AN OLD FAITH IN THE NEW WORLD

Portrait of Shearith Israel

1654-1954

DAVID AND TAMAR DE SOLA POOL

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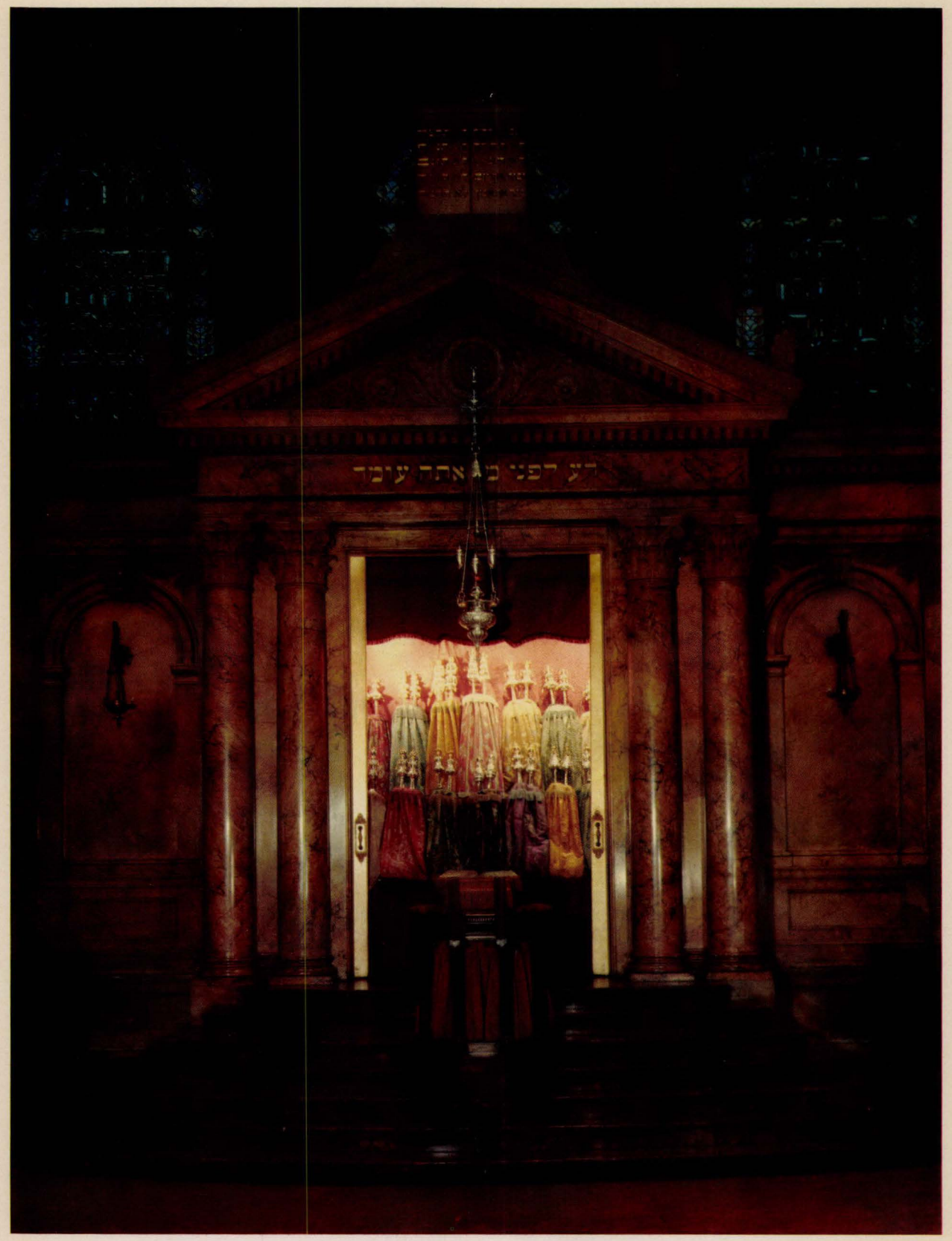
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AN OLD FAITH IN THE NEW WORLD


דע לפני מי אתה עומד

Dedicated
to the Future
of
Shearith Israel

Foreword

WE HAVE AIMED TO PRESENT a portrait of Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York. The Hebrew words Shearith Israel mean "a remnant of Israel."

Three hundred years ago, the Founding Fathers of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, as Shearith Israel is popularly known, set their stakes in this country. Though few in number, they were destined to establish an enduring settlement for others also and to help create a home for the generations to come. They could not have remotely foreseen how great that home was to be, nor could they have forecounted the myriads who would follow them.

The Jews who came to America over the centuries were not destitute immigrants. They carried within themselves the fruits of a precious heritage—the faith of Abraham, the Law of Moses, the vision of the prophets, the aspirations of the psalmist, the wisdom of the sages, the spirit of the martyrs, the unfailing hope of the people of Israel. In the realm of spiritual experience a part can encompass the whole. To a Remnant of Israel belongs the totality of Israel's treasury. The portrait here limned, however falteringly, is a story of an ancient faith in the New World. And it is an American story. The Jews who came here took their part in the development of American democracy and in the course of its purposive history.

The synagogue sheds light and comfort. It is an island of safety for man's spirit. In a confused era and a troubled world where so much has been destroyed, it is all the more sorely needed. Tragically few are the Jewish congregations today which can count three centuries. Great historic religious centers of the Old World have been violated and their people ruthlessly destroyed. Shearith Israel's organic growth and its place in the community of which it is a part are a bright and significant commentary on the spirit of America. In reviewing the three centuries behind us, we unfold a panorama in which Judaism in its pristine purity has been preserved and the horizons of service have been extended to meet expanding needs.

Twelve generations take their place in a story both of a congregation and

a synagogue. No boundary line can be drawn between them. All who have chosen to ally themselves with this American mother synagogue have thereby entered into its religious fellowship and have shared in the making of the congregation. Close integration with one's spiritual home has always been an ideal to strive for. Those who have brought the utmost of response to all that the synagogue offers and demands have been most richly rewarded. A special meed of gratitude is due them for their works, their loyalty, and their faith.

The past is our heritage, the present our responsibility, the future our challenge. The future is darkly unclear, the present is evanescent. Only the past is ours to possess and transmit. We come to our rendezvous with the future offering our heritage as a legacy for the days to come.

This book is dedicated to the future in Shearith Israel. In a profound sense it is dedicated to the men, women, and children who will carry on after us. It is for them to assure the realization of the promise of the past. A hundred years hence when the congregation turns to the celebration of its quadricentennial may it find that its fourth century will have been a fulfillment of purpose to which the first three hundred years have been an introduction, and may they know in their hearts then, as we know today, that the past is everlasting.

DAVID AND TAMAR DE SOLA POOL

April, 1955

We Thank You

WE PREFACE OUR THANKS with a word of appreciation to Professor Allan Nevins, who, in his busy life of creative scholarship, has graciously read the proofs of this book with meticulous and critical attention. His warm encouragement and his helpful comments leave us deeply grateful.

We record our indebtedness to many who have been of inestimable assistance. The American Jewish Historical Society whose archives are a primary source of Shearith Israel history, the New-York Historical Society Library, the New York Public Library, and the Frick Reference Library, have added to the delights of delving in old papers the never-failing cooperation of their librarians. Mr. Thomas F. McLaughlin, Clerk of the City of New York, graciously made available the earliest manuscript records of the municipality. Jane Nelson called our attention to Walt Whitman's visit to the synagogue.

Congregants and other friends have shared in the making of this book. Captain Jason Meth placed at our disposal his valuable material on American Jewish military history. Dr. Arnold Wiznitzer wholeheartedly shared with us the fruits of his wide exploration of sources relating to the first American Jewish settlers, the founders of Shearith Israel. Rabbi Isidore S. Meyer was ever ready with counsel and help.

We are grateful to Warner Prins for the interpretive drawings at the head of each chapter; to Siegfried Landau and Margot Mendes Oppenheimer for the transcription of the music; to Hazel Greenwald for many of the photographs; to Elsa Cesar for the maps. The preliminary work on the preparation of the index was cheerfully assumed by Dr. Anne Schlesinger. Jean Mateles read proofs. For helpful suggestions, friendship, and assistance, we thank also Professor Salo W. Baron, Adrian Baumgart, Dr. Joshua Bloch, Rose Harte, Rosalie Hendricks, Rosalie Krieger, Ivan Salomon, Samuel and Mollie Schneierson, Murray Silverstone. The staff of the synagogue never failed us: Victor Tarry and Judah Guedalia, when we needed to study the records of the congregation; Marian Hoffman and Esther Heckel in the difficult secretarial work involved in a complicated manuscript. On the endpapers of the book are reproduced the commemorative plates drawn by Esther H. Oppenheim.

It was a privilege to work with the officers and staff of the Columbia University Press, publishers and teachers at once. In the organization of the illustrative material Miss Laurel Wagner was especially helpful.

To the board of trustees of Shearith Israel, its president, Justice Edgar J. Nathan, Jr., and to the chairman of the publication committee of this book, Mr. William Roth, we are grateful for their constant solicitude to free us for the labors of this book and to lighten the tasks that were involved in its compilation.

There are many others whom we have had occasion to thank, and now thank again, for kindnesses, suggestions, and criticism. The friendship of all will be a treasured memory as it has been a most precious ingredient in the making of this book.

We thank you!

THE AUTHORS

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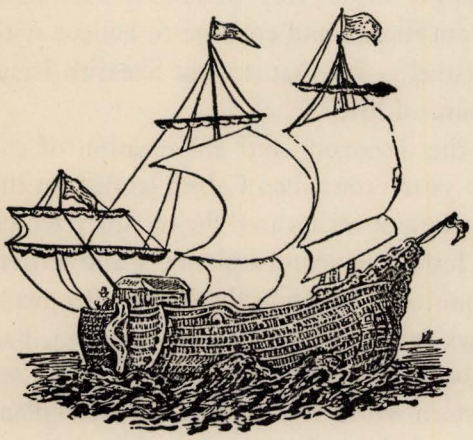
PLAQUE OF HER SONNET *THE NEW COLOSSUS*
Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society and the National Parks Service, Department of Interior

AN OLD FAITH IN THE NEW WORLD

I. *Shores of Hope*

"Whence come you? What is your country?
Who are your people?"
"I am a Hebrew and I revere the Lord God of heaven,
Who made the sea and the dry land."

JONAH I: 8, 9



EARLY IN SEPTEMBER, 1654, a small group of Jews, twenty-three in all, providentially reached the port of Nieuw Amsterdam. They were the Founding Fathers of Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York and of the Jewish community in the United States of America, a community destined to become within three centuries the largest Jewish settlement in all the long history of the Children of Israel. The story of their momentous journey has been transmitted through the generations as a proud and precious tradition.

Perilous adventure had beset these Founding Fathers beyond the measure

common to pioneers in those days. Early in 1654, they sailed from Recife, Brazil, when the Portuguese conquered the Dutch. Hither and yon went the defeated, and many reached the safety of Holland. Others who clung to the New World were storm-driven to a Caribbean port and held by the very Inquisition they fled. A ship of that convoy was captured by pirates.

> But God caused a savior to arise unto them, the captain of a French ship arrayed for battle, and he rescued them from out of the hands of the outlaws who had done them violence and oppressed them, and he conducted them until they reached the end of the inhabited earth called New Holland, and thence she [the ship] also came to our encampment here. And so no man was missing, praise be to God.[1]

The time of their arrival preceded by but a few days the Jewish New Year, and the thrice-exiled pilgrims reaching these shores of hope must have felt it symbolic that their arrival in New Holland came with the opening of their new year, with its message of life, atonement, and thanksgiving in solemn succession. In the soul-searching communion of those Holy Days they must have found strength to face their still uncertain future, and courage to believe with the prophet of old that a "remnant of Israel"—for that is what Shearith Israel means in Hebrew—was to be a new fount of life.

The Jews had played their part in the discovery and colonization of the country which they had left. From the year 1500 when Cabral landed on the shores of Brazil, until 1654 when the Portuguese recaptured the territory which they had for a period lost to the Dutch, Jewish navigators, pioneers, and settlers helped shape Brazilian history. The Inquisition, which in the Iberian Peninsula darkened and tortured the lives of Jews (albeit they were secret-Jews), had for the most part not yet crossed the ocean. Distance lent the illusion of security, and for a time many in the Western world found respite from vigilantism and persecution. Some of them were, indeed, deportees consigned as suspects of Judaizing to what was virtually a penal colony. But whether exiles or pilgrims, the Jewish pioneers helped develop a substantial, prosperous, and important settlement in the land of the Amazon.

In 1630 a dramatic attack by the Dutch wrested Brazil from the Portuguese. For the Jews in the New World, who under fear and duress had outwardly abandoned the Jewish faith, it was an historic moment. Some months before, the council of the West India Company, whose concession governed the Dutch settlements throughout the Americas, had in clear and unmistakable terms proclaimed freedom of conscience among its rules of administration.

The liberty of the Spaniards, Portuguese and natives, whether they be Roman Catholics or Jews, will be respected. No one will be permitted to molest them or subject them to inquiries in matters of conscience or in their private homes; and no one should dare disquiet or disturb them or cause them any hardship—under the penalty of arbitrary punishments or, depending upon circumstances, of exemplary or severe reproof.[2]

Thus, from 1630, the door was open for a free Jewish settlement in Brazil. There were some clerical attempts to counteract the freedom which had been proclaimed. But the Dutch West India Company upheld with authority its principle of tolerance. Several hundred Jewish families, we are told, migrated from Holland to Dutch Brazil by 1645. Their arrival acted as a blood transfusion on the resident community of the Marranos, as the secret-Jews were called. Many of these, though not all, emerged from hiding and publicly returned to the beloved ancestral faith. The free Dutch Jews gave strength and guidance to the liberated Jewish community.

Under these conditions Jewish life flowered. The parent body in Amsterdam kept a paternal eye on the distant outpost to make certain that, though it thrived, it lived not alone on sugar, lumber, or commerce. Rabbis who made their mark, Isaac Aboab da Fonseca and Moses Raphael de Aguilar, came from Holland among a goodly company to minister to the pioneer congregations.

On Recife's main street, known as Rua dos Judeos (Street of the Jews), stood the synagogue Tsur Yisrael (Rock of Israel). Tsur Yisrael had as an affiliate another congregation, Magen Abraham (Shield of Abraham). This was in Mauricia, a section of the town linked to the main part by a bridge of which one of the builders was Balthazar da Fonseca, a Marrano who had lived in the colony before the coming of the Dutch.[3] Cultural development kept pace with throbbing economic progress. It seemed as if the tide of history was breaking upon a land that might have become a standard-bearer of civilization in the Western hemisphere.

But this was not to be. All too soon Dutch rule came to an end. The final blow fell on January 26, 1654, when Recife surrendered to the Portuguese commander, Francisco Barreto de Menezes. The Inquisition had been slow to set up its tribunal in Brazil, unlike the early terrible dominion it had established in Mexico. Yet its outstretched hand could grasp the Brazilian victims of its intransigent faith and bring them for trial to Portugal.

The Jews had fought valiantly in the Dutch militia. Under the generous terms of the capitulation agreement, Dutch Jews received from the conqueror,

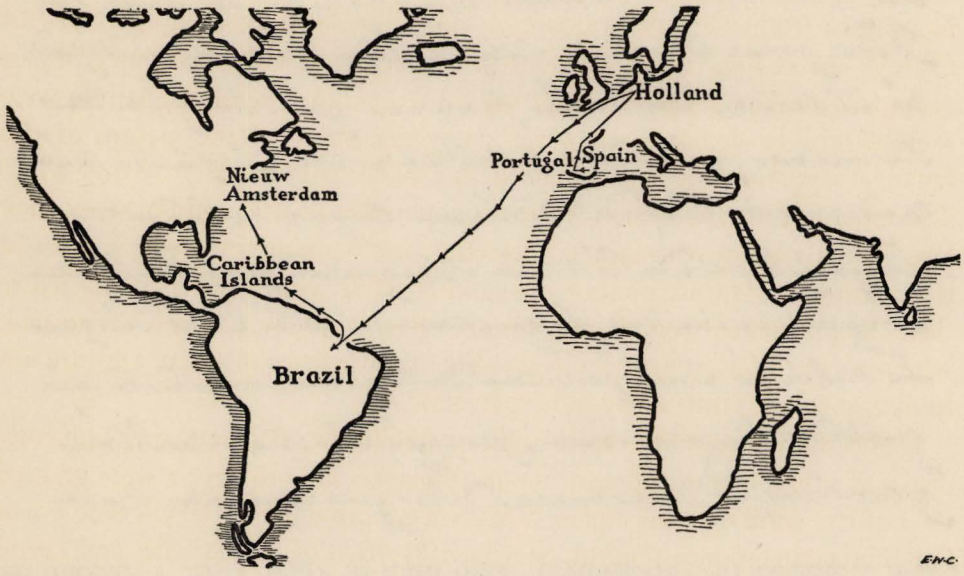
"who should be favorably remembered," the same consideration as Dutch Christians. But for those Marranos who had been Portuguese subjects there was no respite. For them surrender meant the return to the Dark Ages. In vain might those who remained in Brazil hope to find refuge from the Inquisition in a return to their former secrecy of faith. The keen-eyed vigilantes of the Church ferreted out every apparent or real act of Jewish observance. It was enough to awaken dangerous suspicion for one on the Jewish Sabbath to wear a clean shirt or do no work. Over the years, many of the victims of this fanatical vigilantism were denounced and taken to Portugal "to stand trial." The record of the Inquisition leaves no doubts as to their punishment or their fate. The Marranos who escaped detection and persecution left little trace of their existence. The attrition of time and of a life with fear eventually led to their disappearance from Jewish history. But for those pilgrims thrice over who took to the sea, a new era began. For twenty-three of them, a future unfolded, great and fruitful beyond expectation.

Under the terms of the capitulation of Recife, the Portuguese Commander declared a three-month amnesty for all. Those wishing to depart were granted the right to wind up their affairs. Vessels were provided on which they could sail. The contemporary Haham Saul Levi Mortera of Amsterdam, and David Franco-Mendes drawing on his words more than a century later, both record of Barreto that

> he caused it to be proclaimed throughout his camp that everyone of his soldiers should be careful not to wrong or hurt any of the Children of Israel, and that if any were wilfully to transgress his command his life would be forfeited. And he gave them a specified time within which they could sell their houses and goods at an adequate price and in the most advantageous manner. . . . Since they did not find enough of Hollandish ships in the harbor, for they were few, he ordered that there should be given them as many Portuguese ships under his command as needed until a sufficient number should be obtained. And all our people went down into the sea in sixteen ships, and spread sail, and God led them to their destination to this land, and they came to us in peace, except one ship which the Spaniards captured on the high seas.

The vicissitudes of the journey of these wanderers must be left to the imagination. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even in the eighteenth, a transatlantic voyage was no luxury cruise. Hard was the journey across the ocean. Harder was the long sail across the pirate infested seas from Brazil to the north. Conditions on board ship were often a cruel test of human endurance. "It was not uncommon" writes an old sea captain,

to be fifty or sixty days making the homeward passage. In gales, which were frequent, hatches had to be battened down, and men, women and children screamed all night in terror. Ship fever, smallpox, and other diseases were common, and it is a wonder that so many survived the voyage as really did.

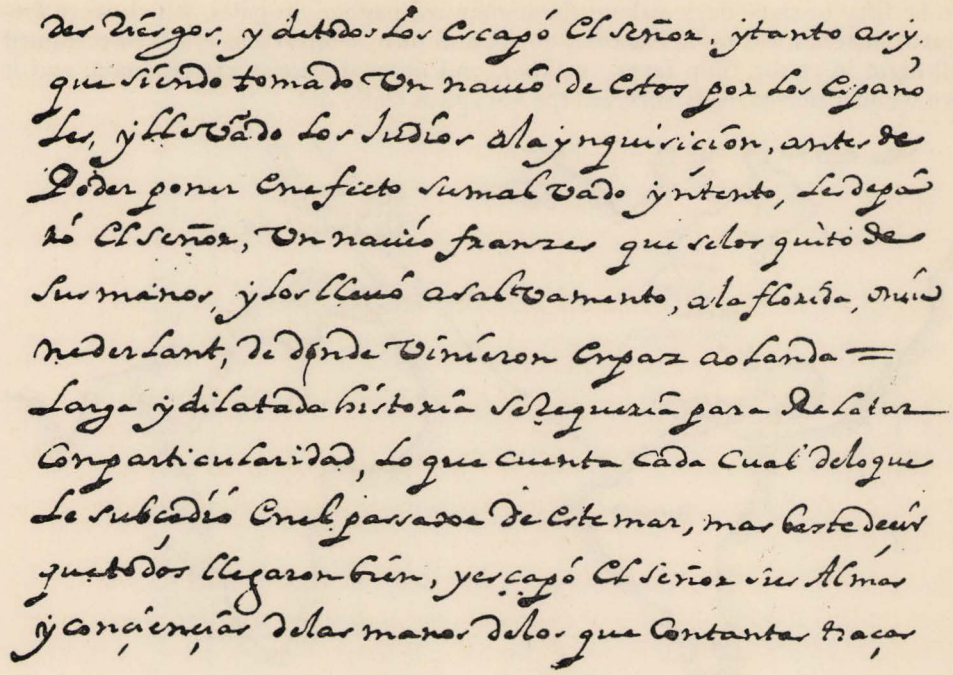


THE LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM

As ships were then built, in 1661 a seaman could write that

. . . in stormy weather when the ship rolled and tumbled as though some great millstone were rolling up one hill and down another we had much ado to hold ourselves fast by the small ropes from falling by the board; . . . and water beneath us, and that so raging as though every wave would make a grave for us; and many times the nights so dark we could not see one another, and blowing so hard that we could not hear one another speak, being close to one another; and thunder and lightening as though Heaven and earth would come together.[4]

Such a storm with adverse winds drove some off course to the Spanish Main where the Inquisition held sway. One ship fell prey to Spanish pirates. These had their heyday in the middle of the seventeenth century in the rich domain of the Caribbean seas. Fortunately their "monopoly" of buccaneering was disputed by corsairs and privateers of other nations. Some or all of these many tribulations befell the doughty forebears of a segment of the people of the United States of America. Diligent search for more documentation may yet help us retrace with a measure of certainty the log of the dramatic journey of the Founding Fathers of Shearith Israel.



RABBI MORTERA OF AMSTERDAM, WHO DIED IN 1660, LEFT A RECORD OF THE TRIALS AND REDEMPTION OF BRAZILIAN JEWRY IN 1654.[5]

The fateful ship from which they landed has been called both *St. Charles* and *Ste. Catherine*. In the two places of the old Dutch minutes of Nieuw Amsterdam where the ship is mentioned, the page is torn or worn and the word is overwritten with other ink. The official English translation in the New York City records of a century ago gives the name as *St. Charles*. Fifty years ago, it was read as *Ste. Catherine*. Thereafter, the pioneer researcher Samuel Oppenheim went back to the first name, and this has been accepted by the American Jewish Tercentenary. The Dutch Reformed Church, whose minister Polhemus came on the same vessel as the Jews, likewise calls the ship *St. Charles*. Arnold Wiznitzer, Brazilian historian, makes out a good case for *Ste. Catherine* or *St. Cathrien*.[6]

Whether the twenty-three reached Nieuw Amsterdam on the self-same "French ship arrayed for battle" that had "rescued them from out of the hands of the outlaws," or whether they were brought "according to agreement and contract" by another French bark from some Caribbean port where they

were stranded, how much time of their long and fitful journey they spent terrorized by ruthless enemies, or how long they lingered in the West Indies, are all still matters of surmise. Their trials must have recalled to them, as they do to us, the words spoken of old by another woebegone traveler. The cry of Jonah must have welled up from their hearts:

> I called upon the Lord in my affliction. He answered me. From the depths of Sheol I cried. Thou didst hear my voice. The water surrounded me even unto death, the deep encompassed me. . . . Yet Thou hast brought up my life from the pit.[6]

Though they had left behind them the perils of the sea, they yet did not find a sure haven. New trials awaited them. The vessel which had brought them to port, was a French frigate mounting five iron guns, and was owned by Captain Symon Felle. Its master, Jacques de la Motthe, had made a contract *in solidum*, that is, "all as one," with his Jewish passengers whom he brought from "St. Anthony." On arrival at Nieuw Amsterdam, these refugees from defeated Dutch Brazil and from the hazards of the sea were unable to meet all their financial obligations to de la Motthe. On their dramatic journeying these unfortunate—and fortunate—victims must have had a chance to appraise at once the glamor and the horror, and also the workaday business code, of the prowlers for booty along the coast which led northward from Brazil. This lesson they learned at a price, for by the time they reached Nieuw Amsterdam all that was left of their wealth was some battered possessions, worth far less than the fare for their journey. They found no one in the settlement to whom they could turn for assistance, and the captain held their personal goods on board as security. He took legal steps to collect the money that was due him. On September 7 he brought action before the worshipful court of burgomasters and schepens (aldermen) asking for payment for the freight and board of the Jews whom he had transported. Of the total sum of 2,500 golden guilders which he claimed, only 933 guilders had been paid. The court record as translated from the Dutch reads:

> [Monday, the 7th Sept. 1654]
> Jacques de la Motthe, master of the bark St. Charles, by a petition, written in French, requests payment of the freight and board of the Jews whom he brought here from Cape St. Anthony according to agreement and contract in which each is bound *in solidum*, and that, therefore whatever furniture and other property they may have on board his bark may be publickly sold by order of the Court, in payment of their debt. He verbally declares that the Netherlanders, who came over with them, are not included in the contract and have satisfied him.

The record then goes on to tell how Solomon Pietersen who acted as legal counsel for the Jewish passengers

> . . . a Jew, appears in Court and says nine hundred and odd guilders of the 2500 are paid, and that there are 23 souls, big and little, who must pay equally. The Court having seen the petition and contract, order that the Jews shall, within twice 24 hours after date, pay according to contract what they lawfully owe: and in the meanwhile the furniture and whatever the petitioner has in his possession shall remain as security without alienating the same.[7]

After the lapse of the forty-eight hours, the court decided that these possessions should be sold toward payment of the debt, but a further delay of four days was granted. This respite to Monday, September 14, must have been eagerly welcomed, for it included the two holy days of the Jewish New Year. After the four days had passed and no cash had been found for payment of the debt, the ship's master, de la Motthe, unloaded the goods and put them on sale beginning with the goods of Abraham Israel and Judicq de Mereda.

It has been said by many that some of the Christian Dutch citizens of the town began to buy at nominal prices the goods on sale and give them back to their original owners. Seeing that this generous neighborliness would result in loss for himself, de la Motthe put a quick stop to the sale and called for a special hearing in the Stadthuys (City Hall). There on September 16 he asked that David Israel and Moses Ambrosius be held responsible for the balance due him, and that they be kept as prisoners until the debt should be wholly paid. His demand was granted, but on condition that the two prisoners should not be an expense to the city. De la Motthe was to pay for the board of each prisoner the nominal charge of sixteen stivers a day (a stiver being the equivalent of our two cents). He had also to pay the substantial sum of forty or fifty guilders out of the proceeds from the sale of the goods in order to cover the special expenses of the court. A guilder, gulden, or florin was the Dutch coin valued at forty American cents.[8]

The court records in October show that finally some of the goods were sold to raise funds to pay the debt. On October 5, Asser Levy appears in the records as one whose goods were sold at auction.

> Jan Marty, pltf. v/s Asser leeven, deft. Pltf. as attorney and agent of the sailors, who brought the Jews here from the West Indies, demands from deft. payment of f. 106. still remaining due. Deft. says that all his goods were sold at auction, and he

is not bound to pay any more, inasmuch as payment for his freight was offered before the sale, on condition that his goods be not sold. The court persists in its previous decision that the prisoners, who were taken as principals, be held responsible, also, for the remainder of the payment.

A week later, on October 12, there was paid in to the court some money derived "from the proceeds of the Jews goods which were sold by order at vendue." [9] This was not enough to discharge their staggering indebtedness. The charge of 2,500 guilders, thrice the normal cost at the time of a journey of comparable distance, points to the extraordinary circumstances in which the journey was undertaken. To assure their transport they must have mortgaged all that remained to them, and if their own means were not enough, there was always the hope that help could be obtained from brethren in the homeland. Since there were Jews in Holland who were secure and prosperous, those in distress in New Holland confidently hoped for help from them.

Turning to the mother country for financial assistance seems to have been an act of last resort, although it might well have been from the beginning a persuasive argument to the captain who was called upon to undertake the rescue and transport of the storm-tossed victims. These may have hoped that what was still left of their belongings would in its totality cover the cost of their freight. But it did not. They therefore turned to the brothers across the seas. What is of special interest is that de la Motthe and his crew considered the help asked from members of the Jewish community in Amsterdam likely enough to be forthcoming to justify the releasing of what was left of the mortgaged goods and also of the deposited funds. The detention of the frigate at the dock was becoming increasingly costly and irksome. Since a reasonable sum had already been realized by the sale of the goods, it was easier for Solomon Pietersen, the representative of the Jewish travelers, to persuade the sailors to leave in the expectation that on their return they would be paid the balance still due them, from money made available by Jews in Holland. On October 26,

Solomon Pietersen appeared in Court, and exhibited a declaration from the attorney of the sailors, relative to the balance of the freight of the Jews, promising to wait until the arrival of the ships from *Patria*. Wherefore he requests to receive the money still in the secretary's hands for Rycke Nounes, whose goods were sold, over and above her own freight debt, in order to obtain with that money some support for her. Whereupon was endorsed: Petitioner Solomon Pieters as attorney was permitted to take, under security, the monies in the Secretary's hands.[10]

With this there came to an end the complex dealings with the master of the ship which brought to Nieuw Amsterdam the sturdy band of "23 souls, big and little" who could endure so much without break of spirit or body.

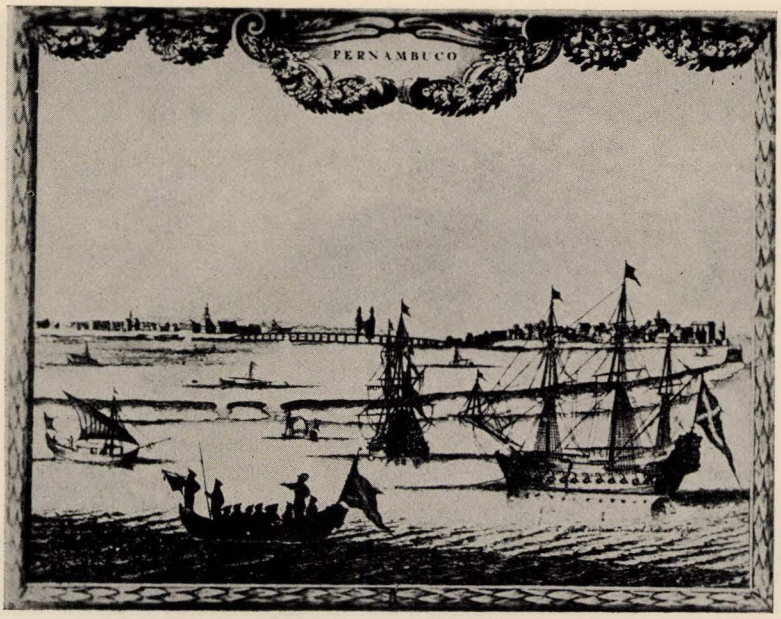
In so far as their names have come down to us in the court records, four men: Abraham and David Israel, Moses Ambrosius (Lumbrozo), and Asser Levy; and two women, Judicq de Mereda and Rycke Nounes, and others making up the twenty-three, found in Nieuw Amsterdam two other Jews. One of these was Solomon Pietersen, of whom we seem to know no fact other than that he was designated to act as counsel for the new arrivals. The other was one Jacob bar Simson. He had come from Holland some two weeks before the arrival of those who came from Brazil. He bore with him a passport issued by the Dutch West India Company in July. Isolated Jews had preceded them in coming to what is now the United States. These scattered individuals left no mark on the American Jewish story. But Solomon Pietersen, Jacob bar Simson, and the twenty-three other Jews who came to Manhattan in 1654 may truly be called the "Jewish Pilgrim Fathers," for their settlement on the North American continent became the nucleus of a congregation and of a community with historic continuity.

It has been suggested by that trail-blazer in American Jewish history, Samuel Oppenheim, that Jacob bar Simson was more than an immigrant, and that he may have come as part of a planned pioneer movement to work and develop the new and extensive domain held by the Dutch West India Company in North America. Brazil had just been lost by the Dutch. Curaçao was but a small island. Dutch Guiana was opened up for settlement later. In contrast, the New Netherlands was spacious and crying out for settlers. The Dutch West India Company, eager to develop it, issued circulars which offered "freedom and exemptions" to potential colonists there. In June, 1654, the Company assigned fifty orphan children to the vessels *Pereboom* and *Gelderse Blom* to help populate Manhattan Island. On November 9, 1654, Peter Stuyvesant signed a resolution to lodge the children sent over by the "Poormasters." [11]

Leaving on July 8, 1654, Jacob bar Simson had crossed the ocean on the *Pereboom*, and reached Nieuw Amsterdam on August 22, apparently with some of these children. He paid thirty-six guilders for his passage. He had been in Manhattan but a fortnight, this official Jewish pioneer, when he was suddenly joined by a company that landed without benefit of passport.



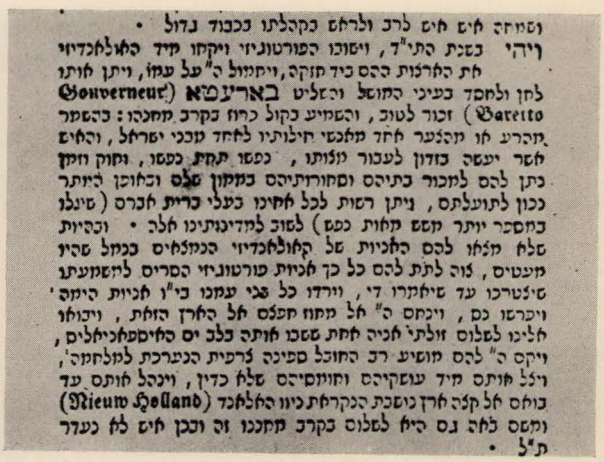
This was Nieuw Amsterdam when the Founding Fathers of Shearith Israel reached harbor in September 1654



After sharing valiantly in defense of Dutch Brazil, the Jews left when the Portuguese recaptured the country



First rabbi in America—da Fonseca



Hebrew chronicle of 1784, based on earlier records, retells of capture by pirates and rescue of Jewish pilgrims

Stuyvesant seems to have raised no difficulties with the Jewish merchants or with him who had arrived with the approval of the authorities in Holland. An altogether different situation was presented by the no less than twenty-three men, women, and children, who had now so unexpectedly landed, bereft and weary, still bearing the marks of their turbulent voyage, and plunged at the very moment of their arrival into legal difficulties.

"Who are you? Whence come you? What is your country? Who are your kinsmen?"

"We are Hebrews and we revere the Lord God of Heaven." One can hear the echo of the immemorial questions and Jonah's simple answer ringing down the corridors of time.

Peter Stuyvesant required the twenty-three Jews "in a friendly way to depart." The director-general had an aversion to all dissidents—Lutherans, Quakers, Roman Catholics, or Jews—and would have none of them. He brooked ill any variance from doctrines which he made his own. The very arrival of the Jews was a challenge to his conception of New Holland as the serene haven of those who believed exactly as did he. The wanderers became pioneers. They stood up against Stuyvesant's will with dignity and strength, setting up, no doubt unconsciously, a cornerstone for the subsequent structure of American democracy. They waged a brave battle to secure for themselves and implicitly for others the right of settlement, freedom of worship, and equality in citizenship.

Their doughty resistance proved indeed to be a springboard for liberty. Less than two years earlier, the good burghers of Nieuw Amsterdam, in their struggle with Peter Stuyvesant for representative government, had won only a very limited victory. In politics as in theology, "hardkoppig Piet," as Washington Irving called the Knickerbocker governor, had an inflexible mind of his own. This did not encompass government of the people and by the people. The burgher government which finally was wrested from the stern hands of the Amsterdam Council in 1652 was not much more than a half-way station to the goal of those who led the fight. It was more of a victory for Peter Stuyvesant. The new plan called for the powers of local government to be vested in two burgomasters, five schepens and a schout. Selection of those representatives was to be made with due regard for the wishes of the people.[12] But when put into practice at the proclamation of the new order on February 2, 1653, Manhattan's first municipal government ill concealed the fiat rule of

the arbitrary director-general. Before the year was ended, a convention of delegates from Nieuw Amsterdam and Long Island towns protested against the disregard of the rights that were theirs, and expressed "apprehension of the establishment of an arbitrary government," asserting that "our consent or that of our representatives is necessarily required in the enactment of . . . laws and orders."

Against such courageous declarations, Stuyvesant hurled the charge of illegality. He ordered the citizens "not to assemble any more under pain of our extreme displeasure and arbitrary correction." The delegates disbanded, and in due course the authorities in Holland expressed their support of the governor. Strengthened in his position, he quietly purged the remonstrants, and thus further stretched the gap between government and democracy in the fledgling municipality.

The arrival of the Jews gave a new impetus to resistance against arbitrary authority. It constituted a renewed challenge to the constricting policies of Peter Stuyvesant. Yet xenophobia in the little colony did not begin with him. His predecessor, Director-General van Dincklagen, had like reservations. The prejudices that Stuyvesant expressed about Jews van Dincklagen expressed on the subject of "Scots and petty traders" in general, and on September 18, 1648, in council at Fort Amsterdam, action had been taken limiting the rights of "such destroyers of trade." [13]

The Dutch West India Company in the homeland did not see eye to eye with their directors in the colonies about the virtues of restraint of trade. They enunciated a classic definition of free enterprise when on March 12, 1654, they wrote Governor Stuyvesant with regard to another edict restricting trade:

> We judge [this] to be impracticable, especially in the very beginning of a first-budding state, whose growth must be sought for in, and founded rather on, fostered and unlimited freedoms, than on compulsory restrictions. . . . We will also warn you, before quitting this subject, not to enact, in future, any more such or similar ordinances or regulations, much less to publish them, before you shall have first received our instructions thereon, as we find such to be for the greatest advantage of the company and this State in particular.

September of that year, 1654, found Stuyvesant unconvinced and more certain than ever that new arrivals were detrimental to the colony and the vested business interests of his "most affectionate subjects." But in consonance with the instructions he had received, with unconcealed asperity and preju-

dice he wrote on September 22, to the Worshipful Directors in Holland about the newcomers:

> The Jews who have arrived would nearly all like to remain here, but learning that they (with their customary usury and deceitful trading with the Christians) were very repugnant to the inferior magistrates, as also to the people having the most affection for you; the Deaconry also fearing that owing to their present indigence they might become a charge in the coming winter, we have, for the benefit of this weak and newly developing place and the land in general, deemed it useful to require them in a friendly way to depart.[14]

In words still more acrid and tainted with medieval abuse, he further requested the worshipful directors to protect the new colony from what he called "blasphemous" newcomers. He awaited what he hoped would be a concurring reply, though he knew that the Dutch West India Company was eager to encourage development through a policy of the open door to its domains.

The governor's fears for the coming months were fully substantiated by the extreme severity of Manhattan's winter of 1654–55. In January all the rivers round Nieuw Amsterdam froze. One could walk acoss the East River on the ice where the Whitestone Bridge now spans the waters. In desperate need, the Jews were compelled to turn to Domine Johannes Megapolensis of the Dutch Reformed Church. The good domine had come in August, 1642, from Holland to Albany, then called Rensselaerwyck. He came by free passage to New Netherlands with an outfit of 300 guilders (about $124), or five times the amount paid for Manhattan Island sixteen years earlier. His salary was set at 1,100 guilders and thirty schepels of wheat (about twenty-two and a half bushels of the staff of life). To that were added two firkins of butter annually for the first three years. He remained at Albany under the aegis of the Patroon from 1642 to 1649. From 1649 to 1670 he served in Manhattan. He should be remembered in friendship not only in his own church, but also by Catholics and Jews. He had had occasion to be of service to some Jesuit fathers in his first parish and his saving kindness to Father Jogues, Jesuit priest, has left its mark.[15] Later in Nieuw Amsterdam, he did not turn his back on the Jewish poor though he grumbled about it. He gave substantial help to others than his own fellow-Calvinists. His letter of March 18, 1655, to the classis, the governing body of ministers and elders in Amsterdam, indicates gaps in our historical sources and raises questions which still remain unanswered. Writes the domine:

Last summer some Jews came here from Holland in order to trade. Afterwards, some Jews, poor and healthy, also came here on the same ship with D. Polheijmius. It would have been proper that these had been supported by their own nation, but they have been at our charge, so that we have had to spend several hundred guilders for their support. They came several times to my house, weeping and bewailing their misery, and when I directed them to the Jewish merchant they said that he would not lend them a single stiver.[16]

Jacob bar Simson and Solomon Pietersen were two Jews who came to settle before the arrival of the twenty-three. Had other Jewish traders from Holland come and gone? As for Jacob bar Simson, he later described himself as a day laborer. Pietersen may have been the merchant mentioned by Megapolensis.

Thus far the very right of settlement by the Jews had not been established. Indeed, Director-General Stuyvesant had found local support for his views when at the beginning of March, 1655, the

Fiscal van Tienhoven informed the Burgomaster and Schepens the Director General and Supreme Council have resolved that the Jews who came last year from the West Indies and now from Fatherland, must prepare to depart forthwith, and that they shall receive notice thereof, and asked whether Burgomasters and Schepens had anything to object thereto. It was decided No, but that the resolution relating thereto should take its course.[17]

The Jews in Amsterdam had been actively interceding with the Dutch West India Company to obtain an official declaration of the right of the Jews to remain in New Holland and enjoy burgher rights, notwithstanding the epistolary remonstrances of Stuyvesant. With broad vision of the facts and with the eloquence of deep earnestness they wrote in January, 1655,

To the Honorable Lords, Directors of the Chartered West India Company, Chamber of the City of Amsterdam.

The merchants of the Portuguese Nation residing in this City respectfully remonstrate to your Honors that it has come to their knowledge that your Honors raise obstacles to the giving of permits or passports to the Portuguese Jews to travel and to go to reside in New Netherland, which if persisted in will result to the great disadvantage of the Jewish nation. It also can be of no advantage to the general Company but rather damaging.

There are many of the nation who have lost their possessions at Pernambuco and have arrived from there in great poverty, and part of them have been dispersed here and there. So that your petitioners had to expend large sums of money for their necessaries of life, and through lack of opportunity all cannot remain here to live. And as they cannot go to Spain or Portugal because of the Inquisition, a great part of the aforesaid people must in time be obliged to depart for other territories of their High Mightinesses the States-General and their Companies, in order there, through their labor and efforts, to be able to exist under the protec-

tion of the administrators of your Honorable Directors, observing and obeying your Honors' orders and commands.

It is well known to your Honors that the Jewish nation in Brazil have at all times been faithful and have striven to guard and maintain that place, risking for that purpose their possessions and their blood.

Yonder land is extensive and spacious. The more of loyal people that go to live there, the better it is in regard to the population of the country as in regard to the payment of various excises and taxes which may be imposed there, and in regard to the increase of trade, and also to the importation of all the necessaries that may be sent there.

Your Honors should also please consider that many of the Jewish nation are principal shareholders in the Company. They having always striven their best for the Company, and many of their nation have lost immense and great capital in its shares and obligations.

The Company has by a general resolution consented that those who wish to populate the Colony shall enjoy certain districts of land gratis. Why should now certain subjects of this State not be allowed to travel thither and live there? The French consent that the Portuguese Jews may traffic and live in Martinique, Christopher and other of their territories, whither also some have gone from here, as your Honors know. The English also consent at the present time that the Portuguese and Jewish nation may go from London and settle at Barbados, whither also some have gone.

As foreign nations consent that the Jewish nation may go to live and trade in their territories, how can your Honors forbid the same and refuse transportation to this Portuguese nation who reside here and have been settled here well on to about sixty years, many also being born here and confirmed burghers, and this to a land that needs people for its increase?

Therefore the petitioners request for the reasons given above (as also others which they omit to avoid prolixity), that your Honors be pleased not to exclude but to grant the Jewish nation passage to and residence in that country; otherwise this would result in a great prejudice to their reputation. Also that by an Apostille and Act the Jewish nation be permitted, together with other inhabitants, to travel, live and traffic there, and with them enjoy liberty on condition of contributing like others, &c. Which doing, &c.[18]

The extant copy of this document preserved by the Pennsylvania Historical Society is unsigned. The original probably bore the signature of the Mahamad, the governing trustees and official spokesmen of the Sephardi community of Amsterdam. For their enduring credit let their names be here recorded: Jacob d'Olivera, Ishac Israel Belmonte, Selomoh Salom, Jacob del Soto, Joseph Bueno Bivas, Abraham Aboab, and Jacob Bueno de Mesquita.[19]

This epistle of Amsterdam Jewry is in its own right outstanding as a political and social document. It is also a distinguished example of the time honored Jewish tradition of folk-solidarity expressed through generous assistance, espe-

cially for "the redemption of captives."

The reply of the Dutch West India Company to the eloquent petition was an affirmative one. On April 26, 1655, the directors wrote their clear decision to Stuyvesant. They took note of the governor's repugnance to the presence of any dissidents from his faith, and they made special provision to allay the domine's fear of the Jews burdening the economy of his community by stating that "the poor among them shall . . . be supported by their own nation."

> We would have liked to effectuate and fulfill your wishes and request that the new territories should no more be allowed to be infected by people of the Jewish nation, for we foresee therefrom the same difficulties which you fear, but after having further weighed and considered the matter, we observe that this would be somewhat unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by this nation, with others, in the taking of Brazil, as also because of the large amount of capital which they still have invested in the shares of this company.

This added argument helped clinch the matter. Therefore,

> . . . after many deliberations we have finally decided and resolved to apostille upon a certain petition presented by said Portuguese Jews that these people may travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the Company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will govern yourself accordingly.[20]

With freedom to live and remain in the goodly land and to travel and trade in it, it was not long before the dynamic Jewish pioneers were in a position to fulfill that proviso of the Dutch Company which was likewise a cardinal principle of the Jewish religion to care for their poor. In the following months, attempts to negate some of these patent rights given to the "Jewish nation" aroused Amsterdam Jewry to action. On June 1, 1656, they protested to the Company that despite orders Stuyvesant was not granting Jews freedom to exercise their religion in quietness. Nor were they permitted to deal in real estate, or have a Christian employee, or trade freely. Six months later a Jewish petition to the civic authorities of Amsterdam stated that many and various persons and households were disposed to "set out for the colony in the New Netherland." An assurance was asked that Jews going there would be given social, commercial, and religious freedom.[21]

When the Jews arrived in 1654, the years of Stuyvesant's competent, if not ingratiating, administration had had their telling effect. We are indebted to one Nicasius de Sille for a delightful description of the settlement.

This country suits me exceedingly well. I shall not try to leave it as long as I live. . . . [It] does a large trade in furs, especially beavers, which are sold to us by the savages by the thousand for Dutch merchandise. All the people here are traders. . . . It goes here in the manner of the Old Testament; wealth consists in oxen and horses to plow with, and in cows, sheep and goats. . . . Children and pigs multiply here rapidly and more than anything else, but there is a lack of women. The rivers are full of fish, good edible fish. . . . The weeds consist mostly of strawberries, catnip and blackberries. . . . In fine, one can live here and forget Patria. Beer is brewed here as good as in Holland, of barley and wheat. . . . No gold or silver circulates here, but beads, which Indians make and call sewant. The women of the neighborhood entertain each other with a pipe and brazier; young and old they all smoke.[22]

A French Catholic missionary, Father Jogues, the Jesuit who was beholden to Domine Megapolensis for sanctuary from torture by Indians ten years earlier, described the fort at Nieuw Amsterdam as "a commencement of a town." It had a church, a government house, storehouses and barracks. The bastions were crumbling mounds of earth. The soldiery numbered sixty and was charged with the added maintenance of the fort up the Hudson at Albany. The most striking report given by Father Jogues is that the 400 to 500 inhabitants scattered over the island of Manhattan represented various nationalities speaking eighteen different languages. That little babel was a far cry from the primeval estate bought from the poor Indians by Peter Minuit for $24.00 worth of tawdry trinkets. It was already a prototype for a book written two and a half centuries later describing a trip *Around the World in New York*. A first edition of this book could have been written early in the history of the city.

Much as the Peter of 1654 loved his Nieuw Amsterdam and though he sought to serve it well within the confines of his own contracted vision, he in nowise sensed the ferment within the embryonic metropolis. He believed that its boundary would forever be set by Wall Street, just as he, the son of a Calvinist minister, devoutly hoped that only good Calvinists would forever determine its fate. It was less than fifty years later, in 1699, that the wall of Wall Street was removed.

While awaiting from the directors of the Dutch West India Company their concurrence with his request of the Jews "in a friendly way to depart," he found a pretext which would in his opinion justify an order that "the Jews, who came last year from the West Indies and now from the Fatherland, must

prepare to depart forthwith." One Abraham de Lucena "had kept his store open during the sermon, and sold by retail. . . ." Every citizen was expected to attend sermon twice on Sunday. Indians and Negro slaves were allowed recreation on that day, except during church hours. Then the schout (sheriff) went the rounds of the town to assure quiet and stop the games of the privileged slaves and Indians. Abraham de Lucena had arrived in the early spring of 1655, apparently a recent émigré from Portugal or Spain. Though he is described as having come from Holland, he hardly understood Dutch.

Selling by retail was not permitted to Jews, whose residence rights were not yet established. Keeping a store open during the sermon was allowed to no one. The court record for Monday, March 1, 1655, reads:

> Cornelis van Tienhoven, as Sheriff of this City, pltf, v/s Abram de la Sina, a Jew deft. Pltf rendering his demand in writing, says, that he, De la Sina, had kept his store open during the sermon, and sold by retail as proved by affidavit; concluding, therefore, that deft. shall be deprived of his trade, and condemned in a fine of six hundred guilders. The charge having been read before deft., who not understanding the same, it was ordered that copy thereof be given deft. to answer it by next Court day. Fiscal Cornelis van Tienhoven informed the Burgomasters and Schepens, the Director General and Supreme Council have resolved, that the Jews, who came last year from the West Indies and now from the Fatherland, must prepare to depart forthwith; and they shall receive notice thereof, and asked whether Burgomasters and Schepens had anything to object thereto. It was decided, No; but that the resolution relating thereto should take its course.

Be it recorded to the credit of the burgomasters Allard Anthony and Oloff Stevenson van Cortlant, and the schepens, that despite the unequivocal verdict, no action seems to have followed the drastic judgment.[23]

Grass was not growing under the feet of the incipient and struggling Jewish community. In addition to those who came and went between Old and New Holland on behalf of a brisk transatlantic trade, there were those who came to stay. These greatly strengthened the original settlers. Early in 1655, we find Joseph d'Acosta among them. He was a brother of the famous Uriel Acosta. In 1630, he had been president of the Amsterdam Jewish community. He was also a large shareholder in the Dutch West India Company. There were also Salvador d'Andrade and Jacob Cohen Henriques. This was the Jacob Cohen Henriques who had been a member of the governing board of the congregation in Recife, Brazil, in 1651–52.[24] One of the factors which worked toward concentrating the community in the city and which discouraged the scattering of Jewish traders was that "all that inhabite up

Hudson River were forbid to trade over sea," a branch of commerce in which Jewish merchants were preeminent.[25]

Some six weeks after de Lucena's encounter with the law, we find another entry of special Jewish interest in the early city records. On April 15, 1655, David de Ferera was registered as leasing one of the 120 houses that comprised the town of Nieuw Amsterdam. Some eight months later, Joseph d'Acosta also leased a house. A week after that, Salvador d'Andrade "rented and inhabited a house . . . knocked down to him at a public sale by the secretary of the Noble Worships, held on the fourteenth of this month of December." The conveyance of these premises was declined "for pregnant reasons," namely that Jews had no right to own real estate.[26]

The test case followed closely upon a formal petition of rights likewise rejected by the local authorities. On November 29, 1655, five petitioners addressed themselves:

To the Honorable Director General and Council of New Netherlands:

With due reverence, Abraham de Lucena, Salvador Dandrada and Jacob Cohen, for themselves and in the name of others of the Jewish nation, residing in this City, show how that under date of the 15th of February, 1655, the Honorable Lords Directors of the Chartered West India Company, Masters and Patrons of this province, gave permission and consent to the petitioners, like the other inhabitants, to travel, reside and trade here, and enjoy the same liberties, as appears by the document here annexed. They therefore respectfully request that your Honorable Worships will not prevent or hinder them herein, but will allow and consent that, pursuant to the consent obtained by them, they may, with other inhabitants of this province, travel and trade on the South River of New Netherland, at Fort Orange and other places situate within the jurisdiction of this Government of New Netherland. Which doing, etc., the undersigned shall remain your Honorable Worships'

Humble Servants:

This petition was denied "for weighty reasons." [27]

On March 14, 1656, Abraham de Lucena, Jacob Cohen Henriques, Salvador d'Andrade, Joseph d'Acosta, and David de Ferera put in their remonstrance "for themselves, as also in the name of the other Jews residing in this Province." They asked the director-general and council that they be granted equal rights with others in the matter of trading and of acquisition of real estate, claiming that with admission to citizenship these rights were assured to them in the grant received from the Dutch West India Company. Moreover, they were taxed equally with other citizens.

Therefore your suppliants once more humbly request hereby that your Honors permit them if, like other burghers, they must and shall contribute, to enjoy the same liberty allowed to other burghers, as well in trading to all places within the jurisdiction of this Government as in the purchase of real estate, especially as this has already been consented to and permitted by the Honorable Lords Directors, as can be seen by the aforesaid order shown to your Honors on November 29th. They are willing and ready, with other burghers and inhabitants, to contribute according to their means.

The city fathers referred to the Lords Directors in Amsterdam the question of the right of the Jews to own real estate.[28] Once more the liberal directors of the Dutch West India Company overruled Stuyvesant. On June 14, 1656, they extended to the petitioners the right to trade at the South River (the Delaware) and at Fort Orange (Albany).[29]

We have here seen and learned with displeasure that your Honors, against our apostille of the 15th of February, 1655, granted to the Jewish or Portuguese nation at their request, have forbidden them to trade at Fort Orange and South River, and also the purchase of real estate, which is allowed them here in this country without any difficulty, and we wish that this had not occurred but that your Honors had obeyed our orders which you must hereafter execute punctually and with more respect.[30]

Finally, when the Jews renewed their demands, in April, 1657, the burgomasters were told to grant them the right both to trade and to purchase real estate.

So far so good. But full rights had not yet been granted in 1656, for the word then sent from Amsterdam continued:

Jews or Portuguese people, however, shall not be permitted to establish themselves as mechanics (which they are not allowed to do in this city), nor allowed to have open retail shops, but they may quietly and peacefully carry on their business as heretofore.

Then follows another provision calculated to allay Stuyvesant's fears. With regard to worship, they were to

. . . exercise in all quietness the religion within their houses, for which end they must without doubt endeavor to build their houses close together in a convenient place on one or the other side of Nieuw Amsterdam—at their choice—as they have done here.

This did not mean a ghetto but rather a recognized "Jewish quarter," "at their choice," as there was in Amsterdam, where Rembrandt found inspiration for many of his pictures. Immigrants, of whatever origin they may be,

tend to group together in protective neighborliness. From the beginning we find Jews in the little settlement more or less in the district where eventually their synagogue was built. In the "Castello plan" of the city in 1660, the house of Asser Levy is situated where Mill Lane met Stone Street, just around the corner from where the synagogue was eventually built on Mill Street. At the northern end of Mill Street (Slyck Steegh) was the house of Rutger Jacobsen that was occupied by Abraham de Lucena. But this was assuredly no ghetto. Next door to de Lucena on Mill Street lived the Calvinist domine, Johannes Megapolensis, and next to him was the home of Jan Reyndersen. After one more house, the occupant of which has not been identified, came that of Joost Goderus, then the house built by the Dutch West India Company to house its Negro slaves, and the next, the last house on Mill Street, was the tavern run by the Walloon Adriaen Vincent.[31] Nevertheless, that street of the synagogue later became popularly known as "Jews' Alley."

Life in Nieuw Amsterdam bore the marks of frontier pioneering. Its greatest danger came from the Indians around Manhattan. Early in 1655, houses were burned by them, about twenty settlers were killed on Staten Island alone, others were taken into captivity. In the Clarendon papers we read that

> Indians about Manahatans fell uppon the Dutch, & in their first furie killed all they could light uppon, burning their howses destroying their Cattle, but uppon better considerations spared the lives of such as they tooke & put them to ransome . . . the bowers or farmers generallie left their habitations, & betooke themselves to their Cittie New Amsterdam, where the affrighted burgers or Citizens themselves were as readie to gett aborde such ships as were then in the harbour, with what goods they coulde and to bid an ultimum vale to their New Netherlands.

On August 28, 1655, the officers of the city's defense "train bands" asked Governor Stuyvesant whether the Jews of the town should "train and mount guard with the citizens' bands." Stuyvesant and the council ruled that since the Jews were "not admitted or counted among the citizens for such purposes in Amsterdam or any other city in Holland," for this and for other reasons they would be exempted from such service.

This the Jewish pioneers refused to accept. They would not agree to being exempted from guarding their home town against attack, though this was an onerous and certainly a dangerous duty. In Brazil they had been outstanding for the fervor with which they had defended the country against the attackers, as well as for generosity in giving of their means more than propor-

tionately for the difficult defense operations. Now having won the right to settle and freedom to work in their new home, they were cavalierly told to pay a monthly tax of sixty-five stivers in lieu of giving military service. This was a paltry amount for being freed from the physically onerous duties and the dangers of standing guard. But the Jews would not accept this easy dispensation. They found a way of defeating the opinionated governor, and thereby once more successfully challenged prejudice and autocracy, and gained one more victory for equality and democracy.

Two men made a test case of this new attempt at discrimination against their group. They boldly requested the director-general and council to let them "keep guard with other burghers or be free from the tax." These two men were Jacob bar Simson and Asser Levy. Jacob bar Simson might have been considered specially privileged in his rights as, it will be remembered, he came from Holland with a passport. Asser Levy, as events soon proved, was a natural leader. But at the time both were simple workmen. We read that on November 5, 1655,

> Jacob Barsimson and Asser Levy request to be permitted to keep guard with other burghers, or be free from the tax which others of their nation pay, as they must earn their living by manual labor.
>
> After a vote, the answer was given: Director General and Council persist in the resolution passed, yet as the petitioners are of opinion that the result of this will be injurious to them, consent is hereby given to them to depart whenever and whither it pleases them.[32]

That subtle invitation to depart contrasted sharply with a general order adopted a month earlier designed to hold people within the colony in the face of the pioneer hardships which had caused not a few to depart. That order ruled that no one could leave the colony thereafter without permission of the director-general and the council.

On September 15 of that year, 1655, some Indians had assaulted Manhattan "with murder, robbery and fire." The public defense works which had been set up in 1653 along the line of Wall Street running east and west across the northern boundary of the town, had been reinforced in 1654. Now once more the stockade fence had to be strengthened and completed with planks five or six feet in length. Emergency funds were raised for paying for the completion of the town's defenses. Peter Stuyvesant and five captains of trading vessels were taxed 150 guilders each. The next highest assessment of 100 guilders was set on thirteen other citizens of whom no less than five were the

newly arrived Jews Abraham de Lucena, Joseph d'Acosta, Salvador d'Andrade, Jacob Cohen Henriques, and David de Ferera.[33]

For security reasons the city council simultaneously ordered that no one would be permitted to go "inland" without a pass, and when such permission was granted, no member of the party was to be permitted to become separated from his associates. In these conditions and with the need for drawing on as many residents as possible for protecting the little town against the Indians, we later find Asser Levy keeping *tocht en wacht* (watch and ward) together with the Christian residents of the city.

His services having been accepted, Asser Levy felt strengthened in his demand for full citizenship rights. On April 11, 1657,

> Asser Levy, a Jew, appears in Court; requests to be admitted a Burgher; claims that such ought not be refused him as he keeps watch and ward like other Burghers; showing a Burgher certificate from the City of Amsterdam that the Jew is Burgher there. Which being deliberated on it is decreed as before, that it cannot be allowed, and he shall apply to the Director General and Council.[34]

Nine days later, a committee of Jews of the town presented a petition to "the Noble Worships the Director General and Council of New Netherland" in which they expressed their great surprise that Asser Levy's petition to be recognized as a citizen had been declined and refused.

> . . . and whereas the Worshipful Lords consented under date of February 15, 1655, at the request of our Nation, that we should enjoy here the same freedom as other inhabitants of New Netherland enjoy . . . further that our Nation enjoys in the City of Amsterdam in Holland the Burgher right . . . also that our Nation as long as they have been here, have, with others, borne and paid, and still bear, all Burgher burdens: We therefore, reverently request your Noble Worships to please not exclude nor shut us out from the Burgher right, but to notify the Noble Burgomasters that they should permit us, like other Burghers, to enjoy the Burgher right.

In the end, Stuyvesant and the council reluctantly felt compelled to declare that the "Burgomasters of this City are hereby authorized and at the same time charged to admit the petitioners herein and their Nation to the Burgherships in due form." [35] It was fitting indeed when in 1955 two blocks of Avenue A in Manhattan were renamed Asser Levy Place.

After this victory for fundamental rights, on June 10, 1656, Peter Stuyvesant and the council wrote to the authorities in Amsterdam that the Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam had several times unsuccessfully sought the right of freedom on a par with other residents, which would be "abominable." The Jews were still hampered by certain economic discriminations. A letter from the

directors of the Company dated June 14, 1656, had clearly stated that though the Jews of the town should be given the right of trade and of owning property, they were not free to be mechanics in Nieuw Amsterdam in any handicraft which was not open to them in Amsterdam. This letter also stated that they were not permitted to open retail shops, as Abraham de Lucena had painfully learned a year and a quarter earlier. Yet in point of fact, Jews of the town were earning their living as storekeepers.[36] Early in 1657, in an attempt to curb this practice, Peter Stuyvesant and the council published the ruling that the right to set up and keep open store could be granted only after the common or small burgher right had been obtained.[37] On April 11, Jacob Cohen Henriques asked to be given permission like other bakers to bake and sell bread within the city, but within closed doors. He was reminded that this was contrary to the orders of the directors of the Company unless he had obtained burgher right. It is Asser Levy again who appears and also asks for this right. He also is refused. But on October 15 and 29, 1660, Asser Levy and Moses de Lucena became sworn butchers and were permitted to take an oath which differed from that taken by other sworn butchers because they were exempted from killing hogs.[38]

Of the Four Freedoms, three had been secured. Freedom of speech with the right of assembly and petition was operative in principle for all; in 1653, this had transformed Nieuw Amsterdam into a municipality. Freedom from want, and the right to work, had been secured by the Jewish pioneers initially in 1655 and fully by 1660. Freedom from fear and the right to self-defense became theirs in 1656. There was another freedom also that was theirs—social freedom. They could live freely where they wished, and join with their fellow citizens of other faiths in equal payment of taxes, in fun and frolic, and in humanly equalitarian neighborliness.

There was still a great freedom to be achieved, one which history has proved to be perhaps the hardest to win—religious liberty. This took far more than the first two years of Jewish settlement to achieve. By the spring of 1655, there was in the town more than the nucleus of ten men required for a functioning Jewish congregation. We know Jacob bar Simson, Solomon Pietersen, Abraham Israel, David Israel, Moses Ambrosius, Asser Levy, Joseph d'Acosta, Salvador d'Andrade, Jacob Cohen Henriques, Abraham de Lucena, David de Ferera, Isaac Israel, and Benjamin Cardozo. In the letter which Domine Megapolensis wrote on March 18, 1655, to the classis in Amsterdam, he

expressed his alarm at the rumor that Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam might want to come together and "build here their synagogue."

Last summer some Jews came here from Holland, in order to trade. Afterwards, some Jews, poor and healthy, also came here on the same ship with D: Polheijmius . . . Now again in the spring some have come from Holland, and report that a great many of that lot would yet follow and then build here their synagogue.[39]

A year later, on May 26, 1656, the classis in Amsterdam took up this rumor when they wrote

We are informed that even the Jews have made request of the Honorable Governor and have also attempted in that country to erect a synagogue.[40]

But that consummation of religious freedom was not yet to be. In a letter dated March 13, 1656, the directors of the Dutch West India Company had written that

Het Consent aende Jooden gegeven omme naer Nieundederlandt to mogen vertrecken ende aldaer to genieten deselve vrijicheyt dewelcke haer hier te lande is vergunt, is geextendeert geweest ten opsichte van burgerlycke ende politicque Vrij Heden, sonder dat de voorsz Jooden daeruyt licentie sullen mogen nemen omme haeren Godsdienst in synagogen ofte vergaderingen te exerceren ende te pleegen; diensvolgens soo lange Ue geen versoeck voorcomt omme tot de voorsz vrije exercitie van religie geadmitteert to worden, is de consideratie develcke dieswegen gemoveert wordt, te praematuijr, ende soo wanneer iets voortgebracht wort, sullen Ue vel doen ende tselve alleen herwaerts adviseren, omme daerop de noodige orders te verwachten.[41]

The consent given to the Jews to go to New Netherland and there to enjoy the same liberty that is granted them in this country was extended with respect to civil and political liberties, without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to a license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gatherings. So long, therefore, as no request is presented to you to allow such a free exercise of religion, any consideration relative thereto is too premature, and when later something shall be presented about it you will be doing well to refer the matter to us in order to await thereon the necessary orders.

In reply to this, Governor Stuyvesant wrote on June 10, 1656,

Considering the Jewish nation with regard to trade, they are not hindered, but trade with the same privilege and freedom as other inhabitants. Also, they have many times requested of us the free and public exercise of their abominable religion, but this cannot yet be accorded to them. What they may be able to obtain from your Honors time will tell.[42]

At the very same time, on June 14, 1656, the directors of the Company wrote that the Jews were to observe their religion and offer up their prayers

"in all quietness within their houses" (en haren Godsdienst binnen haer heysen in aller stillicheijt v'mogen te plegen).[43]

It should be recognized that this limitation on freedom of worship was not directed against Jews alone. On October 30, 1655, Peter Stuyvesant and the city council had written to the directors in Amsterdam: "To give liberty to the Jews will be very detrimental there. . . . Giving them liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists."[44]

This oft-quoted phrase foreshadowed indeed the march of events in the religious history of the city. Though the domine of the parish echoed the governor's fears that the Jews who came to settle within the already variegated population would create still greater confusion, what he called confusion was actually a basic condition of freedom. The handful of Jews on Manhattan Island faced a blank wall of prejudice that separated seventeenth-century society and liberty of conscience. That wall did not tumble at the mere request made "many times" by the Jews for "the free and public exercise" of their religion. But their presence and their determined stand proved to be an entering wedge that reenforced the efforts of Christian denominations also for "the free and public exercise" of their religion. Freedom came only haltingly. Lutherans beginning in 1653, Jews beginning in 1654, Quakers from 1657, and others later in that century and in the next who dangerously followed their faith, owe one another something of the freedom which all today enjoy. The efforts first under Peter Stuyvesant and later under British governors to counteract the narrow statutes that were a drag-over from the Old World, constituted milestones of freedom in the New.

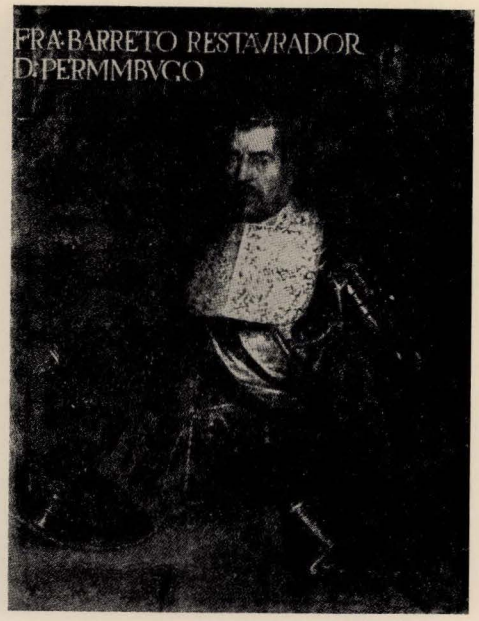
In perspective, Stuyvesant's stand against the Jews was part of a general intolerance against any religious group which differed from the dominant church. In Nieuw Amsterdam the Dutch Reformed Church was the officially recognized State church. The earliest Dutch settlers were, in large part, men whose loyalty to their church had been steeled through the religious war between Holland and Spain. The colony's governor, who went far beyond most of his fellow colonists in these matters, could see no reason for the expansion of public worship beyond the walls of his own church.

Domine Megapolensis shared his views. He wrote to the classis in Amsterdam depicting religious pluralism in the settlement.

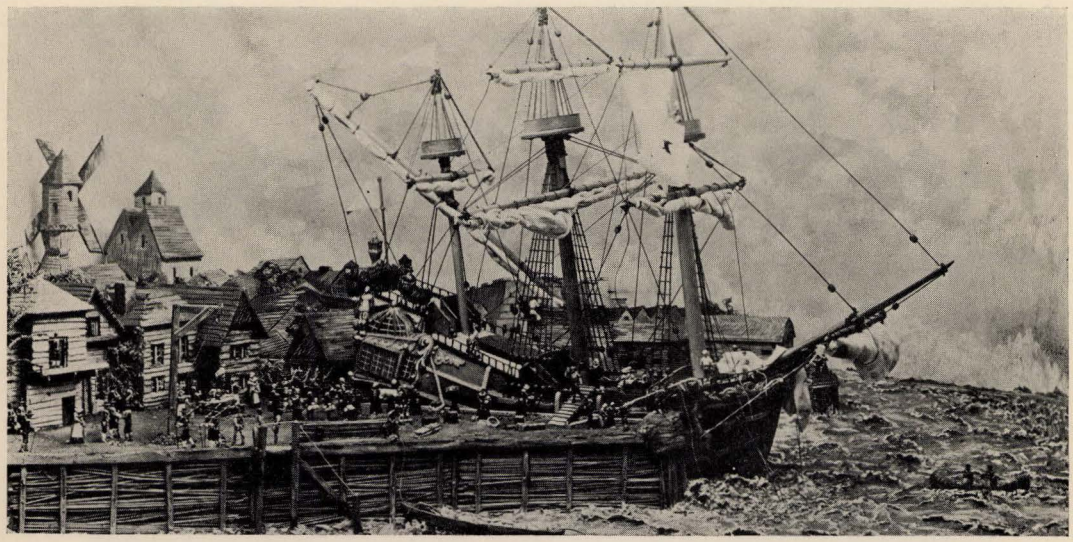
For we have here Papists, Mennonites and Lutherans among the Dutch; also many Puritans or Independents, and many atheists and various servants of Baal among



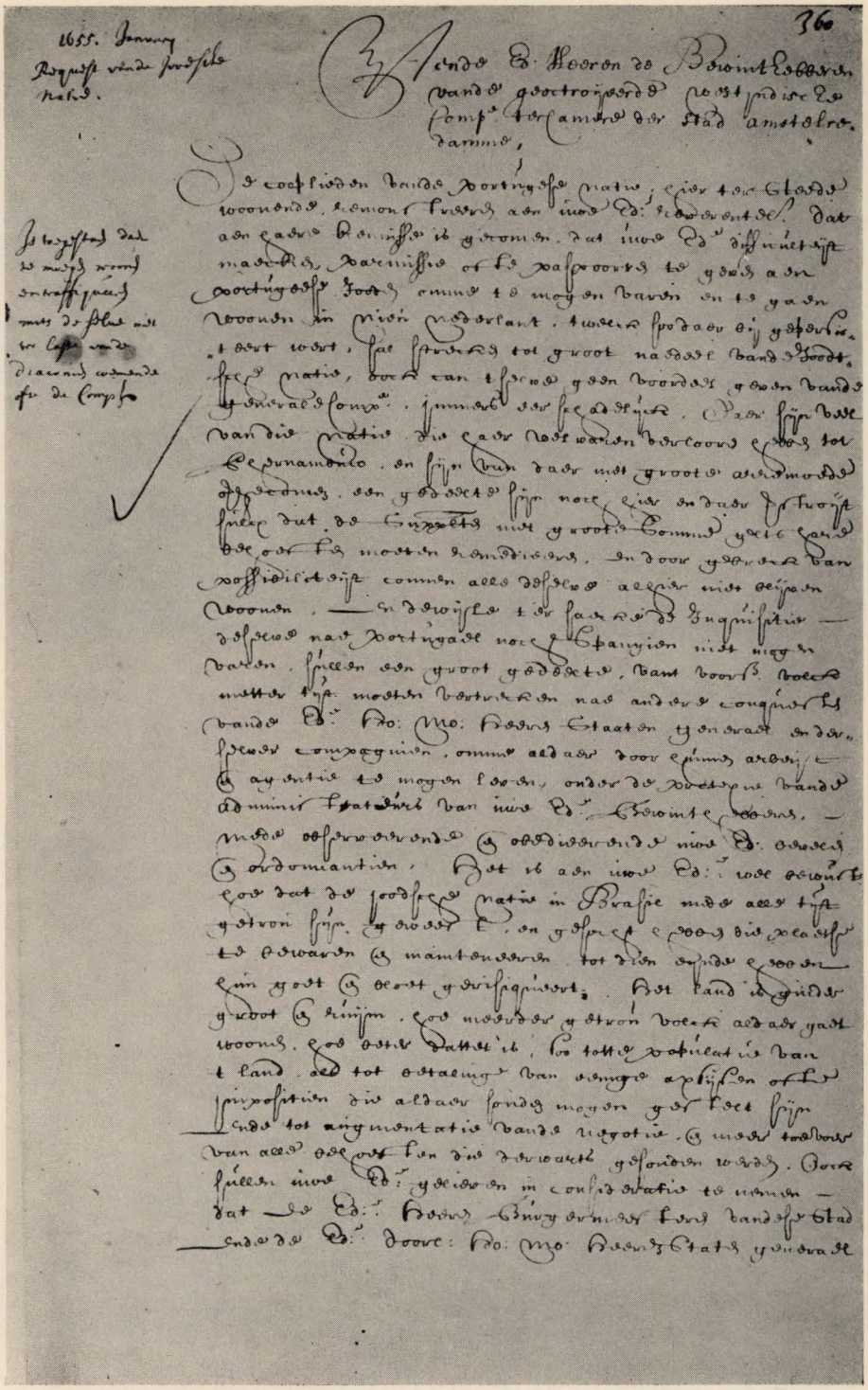
Governor Peter Stuyvesant
efficient but bigoted



General Francisco Barreto
"a merciful conqueror"



Diorama of the landing of the founders of the American Jewish settlement



One of Dutch Jewry's historic petitions for the official sanction of free Jewish settlement "in yonder broad lands"

the English under this government, who conceal themselves under the name of Christians; it would create still greater confusion, if the obstinate and immovable Jews came to settle here.[45]

In 1653, the Lutherans in the city had unsuccessfully petitioned the governor for permission to organize their own church and to send to Holland for a minister. Stuyvesant peremptorily refused to grant their request. In this he was strongly supported by Domine Megapolensis and Domine Samuel Drisius, the two ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church in the city. They expressed their opposition to the granting of these privileges, which they considered would be an opening wedge for dissident sects and for turning the godly province into a receptacle for all sorts of "abominable" heretics and fanatics.

The Dutch West India Company, in some aspects remarkably liberal, nevertheless, writing on March 12, 1654, unreservedly upheld the narrow position taken in this case in Nieuw Amsterdam.

We have decided absolutely to deny the request made by some of our inhabitants, adherents of the Augsburg Confession, for a preacher and free exercise of their religion . . . and we recommend to you also not to receive any similar petitions, but rather to turn them off in the most civil and least offensive way, and to employ all possible but moderate means in order to induce them to listen, and finally join the Reformed Church.[46]

The Lutherans were therefore compelled to continue to hold their religious services only in private homes. But even this failed to satisfy the monolithic minds of Stuyvesant and his associates. Early in 1656, in an action directed against the Lutherans, Stuyvesant and the council adopted an ordinance forbidding any religious conventicles or meetings which differed from those of the Dutch Reformed Church, whether public or private. Arrests and imprisonment followed. A fine of 100 Flemish pounds was set on anyone acting as an unrecognized preacher. This went further than the authorities in Holland approved. It was certainly not consonant with the directive of dealing with the Lutherans "in the most civil and least offensive way." The Company therefore informed the governor that they would have been better pleased had all this not been done. They asked that no similar ordinances be passed in the future, and that the Lutherans should be treated quietly and leniently, and be allowed the free right of holding religious exercises in their homes. Later in that year, 1656, the Lutherans renewed their petition, which again was summarily rejected.

In the following year, 1657, the Lutherans repeated their plea to bring over

a minister of their denomination. The West India Company in Holland concurred with Stuyvesant that this could not be countenanced, though Lutherans could continue to hold their services of worship quietly within their homes. Nevertheless, the Lutherans in Europe meanwhile had sent over Johannes Ernestus Gutwasser to be minister in Nieuw Amsterdam. His banishment was peremptorily ordered, whereupon he went into hiding. In 1658, the order of deportation was renewed, and in the next year, 1659, he was arrested and sent back to Holland. It was not until the British became masters of the city in 1664 that the Lutherans gained from Governor Richard Nicolls the right of freedom of worship, and about a dozen years later they erected their first church.

Early in 1657, Quakers appeared in Manhattan. Arrests were made and fines imposed for harboring "the abominable sect of Quakers." Thirty years later in British New York the Quakers addressed a petition to the governor. As pacifists they asked for exemption from the law under which all persons who refused to train for the militia could have their goods seized. The council unanimously rejected their petition. It was not until 1698 that the first Quaker meeting house was erected.

As late as 1707, when the Presbyterian Francis Mackemie applied for permission to preach, Lord Cornbury, the governor, roundly refused this. When Mackemie nevertheless preached, he was arrested. He was acquitted after trial, but he was warned not to preach any more. He bravely disregarded this warning, but the first church of the Presbyterians was not built until 1718–19. Similarly the Baptists were not free to build their first meeting place until 1715, and their first church, on John Street, was built in 1728.

Suspicion of Catholics, persisting from the perilous days of the French wars, delayed for them recognized open worship. Domine Selyns wrote to the classis in Amsterdam on October 28, 1682, "As regards papists there are none, or else they come with us or the Lutherans." In 1685, a few Catholics could be found in the city. Eleven years later, in 1696, ten were listed by Mayor William Merritt, and Governor Benjamin Fletcher and the city council directed that they should be disarmed and imprisoned. Four years later, in 1700, the general assembly passed a law banishing Jesuits and Roman Catholic priests. If any were found after the first of November they would be held in perpetual imprisonment. Should any subsequently escape from prison and be captured, the penalty would be death. As late as June, 1741, the report went

around that some Roman Catholic priests were lurking in the town. One man named Ury, a schoolmaster, was charged with being a priest and was jailed. Two months later he was hanged, having been declared guilty both of conspiring to burn down the town, and of having celebrated masses.[47] Private worship, however, did go on, though the first Catholic church in New York was not erected until 1785. Then, indeed, complete freedom of worship was operative in fact, as it was in law, for the New York State convention at Kingston on April 20, 1777, assured the free exercise and enjoyment of religious worship forever for all.

This Convention doth further, in the name and by the authority of the good people of this State, ORDAIN, DETERMINE and DECLARE, that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall for ever hereafter be allowed within this State to all mankind.

Against the backdrop of pristine prejudices the undeterred courage of the Jewish pioneers becomes correspondingly impressive, their determined stand significant, and their victory a creative factor in the history of liberty. They did not wait to pray to the God of their fathers until time and tide overcame the obstinate opposition to the fundamental principle of freedom of conscience. They conducted religious services at first within a home. But while a prayer demands no greater dimensions than the heart and the hearth, they knew that sooner or later they would require a cemetery of their own so as to be able to inter their dead in ground consecrated for Jewish religious burial. Like the patriarch Abraham of old, they had to say to those among whom they had come to dwell, "Give me possession of a burying place with you that I may bury my dead." [47]

On July 27, 1655, three months after the granting by Amsterdam of their patent right of settlement, the group applied to the director-general for permission to have a burial place which they could consecrate in accord with their ancient religious traditions. This time Stuyvesant did not take upon himself responsibility for the answer. It was his custom to meet each Monday with his burgomasters, schepens, and schout, and there the petition was dealt with.

Abraham de Lucena, Salvador d'Andrade and Jacob Cohen, Jews in the name of the others, petition the Honorable Director General this day to be permitted to purchase a burying place for their nation, which being reported to the meeting and voted on, it was agreed to give them the answer that inasmuch as they did not wish to bury their dead (of which as yet there was no need) in the common burying

ground, there would be granted them when the need and occasion therefor arose, some place elsewhere of the free land belonging to the Company.

Inevitably "the need and the occasion therefor" did come. On February 22, 1656, the petition was renewed. Then the record tells:

Present at the meeting, the Worshipful Director General and Council, Nicasius de Sille, La Montagne and Cornelis van Tienhoven, Fiscal.

Received and read the request of Abraham de Lucena, Salvador Dandrada and Jacob Cohen, Jews, in the name of other Jews, requesting that consent may be given to them to purchase a burying place or that a place, after being pointed out, may be granted and allowed them.

After a vote, the following was thereupon added as an apostille: The Honorable Nicasius de Sille and Cornelis Tienhoven are authorized to point out to the petitioners a little hook of land situate outside of this city for a burial place, and to make report thereof to the meeting.[48]

Cornelis van Tienhoven was the man who had conducted the action against de Lucena for keeping his store open during the sermon and "selling retail." It may be remarked *en passant* that a month later he was dismissed from public office as fiscal (treasurer) because of irregularities, and he absconded.

Who today knows where was situated that little hook of land which gave first official testimony to the existence of a Jewish community in this land? [49] That cemetery was a symbol for all to see. Through it the religion of the Jews, though not yet permitted free exercise in a public synagogue, nonetheless held a recognized place in the town in 1656, even though that place was only a graveyard.

There was one other incident from those early days in Nieuw Amsterdam which vividly illustrates the growing right of the Jew to the practice of his religion. In June, 1658, two cases were brought in the municipal court against Jacob bar Simson. He did not appear in his own defense, but no default was entered against him as the court recognized that he had been summoned on his Sabbath. Judaism and the Jew were finding recognition in Nieuw Amsterdam.[50]

In September, 1664, the English captured Nieuw Amsterdam. The town, then numbering some 1,500 souls of whom less than 350 were adult males, became New York. In the articles of capitulation it was laid down that "the Dutch here shall enjoy the liberty of their consciences in divine worship and church discipline." The Dutch Reformed Church had by far the largest number of adherents, and it held its position of primacy until 1693. On September 7, 1655, almost a decade before the British capture of the city, fearful

of the future, the classis in Amsterdam had written to Domine Samuel Drisius to oppose the introduction of the English liturgy with all his might. As late as 1682, in a letter to the classis in Amsterdam, Domine Selyns, the newly arrived Dutch minister, wrote,

> We and the English inhabitants use the same church. They perform their services at the conclusion of ours, by reading the communion prayer. They have a clerk but no minister, except one who marries and baptizes in private houses, but does not preach.

Relations among the varied Protestant denominations continued for a time to show the strain of earlier prejudices. In 1676, the Reverend Charles Wolley tells of the Lutheran High Dutch minister and the Calvinist Dutch minister whom he found in the very little town of New York on his arrival. They had not visited or spoken to one another for six years until by a pleasant ruse he brought them together.

Full freedom of public worship was trailing slowly behind personal freedom of conscience in the mother countries and the colonies. In July, 1664, two months before the British gained possession of New York, the Conventicle Act had been passed in England. This gave preferential recognition to the Established Church and discriminated against other denominations. In 1673, Sephardi Jews in England were indicted for holding public worship, but the intervention of King Charles put a stop to the proceedings. Twelve years later a number of Jewish merchants in London were indicted for not attending church. Again the intervention of the king, James II, called a halt to the proceedings. It was therefore comparatively gratifying when in 1669, the English conqueror of the town and first governor of the province, Colonel Richard Nicolls, on his return to England stated that in the Duke of York's territories in America "liberty of conscience is granted and assured." [51] Five years later, in 1674, the Duke of York gave instructions to Governor Edmund Andros to

> . . . permit all persons of what Religion soever, quietly to inhabitt within ye precincts of yor jurisdiction wthout giveing ym any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever, for or by reason of their differing opinions in matter of Religion: Provided they give noe disturbance to ye publique peace nor doe molest or disquiet others in ye free exercize of their religion.[52]

This liberty of conscience was indeed needed in a little settlement which contained members of so many religious denominations. In 1678, Governor Andros reported:

There are religions of all sorts, the Church of England, several Presbyterians and Independents, Quakers, Baptists of several sects, some Jews, but Presbyterians and Independents most numerous and substantial.

Eight years later, in 1686, Governor Thomas Dongan, himself a Roman Catholic, more caustically reported:

Here be many of the Church of England; few Roman Catholics; abundance of Quakers; preachers, men and women especially; singing Quakers; ranting Quakers; Sabbatarians; Anti-sabbatarians; some Anabaptists; some Independents; some Jews; in short of all sorts of opinions there are some, and the most none at all.[53]

Four years earlier, in 1682, Domine Henricus Selyns in his letter from which we have quoted added a significant phrase in his similar report when he says: "Besides we have Quakers, Jews and Labadists, all of whom hold their separate meetings. The Quakers are the most numerous, the Jews come next, and the Labadists are the fewest." [54]

This is the first extant mention of Jewish "separate meetings" on a par with other religions in New York. Domine Selyns does not lift the veil as to the locale where the Jewish services were held.

It was in the year in which his letter was written, 1682, that the Jewish community in New York purchased its second cemetery. Part of this ground still exists on St. James Place just south of Chatham Square and constitutes one of the oldest historic sites in New York. From its beginnings it gave eloquent testimony to the existence and organization of a Jewish community in New York. The story of that burial ground and of many of those buried in it has been told in full in *Portraits Etched in Stone.*

However, the struggle for complete freedom was not yet over. The Charter of Liberties of October 30, 1683, still limited to Christians the right of public worship. Charles II died in February, 1685. The Jews of New York may then well have cherished the hope that under the new king, James II, there would be an alleviation of these regulations. Therefore, on September 12, 1685, they petitioned Governor Dongan for liberty to exercise their religion publicly. He avoided the issue and referred the petition to the mayor and aldermen. It was read in council, but was not granted on the grounds that "noe publique Worship is Tolerated by act of assembly, but to those who professe faith in Christ, and therefore the Jews' Worship not to be allowed." [55]

Strict outward regard for Christian observance was required by law. On October 22, 1685, an act was passed by the provincial legislature against the

profanation of the Lord's Day, called Sunday. This prohibited on that day among other things, traveling, servile labor, working, shooting, fishing, sporting, playing, horseracing, hunting, and frequenting tippling houses.

The outlook for liberty of public worship was, however, improving, first to include Jews and much later also Roman Catholics. On May 29, 1686, secret but reminiscent instructions were sent to Governor Thomas Dongan permitting all to exercise their religion openly. Except for the spelling the new governor was told in the selfsame words:

> You shall permit all persons of what religion soever quietly to inhabit within your Government without giving them any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever for or by reason of their differing opinions in matters of Religion, Provided they give noe disturbance to ye publick peace, nor doe molest or disquiet others in ye free exercise of their Religion.[56]

The establishment in fact of the broad theoretical definition of "what Religion soever" was only partially achieved. Yet between 1674 and 1686, there was more than a difference of spelling in the identical instructions given the first time to the governor, Sir Edmund Andros, and then to Governor Dongan. There was a difference of interpretation. The restrictive city charter itself was annulled by Governor Dongan in January, 1687, in keeping with the instructions from the king. But despite this progressing step toward religious liberty the course of freedom did not run smoothly. Four years later, on May 13, 1691, an act was passed by the general assembly which relapsed into the restrictive spirit of the Charter of October 30, 1683. This act limited liberty of worship to all those professing faith in God by Jesus Christ, and this time it expressly excepted the Roman Catholics in wording, as had been done previously in intent.[57] In practice, however, the Jews of the city had by then attained the right of public worship. For in the year 1692 Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac writes of "Calvinists, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Jews, Quakers (a great many), Abadiens, French Protestants and some Catholics. Each sect has its own church and freedom of religion." [58]

Three years later, in 1695, on the map of the city which John Miller drew he indicated the existence of a synagogue. After another five years, in 1700, in a real estate document a house on Mill Street was described as "commonly known by the name of the Jews' synagogue."

It is therefore clear that from the end of the seventeenth century the synagogue of New York's Jewish community was given recognition, and the

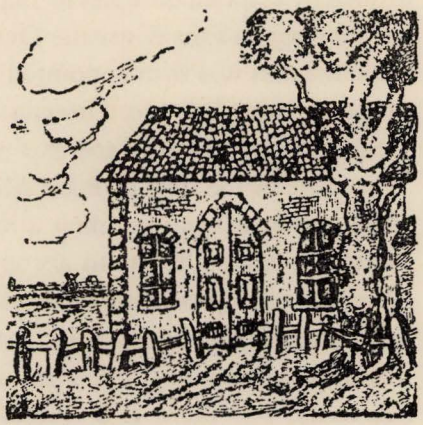
right of the Jews to conduct worship in a publicly recognized synagogue was never again questioned.

The Jews who came to Nieuw Amsterdam did not find freedom. They fought to create it. They helped to define it. Their unremitting struggle to secure freedom of worship in no small measure enlarged the very conception of spiritual liberty and helped lay the foundations for its achievement. What they did with simplicity and assurance, assumes an importance far beyond what might have been expected of their small numbers. It helped open the road to the American credo of full, free and equal rights for all. The words of Stuyvesant that "giving them [the Jews] liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists" were a happy prophecy. For what the Jews secured for themselves, they furthered for others—Lutherans, Quakers, Catholics, and men of all faiths. Conversely, the struggle and victory of every other religious group helped endow American Jews with the common heritage of tolerance. The genius of the New World finally repudiated the concept of one exclusive religion. Notwithstanding the domines and burgomasters who believed in the identity of society with their own one church, Nieuw Amsterdam drew from the beginning the many and the varied within the safety of its harbor. Two centuries before a statue was erected there, liberty stood at the gateway to America, foreshadowing the days to come. Those who fought against this spirit fought in vain. Those who battled on behalf of freedom helped mold the face of the future.

II. *Citadels of Faith*

Wheresoever I am remembered thither
I shall come to you and bless you.

EXODUS 20:24



WHERE WAS SITUATED the earliest synagogue in North America?

We have seen that on March 18, 1655, the good cleric Domine Johannes Megapolensis, perplexed, reported to the classis (the organized religious authorities of his church in Amsterdam) that a great many Jews would follow the handful that had arrived "and then build here their synagogue." The classis reflected this anxiety still further when two months later in their letter of May 26 they wrote to the consistory in Nieuw Amsterdam that "we are informed that even the Jews have made request of the Honorable Governor and have also attempted in that country to erect a synagogue."

Whether or not there was any basis of fact in this rumor, it is clear that the original Jewish settlers in Nieuw Amsterdam left no doubt as to their intention of seeking full freedom of worship. The Dutch West India Com-

pany had thought to placate ecclesiastical prejudices by interpreting the rights accorded the Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam as civil and political liberties similar to those they enjoyed in the parent city of Amsterdam, but "without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to a license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gatherings." Like the Lutherans, the Jews had to "exercise in all quietness their religion within their houses." [1] It was no simple matter in those days to erect a house of worship, even for the officially recognized Dutch Reformed Church. Its first church built on Pearl Street was described by Captain de Vries in 1642 as "a mean barn of a church." In "Breuckelen" across the East River the Dutch Reformed Church was born in 1654 and a commission was then appointed to erect a house of worship in Flatbush. But six years later, in 1660, Domine Selyns still had to write, "We preach in a barn." It was not until 1666 that a church was built in Brooklyn.

In 1626, in the time of Peter Minuit, a written notice records that "François Molemacher is busy building a horse-mill over which shall be constructed a spacious room sufficient to accommodate a large congregation . . ." [2] It has been generally accepted that in that mill loft the Dutch Church of Manhattan held its earliest services, from 1628 to 1633. We do not know how rigidly enforced was the ruling which prohibited the holding of public worship by non-Calvinists; but there is a tradition that later those comparatively spacious quarters were used for synagogue services. Mill Street may thus have been the home of a Jewish congregation for at least a century and a half. It is good to find in the vestibule of the present synagogue of Shearith Israel two massive millstones from the Mill Street where wheat was converted into flour. These are graphic reminders of the village life where alongside the bread that "stayeth man's heart" it was not forgotten to provide the spiritual food which sustains man's soul.

Yet the millstones which stand at the entrance of the synagogue on 70th Street come not from Molemacher's mill of 1626, but from one erected some forty or fifty years later on the site of what is now 32 and 34 South William Street, near where Mill Street turned sharply into Mill Lane. When in its time that later mill fell into disuse, the stones which were too heavy to be readily moved were left in the rear yards of the lot where eventually, in 1730, the synagogue was built. After the great fire of 1835, sixteen such millstones were uncovered in the pavement of the courtyard behind the warehouses in the center of the block bounded by Beaver, Broad, and South William

streets. Two of those millstones, five inches thick and twenty-nine and a half inches in diameter, were brought to the congregation in 1894 through the interest of N. Taylor Phillips. Others of these stones are to be found in the New-York Historical Society Museum, in the Museum of the City of New York, and in the West End Collegiate Church.

The Dutch municipality within which Jewish life set its roots slowly but firmly was destined for a great historic change. Exactly ten years after Asser Levy and his coreligionists wrested from the unwilling Peter Stuyvesant their patent rights to settle and labor, the Dutch governor had to surrender his domain to the British. In 1664 Nieuw Amsterdam became New York. At first no changes were made in the restrictive rulings on religious freedom. As late as 1685, as we have seen, the mayor and common council of the city ruled "the Jews worship not to be allowed." Yet three years earlier, in 1682, the Dutch Domine Henricus Selyns had recorded that the Jews "hold their separate meetings." De la Mothe Cadillac in 1692 made a similar observation.[3]

There is evidence that in 1695 Jewish religious services were held in a building that was openly recognized as a synagogue. John Miller had been chaplain in New York to the forces of King William and Queen Mary. On his voyage back to Europe in 1695, his ship was captured by a French privateer, and for a time he was held prisoner in a French jail. There he wrote from memory a description of the New York that he had known. He stated that in the city of about 855 families there were about twenty Jewish families, and that their minister was Saul Brown. He marked "The Jews Synagogue" on his map on the south side of Beaver Street, between Broadway and Broad Street, immediately opposite New Street. If Miller's memory was accurate, the site of the first building known to have been used as a synagogue in continental North America is where now stands the Beaver Street entrance to the New York Produce Exchange. Five years later, a real estate document of 1700 describes a lot on the north side of Mill Street as being bounded on the "east by the house and ground of John Harperding, now commonly known by the name of the Jews' synagogue." [4] This is unquestionable testimony that in 1700 a publicly recognized synagogue was located on Mill Street in a house belonging to the shoemaker John Harperdinck, who later bequeathed to the Dutch Reformed Church the valuable Shoemaker's Pasture.

Mill Street was known earlier by the uninviting name of Slyck Steegh (Muddy Alley). Even a century later most of New York's streets were still

unpaved and described by visitors from Europe as being unclean, littered, and muddy. To be so named in Stuyvesant's little town, Slyck Steegh must have been outstandingly unattractive. It was at first an impasse leading to a mill. It ran roughly east and west from Broad Street between Princes(s) Street, now Beaver Street, and Field Street to the north, and Duke, later Stone, Street to the south. Officially its name became Mill Street, but popularly it was known as "Jews Alley." After the fire of 1835 the street was pushed through to William Street, and it now bears the more dignified name of South William Street. The site of the house of John Harperdinck that was rented for a synagogue sometime prior to 1700 would today bear the address of 18 South William Street.

THE FIRST MILL STREET SYNAGOGUE [5]

The frame building on that site was rented for £8 a year and was used as the synagogue of the New York Jewish community during the first three decades of the eighteenth century. A home, even the loft of a mill, a rented building, all could be made into a house of prayer, yet none was a completely fitting answer to the ancient call, "They shall make for Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." In 1728 there was a burst of vigorous new life in the congregation. It was as if free rein was suddenly given to the energy pent up during almost three quarters of a century. Within four months the community bought land in the neighborhood of Gold Street for a cemetery, revised and reenforced its constitution, and purchased a site for a new synagogue. As they headed towards the seventy-fifth anniversary of their settlement, they braced themselves for resolute and dignifying action.

No outward circumstance explains the ambitious blossoming activity in the summer and fall of 1728 in the little Jewish community of New York. There was no marked prosperity; the winter of 1727–28 had been a hard one. At the end of January, 1728, people had crossed the East River on the ice from Manhattan to Long Island. The stagecoach to Boston and to Philadelphia set out but once a fortnight, although in summer there was a weekly post. A major change, however, occurred in the status of New York's Jewry after the death of George I on June 11, 1727, Governor Burnet had permitted the Jews to omit the words "upon the true faith of a Christian" in taking their abjuration oath of allegiance to George II. The leading personalities of the community, men like Lewis Moses Gomez, Jacob Franks, Rodrigo Pacheco,

Abraham Isaacs, Moses Michalls, had been active in the city for years past. It is clear why the new burial ground had to be acquired. The small piece of land a little over 50 feet square beyond the Freshwater, i.e., the original Chatham Square ground purchased for a cemetery in 1682, was filled by 1728. The prompting to build a synagogue after the years of acceptance of the inadequate makeshift place of worship that was squeezed into the house of John Harperdinck was, we may well believe, in line with the building of churches that was going on in the town on all sides.

In January, 1727, the Dutch Church obtained permission to build a new edifice because of the increase in the number of those who had no seats in the old church. This new church covered some 100 feet by 70 feet on the north side of Pine Street, east of Nassau Street, with the main entrance on Cedar Street. During the whole of 1728 and 1729, the Jewish inhabitants of the city kept pace with the building progress all around them. In May, 1727, the Lutheran Church decided to continue the work it had begun on its new house of worship. During 1728 the Baptist congregation, organized four years earlier, completed the construction of its first real church, a little chapel 20 feet square, on Golden Hill, fronting on Orange Street, not far from where the later Baptist Church stood on Gold Street. It was high time to think of a permanent dignifying structure for the Jewish faith also. No longer could one be content with the paltry rented frame building which had hitherto served as a synagogue, a building worth much less than the home of many a congregant. Its 1720 tax assessment of £15 compared poorly with that on the house in which the minister de Lucena lived, a house which was assessed at thrice this amount. The house of Lewis Moses Gomez was assessed at £140, nearly ten times the value of the synagogue building. Surely the time and circumstance called for action.

During the summer of 1728 the community made plans for purchasing a lot. On October 28, (Heshvan 15, 5489), the parnas of the congregation "called a Publick meeting of the whole Congregation in order to Subscribe for the purchaseing of Land for the Building of a Sinagoga and for a Buring place which was then Efected."

At the price of £100, one loaf of sugar, and a pound of Bohea tea, they bought on December 19, 1728, from Cornelius Clopper and Catherine his wife, a lot of land on Mill Street immediately to the west of the rented house that was being used as a synagogue. That plot is today the site of 22 and parts

of 20 and 24 South William Street. The original deed of purchase reposed until recently among the legal papers of an old established law firm. They were found and presented to the congregation in December, 1951, by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Snyder.

The text of the deed calls for some interpretation. Two and a quarter centuries ago, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Episcopal Church were the only New York religious bodies which had received patents of incorporation. Other denominations were not yet thus recognized, and in consequence Congregation Shearith Israel could not hold real estate in its own name. The land for the projected synagogue therefore was purchased in the name of four individual trustees, Lewis Moses Gomez, his son Mordecai Gomez, Jacob Franks, and Rodrigo (Benjamin Mendes) Pacheco. Little New York Jewry then actively set about building on the land thus acquired. Its hands were strengthened by the solidarity which made into one brotherhood the Jewish communities that had cast anchor in the far-flung countries on the western shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The synagogue that was brought into being might have been termed a pan-American Jewish house of worship. Three Jews and one Jewess in Barbados contributed £22.13.0, and from Jacob and Isaac Gonsalez in Jamaica the sum of £7.10.0 was received. Isaac Levy, Simon Barzilay, Michael Asher, and Isaac Solomons in Boston sent £4.14.0. Three hundred florins came from the Joden Savanne in Dutch Guiana. The Jewish community in Curaçao made a munificent contribution of pieces of eight and silver which realized £136.12.1¾. Contributions were also received from three Jews in London. In September, 1729, exactly three quarters of a century after the arrival of the first pioneers, the four foundation stones were laid for the new structure. Toward its cost, no less than £223.17.9¼ had been received in reply to the appeal sent to Jews abroad. The eventual total outlay was over £600, the difference being made up by the small community of Jews in New York. How sacrificial their contributions often were may be seen from those made by three salaried officials of the synagogue. Out of his salary of £50 a year, Hazzan Moses Lopez de Fonseca gave £2.14.0. Benjamin Wolf, the former shohet, gave £1.6.0 from his meager annual pension of £20, and the shammash, Valentine Campanal, contributed £1 out of his total yearly salary of £16.

The new synagogue, unlike the former rented wooden frame house, was a brick building with blue faced bricks on the outside. In structure it fol-

lowed the general architectural pattern of its sister Sephardi synagogue in London and its mother synagogue in Amsterdam. The Ark (hehal) was at the east end of the building behind a railing of banisters. The men's seats ran east and west along the north and south sides of the synagogue, and the women's seats were set in a special gallery. There was a seat (banco) for the president (parnas presidente) and one for the vice-president (parnas residente) on the north and south sides of the Ark respectively. This general architectural form has not varied in each of the synagogues built by Shearith Israel during the last two centuries, although the dimensions of each newly built synagogue have progressively increased with the growth of the congregation.

The Ark with its sliding doors, a silk curtain behind them and "two fine locks," was approached by three steps, with candlesticks about one and one-half feet in height in front of them and at their side. Three steps above the floor level, in the center of the building, was the reading desk (shulhan, tebah) covered with red tapestry fringed with silver lace. Before this were "seven golden candlesticks, transformed into silver gilt." The wax candles in them were "as large as a man's arm." Near the corners of the building there hung from the roof four brass candelabras each holding sixteen candles, and in the center there was a fifth on which thirty-two candles were set. The candles for all these fixtures had to be made by the shammash from kasher wax.

Hanging before the Ark was the perpetual lamp which now is in use in the small synagogue of the congregation. This always impressed Christian visitors. Ezra Stiles, the head of Yale College, in his diary under the date of September 20, 1754, mentions without further comment the churches to which he went on his visit to New York, but he singles out for mention the perpetual lamp of the synagogue. "Arrived at New York . . . Went to New English Church . . Afternoon went to Old Dutch Church . . 23 . . Went to see old English Church . . . ; Synagogue and there saw the perpetual lamp, &c. &c."

Similarly Gabriel P. Disosway, who remembered the first Mill Street Synagogue, tells that as a boy "very often have I looked in at the window to see if the 'Holy Light' was burning before the altar. I never saw it extinguished; this ever burning Jewish light was the wonder and mystery of the First Ward, among its youngsters, and some old folks too." [6]

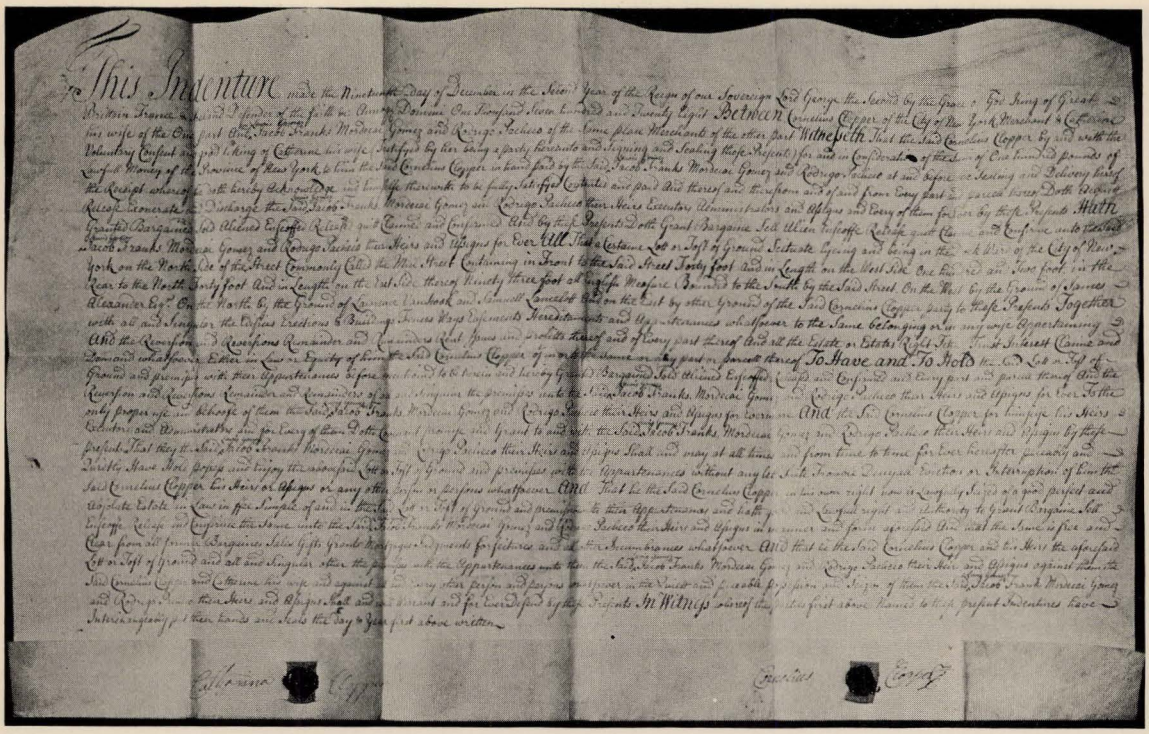
The inside of the building was severely simple. The Bible tells us that

within King Solomon's Temple there had been artistic decorations, including representations of cherubim, bulls, and lions. But later, especially in the Middle Ages, a strict interpretation of the second commandment tended to proscribe such decorative motifs, whether in statuary, in relief, or in painted form. The medieval sage Maimonides did not prohibit conventionally accepted decoration within a synagogue; but it was his personal custom to close his eyes when praying facing an ornamental wall so that its decoration should not divert his attention and detract from the spiritual concentration of his devotion. The plain simplicity of the Mill Street Synagogue would have won his approval.

The little synagogue on Mill Street was consecrated on the seventh day of Passover, April 8, 1730. It was the first structure designed and built to be a synagogue in continental North America. Although Jews had settled in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1658, there were apparently no Jews living there in 1730. At that time the town of New York had the only Jewish community in the country. It was still early in the history even of the Atlantic coast states of Colonial America. Plans were being laid out for a city to be called Baltimore. Three years later, in 1733, Jews arrived with the earliest settlers in Savannah, Georgia. It was not until some two decades later that there were the beginnings of organized Jewish settlement in Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Charleston.

The synagogue built in the solitary outpost of Judaism that was New York was but 35 feet square, and even though it contained a women's gallery, it was only 21 feet in height. It was set back from the street in its own little courtyard. The building had been painted inside by a member of the congregation, the snuffmaker Isaac Navarro. Six months later there was built in the yard in the rear of the synagogue the harvest booth (succah, cabaña). An adjoining ritual bath (mikveh) was soon completed. It drew its water from the spring which gave power to the mill of Mill Street. In 1759 it was found necessary to improve the bath by rebuilding it of stone. In the northwest corner of the women's gallery a special section developed called the "banco." This was reserved for the numerous women in the Gomez family. It lasted until 1786 when in the more democratic spirit of the post-Revolutionary era this family privilege was abolished.

The first major addition to the synagogue was a synagogue center. Nearly two hundred years were to elapse before the idea of such a building was to take



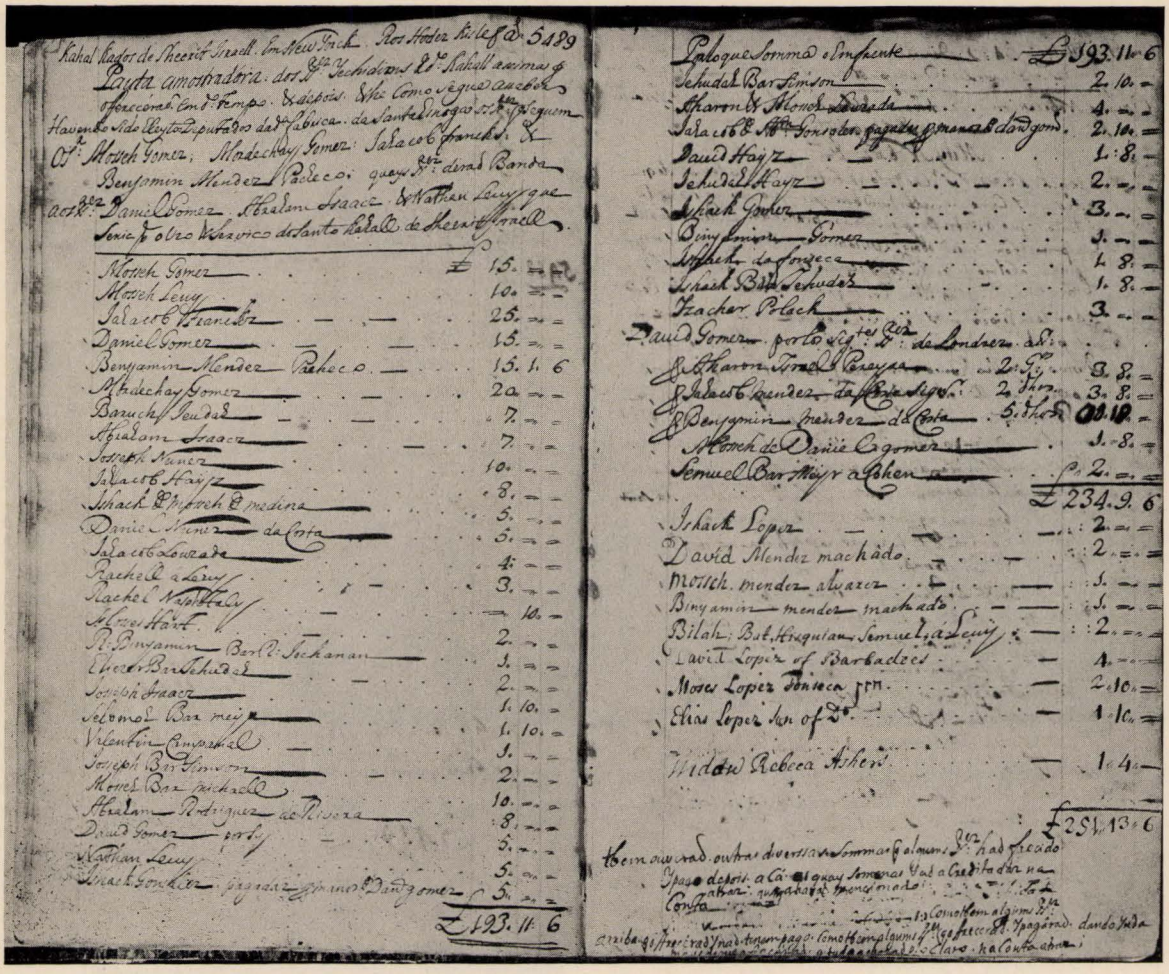
This Indenture made the Nineteenth Day of December in the Second Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second by the Grace of God King of Great Britain France & Ireland Defender of the Faith &c. Annoque Dominie One Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Eight. Between Cornelius Copper of the City of New York Merchant & Catherine his wife of the One part And Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco of the same place Merchants of the other part Witnesseth That the said Cornelius Copper by and with the Voluntary Consent and good Liking of Catharine his wife testified by her being a party hereunto and Signing and Sealing these Presents for and in Consideration of the Sum of Five hundred pounds of Lawful Money of the Province of New York to him the said Cornelius Copper in hand paid by the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco at and before the Sealing and Delivery hereof the Receipt whereof he the said Cornelius Copper doth hereby acknowledge and himself therewith to be fully satisfied Contented and paid Hath Granted Bargained Sold Aliened Enfeoffed Released and Confirmed And by these Presents Doth Grant Bargain Sell Alien Enfeoff Release Confirm unto the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns for Ever All That a certain Lot or Tract of Ground Situate Lying and being in the West Ward of the City of New York on the North side of the Street Commonly Called the Mill Street Containing in Front to the said Street Forty Foot and in Length on the West Side One Hundred and Three Foot in the Rear to the North Forty Foot And in Length on the East Side thereof Ninety three Foot and a half Measure Bounded to the South by the said Street On the West by the Ground of James Alexander Esqr On the North by the Ground of Thomas Lambert and Company Leased out on the East by other Ground of the said Cornelius Copper Lying to these Presents Together with all and Singular the Rights Members Hereditaments and Appurtenances whatsoever to the same Belonging or in anywise Appertaining And the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders Rents Issues and Profits thereof and of every part thereof And all the Estate or Estates Right Title Interest Claim and Demand whatsoever Either in Law or Equity of him the said Cornelius Copper of in & to the same or any part or parcel thereof To Have and To Hold the said Lot or Tract of Ground and premises with their Appurtenances before mentioned to be given and hereby Granted Bargained Sold Aliened Enfeoffed Released and Confirmed and every part and parcel thereof And the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders of all and singular the premises unto the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns for Ever To the only proper use and behoove of them the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns for Ever And the said Cornelius Copper for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators doth for Covenant promise and Grant to and with the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns by these presents That they the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns Shall and may at all times and from time to time forever hereafter peaceably and quietly Have Hold Possess and Enjoy the aforesaid Lot or Tract of Ground and premises and every part thereof with the Appurtenances without any Let Suit Trouble Denial Eviction or Interruption of him the said Cornelius Copper his Heirs or Assigns or any other Person or Persons whatsoever And That he the said Cornelius Copper in his own right now is Lawfully Seized of a good perfect and absolute Estate in Law in fee Simple of and in the said Lot or Tract of ground and premises to their Appurtenances and hath full and Lawful right and Authority to the Grant Bargain Sell Enfeoffe Release and Confirm the same unto the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns as aforesaid And that free and Clear from all former Bargains Sales Gifts Grants Mortgages Judgments Forfeitures and all other Incumbrances whatsoever And that he the said Cornelius Copper and his Heirs the aforesaid Lot or Tract of Ground and all and Singular other the premises with the Appurtenances unto the said Jacob Franks Mordecai Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco their Heirs and Assigns against him the said Cornelius Copper and Catharine his wife and against all and every other Person and Persons whatsoever lawfully Claiming or to Claim the same or any part thereof shall and will Warrant and for Ever Defend by these Presents In Witness whereof the said parties first above named to these presents Indentures have Interchangeably set their hands and Seals the Day & Year first above written

Catharine [illegible] Cornelius [illegible]

This Deed of Sale, 1728, secured the land on Mill Street where Shearith Israel erected the first synagogue building in North America



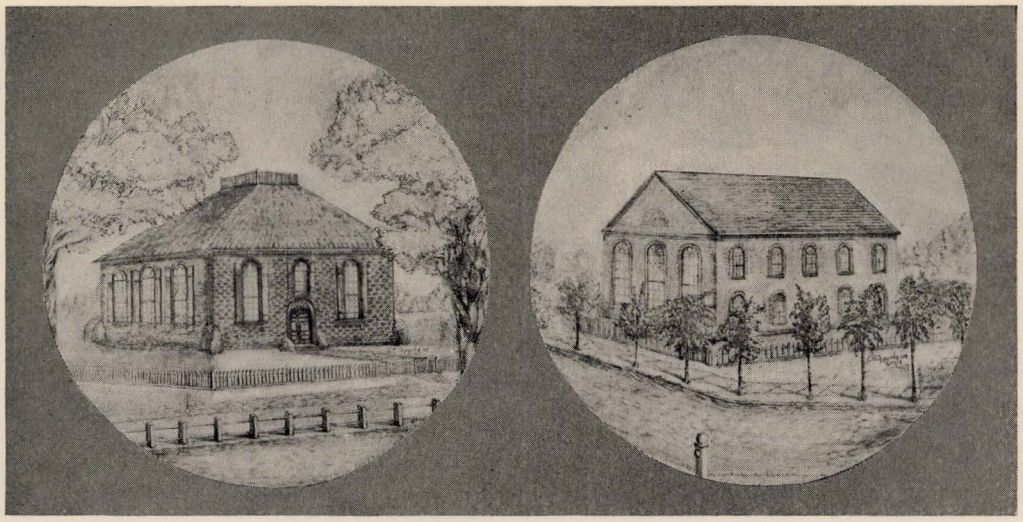
These millstones are relics of Mill Street where bread and prayer nurtured the doughty pioneers



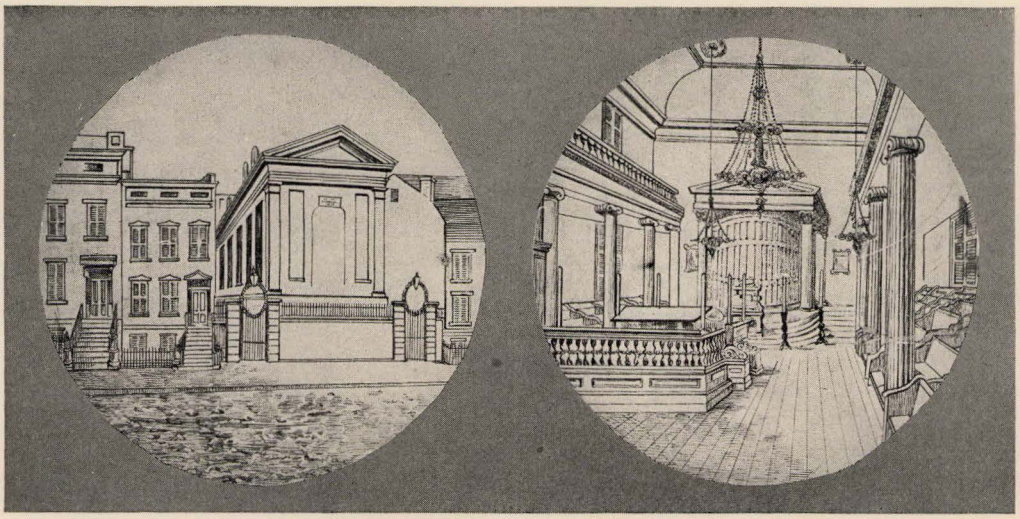
A spirited campaign for funds in 1729 elicited wide support for the first American synagogue



New York, 1744: crowning this map of the city are its churches. In the next to the last section stands the first Mill Street Synagogue.



Built 1730, rebuilt 1818, a synagogue stood on Mill Street for over a century



With the Crosby Street Synagogue, 1834, Shearith Israel began its northward march

its present dynamic form in the United States. Early in the twentieth century, the movement began for the erection of synagogue centers to give adequate accommodation to the growing program of congregational and communal activities. This was thought to be a new idea in American Jewish life. But it had indeed an early antecedent in Shearith Israel's community center of 1731 which housed the educational, philanthropic, and administrative activities of the synagogue. This was a two-story wooden structure erected in 1731 immediately to the north of the synagogue. It was dedicated on the seventh day of Passover, exactly a year after the consecration of the synagogue. Designed primarily for the school, the building was called the *beth hamidrash*, *yeshibah*, or most frequently, the *hebra*. It was used also for meetings of the trustees and congregants, and sometimes for the residence of the teacher. Its construction was made possible through the generosity of Jacob Mendes da Costa, Sr., of London. Born in Bayonne, France, in 1682, he lived in Amsterdam and later settled in London. He was the man who the *London Magazine* said was "reputed one of the richest Jewish merchants in this Kingdom." [7] His name appears among the members of the mahamad of the London congregation in those days. It is not clear what his special interest was in the faraway New York Jewish community. To the cost of building the synagogue he had contributed £3.8.0, the equivalent of two days work on the building, and his brother, the philanthropist Benjamin Mendes da Costa, had contributed £8.10.0, the equivalent of five days work.

In 1758, twenty-eight years after the Mill Street Synagogue was completed, the congregation purchased for £300 the house immediately to the west of the synagogue where lived the shammash, Elias Solomon. Thirty-two years later, in 1790, a fifth building was added when a home was built for Hazzan Seixas immediately to the east of the synagogue. In the following year, 1791, this house was burned down in one of New York's famed fires along with ten other houses, but a new parsonage was later erected in its place. At the end of the eighteenth century the congregation was making use of a complex of no less than five buildings—the synagogue, the community center (which served as school and meeting house), the home of the hazzan, the home of the shammash, and the ritual bath house. In addition there was a small structure for storing wood for fuel.

Numerous problems arose over the years in the assignment of seats within the synagogue. As a measure designed to discourage possible coquettish or

ogling glances being directed either downward or upward during religious services it was the practice to seat only married ladies in the front row, although, as the Reverend John Pierce of Brookline reported in 1812, the gallery had "a breastwork as high as their chins." Toward the end of the eighteenth century, in 1792, a resolution that "no unmarried lady except Rachel Pinto [who was then approaching her seventieth year] be allowed to occupy a front seat" was "passed in the negative 12 to 11." Eight years later, fortunately for the peace of the congregation, there also failed of passage an invidious resolution that no unmarried lady under the age of forty years should occupy a front seat.

As the community grew in numbers, a shortage of seats developed in the women's gallery, a chronic condition which has recurred in every synagogue building of the congregation. With time serious difficulties also developed in providing enough seats for the men. The seats which had been put around the reading desk in the center of the synagogue were occupied by the children so that Hazzan Seixas could the more easily keep watch over them. In 1789 these seats were allotted to adults. Eventually in 1794 seats were added between the Ark and the reading desk, "their being no Room at present in the Synagogue for the Accommodation of Strangers."

On September 15, 1776, the British troops occupied New York. Most of the leading personalities in the congregation and its minister, Gershom Mendes Seixas, like ardent patriots of other faiths, had left the city rather than live under British rule. Loyalists, such as Abraham I. Abrahams, Samuel Lazarus, Uriah Hendricks, and Abraham Wagg, remained in the city, and in the years of the Revolution from 1776 to 1783 this nucleus maintained the synagogue and continued to hold services as best they could. A notable addition to their number was Alexander Zuntz. He arrived in New York in 1779 with the Hessian troops as commissary and adjutant to the general staff. He soon became the leading member of the city's residual Jewish community. The synagogue building escaped all damage in the devastating fire of September 21, 1776, which destroyed a quarter of the town six days after the British soldiers moved in. It also escaped the fire of August 3, 1778, when over sixty houses were lost in flames. Perhaps because of its small size, the synagogue was not requisitioned by the occupying authorities for a prison, a stable, a hospital, or a store house, as had happened to the Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian and Huguenot churches of the city. The only physical damage suffered in the

war was when two British soldiers broke into the synagogue, desecrated two scrolls, and stole silver bells of the scrolls of the Torah.

On November 25, 1783, the British troops evacuated the city and American troops marched in. This was the long awaited signal for the self-exiled patriot members of the congregation to return to the city which now belonged to the Republic. Early in February, 1784, New York's first American municipal city government was set up. The new nation's Congress moved from Philadelphia to New York, which remained the federal capital city until 1790. Yet New York was largely ruined. The scars of war were everywhere to be seen. The need for rebuilding was desperate. Though the synagogue fortunately had escaped major damage, it had a pressing and growing need for repairs. It had been in use for half a century, and during the eight years of the Revolution its physical maintenance had perforce been neglected. Those returning to the city and the wartime residue of congregants immediately joined in united action to reintegrate the congregation and restore the synagogue and its buildings. In the summer of 1785 new windows were put in the synagogue because the former ones were "going to pieces fast." In the next year the level of the benches was changed in the women's gallery on the west and south sides. The fire of 1791 which destroyed the home of the hazzan next door to the synagogue revealed "the exposed situation of the synagogue," and new "protective" fences were then erected around the building. At the turn of the century the house of the shammash was characterized as "good for nothing." At the same time the framework of the succah was repaired because the congregation could not incur the heavy expense of $500 required to erect a new structure. Had they followed out the proposed plans, they would have had a brick building 18 feet long and 14 feet broad serving also as a bake house with a ten foot oven for baking matzoth. It was planned to cover it with a tin roof that could be hoisted with tackles when the building served as a succah. Less than two years later, at the beginning of 1803, it was decided by the trustees that because of "the ruined situation of the buildings attached to the school" they be taken down,

> and suitable buildings be erected to the Northward of the School to comprehend a House for the Mikva, School Room and a Room for the meetings of this Board and that of the congregation and as many other Rooms as may be thought proper.[8]

In 1796 a petition was presented to the city asking to have a gutter built on the south side of muddy Mill Street. In 1799 a new pump had to be set

up in the synagogue yard. Two years later it was decided that Manhattan water should be conducted into the homes of the hazzan and of the shammash.

The eighteenth century closed and the nineteenth century opened on the modest house of worship that had been brought into being with great uplift of spirit in the year 1730. As early as some two decades after its consecration the pressure of immigration and the large size of families began to strain the accommodations which the synagogue offered. Immigration of Jews from Western Europe began markedly to increase with the opening years of the nineteenth century. The community then found itself faced with the inescapable necessity of replacing the little synagogue on Mill Street with one that could aspire to serve as a spiritual home for all the Jews of the city.

THE SECOND MILL STREET SYNAGOGUE

Where should that new synagogue be built? A northward movement of population necessarily characterized the growth of the city from the time when the Fort was built at the Battery, the southernmost point on Manhattan island, and the first village clustered around it. Citizens were making their homes farther and farther from the Bowling Green district. In 1805 action was taken which, had it eventuated as planned, might have altered markedly the subsequent development of the Jewish community of New York. A dynamic and imaginative proposal was made to establish a branch of the synagogue in the suburban Greenwich Village, two miles to the north of Mill Street. Offerings were taken up for that purpose, and in the following year the trustees recommended the adoption of this plan without further delay. But the congregants, clinging to the shrine in which they had been reared and which had been sacred to so many of their parents and grandparents, were not ready for such radical action. They recognized that the residential population was rapidly moving away, and "the situation of our place of worship is deplorable." Nevertheless, they recorded that "a general opinion prevails among the members of our Congregation in favour of enlarging the synagogue." Modernizing, enlarging, and beautifying the outworn and inadequate though well-loved building might, some thought, outweigh or at least counterbalance for the synagogue the inexorable trend of real estate development. Consequently, in 1817 it was decided, as in retrospect we can see not wisely, to rebuild and enlarge the aging structure in its "deplorable" situation.

The rebuilding was done thoroughly, and construction rather than reconstruction was called for. In place of a building 35 feet square, a new structure was put up that was 35 by 58 feet, and 9 feet higher than the old one. It provided 167 seats for men and 133 (and eventually 137) seats for women. It ran east and west, not north and south as had the first Mill Street Synagogue.

On Friday, August 11, 1817, the demolition of the old synagogue began, and in that same month the cornerstone of the new building was laid. During the interim of building, the congregation worshiped in a room over the fire-engine house on Beaver Street, a little west of Broad Street.

The most generous supporters of the undertaking were Naphtali Judah, who gave $375 at the outset of the undertaking, and Harmon Hendricks, who gave $250 outright, and lent the congregation $1,000 for fourteen years without interest. Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto, the volunteer hazzan of the congregation, gave $50 and three logs of mahogany. Appeals were sent to a list which constitutes a miniature directory of the leading Jews in the scattered communities of the United States in 1817. It included Jews in the well-established communities of Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah, Solis in Wilmington, Moses Myers and the firm of Marks Nones & Co. in Norfolk, Jacob Hart and Judah Touro in New Orleans, Judah Hays and Abraham Touro in Boston, Levi Salomons in Albany, Solomon Etting, Levy Solomons, and John Myers in Baltimore, and in Canada Ezekiel, Moses, Benjamin, and Alexander Hart of Three Rivers and David David, and a son-in-law of Hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas, Benjamin Solomons, in Montreal. Appeals were also sent to Amsterdam, London, Curaçao, Surinam, and the two congregations in Kingston, Jamaica, and to Saqui and D'Azavedo in St. Thomas.

Again the religious brotherhood of Israel came to generous expression. As had happened eighty-eight years earlier, the Jews of Curaçao responded with open-handed alacrity. They sent 600 pieces of eight, with apologies that they could not send more because of the total stagnation of commerce at the time. A response was received from Philadelphia. From Baltimore two of the thriving families "which are but three in number" sent $150. David David of Canada sent $100, and, surpassing all the rest, Abraham Touro of Boston gave $666.43 toward the cost of the new synagogue on Mill Street. Abraham R. Brandon of Barbados sent a brass chandelier that had been made in London.

The new synagogue was built of brick and stone with a surface of Roman cement. The women's gallery was reached by a covered passageway from the

upper story of the adjoining brick schoolhouse on the north. This passageway was built as a narrow bridge over the space intervening between the schoolhouse and the synagogue, so that in general that space would not be covered in, and when each year the congregational succah was built there the succah's roof could be open to the heavens. There was some discussion as to whether the front of the women's gallery in the rebuilt synagogue should be open or be closed by a lattice. The final decision was that it should be made of "handsome planed turned mahogany banister." The old wooden tablet of the Ten Commandments which stood above the Ark in the first Mill Street Synagogue and which now crowns the Ark in Shearith Israel's small synagogue at 70th Street was replaced by a more costly white marble tablet presented by Naphtali Judah. This is now imbedded behind the tablet of the Commandments in the large synagogue of today and it may be seen from the choir loft.

The severity of the winter during which the Hudson River had been closed by ice may have caused some delay in the work of building, for it was not until after eight months and six days of work that the new structure was ready. On April 17–18, 1818, the Sabbath before Passover, the synagogue was dedicated by Hazzan Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto. Mordecai M. Noah gave the dedicatory address. He described the building as "ample in accommodation, neat and elegant in execution." In his oration he recalled the picturesque fact that "my great-grandfather [David Mendes Machado] officiated as pastor of this congregation, and seventy years ago occupied the same spot on which I now stand." In the notes which he added to his address when it was printed he mentioned that his grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather were buried in the congregation's cemetery.

Only fifteen years after that synagogue was consecrated, the struggle to maintain it on that site was abandoned. Its days were numbered from the beginning because of the movement of population from the progressively commercialized district of Mill Street to the residential districts a mile and more to the north. The unwillingness to bend before the realty actualities of the city's growth proved costly if not punitive. Despite the pressing need for enlarged synagogue accommodations in New York, it was found impossible to rent all the seats provided by the new building. In 1822, only 102 of the 167 men's seats were taken up, and only 108 of the 133 women's seats.

Four years later, in 1826, there were still 47 men's seats and 27 women's seats unassigned.

In its brief story from 1818 to 1833, the second Mill Street Synagogue passed through some critical days. In 1822, in the violent epidemic of yellow fever which "early in July . . . commenced at the foot of Rector Street, . . . the infected district was fenced in . . . and the citizens generally moved" to the open spaces of Greenwich Village.[9] At that time, the synagogue was closed temporarily. The congregation was not superstitious, and services were held in the attic of a schoolhouse at the corner of Henry and Oliver streets—ominously just opposite the entrance to the congregation's cemetery.

On November 30, 1831, there was a fire in Mill Street and only with difficulty was the synagogue saved from going up in flames. In the newspapers of the following day the trustees published the expression of their grateful appreciation of the devoted and unremitting efforts of the firemen. During the conflagration Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas provided the firemen with emergency refreshments.

In the following year, 1832, New York saw two "firsts"—the New York–Harlem railroad which was the first horse-drawn railroad in the world, and the first appearance in the city of Asiatic cholera. On August 1, Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto, son of Hazzan Peixotto, wrote the congregation a letter. In it he suggested that because of the cholera and the summer heat, on the fast of Ab, which would fall on the fifth of August that year, the congregants should be permitted on rising to take a light meal of coffee, tea, or cocoa, with dry toast, and a few draughts of water or tea with toast during the day.[10]

Such were some of the difficulties which the second Mill Street Synagogue experienced. In October, 1833, the trustees of the synagogue were finally compelled to admit that their principal troubles arose out of the constantly shifting residential center of the city.

> The Scite on which the old one was built having been selected more than 100 years ago, it became surrounded by stores, and warehouses and was situated in a short, crooked and confined street, and the main approach to our place of worship through a narrow passage, added to which all the members of the Congregation with the exception of one family have abandoned the lower part of the city, few reside within a mile of the old spot and many at the distance of two miles and more, thus preventing many of the Congregation attending Service in bad weather or in the extreme warm Season, and the Older part at all times.

Under such conditions the synagogue could not be maintained at that location, and it was soon sold.

In some ways this meant changing old troubles for new. Ancient Jewish regulation requires that "one must not pull down one synagogue in order to build another . . . lest anything should prevent the building of the new one. One should first build the new one and then tear down the old." [11] The wisdom of this provision was soon apparent. The last service was held in the second Mill Street Synagogue on April 13, 1833. The building had to be vacated at once as it was to be demolished. Two months earlier, space had been rented uptown for temporary use as a synagogue. This was a room on the middle story of the New York Dispensary at the northwest corner of White and Centre streets. These quarters became available May 1. The congregation met in this room in the Dispensary for a year, until May 24, 1834. Scrolls of the Torah which could not be kept in the small temporary Ark in that room were entrusted to Congregation Bnai Jeshurun for safe keeping.

The move from Mill Street was fortunate. Two and a half years later, in December, 1835, there was a disastrous fire. This was one of those storied conflagrations which remain vivid in the history of the city. For three days a losing battle was fought in extreme cold, with water freezing in the firemen's hose. The *Herald* dramatically wrote, "Talk not to us of the burning of Moscow. . . . The great fire in London. . . . Nearly twenty blocks of valuable buildings are destroyed, 529 rich stores, the splendid edifice called the Merchants Exchange . . ." That fire removed Mill Street from the map of New York. Neither the street nor its name remains to recall the first building erected to an ancient faith in the new land.

In 1930, in celebration of the bicentenary of the opening of the first synagogue on Mill Street the congregation prepared a large bronze tablet which it planned to set up on its site at 22–24 South William Street, under the auspices of the congregation and the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. At the time it was considered inadvisable to erect the plaque on the little outworn building then standing there, as it seemed clear that the house would shortly be taken down. This supposition proved to be correct. No new structure, however, has as yet taken its place, and the commemorative tablet awaits a wall on which it can be attached.

THE CROSBY STREET SYNAGOGUE [12]

The site chosen on March 31, 1833, for a new synagogue consisted of four lots on the west side of Crosby Street, covering numbers 56 to 62, about two-thirds of the way up the block between Broome and Spring streets. Here the third synagogue building of the congregation was built. Being 53 feet in breadth and 75 feet in length from east to west, the structure was substantially bigger than the second Mill Street Synagogue, and very much more spacious than the 35 feet square of the first Mill Street Synagogue. It had a new feature, a basement. This was 10 feet in height, and it was used for housing a chapel, the school, and the meeting rooms.

The cornerstone for the new building carried history with it, for it was the selfsame cornerstone used more than a hundred years earlier for the first Mill Street Synagogue. It was relaid on October 3, 1833, the sixth day of the festival of Succoth. The main inscription stone of the second Mill Street Synagogue was set on the west outside wall of the basement.

In 1825, a new light shone upon the city in the glow of illuminating gas. Shearith Israel, progressively up to date, replaced the traditional candlelights with the much admired innovation of fixtures for gas lighting. One large central chandelier with twelve burners, four smaller chandeliers toward the corners of the auditorium each with six burners, and a number of single or double wall brackets, inspired the *Times* to say of them, "We must take occasion to express our admiration of the chandeliers which were manufactured in this city, the design and execution of which were truly elegant. These were furnished by the gas company and reflect much credit on the taste and skill of the manufacturer."

The general frame of the outwardly curving Ark of the Mill Street Synagogue was used in the new building. Other characteristic symbols and furnishings of the earlier synagogue were not discarded. In the basement chapel of the new synagogue were set up once more the perpetual lamp, the tablet of the Ten Commandments with their gilded letters, and the six large brass candlesticks on the rail of the reading desk and before the Ark, all of which had been used in the first Mill Street Synagogue, as well as the reading desk which had been in the second Mill Street Synagogue. All these are now in the small synagogue on Central Park West and 70th Street.

In keeping with the tradition that in prayer one should face the site of the

ancient Temple in Jerusalem, the Ark containing the scrolls of the Torah should be placed at the east end of American synagogues. The Crosby Street building was on the west side of the street. In order to meet the requirements of the Ark being placed in the *mizrah* (the east), the front of the structure, which was its eastern end, was built as a solid wall. The Ark within the synagogue rested against it. The entrance to the building was set in the rear. Thus the worshiper when he entered the synagogue properly faced the Ark and eastward to the Temple mount in Zion. The entrance to the synagogue was approached from a high curved stoop from which a double flight of steps led up, and from which steps led also down to the basement. The illumination within the synagogue auditorium came at night from the gas fixtures, and by day from five windows on each side. Seating was provided by wooden benches. Two of them still in daily use in the present small synagogue of the congregation are reminders that these seats were both hard and narrow. The benches, set in four rows running east and west on either side of the building, were made of white wood with full backs edged with mahogany. They gave seating for 174 men, slightly more than the 167 men's seats that had been available in the second synagogue on Mill Street. Free seats for men were provided along the wall behind the reading desk. For women there were 204 seats, 30 more than the number provided for men, and 67 more than had been available for women in the enlarged second Mill Street Synagogue.

So many synagogues today are arranged in auditorium style that questions are often asked about the placing of the reading desk on a central platform in Shearith Israel. The Bible tells us that Ezra read the Torah to the people from a raised platform the better to be heard by all.[13] This arrangement has much to commend it. The reader is closer to the congregation. He is not a remote soloist singing to an audience. The few steps which lead up to his desk in its focal position assure the maximum visibility and audibility for him as he leads the chanting of prayer and reads from the Torah. In the Crosby Street Synagogue the 12 foot square mahogany enclosure for the reading desk was approached by three steps. Its floor was covered with a Brussels carpet, and the seat facing the desk was upholstered with a haircloth cushion. The white reading desk had a red covering hung around the sides in festoons.

The Ark, which was described by the *Times* as "one of the most exquisite specimens of workmanship and architecture that we have ever seen," was approached by five steps covered with a bright hued Brussels carpet. The slid-

ing doors of the Ark revealed a richly lined interior of crimson red silk hanging in festoons, with red brocade drapery over the two outwardly curving tiers on which the scrolls of the Torah were set. Attached to the wall on either side of the Ark were the two white marble tablets commemorating the generosity of Abraham Touro and Washington Hendricks. These tablets are set up at the west end of the present synagogue.

By the middle of 1834 the new synagogue was completed. It was described by the *Times* as a "remarkably neat building," and by the Boston *Courier* as "constructed in admirable taste." The consecration was set for June 12, the first day of the festival of Shabuoth. Because of limitations of seating capacity, tickets of admission were issued. The building was crowded long before the hour set for the service to begin. The special choir trained for the occasion was placed in the front gallery. The synagogue was decorated with flowers in the spirit of the Pentecost festival. Among those present were Mayor Cornelius W. Lawrence, the recorder, the district attorney, and some aldermen and other city officials, including the high constable Jacob Hays. Vicar-General Powers, Bishop Anderson, Dr. Schroeder, William Wary, W. Berman, and the Reverend Dr. Mortimer Broadhead, clergy representing Trinity Church, the Dutch Reformed Church, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the Unitarian Church, were also present with numerous other Christian visitors. The nine scrolls of the Torah which had been cared for by Congregation Bnai Jeshurun since the Mill Street Synagogue had been closed were formally set in the Ark after seven circuits were made. Once more the dedicatory address, one hour in length, was made by Mordecai M. Noah.

This synagogue on Crosby Street served the congregation for twenty-five years. Simultaneously with the construction of the synagogue, a house for the hazzan was built immediately to the south of it, and later a house was erected in the rear for the shammash. A cistern designed to serve a ritual bath was carefully prepared next to the synagogue, but the bath was never constructed. The cornerstone bearing a Hebrew inscription from the Yeshibah Minhath Areb, the congregational school building of 1731, and three stones which formed an arch with a Hebrew inscription commemorating the reorganization of the school in the year 5563 (1803), were placed in the schoolroom of the new synagogue building.

But then once more the relentless changing process which often assails neighborhoods more quickly than the aging of its buildings affected Crosby Street

as it had struck Mill Street before it. The 1850s saw so rapid a deterioration in the character of the street that parents were loath to have their children go to the synagogue unattended. Residents were moving away from the district. In July, 1857, shortly before the acute financial crisis of that year it was resolved by overwhelming vote to offer the building for sale. In January, 1859, it was sold. The Jewish magazine the *Occident* had declared, "the structure is worth nothing more than the price of the old building material."

This, however, was hardly the case. Little did the trustees anticipate that the synagogue building was to live on as a center of hilarity and worldly entertainment. The rear of 56–62 Crosby Street abutted on 514 Broadway. The astute purchaser made the entrance to the building at that address. Historic Sephardi custom has tended to make a synagogue inconspicuous by setting it on a quiet street or behind a wall. This usage grew up in part for reasons of security, and in part because of limitations on religious freedom. If the address on the main thoroughfare of Broadway in the rear of the Crosby Street Synagogue may have seemed to the congregation inappropriate for the entrance to a synagogue, it was considered by Henry Wood to be highly advantageous for a minstrel hall and variety theater. To those of Shearith Israel, the change of entrance and formal address were of small comfort in the distressing knowledge that the walls which had enshrined their prayers were echoing to very different words and sounds. On July 7, 1862, Henry Wood's "fine new Minstrel Hall" opposite the luxurious white marble-fronted St. Nicholas Hotel, opened "with a very superior aggregation." Until 1866, it housed successively a wide range of theatrical adventures, and the stage was occupied by breathtaking dramas and minstrel or burlesque shows. *Abraham's Daughter, The Fall of Atlanta, The Conscripts, The Contrabands' College, Manager's Triumph or the Blackmailer's Defeat, Ghost Burlesque, Othello* with one Ephraim Horn as Desdemona, are some of the titles which cried out from the billboards. In January, 1866, Henry Wood sold his right to George Wood of the Broadway Theatre, and Wood's Minstrel Hall became Wood's Theatre. But not for long. In the fall of the same year, 514 Broadway opened as the German Thalia Theatre, to be succeeded by opera in January, 1867. This, too, was of brief duration. On March 2, "Wood's Theatre Comique" with minstrels, pantomimists, ballet and a "marvellous troupe of acting dogs" attempted to hold the Broadway clientele. Neither the variety shows nor the stirring *East Lynne, Perfection,* or *Camille,* nor yet the fetching *French*

Milliners, could stay the hand of time. The address became "unprofitable theatre property" and the Theatre Comique was described as "a tragic investment." After a fire in 1868 it was reopened in 1869. In 1881 the last curtain fell and then the theater was finally closed and demolished.[14]

THE NINETEENTH STREET SYNAGOGUE

In 1859 and 1860 while the congregation was planning for a new building to take the place of its Crosby Street Synagogue, it used temporary quarters at 894 Broadway, just south of 14th Street. In 1859 lots were acquired for a new house of worship on the north side of 19th Street, west from Fifth Avenue. They covered 70 by 90 feet on 19th Street and 27 feet 8½ inches by 100 feet on Fifth Avenue. Still holding to the Sephardi custom of not placing a synagogue conspicuously on a main street, the congregation did not wish to build its synagogue on Fifth Avenue, and it soon sold the corner, stipulating that the purchaser would not erect on it stables or other nuisances.

In those days the neighborhood of 23d Street was fashionably residential. Rows of private houses with wrought-iron balconies and front yards enclosed by iron gates gave the district something of the appearance of a New Orleans of the north. At first glance all looked well for the synagogue that was to be built, but difficulties developed from the very beginning. Robert Mook, chosen as architect, was paid $1,500 for the imposing design which he submitted. Through an oversight, to the distress of the congregation the contract with the builders failed to stipulate that there should be a complete cessation of work on the Sabbath, and Jewish festivals and Holy Days.

The total cost of the new building amounted to $99,935.01. This included $603.75 for making three new pairs of silver bells for scrolls of the Torah used in the service of the synagogue's consecration. The sale of the Crosby Street Synagogue in 1859 had realized only $56,000. Of this, $40,000 was not payable until after three years. The congregation therefore did not have nearly enough money to meet the almost $100,000 cost of the new building. To help the financing, it took a $30,000 mortgage on the property it was holding on Sixth Avenue and 20th Street alongside its cemetery.

The laying of the cornerstone was set for Monday afternoon, July 11, 1859, at five o'clock. Advertisements of the ceremony were inserted "in such journals as thought proper." The order of the ceremony was drawn up by Hazzan Lyons. Asher Kursheedt, chairman of the building committee, was presented

with the silver trowel that was used. Addresses were made by the congregation's preacher, Dr. Arnold Fischel, and the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs, the minister of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun. In the cornerstone were then deposited

> a metallic plate with Hebrew inscription, date, names of trustees and officers and the congregation, builders and architect, a parchment containing the names of the executive officers of the United States and State of New York, a history of the congregation for nearly 210 years, a copy of the constitution and by laws of the congregation, copies of various benevolent societies' constitutions, of the Hebrew Bible, daily prayers, marriage contract, a set of tefillin, tsitsith, mezuzah, a compendium of the burial service, copies of the consecration service of the Mill and Crosby Streets' synagogues, various documents of Jewish character, six vials with relics from Jerusalem, newspapers of the day, and sundry coins.[15]

Fifteen months later the building was completed in time for use on the High Holy Days. The ceremonies of consecration were set for Wednesday, September 12, 1860, a date which was characterized as commemorating the 206th anniversary of the arrival of the Founding Fathers of Shearith Israel on the island of Manhattan.

Hazzan Lyons had been charged with preparing for the ceremonies a program which would be marked by "solemnity and due impressiveness." At five o'clock the oldest member of the congregation, Naphtali Phillips, then eighty-seven years of age, formally opened the inner doors to the synagogue. The scrolls of the Torah in new mantles were carried through the opened doors transforming the edifice into a shrine. Shearith Israel's preacher, Dr. Arnold Fischel, headed the procession, carrying the first scroll of the Torah. He was followed by congregational leaders, all formally attired in Prince Albert coats and all wearing silk top hats. In his sermon Dr. Fischel spoke of the history of the Jewish people, the decline of the great nations which had oppressed them, and the providential survival of the Jew despite all oppression. At seven o'clock there was concluded the elaborate consecration service conducted by Hazzan Lyons with "solemnity and due impressiveness," aided by a specially trained choir. The new synagogue on 19th Street was ready to serve the congregation and the community.

In reporting the dedication ceremonies, the *Jewish Messenger* declared that "the present place of worship is probably the handsomest edifice of the kind in the United States." Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* wrote that, "It is said that the ark of this Synagogue is the finest in the world," and it de-

clared that the synagogue as a whole is "decidedly one of the prominent lions and curiosities of New York." The *Express* gave the following elaborate description of the new synagogue:

The building is nearly square, and built in the Palladian style of architecture, in two orders—the Ionic and Corinthian, surmounted by a dome. The materials of the front are Dorchester or Nova Scotia stone, and, as seen from the street, it has that effect of grandeur which always accompanies the forms of classic art.

The entrance is in the centre of the front, up three steps, through a wide doorway, into a small vestibule, through which is the passage to a large vestibule on the ground floor, ornamented by Corinthian columns and deep bayed ceiling. On the right are numerous doors leading to the vestry and general meeting rooms, with doors leading to an open space without, covered by an arbor hung with awnings for the purpose of holding the feast of the tabernacles. On the left are four staircases winding round to the auditorium, which is on the floor above. The two centre staircases are for the gentlemen, and lead to the main floor, while the two extreme stairways are exclusively for ladies, and lead to the galleries. Ascending these stairs, the auditorium is entered with the face towards the East. The auditorium is the whole size of the ground floor, excepting only that portion occupied by the stairways. The seats are ranged on the right and left, leaving the floor between occupied by a raised platform, containing the desk, chairs, etc., for the use of the minister and officers. Immediately in front of the desk is the ark, and between the desk and the ark is a movable pulpit for the preacher, raised above the floor by four steps. The ark is formed by a portico of four Corinthian rouge antique columns, with gilded capitals, and standing on pedestals of verde antique scagliola, having bronze mouldings, while the whole is covered by a rich entablature and pediment.

Between the columns, and about twenty feet high, are rosewood panels and doors enclosing the ark, over which is a projecting canopy holding the Ten Commandments, chiselled upon marble and standing from the wall. The interior of the ark is hung with crimson and gold drapery in folds, with two tiers of tables for holding the scrolls, of which there are fourteen. These scrolls contain the five books of Moses, written on parchment, and wound round rosewood handles, each handle being surmounted with a heavy silver finial, having three rows of gold bells.

The galleries for ladies are ranged on the right, left, and back of the auditorium over the seats on the main floor, supported by Corinthian columns, while another gallery on the back, over the first gallery, is for the choir.

Casting the eye round the building, the walls seem decorated by columns, and the windows are filled with stained glass of a rich combination of colors.

From the ceiling (which is paneled) springs up the dome, not a circle, but octagonal, the sides containing panels, and a large opening at the top filled with glass corresponding with the windows. At the bottom of the dome is a balcony running entirely round on the inside: and on this gallery is a line of gas jets which give a beautiful mellow light, yet sufficiently strong to illuminate the whole auditorium, though there are abundant means of lighting without this, by brackets, chandeliers, etc. Here may be noticed the bronze standards round the ark and desk representing

Columbus holding silver candles. Pompeian lamps hang against the walls, and from the canopy of the ark was suspended the perpetual lamp, of silver. . . .

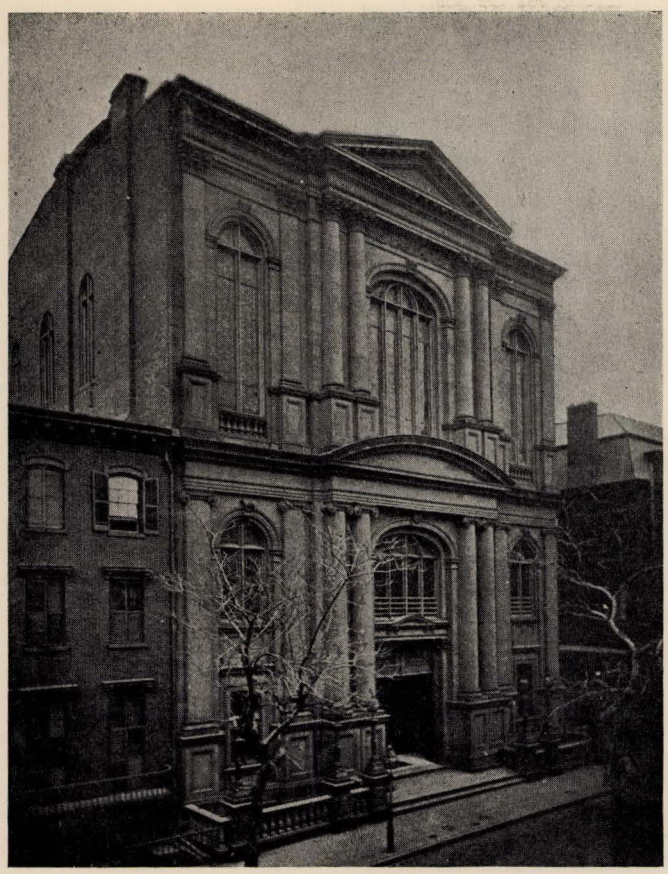
The design is uniform throughout; without being extravagant, it is still rich and chaste.

It is said by those who are competent to judge of such matters that the ark in this synagogue exceeds that of the Synagogue in Leghorn, which is recognized as the finest in Europe.

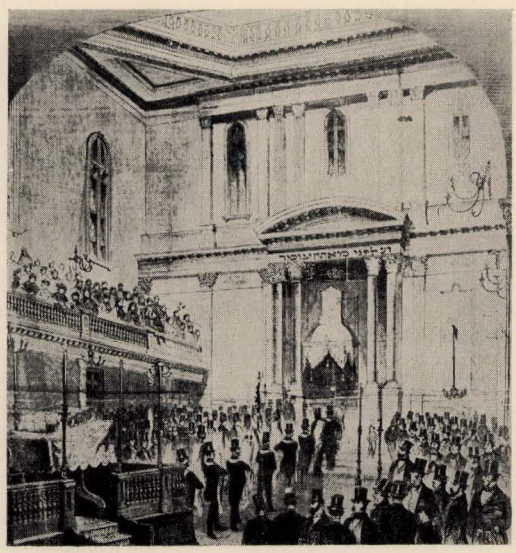
At first, gratifying use was made of the new synagogue building. The congregational school was housed in the basement. One of the rooms on the vestibule floor was fitted up as a chapel for occasional worship. Another room was finished as the trustee room. The women who during the Civil War organized themselves into the Ladies Army Relief were given for their sewing the use of the room on the vestibule floor near the front of the building. In 1878 the policy that had been adopted of not permitting meetings in the building on Sundays was revoked. Six years after the consecration, the seating capacity of the synagogue auditorium was overtaxed and thirty-six seats were added. Twelve years after that, the rear portion of the reading desk platform where the choir had been seated was removed and three rows of benches taken from the unused upper gallery were put into that space. Later, four rows of benches were added between the reading desk and the Ark.

Yet, notwithstanding such unquestionable indices of progress, the life of that synagogue, thirty-seven years in all, was attended by a trail of difficulties which began even in the days of its construction. The congregation had purchased for a modest sum stained glass windows originally made for but not used by St. Ann's Church on 18th Street. These, when built into the synagogue, were a source of trouble, for congregants would notice in them detail inappropriate for a synagogue.

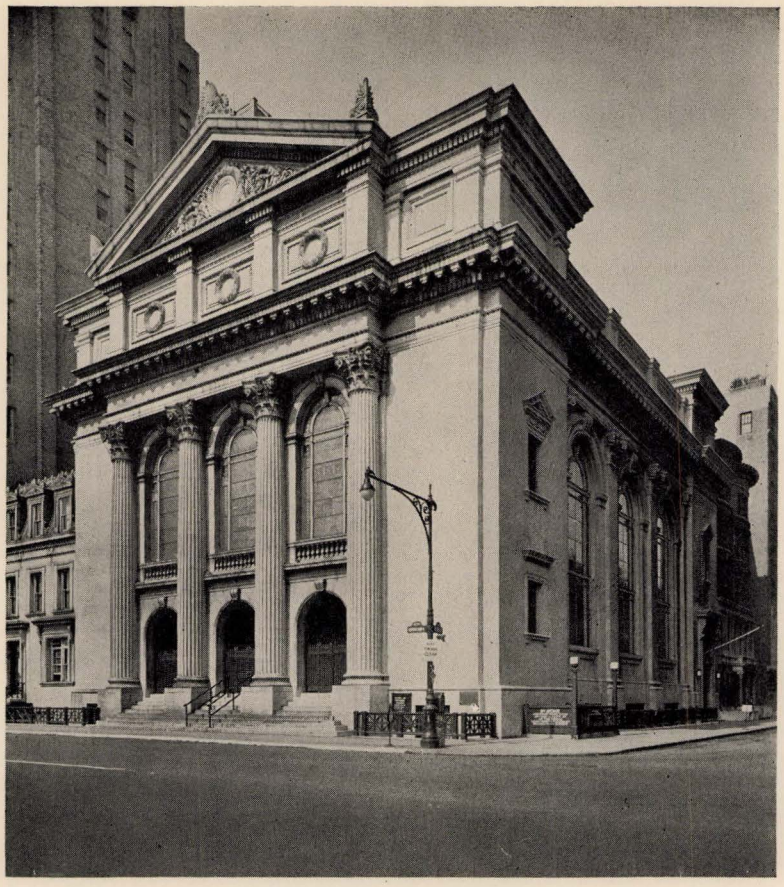
Another difficulty arose from the height of the building. A regulation from ancient days requires that the synagogue should be the loftiest building of its community. "If a man has made his house higher than the synagogue, some say that the community has the right to compel him to lower it." [16] When the Nineteenth Street Synagogue was erected, it was said to be the highest building in the city above 14th Street. The architect had set the main part of the structure high above the street so as to give it the three advantages of a commanding position, ample light, and good ventilation. Translated from design to structure this meant steps and more steps. On entering the building



In 1860, the Nineteenth Street Synagogue was the highest building to be seen above 14th Street



Its dedication was a noteworthy event sanctified with circuits of the Torah and marked by special music and the presence of leaders of all faiths



Synagogue on Central Park W
1897: its neo-classic style was
novel in synagogue architectur



A duck farm was on the site where the synagogue was built in the "new" neighborhood

from the street one ascended three steps and then climbed up a long winding staircase from the vestibule to reach the main synagogue auditorium which was on the next floor. A woman had to climb still another long staircase of no less than fifty steps to reach the women's gallery. There was still one more flight of steps to be mounted by the members of the choir when they occupied the upper gallery facing the Ark. All this, of course, with no alternative of an elevator. Even to a generation inured to the stairs of nineteenth-century five-story houses these compulsory climbs were hardly an alluring invitation to come to worship, and for elderly persons the stairs sometimes proved to be an impassable barrier.

In 1888, and again in 1893, a proposal was made to the electors that the floor of the main synagogue be lowered nearly to the street level, that the women's gallery be reconstructed "at a convenient height," and that suitable school and meeting rooms be provided in the light upper part of the building. But by that time the desire, and, indeed, the need for a new synagogue was strongly felt, and it was considered undesirable to undertake any costly reconstruction.[17]

The handsome high octagonal dome with its panelled sides was another source of difficulty. Whether it was guilty or innocent it was blamed for faulty acoustics, and on the Building Committee was set the responsibility of finding a remedy. When the congregation finally appointed a preacher in the person of H. Pereira Mendes, it was proposed to stretch wires across the building in order to assure greater audibility for him, since a preacher should be heard even though he may not always be listened to. At one time unsightly gauze was stretched across the inside of the dome in the hope of deadening the echoes. Later, the position of the pulpit was held accountable, and the pulpit was moved. Dr. Mendes was compelled to climb winding stairs to reach his place in the pulpit. There he would preach high above the heads of the men, physically, though his voice would carry more intelligibly to the occupants of the women's gallery—the opposite of the condition often found in synagogues of traditional architecture.

A more common problem of the times was that of adequately heating the building. In the winter of 1876 it was decided that the side doors leading into the auditorium should be kept closed during service. At the same time it was resolved to keep the furnace lighted during a week as a test. If after that

the synagogue still proved to be cold on the Sabbath, stoves were to be purchased and set on both sides of the main floor, connected with drums for the gallery. In the winter of 1885 the problem was still not fully resolved, and the building committee was once more called on to report on the regulation of the temperature in the synagogue.

So much for the woes of the synagogue proper. Upon the rest of the building troubles trouped not singly. The basement rooms were unattractive, and proved to be inadequate for the congregational school. Almost from the beginning serious difficulty was found in the physical upkeep of the building. The halls and corridors were poorly lighted and ill ventilated, and there were many dark corners. The doors of the synagogue "made a noise" when opened. Within a few months after the dedication, in February, 1861, the ambitious roof developed a leak. A year and a half later, an open scuttle caused part of the ceiling to fall. A few years thereafter, on the eve of Atonement Day some of the plaster fell. In November of the following year, 1867, the roof had to be repaired again, and new fireproof cornices were set up. Six months later, once more the roof was repaired. Then eight years passed before the roof was again repaired and after another six year interval, in 1882, the dome and the roof once more needed repairs. The architecturally impressive dome was a source of trouble not only for the synagogue acoustics and for the building committee of the congregation, but also at times for the neighbors. In the winter of 1884, accumulated snow fell from the base of the dome and damaged the neighboring property at 144 Fifth Avenue. After this a guard was built around the roof.

It was inevitable that from time to time costly painting had to be undertaken. But it was little short of catastrophic that from the very beginning it was found that the site of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue had not been felicitously chosen. In 1859 when the electors heard that the lots at that location had been purchased for a synagogue, they discussed asking the trustees to sell them. However, a resolution to that effect failed to be carried, the vote being eight against twenty-one. Undaunted, the far-seeing minority brought up the matter again. Three weeks later, on April 10, 1859, twenty-one electors remonstrated against any immediate action in the matter of building the new synagogue at the site on 19th Street until the electors should have expressed themselves on the location, the plan, and the style of building. At that meeting, Gershon Nathan offered the following lengthy resolution which was seconded by Solomon Dreyfous:

Whereas the electors of this Congn have not been courteously informed that the Board of Trustees have purchased a plot of ground in 19th Street 100 feet west of 5th Avenue, and whereas as the said plot of ground is said to be only 70 feet wide by 92 feet deep containing an area of 6440 superficial feet and that the board of Trustees have paid or promised to pay the sum of $26,250—and whereas the usual dimension of a city lot being 25 by 100 feet or on three lots they should contain an area of 7500 superficial feet—thus by a simple calculation we shall find that this plot of ground has cost the Congn $10,150 per lot, and whereas as the position of the (Synagogue) lot cannot admit of any easy access to the Synagogue according to the usages of our religion by facing towards the east on entering our holy place of worship, and as the said plot of ground will be required for the building of a Synagogue, consequently not leaving sufficient ground for building the residences of Hazen & Shamas, and whereas it is the wish of the electors that we should adhere to the custom of our forefathers by having the Hazen and Shamas residing adjacent our Synagogue in case their services should be called on as they are at all hours of the night or during the day by Electors or their families, and whereas we oppose the selection of this plot as we desire a Synagogue should be erected to have an exposure to obtain fresh air, a desideratum apparently lost sight of by the Trustees—and whereas as the electors are deeply interested as to the cost of the building and as the electors understand that the cost of the Synagogue will be $60,000 the lots costing $26,250 thus making the large sum of $86,250 without considering extra demands averaging 10 per cent on estimates, and as this sum is irrespective of the rent for the residences of Hazen & Shamas which would in that neighborhood require the interest of $3000 to pay, we find that our new Synagogue and two residences will cost the Congn at least $116,000—and as the electors do not believe the means of the Congn will admit of such an outlay, that we strenuously and emphatically protest against such an expenditure of money thereby entailing a heavy debt on this Congn.—And the electors desire that Architects of experience and ability should be fairly treated—all information given as sought for—for as the creation of a Synagogue is not an every day occurrence, hence some courtesy should be shown to those who may not be equally informed as others as to the requirements of a Synagogue—and more particularly the electors have learned that the purchase of the plot of ground in 19th Street did not meet the unanimous approval of the Board of Trustees—also that the plans, building materials and cost of the Synagogue do not meet with that unanimity which should characterize a board who so deeply feel the responsibility of their trust and as the electors are willing to share with the trustees in their Labors and Responsibilities therefore Be it

Resolved—that this meeting appoint a Committee of 6 to act with the Trustees and that they obtain a purchaser for the plot of ground in the 19th Street at the most advantageous price, and this Committee be instructed to report to the Electors what property is considered eligible for the new Synagogue and residences of its Officers, and that the Committee Report this day fortnight.

A substitute motion was then offered by Benjamin Nathan ratifying and confirming the action of the trustees. This was adopted by a vote of twenty-nine to eighteen, with fourteen not voting.[18]

Experience soon proved that the minority had been right. Congregants were progressively moving uptown away from the neighborhood of 19th Street and Fifth Avenue, which was becoming more and more a business district. As early as only a little over three years after the consecration of the synagogue, the trustees themselves in February, 1864, authorized the selling of the costly and beautiful new building, subject to the approval of the electors. In the winter of 1865 some bids for the property were received, but no sale was consummated. In September, 1866, exactly six years after the building had been opened, a committee was appointed to seek an eligible site for the erection of a new synagogue. It was then found that about four and a half lots on the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 42d Street could be obtained for $40,000. These were not purchased. They certainly would not have solved the problem of moving the synagogue into a more residential neighborhood.

One of the drawbacks to the 19th Street site was that it allowed no room for building a parsonage for the hazzan adjoining the synagogue, as had been done both in Mill Street and in Crosby Street. In 1867 this defect was overcome when for $30,000 Number 7 West 19th Street immediately adjoining the synagogue was acquired to be used as the residence of the hazzan. But the record continues as a threnody. In 1869, only nine years after the doors of the building were opened, Alfred Tobias was authorized to obtain an offer for the synagogue property. Later that year came Black Friday and the disastrous financial panic, and the matter was held in abeyance. But in the following year inquiries were renewed as to the possible sale of the synagogue and the purchase of a suitable site for a new house of worship. Eleven years passed without action. In 1877 the attempt was made to sell the synagogue to the Mercantile Library Association. Three years later, a proposal was presented to the board of trustees that a branch of the synagogue be opened near 59th Street and Fifth Avenue. A few months later, in December, 1880, the trustees admitted that it was most advisable to consider a change of location and the erection of a new synagogue, and they decided to ascertain the views of the membership on these questions. Five months later, consideration was given to the desirability of buying a church with three lots on the north side of 57th Street between Park and Lexington avenues. A committee of three was appointed three months thereafter to investigate and consider the sale of the 19th Street properties and the purchase of a new site for a syna-

gogue. The refrain continued. Another three months passed and the electors recommended, and the trustees agreed, to sell the synagogue property as soon as a price could be obtained that would warrant the sale.

In the summer of 1882, the synagogue needed repainting and new carpeting. The president, Joseph Blumenthal, did not favor incurring this expense at a time when a large majority of the members desired and hoped to sell the synagogue as speedily as possible. Two years went by, and once more the electors requested the trustees to find a new location for their synagogue. In the preceding year, 1883, the decision had been made to buy five lots at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and 65th Street for a sum not exceeding $140,000. Nothing came of this plan, nor of the proposal made in 1885 to purchase 125 feet of land in two lots east of Calvary Baptist Church on the north side of 57th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues for a sum not exceeding $125,000.[19] A little later it was proposed to buy the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 45th Street which today faces the Hotel Roosevelt. Unanimously the thirty-seven electors who considered this last proposal found it inexpedient. They also considered it inexpedient to make extensive alterations or repairs to the Nineteenth Street Synagogue.

After various hopeful attempts to secure a purchaser for the synagogue, the board of trustees on January 26, 1891, finally authorized the purchase of five lots on the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 104th Street for not more than $60,000. Less than a fortnight later the board of trustees disapproved of the site they had bought so far uptown, either for a synagogue or for an investment. The electors also disapproved of the purchase, and they requested the trustees to dispose of it. Relief from this embarrassing situation was found when a member of the congregation, Anthony Wallach, took over these Fifth Avenue lots. On this site there was later erected the Hecksher Building which now houses the Association for the Care of Children.

Still no solution had been found to the problem. Early in 1893 the synagogue building was offered on a lease to Knabe and Company. Six years earlier the selling price had been set at $220,000. After a year this was reduced to $200,000. By 1893 it was lowered still further to $180,000 and then to $175,000. An offer of $168,000 was not accepted. Although the trustees unanimously resolved that it had become necessary for the congregation to move farther uptown, they made this conditional on a satisfactory price being obtained for the synagogue properties, and a suitable site being secured for a new building.

In November of that year, 1893, they agreed unanimously to put on the synagogue the sign "For Sale" and to advertise for a plot of not less than 75 by 100 feet between 55th and 70th streets, between Park and Columbus avenues.

There then developed a spirited difference of opinion as to where the new synagogue should be built. On one point the congregation was united: "since the congregants have moved away from the synagogue, it must be brought near to them." The choice of the site for the Nineteenth Street Synagogue had proved to be a crippling mistake almost from the beginning, and move they must.

A joint committee of trustees and electors was set up to find the answer to the question of where the new house of worship should be erected. Some who favored Eighth Avenue between 59th and 85th streets were attracted by a plot near 68th Street that could be obtained at a reasonable figure. Others preferred Madison Avenue or the side streets east of Fifth Avenue. In general, five of the committee favored going above 59th Street, three were noncommittal, while three "decidedly opposed a removal above 59th Street for the reason that the access from the East Side to the West Side cut off by Central Park is so difficult and . . . the transportation is irregular and insufficient."

Because the congregants on the East Side wanted the new site near them, the committee toyed with the idea that though East is East and West is West, the twain could meet "by building below which is claimed to be the dividing of the city proper, Fifty-ninth Street." They knew that there were vacant lots in that portion of the city, but they felt that "four houses will have to be bought and torn down." A site on the south side of 59th Street just west of Fifth Avenue was considered, but it was rejected for the reason that its dimensions of 50 by 100 feet were not wide enough.[20] That property was later acquired, extended and built on by the Plaza Hotel. Finally, in January, 1895, the congregation purchased for $130,000 six lots of 100 feet on Eighth Avenue (Central Park West) and 150 feet to the west on the south side of 70th Street, where the present synagogue stands.

Even then the building on 19th Street did not cease to be a problem. The question now was how to dispose of that property. Various offers were received, even up to the figure of $200,000, but no deal went through. The time came when the new synagogue was ready. On May 11, 1897, the last meeting of the board of trustees was held in the 19th Street building. On the fol-

lowing Sabbath morning Dr. Mendes and Hazzan Abraham H. Nieto conducted a service in it before a very large congregation that had assembled to say farewell to their synagogue. Toward the close of the regular service of prayer, memorial prayers were recited. Then followed the kaddish and Alei'nu, after which Dr. Mendes preached a sermon of wistful reminiscence of the past and hope for the future. Then were intoned Psalm 67, "that God's way be known on the earth," a prayer in Hebrew, and Psalm 122, "I rejoiced when they said to me 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.' " The Ark was opened and the Shema', the age-old declaration of the unity of God, and other verses, were solemnly chanted before the final singing of Adon Olam. The priestly blessing impressively closed this moving service of parting from a sanctuary which during its thirty-seven years of troubled occupation nevertheless had been a center of worship and sacred associations.

Perhaps the shrine had become the more cherished because of all the problems which had developed and the thought and loving care they had evoked. The vacillations and indecision in the consideration of another site may have sprung from a deeply seated attachment to the nobly built sanctuary. It may have been this love of the synagogue that for decades restrained the implementation of the eminently reasonable decision to move into a new building.

The service of farewell was not quite the end for the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. In September, 1897, the Hebrew Free School Association was given without charge the use of the building for Holy Day services on condition that these be conducted according to orthodox ritual. Dr. A. E. Hartogensis, a member of Shearith Israel, presided over those services. Thereafter, the synagogue building was torn down to avoid possible repetition of the embarrassment experienced when the Crosby Street Synagogue had been converted into a theater. The parsonage at 7 West 19th Street was turned into business premises in 1899 at a cost of $4,241. For many years thereafter these premises served as a none too profitable investment, sometimes rented out, sometimes partly rented, and sometimes vacant. In 1945, the congregation succeeded in disposing of that building.

SEVENTIETH STREET

On Wednesday afternoon, May 20, 1896, in solemn gathering the cornerstone was laid on the new site on Central Park West. Participating in the religious service besides Dr. Mendes were the congregation's Hazzan Abraham

H. Nieto, and the Reverend Meldola de Sola of Montreal. In addition, addresses were given by the Reverend Sabato Morais of Philadelphia and Dr. Mendes. Lewis Hyman, then vice-president of the congregation, presented the trowel to L. Napoleon Levy, the president. Deposited within the stone before it was sealed was a copper plate 8 inches by 10, inscribed "The Corner Stone of the Fifth Holy Place of Worship erected by the Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York was here laid on Wednesday, Sivan 8,5656, May 20, 1896." On it were inscribed also the names of Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, minister, Abraham H. Nieto, assistant minister, the officers of the congregation, the members of the board of trustees, the electors who served on the committee on buildings, the treasurer, the shammash, the shohet, the architects, and the builder. Others whose names were inscribed on parchment and deposited within the cornerstone were Grover Cleveland and Adlai E. Stevenson, President and Vice-President of the United States, New York State Governor Frank S. Black and the Lieutenant-Governor, Mayor William L. Strong, and other city officials. To this was added an impressive outline of the history of the congregation covering nearly two hundred and fifty years written by N. Taylor Phillips and later published in the *American Hebrew.* Together with a copy of the constitution and the by-laws of the congregation were included those of all its constituent societies in symbolism of their integration into the life of the synagogue. The link with the past was further emphasized by placing in the cornerstone the description of the laying of the cornerstone of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue on July 11, 1859, together with a prayer then written by the Reverend J. J. Lyons and his translation of a Hebrew poem, as well as the order of service used at the dedication of that synagogue in 1860, and photographs of its interior. Loyalty to the religious heritage of the Jewish people was symbolized by placing in the stone the book of books—a Hebrew Bible, a prayer book in Hebrew, and a prayer book in Hebrew and English, religious fringes (tsitsith), tefillin, a mezuzah, a marriage contract (kethubbah), a hymn book of the Polonies Talmud Torah School, the Lyons and de Sola Jewish calendar, the form of service used at the dedication of the second Mill Street Synagogue in 1818, and a package of *terra santa*—the earth from the Holy Land. There were placed in the stone also the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society and the report on its organization, the constitution and by-laws of the Jewish Theological Seminary and some of its biennial reports, and a copy of the letter

sent by the Newport Jewish community to George Washington and of his reply. The date was recorded by the inclusion of some coins then in use, copies of current Jewish and secular newspapers, and the invitation to the ceremonies and the program of the day.[21]

Arnold Brunner, the architect of the new synagogue, designed many public buildings, among them the School of Mines of Columbia University, the Cadet Hospital at West Point, and the State Department Building in Washington. The builder, Percy Jacobs, was a member of the old Jacobs and Phillips families of the congregation. In the construction of the building, Sabbaths, festivals and Holy Days were all strictly observed.

The first estimate of the cost of construction was in the neighborhood of $100,000. When the building was finished, it represented an expenditure of more than a quarter of a million dollars. Difficulties in the work and exacting standards of perfection in detail and in quality of furnishings, shared in causing this wide gap between the initial estimate and the final cost. Every detail of the work was daily watched by the president of the congregation, L. Napoleon Levy. It was deservedly said of him that he was "the ruling spirit, having the whole matter under his able supervision," giving to the work "unremitted attention . . . practical knowledge . . . indomitable perseverance." Every year on the anniversary of the dedication of the synagogue his name is recalled in a special prayer of grateful memory.

The completed synagogue was dedicated on the evening of Lag L'Omer, Wednesday, May 19, 1897. Special music, additional to that of the synagogue choir of men and boys, was provided by the Halevy Chorus of which the choirmaster, Leon M. Kramer, was the founder and the director. Since the dedication took place on a weekday, the use of instrumental music was permitted. Organ, with brass and string orchestration, gave musical distinction to this memorable and inspiring experience. The melodies used were drawn from varied sources. They included one composed for the occasion by Mr. Kramer, traditional Sephardi themes associated with Sabbaths, festivals, and Holy Days, as well as compositions by Solomon Sulzer, Sir Joseph Barnby, Charles K. Salomon, Louis Lewandowski, M. Moss, D. A. de Sola, and H. Pereira Mendes.

With stirring symbolism of loyal continuity, Dr. Horatio Gomez, great-great-grandson of Lewis Moses Gomez who was the president of the congregation in 1730 when the first Mill Street Synagogue was consecrated, ceremoniously opened the doors of the new synagogue. Fifteen scrolls of the

Torah were borne in and carried reverently to the steps of the Ark. As if taking from them the light of the Torah, L. Napoleon Levy kindled the perpetual lamp which he had given to the synagogue. The scrolls of the Torah were then carried seven times around the synagogue in traditional circuits accompanied by the singing of Biblical verses.

After the scrolls were deposited in the Ark, the Reverend Meldola de Sola of Montreal offered a prayer from the pulpit. This was followed by a fervent sermon delivered by the Reverend Sabato Morais of Philadelphia in which he appealed especially to the women to strengthen the influence of the synagogue. Dr. Mendes gave the sermon of consecration in the spirit of prayerful faith.

The Renaissance Greek architecture of the building was something of an innovation at a time when the Moorish style, associated with a monotheistic culture, was considered appropriate for a synagogue. Soon, however, it was copied by other congregations building synagogues. It did not long remain strange to find that there was a synagogue within the stately Hellenic structure of Indiana limestone with its handsome bronze gates and its classic façade with four fluted Corinthian columns and elaborately decorated cornice and pediment.

From the outside one could not guess the architectural problem which had been overcome. Ancient Jewish regulation requires that the door of the synagogue face the direction in which the congregation turns in prayer. When one rises up to pray, one should physically as in one's heart turn toward Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Holy of Holies. Of Daniel we read that in exile in Babylon "his windows were open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he prayed . . ." [22] The Ark of the Torah in an American synagogue should therefore be placed at the east, and one enters the synagogue from the west, bowing reverently toward the Ark and beyond its physical presence to the Temple emplacement upon Mount Zion. "Lo, in Thine abundant love I enter Thy house; in reverence to Thee I bow toward Thy holy temple." The entrance to Shearith Israel's synagogue from its western end through the side doors on 70th Street was therefore extremely important, though it had not the imposing appearance of the gates on Central Park West. These are used for the most part when leaving the synagogue and on such occasions as weddings. This arrangement obviated a blank closed

frontage on the Avenue, such as had the Crosby Street Synagogue, and gave to the structure a handsome approach and an impressive façade.

The outer dimensions of the building are 85 feet in height, 76 feet frontage on Central Park West, and 108 feet on 70th Street. The main auditorium is nearly square (69 by 70 feet). Yet the lines and the depth of the women's gallery along the north and south sides create the impression of considerably greater length than breadth. The ceiling over the women's gallery is some 57 feet above the floor. In the central part of the building the ceiling is broken up into caissons and is supported on four massive beams resting on carved consoles. This obviates the need for pillars which would have obstructed the sweep of the auditorium. Notwithstanding the traditional Sephardi arrangement of the seats at right angles to the Ark, the lines of the synagogue focus on the Ark. Seven steps of Numidian marble, 21 feet wide, lead up in noble serenity to the bronze pulpit and the golden doors of the Ark itself which enshrines sixteen scrolls of the Torah. As in many Sephardi synagogues the doors of the Ark are not covered by the elaborate curtain (parokhet) that is a familiar sight in most Ashkenazi synagogues. The doors of the Ark are centrally set in a wall of Sienna marble and flanked with pilasters and columns. That wall determined the color scheme of the whole of the interior of the synagogue. Originally it was yellow; with the years for the most part this has darkened to brown. The upper west gallery facing the Ark was designed for use by the choir, but it was found to be acoustically unsuitable for this purpose. The choir was therefore moved to the gallery at the opposite end of the building, closer to the congregation.

At times the boards composing the floor of the reader's platform in the main synagogue were heard to creak. This was due to the fact that they were not cut and shaped originally for the synagogue in which they are now laid. They made up the very floor on which the hazzan stood in the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, the Crosby Street Synagogue, and it is said also the Mill Street Synagogue of 1730. Their transfer to the new building symbolizes the desire of each generation in Shearith Israel to stand in prayer where their fathers stood in the shrine of Judaism.

The twelve bronze candlesticks around the reading desk in the main synagogue were the gift of Dr. H. Pereira Mendes in memory of his father, the Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes. A little later, members of the family

of Harmon Hendricks presented the bronze tablet in memory of the Reverend J. J. Lyons. The Hebra Hased Va-Amet on its centenary in 1902 erected the tablet commemorating Gershom Mendes Seixas, and in 1905 "on the 250th anniversary of the settlement of the Jews in the United States and of the founding of the congregation" there was set up the tablet in memory of the ministers of the congregation.

The "Little Synagogue," as the chapel adjoining the main synagogue on the south side is lovingly called, with its chaste and fine proportions follows the style of northern European synagogues of the Sephardi tradition. Its dimensions, 24 by 31 feet, are but little smaller than those of the first Mill Street Synagogue which was thirty-five feet square. Its appurtenances carry the aura of age and the nostalgia of remembrance. Three of the hard wooden benches, too narrow for comfort, with seats under which are lockers (gaveta) to hold books and prayer shawls, were in use in the Mill Street Synagogue of 1730. The tablet of the Ten Commandments and the two vases over the Ark, the four large brass candlesticks around the reading desk and the two before the Ark, also come from that first synagogue erected in North America. There is a tradition that the Tablet of the Ten Commandments had been over the Ark of the synagogues that antedated the building of 1730. The two plain benches, the seats reserved for the president and the vice-president as well as the reading desk and the mahogany rail around it, come from the Crosby Street Synagogue of 1834.[23]

"The commandment is a lamp and the Torah is a light." [24] Hanging in the chapel before the Ark is the Ner Tamid (perpetual lamp) which was kindled, or perhaps rekindled, at the dedication of the Mill Street Synagogue in 1730. In that small synagogue are also to be found three votive lamps with personal associations. One of these is a hanging brass lamp for seven wicks that had been used in the Mill Street Synagogue and that later was hung in the congregational succah. When Adolphus S. Solomons moved to Washington in 1859, there was loaned to him this oil lamp that was no longer used by the synagogue in the days of gas lighting. It was used in his home in the capital city as a Sabbath lamp. Julia Solomons, the last of his eight daughters, died in 1948. She directed in her will that it be given back to the congregation.[25]

Alongside the old Sabbath lamp is one of recent date, 1925. Individual worshipers kindle a wick in its bowl of oil on the anniversary of the death of one of their kin. This bronze lamp was given by G. Richard Davis in memory of

his sister, Alice Davis Menken, outstanding creative social worker who was for many years president of the Shearith Israel Sisterhood.

A third lamp of brass with bronze trim, now hanging over the women's section in the Little Synagogue, was presented to the congregation by Solomon Lazarus of Jamaica, B.W.I., in 1860. This was the perpetual lamp given to the new synagogue to be opened on 19th Street. At the consecration of that synagogue it was kindled by Lawrence Blumenthal.

Many have been the physical improvements made in the building since its construction. In 1902, five years after the synagogue was opened, the little vestry house adjoining the synagogue on Central Park West was transformed into a five-story building to serve as the minister's residence and study. In the preceding year, 1901, a novel device, a telephone, had been installed in the vestry house. Other physical improvements were introduced as time went on. A water pump was put in to divert the overflow from a spring which had made the lower sections of the synagogue building uncomfortably damp. The construction of the Eighth Avenue subway completely diverted that spring and gave the synagogue a dry basement. Shortly after the completion of the subway, Central Park West was torn up again, and once more the synagogue profited from a public utility which then became available. Hitherto the heating of the building had been a popular and a perennial source of complaint, despite generous use of fuel. After the pipes of the New York Steam Corporation were laid along Central Park West, heat unlimited became available at the pull of a lever. If complaint there had to be (and there are some who regard criticism as a sign of health in a congregation), it was that the synagogue, no longer seemingly inhospitably cold, was sometimes too hot.

In the same year, 1930, a remarkable transformation of a drafty corridor room and its adjacent dark shaft gave the congregation a lovely and gracefully proportioned social room. This was constructed by Mr. and Mrs. Albert J. Elias in grateful commemoration of their golden wedding anniversary that occurred in December, 1929. A new chapter in the meaningful activities of the congregation was opened by the Elias Social Room. Pleasantly furnished and handsomely panelled in Early American style, it forms an artistic setting for fellowship in faith. It adjoins the Little Synagogue, and has also something of the tranquillity and peace which mark that historic small shrine.

The construction of the Elias Social Room involved no small engineering problems. For fifty-one weeks in the year an open shaft has to be covered and

organically absorbed into the room. But during the one week of the festival of Tabernacles, the part of the room in which the harvest booth is constructed has to be again an open shaft with only leafy boughs strewn across a slight covering frame through which those there gathering may catch some glimpse of the sky and the stars. Engineers solved this problem and succeeded in combining a twentieth-century technical equipment with a tradition thousands of years old. The threat of seasonal showers had previously been met by a rolled canvas placed at the edge of the roof. Heavy and often recalcitrant ropes were summoned to unroll the canvas when the rain began to fall. The time needed for unrolling the canvas was often long enough for the rain to wet or even drench the tables. But now the push of a button opens or closes the roof of the succah. This moves in two parts simultaneously, an inner roof which forms part of the ceiling of the Elias Room and an exterior copper covering.

The Elias Social Room changed more than the space it occupies. It changed the attitude of the congregation to the rest of the building. In the same year, 1930, Mrs. L. Napoleon Levy, who for some time had desired to establish a memorial to her husband, undertook to transform the not too attractive basement assembly hall into the cheerfully decorated and well-illuminated L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium. This is a worthy memorial to a man who served Shearith Israel as its president for twenty-eight years, during which he counted no day complete in which he did not include in his activities some service for the synagogue that was his life and the length of his days. The platform of the Auditorium was adjusted for amateur theatricals. The lobbies were made to give a pleasant and harmonious access to the larger hall. On the walls of the east lobby, pictures and prints were hung to illustrate the history of the congregation. The Shearith Israel League presented a grand piano to encourage the participation of professional musicians at functions. The League also assumed responsibility for the transfer of the classrooms from the dark south side of the building to the better lighted and better ventilated north side.

In the days of butlers, housemaids, dumb-waiters for food, and call buttons in every room, the kitchen in the parsonage had been set no less than two floors below the dining room. This room was later changed into a study, office, classroom, and conference room for the Reverend Dr. Gerstein. The handicap of long steep staircases necessitated by the high ceilings in the parsonage was overcome by the installation of inclinators.

Progressively each neglected nook and corner was discovered by one or an-

other family as a challenge for still further beautifying their spiritual home. The Lillian Lobsenz Memorial Library meant the transformation of unused space into a pleasantly equipped library and reading room with bookcases and soft wood panels. At that time there was added to the library a gift of books purchased from a fund contributed by the fellow teachers of Lillian Lobsenz in Public School 64 in memory of their well-loved colleague.

Storage space and two cramped dark classrooms in the southwest corner of the basement were combined and redesigned beyond recognition into the much used Benjamin Delvalle Fidanque clubroom. Mr. Fidanque, coming from a family in the West Indies and Panama, gave to Shearith Israel many years of devoted service as vice-president. For a brief period in 1926, he also served as president. After his death in 1937, it was felt that a room for youth activities and family gatherings would be happily expressive of his kindly spirit. The spacious, light, and attractive Fidanque Room has been the scene of Sabbath luncheons happy with song and benedictions, intimate weddings, study groups, lecture courses, classes, and receptions. Folding Ping-pong tables used by new Americans, scouts and other youth groups, have often displaced its ordinary classroom desks and chairs. A number of prints hanging in that room portray synagogues in different parts of the world, in addition to portraits of Mr. Fidanque, Dr. Mendes, Hazzan Lyons, and the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas.

On the entrance floor a room links parsonage and synagogue. In it are books covering a wide range of Jewish studies, prayer books and Talmud, Bible commentaries and encyclopedias, history and philosophy. In memory of Isaac Schneierson, this anteroom was transformed by gracious furnishings and warm wood paneling into a minister's study.

The acoustic problem which had beset the Nineteenth Street Synagogue was repeated in a measure in the 70th Street building. This time there was no dome to be blamed. Time brought the answer in the form of a microphone installed in the pulpit in 1928.

In the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, the introduction of incandescent gas lamps had been a newsworthy item. It was not long before the combined gas and electric fixtures in the Seventieth Street Synagogue caused complaints. A first attempt to unite beauty with good illumination came in memorial to Isaac Bernheim. Then were installed along the front of the ladies gallery modern electric brackets. These shed a warm and a glareless light. They are

hanging lamps, inspired in their design by the historic perpetual lamp in the Little Synagogue. Then ten new and more effective lamps were installed in 1938 under the gallery through gifts of the League and the Men's Club, and eight members of the congregation. When experts in illumination developed floodlights, they gave to Shearith Israel the solution of much of its problem of lighting. Undeterred by the sixty-five feet from caissoned ceiling to floor, Jacob Delvalle Fidanque, or Jack Fidanque as he was popularly called, chairman of the House Committee, climbed to the top and directed the installation of floodlights in the ceiling.

Jack Fidanque was a son of the vice-president of the congregation, Benjamin D. Fidanque, and a leader in his own right. He was an indefatigable worker for his synagogue. Of him it was said that a task accepted was a task accomplished. His was the assignment to direct the complete redecoration of the synagogue in the summer of 1948. In order to be able to reach every corner of the ceiling the painters filled the synagogue with elaborate scaffolding, the erection of which alone had cost several thousand dollars. As L. Napoleon Levy had done almost a half century earlier, Jack Fidanque supervised every step of the work. When the congregation gathered to welcome the New Year, they felt as though the synagogue had been born anew in its freshness and brightness. A touch of blue in the ceiling, a darkening of the beige tint on the walls to keep pace with the natural deepening of the color in the marble, a better microphone, and the new lights, all heightened the beauty of the sanctuary. But the congregation which met to applaud Jack Fidanque sadly mourned some two months later the sudden passing on November 4, 1948, of this faithful servant of the synagogue. He had been treasurer of the congregation for twenty-five years, a trustee for eleven years, a founder and president of the Shearith Israel League and an organizer of the Men's Club. Of him the board of trustees truly said that he was "a gentleman of fine tradition . . . a friend who translated friendship into helpfulness."

In the architect's original plans for the building, provision was made for adding a row of benches as the front row in the men's section when these would be needed. They were set up in 1941, bringing the total seating capacity to just under 700. But because of architectural difficulties, the corresponding need for more seats in the women's gallery has not been met.

In the original planning of the synagogue, it was also stipulated that nothing but the best was to go into its furnishings. The distinctive carpet, so familiar



The Sanctuary: eternal light hangs before the Ark where Torah scrolls are kept



Scaffolding spanned 70-foot rise to ceiling for the renovation of the synagogue interior and its lighting



The Little Synagogue like a bridge across time enshrines sacred mementos of the past. Its benches and brass candelabra of 1730 are antedated by eternal light and tablets of the Ten Commandments.

to two generations of congregants, was especially designed and woven for Shearith Israel. Many wondered what would happen when in time the most used parts would wear out. This indeed began to happen when the first fifty years had passed. It was then that a carpet was woven anew, identical in pattern and color with the former carpet, under the generous encouragement of Samuel S. Schneierson.

Many of these major expenditures to maintain the well-loved synagogue in all its beauty were incurred notwithstanding questions as to the permanence of the synagogue's location. The history of the successive moves from Mill Street, Crosby Street, and Nineteenth Street, epitomizes the relentless instability of the character of a neighborhood in New York. The splendid Nineteenth Street Synagogue was occupied only thirty-seven years, the Crosby Street Synagogue but twenty-five years, and the second Mill Street Synagogue barely fifteen years. In a city that is always changing, a decision not to move is as dynamic as is moving. Shearith Israel was somewhat of a pioneer on 70th Street. When the synagogue was built in 1897, there were in New York City but 300,000 Jews. Few of them lived in what was then the new neighborhood around Central Park where there were still open lots and clustering shanties. But the choice of location of the synagogue had been well made. Soon an unbroken phalanx of comparatively uniform brownstone private houses on the side streets made the West Side an important center of population. On Central Park West itself a succession of multiple dwellings rose higher and higher toward skyscraper heights. A considerable number of Jews moved into the houses and the towering apartment houses of the district.

Furthermore, the construction of the Eighth Avenue subway with a station at the very door of the synagogue, greatly enlarged the neighborhood which Shearith Israel was able to serve. Its educational, social and communal program included many who came from the far ends of Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. All congregational activities showed an upward curve. Shearith Israel's membership grew, and the number of its affiliated societies likewise increased. The religious school classes, the youth and adult groups, lectures, forums, and festival celebrations, all extended the sphere of their influence. More communal organizations, both local and national, sought to meet in the building. Its use had passed comfortable or optimal use. It might have been said that with this growth in activity the maximum service which the synagogue building could render had been reached. But by no means

could it have been said that the facilities which were offered satisfied the increasing social and educational calls on a growing, progressive, alert congregation. The crowding inspired the desire to give not less but more service and hospitality.

Mindful of all these calls upon the synagogue's facilities, Dr. Pool proposed to the trustees in 1943 that the approaching tercentenary of Shearith Israel might be an appropriate occasion for bringing into being a dramatic expansion of the building in keeping with precedents in the history of the congregation.[26] Two and a quarter centuries earlier, when Shearith Israel dedicated the first American synagogue building, within a year it built a synagogue center. Remembrance and anticipation could now be brought together into fertile union. The idea of creating a synagogue center as part of the tercentenary celebration was accepted by the congregants with enthusiasm. Though in 1943 the tercentenary was more than ten years off, a committee was appointed, and the congregational response was encouragingly positive, immediate, and generous.

The business of imaginative planning began. At first it was thought that the parsonage on Central Park West might be rebuilt as a social and educational center. This was eventually ruled out by the building code's restrictions on the area of the plot that could be utilized. The trustees then decided to buy the two houses adjoining the synagogue on the very lots on 70th Street which the congregation had resold in 1897 when they thought that they had more land than they needed. Then with the sale of the 42-foot frontage on 70th Street had gone the stipulation that the houses to be built there must harmonize with the architecture of the synagogue, the trustees imposing "such restrictions affecting the character and position of the dwellings to be erected thereon as would be consistent with the dignity and uses for which our edifice was designed," a condition unfortunately not always fulfilled.

Eventually a substantial price had to be paid to purchase the two houses for its Community House and School. Then tenants would not move, and, under the rent laws, they could not be required to vacate except on orders of the Rent Commission after extended hearings and compliance with onerous conditions. It was several years before the houses were freed of all their tenants and construction could proceed. In the meantime, costs were rising. Various difficulties imposed by the building code compelled the abandonment of the first ambitious plans of construction in which the two houses were to be torn down. Finally there was evolved a plan of reconstruction which

would retain part of the framework and adapt the interior and the front of the buildings for the efficient functioning of a school and social center.

During this period of planning, the change in the population trends of the neighborhood became sharper. The trustees came face to face with the necessity of making a crucial decision: to build or not to build, confronted as they were by a rapid deterioration in the character of the side streets in the entire neighborhood. In defiance of municipal and health laws alike, stately houses on the West Side were being broken up into rooming houses in which single rooms might be unscrupulously turned into crowded "apartments." The poor immigrant on whom blame was set was more often than not the victim of these conditions. Social and religious leaders of the community tried to arrest the deterioration of the West Side by demanding the enforcement of sanitary and housing regulations. Time will tell whether law and civic pride or individual profit will prevail. The general decline in so many of the streets was in part counterbalanced by the development of television studios and business buildings in the neighborhood and by plans to build at Columbus Circle a convention and commercial center and an enlarged housing development. Above all, there was the desire, come what may, to have the educational and social activities of the congregation closely joined to the synagogue itself. Therefore, despite discouraging realities the congregation firmly stood by the decision to build the center where originally planned.

A vigorous reconstruction program was evolved to make best use of the space and the funds available. Clubroom and other facilities were planned for boys and girls, and for all the youth and adult activities sponsored under the banner of Shearith Israel. Parents and children together will be able to enter the great companionship of Jewish books set out on low shelves for the children and on higher shelves for their elders. Throughout, for young and old alike the aim of the center is to stimulate the rewarding and exciting experience of learning, and to foster fellowship and friendship among the congregation through the added social facilities and program in the synagogue house. Repeatedly young people had asked permission to hold dances in the synagogue building, a request which had been consistently refused. In 1919 and 1920, this question threw the congregation into prolonged discussion. An acute division of opinion developed as to whether or not to permit dancing in any part of a building which was first and foremost a synagogue. The debate went on lustily, but in the end the decision remained that there was to be

no dancing in the synagogue building. At long last there will be no need to exile social dancing. Through the new building Shearith Israel can attain its goal of integrated service—religion, education, recreation, and social fellowship all united under the wings of the synagogue.

On June 6, 1954, the cornerstone was laid in a unique ceremonial. The participants ranged from kindergarten children to teenagers. Older congregants were content to act as joyful witnesses of the future. The building was dedicated as part of the tercentenary celebration on November 7, 1954. Then was opened the first of a series of historical exhibits from the archives and collections of the congregation. Two and a quarter centuries after Shearith Israel erected the first American Jewish community house, it renewed that symbol of the continuity between yesterday and tomorrow, with the accent on the youth of today.

The five synagogues of Shearith Israel bore witness to New York's northward march and to its magical growth. As each statelier synagogue rose, from the little building on Mill Street to the present edifice, each generation sought beauty, modernity, and fine appointments in its house of worship. Yet the prophet Isaiah had prodded the people with the question from on high which all generations must answer, "What is the house that you build for Me?" Shearith Israel has not forgotten that the answer to that question did not lie in wood or stone. Its inheritance was not a building but a tradition, a living tradition that was no less luminous in the loft of a mill than in its present beautiful abode.

III. *Living Traditions*



I gave them My statutes and taught them My ordinances, by whose observance man shall live.

EZEKIEL 20:11

THE LITURGY, the ritual, and the music of Congregation Shearith Israel have maintained unbroken the fundamental tradition of Western European Sephardim that was developed during a millennium of life in Spain successively under Visigothic, Moslem, and Christian rule. Within the organic continuity of a common historic tradition, individual congregations inevitably develop local customs of their own. Often these variants born and cherished out of the life of the people become authoritative. The tendency to give sanctity to custom and mores was accepted by the rabbis in the Talmudic era. They named these local variations which inevitably go with a living tradition "minhag." Within the small territory of the Holy Land differing customs developed. For instance, on the day before Passover the Jews in Galilee abstained from all work, while those in Judaea worked until noon. When the Shema', the declaration

of God's unity, was read in synagogue, in the Holy Land the congregation would stand, but in Babylon it remained seated. In the Middle Ages, geography and environmental influences created marked local cultural differences between the Jews of Spain and those of Central and Eastern Europe. The pronunciation of Hebrew was influenced locally by the varying accentuation and intonation of the vernacular of the environment, whether this was Arabic or Spanish, French or German, Polish or Russian. Over the generations the inherited synagogue liturgy itself developed variants between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The synagogue chants took on not a little of the character of the national music of the environment, whether this was Arabic, Spanish, German, or Slavonic.

In the seventeenth century, the Sephardim brought with them from the Iberian peninsula to Amsterdam their own distinctive folk customs, pronunciation of Hebrew, musical chanting, and hymns. The inspired poetic outpouring of the Jewish Golden Age in Spain entered the liturgy. All these traditions spread from the fecund center in Amsterdam to London and Hamburg and were brought to the Western world by those who established the first Jewish communities in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in such places as Brazil, Surinam, Curaçao, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, Barbados, New York, Newport, Savannah, Philadelphia, and Charleston. It was this religious tradition which Shearith Israel has faithfully preserved to this day.

The Ashkenazim who in every generation joined the congregation learned to pronounce and accent their Hebrew in the Sephardi way. They were called to a reading of the *Torah'* on *Shabbat'*, not to the *Tou'roh* on *Shab'bos.* They celebrated the festival of *Shabuot'* or the Holy Day of *Rosh Hashanah'* instead of *Shvu'ous* or *Rosh Hasho'noh.* They learned to use the Sephardically pronounced Hebrew Sabbath greeting *Shabbat' Shalom'* instead of the Ashkenazi formula "Good Shabbos." Not a few of them became *parnas* in Shearith Israel, while when holding the same office in an Ashkenazi congregation they would have been called *gab'bai.* On the other hand, the community as a whole early yielded to Ashkenazi tradition in speaking of *ko'sher* instead of *kasher'*, and in calling the anniversary of a death by the German name *Jahrzeit.* They also referred to the *esnoga* by the German term *shool,* the name popularly given to a synagogue because of its use as a *Schule*—school.

The Sephardi tradition of pronouncing Hebrew is derived from the classic

Hebrew spoken in Jerusalem in olden days, while the Ashkenazi accents brought to New York from northern and central European lands go back to the Hebrew heard of old in Galilee in the north of the Holy Land. The transliteration of Hebrew names in the ancient Greek and Latin translations of the Bible reproduces the accent of Hebrew that was later called Sephardi. This classic pronunciation has been maintained uninterruptedly since Bible times in some lands of the Middle East. This fact together with the euphony and the scrupulous accuracy of grammatical accentuation among the Sephardim were the factors which led Eliezer ben Yehuda, the father of modern spoken Hebrew, to insist that that pronunciation be adopted, when with dramatic vision he revived the Hebrew language as the mother tongue in the Land of Israel. Today the officially recognized and standard pronunciation of Hebrew in Israel is Sephardi, and all Israelis feel completely at home when they join in the Hebrew of the prayers in Shearith Israel. It is also the pronunciation used in Christian theological seminaries, as well as in an ever increasing number of Hebrew schools and seminaries in all parts of the world.

When Ashkenazim arrived in Nieuw Amsterdam and New York where for one and three-quarter centuries Shearith Israel was the only synagogue, they adjusted themselves to the new melodies they heard as they did to the unfamiliar pronunciation. In place of the recondite and stylistically abstruse hymns of Eleazar Kalir and medieval German rabbis that predominate in the Ashkenazi prayer book, they accepted the lofty poems in the classic Hebrew of Solomon ibn Gabirol, Abraham and Moses ibn Ezra, Jehudah Halevi, and others in the Jewish poetic galaxy of medieval Spain.

In Shearith Israel the Sephardi tradition is organic and permanent. The constitution forthrightly affirms that "the fixed prayers, the Torah and Haphtaroth, shall forever be read in the Hebrew language according to the Minhag Sephardim." The preservation and the transmission of this minhag in so far as concerned the wording of the prayers were further assured by the prayer books used in the synagogue. For the first hundred years all prayer books in the congregation were brought from Amsterdam. Not infrequently there were not enough prayer books available. The Swedish naturalist, Peter Kalm, who visited the synagogue in 1748, noted that there were more congregants than books, when he said that "many of the men had Hebrew books in which they sang and read alternately." [1] It was not until the year 1761 that a Jewish book of prayer was printed in America. It appeared in New York as

a small octavo volume of fifty-two pages containing no Hebrew. It also had the distinction of being the first printed Jewish prayer book in the English language to appear anywhere. Its editor-translator is unnamed. The title page reads, *Evening Service of Roshashanah and Kippur or The Beginning of the Year and The Day of Atonement. New York: Printed by W. Weyman in Broad Street, MDCCLXI.*

This anonymous work was followed five years later, in 1766, by another volume of prayers, again in English translation without the Hebrew text, but this time with the name of the translator on the title page. *Prayers for Shabbath, Rosh Hashanah, and Kippur or The Sabbath, the Beginning of the Year, and The Day of Atonements; with The Amidah and Musaph of the Moadim, or Solemn Seasons. According to the Order of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews; Translated by Isaac Pinto. And for him printed by John Holt, in New York. A.M. 5526.*

This later book contains only prayers supplementary to those in the earlier volume. It is probable that the earlier publication was also the work of the learned bachelor layman, Isaac Pinto. These two books, of which very few copies have come down to our day, were issued not with the intention of displacing the Hebrew language, but to help toward understanding the prayers, and to encourage attendance at synagogue among those unfamiliar with the sacred tongue. In the preface to the volume of 1761 there is a startling prescience of the miracle of Hebrew reborn in our days. Speaking of the Hebrew language, the translator writes of his "desire to preserve it, in firm persuasion that it will again be reestablished in Israel."

A little later, there were in use in the New York synagogue some of the Sephardi daily and Sabbath prayer books containing both Hebrew text and English translation edited by Alexander Alexander in London in 1771–76, and in greater number those prepared by David Levi in London in 1789–93. After four decades these were displaced by the complete sets of well-edited and handsomely published Sephardi Hebrew prayer books with English translation again published in London in the third decade of the nineteenth century by David Aaron de Sola, as well as the series independently prepared at the same period by Isaac Leeser, rabbi of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. In the middle of the nineteenth century, in American Jewish traditional circles Leeser was the undisputed leader of his generation. Through his many publications, and especially through his prayer books, he became

spiritually a part of the New York congregation. His edition of the prayer book for the minor fast days in the Jewish year is still the one predominantly in use in the synagogue.

The first prayer book in Hebrew and English published in New York appeared in 1826. This was *The Form of Daily Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews as Read in their Synagogues and Used in their Families. Translated into English from the Hebrew by Solomon Henry Jackson. The Hebrew Text carefully Revised and Corrected by E. S. Lazarus, New York. Printed by S. H. Jackson at the Hebrew and English Printing Office, 23 Mercer Street. A.M. 5586.* It was for the New York of those days an ambitious undertaking to print so much punctuated Hebrew. Copies of this volume are now very rarely to be found.

Late in the nineteenth century the congregation used the edition of the Leeser prayer book as re-edited by Abraham de Sola of Montreal. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Sephardi prayer books edited in London by Haham Moses Gaster also came to be frequently used. The beautifully printed de luxe edition was especially popular. However, as time went on, the need of a newly edited traditional prayer book made itself felt. David de Sola Pool, a great-grandson of David de Sola, undertook to carry on where his forefather had left off. For a number of years he had felt the urge to meet the primary need of prayer books for the growing number of American Sephardi synagogues which were coming into existence. There was a call for a new translation in simpler and more modern style than the early Victorian English of the prayer books in use. There was also an urgent need for an inexpensive volume. Dr. Pool began to prepare these books to contain a more accurate Hebrew text than was currently available, an improved typographical layout in which Hebrew and English poetry would be printed in accepted poetic form, and with continuity of text.

In 1929, he organized the Union of Sephardic Congregations for "the promotion of the religious interests of Sephardic Jews." From the beginning, one of its projects for assuring continuance of the traditional liturgy was that of preparing prayer books for the numerous new congregations of Sephardim which had sprung up over the United States in the second and third decades of the century. Prayer books with an English translation were practically unavailable to them. Henry S. Hendricks, president of Shearith Israel and active in the Union of Sephardic Congregations, undertook as a memorial tribute

to his mother, Mrs. Edgar Hendricks, to initiate the series by paying for the printing of the first volume containing the prayers for weekdays and Sabbaths. This book has been printed in several editions and it has helped establish the order of service used in Shearith Israel as standard in Sephardi congregations throughout the United States. Personal prayers in illness and for health, benedictions for special occasions in the home, are to be found in the Daily and Sabbath volume. The sale of this first volume made possible the publication in 1937 of a volume for the New Year. The call for the completion of the liturgy continued and found response. In 1939 the Book of Prayers for Atonement Day appeared as a memorial to Bertha de Mesquita. The inclusive volume of Festival Prayers—Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles—was underwritten in memory of Herman and Anna Salomon. The Haggadah, the traditional home service of instruction and prayer for the first two nights of Passover, was reprinted separately from the Festival Prayer Book in its Hebrew and English text for convenient use in homes and schools which follow the Sephardi minhag.

In the foreword, the Union of Sephardic Congregations has inscribed words which expressed the feelings of the editor and of others before him who assumed the task of translating the ancient prayers "as a labor of love and reverence that new generations may with deep devotion perceive and prize the beauty, comfort and inspiration of Israel's time-honored prayers to the Almighty Father of all mankind."

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to some extent the nineteenth century, American Sephardi congregations were dependent for their prayer books on overseas sources. The volumes published by the Union of Sephardic Congregations have reversed this situation. Originating in Congregation Shearith Israel, these prayer books have found a worldwide outlet. They give recognition to occasional variants in ritual in the Sephardi world, and this facilitates their being used not only in the United States and neighboring Canada, but also as far afield as India and central Africa. An all-Hebrew edition of the Daily and Sabbath prayer book has been published for non-English-speaking countries, and is found in use in synagogues in the Orient, in North Africa, and in Latin America.

In the fall of 1953 High Holy Day services were conducted in Madrid by the Reverend D. A. Jessurun Cardozo. At those services, the first to be given official recognition by the Spanish government since the somber days

of Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition, prayers were read from these American Sephardi books. They were the very prayers which five hundred years earlier had risen from the hearts of those who, driven from Spain, had wandered forth East and West, North and South. The associations of half a millennium of religious integrity and loyalty gave enriched meaning to the words which had not changed.

Visitors to the synagogue who are unfamiliar with historic orthodox Jewish practice have often commented on four aspects of the service—the prayers in Hebrew, the white prayer shawls called tallith (or talleth) worn by the men, the head covering of the men, and the fact that men and women sit separately, the men on the ground floor and the women in the balcony.

In Shearith Israel all the prayers in the liturgy are in Hebrew, the holy tongue. In the congregation's earliest days some Portuguese was used at one or two points in some of the services. The hazzan would recite in Portuguese the part of the prayer for the government which mentioned by name the monarch of Britain, the governing authorities of the state, and the municipal officers of the City of New York. In earlier Nieuw Amsterdam by slight adaptation of the wording used in Holland, that part of the prayer for the government, the *gebed voor Land-en stadsbestuur*, would have read:

A os grandes e poderosos senhores, estados de Hollanda, & West-Frieslant, e a os altos e poderosos senhores estados gerais das provincias unidas (con todos seus aliados), e a os muy nobles e dignissimos senhores burgamestres, e magestrado desta cidade de Nieuw Amsterdam.

A century later the wording of the prayer as recorded was

A Sua Real Majestad nosso Senhor Rey Georgue o Terceyro & a Senhora nossa Reyna Charlotta, a Sua Real Alteza a Princesa Douger de Veles [Wales] y toda a Real famílla, a Sua Excellensia o Honrado Senhor Governador y todos os Senhores de Seo Conselho o Magistrado desta Cidade de New York e todos os seos Devedares.[2]

In 1783 Gershom Mendes Seixas writing from Philadelphia stated that he was "unacquainted with the Spanish and Portuguese languages which have ever been used since the first establishment of the synagogue." These languages were abandoned by the congregation after the Revolution. English was then used to designate the heads of the government for whom prayer was recited: "The President and the Vice-President of the United States of America, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York, represented in the Senate and Assembly, and the magistrates of this city."

In the prayer for the government, the parent congregation in Amsterdam still uses the Portuguese language to mention the queen and the royal family and the leading government authorities of the country and the city.

In Shearith Israel in earlier generations, on the eve of the Fast of Ab, after the chanting of the Book of Lamentations and some dirges, the officiating hazzan would dramatically announce

Hermanos, Casa de Israel, oyid! En esta triste y funesta noche, cumplen . . . años que fue destruida nuestra Casa Santa segunda por los crueles Romanos, y desda entonces fuimos cautivos de nuestra tierra y esparcidos en las quatro partes del mundo, sin Rey, ni establecimiento, siendo el escarnio de las gentes y el sprobio de las naciones.

Cayose la corona de nuestra cabeza. Infeliz de nos que pecamos.

Brethren of the house of Israel, hearken. On this sad and doleful night there are . . . years since our second holy Temple was destroyed by the cruel Romans, and since then we have been captives away from our land and scattered to the four corners of the world, without a king or settlement, being the scorn of the peoples and the contempt of the nations.

The crown has fallen from our head. Woe unto us that we have sinned.

In the morning service on the Fast of Ab it was also customary of old for the one who chanted the prophetic reading of the morning, Jeremiah 8:13–9:23, to recite an elaborate Spanish paraphrase after each verse. For example, the verse Jeremiah 9:22, "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his richness" became in the Spanish paraphrase,

Dixo Yrmiyahu el Propheta a Ysrael, assi dixo Adonai no se alabe el sabio con su sciencia, aun que sea tan sabio como el Rey Selomoh, que su sciencia no le hade aprovechar nada, a escapar de mano del enemigo: ni se alabe el Valiente con su valentia, aun que sea tan valiente como Simson, poco le hade aprovechar su valentia: ni se alabe el Rico con su riqueza, aun que sea tan rico como Achab hijo de Homri: por que mi sentencia ya es dada, y no le aprovechara nada, su riqueza.

Said Jeremiah the prophet to Israel: Thus spake the Lord: let not the wise pride himself on his knowledge, though he be wise as King Solomon whom his knowledge profited in no wise to escape from the hand of the enemy. Nor let the strong pride himself on his strength, though he be as strong as Samson whom his strength profited nothing. Nor let the rich pride himself on his riches, though he be rich as Ahab son of Omri, for my sentence is already given, and his riches will profit him in no wise.

When the Spanish artist Zuloaga was visiting the synagogue, on being shown this Spanish in a prayer book still in use he turned to Dr. Pool and exclaimed, "Why, that is the Spanish of Cervantes!"

In the earlier days of the New York congregation, the various functions carried out in connection with the reading from the scroll of the Torah were known by their Portuguese or Spanish names. Some of these terms, while no longer announced during the services, are still familiar and in current use among congregants. One still hears words such as *levantar* (signifying to lift up the scroll of the Torah), *levantador* (the one who lifts up the scroll), *accompanhar* (to follow a scroll of the Torah in its procession to and from the Ark), and *banca* (*banco*), the name given the two seats of honor on which the president (*parnas presidente*) and the vice-president (*parnas residente*) of the congregation take their place in the *esnoga*. Those gathered in the succah still delight after their meal to sing the four verses of the Spanish hymn of thankful blessing, "Bendigamos." But one no longer hears the once familiar terms *Adjunta* (*Ajunta*) for the governing board of the congregation, *cabaña* for the harvest booth, or *obras pias* as a technical term for charity.

In the Colonial New York congregation the announcement of offerings and of functions preparatory to the reading from the Torah was made in Portuguese, as it still is in the Amsterdam and London congregations. Thus the name was announced of the one *que abrira as Portas do Hechal* (who will open the doors of the Hechal), *que levara, que desenfaxara, que accompanhara o Sepher Torah* (who will carry, who will unbind, who will accompany the Sepher Torah); but in the New York synagogue these have been announced in Hebrew at least since the time of the Revolution. Announcements of the time when future services will begin or of a forthcoming election of trustees, are today made in English. The sermon has always been in the vernacular, the language of communication between rabbi and congregant, teacher and disciple seeking religion's answer to common problems.

Whatever language an individual may use in his personal prayers in his home or synagogue, only Hebrew is the language of congregational worship. It is the language of the synagogue, whatever the native tongue of a Jew might be. Hebrew, the sacred and historic language of the Jewish people, has been a bond between brothers in faith wheresoever they might dwell. Preserving a unique spiritual tradition, it unites worshipers of today with their ancestors for a hundred generations. It echoes in the synagogue words heard in its classic progenitor the Temple of Jerusalem of Bible days. It was in Hebrew that rabbis, sages, seers and poets of the last two thousand years poured out the fervor of their religious emotion. The generations which have preserved and repeated each day the very words Moses taught his people, the

admonishments of the prophets, and the aspirations and the solace of the psalms have been helped thereby to achieve spiritual union with their Deity. Such is the sacred heritage of language which Shearith Israel has treasured. The services chanted in the Bible's classic words transmit uniquely the untranslatable semantics of the Hebrew. The ethical and religious drive of the Jewish psyche, its emotionalism, its romantic conservatism and the tense strength of the Jewish soul, are uniquely expressed in the ancient Biblical language. It requires application and continued study to acquire a knowledge of Hebrew that will make such a treasury meaningful and familiar. But the reward is great. A living language again, Hebrew is a bond between Jews everywhere and between the generations over thousands of years.

The next question which is usually asked by strangers is why a prayer shawl is worn by the men. "Speak to the children of Israel," Moses was told, "and bid them make for themselves throughout their generations a fringe on the corners of their garments . . ." The enveloping shawl, derived from a simple Biblical garb, receives its sanctity from the distinctive fringe or tassel attached to each of its four corners, "that you may look thereon and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them." [3] Thus the symbolism of the fringed tallith springs not only out of geographic or social circumstance, but is derived from a Biblical injunction with all the religious and moral authority that this connotes for the Jew. The prayer shawl is looked on as a flag of faith. It is usually made of fine wool or silk. Like a uniform of prayer, it covers the workaday clothes and adds a distinctive element of dignity and reverential mood to the synagogue services.

The head-covering like the prayer shawl is reminiscent of ancient Jewish life in the sun-drenched Holy Land. In the Orient, head-covering is a frequent formality which has developed both grace of form and courtesy of meaning. When officiating in the tabernacle and the temple, the high priest of old wore a mitre or turban "for glory and beauty." [4] Covering the head was a symbol of respect and reverence. The Talmud tells that Rab Huna, the son of Rabbi Joshua, would never go four cubits with head uncovered because he felt the divine Shechinah above his head. It also records that the mother of Rabbi Nahman bar Isaac never permitted him to go bareheaded, saying to him, "Cover thy head that the reverence of heaven may be on thee." [5] The church in general followed the Roman custom of uncovered head, while the synagogue developed its own distinctive tradition of both men and

women keeping the head reverently covered during prayer. Abraham ibn Yarhi in the thirteenth century mentions that in Spain it was customary to keep the head covered generally and not only for prayer.

The hardest question to answer for a modern visitor to the synagogue is why the women are seated separately in a gallery. The separation of the sexes has not been uniquely characteristic of Jewish worship. In the early days of the dominant Dutch Reformed Church in Nieuw Amsterdam the men and the women were seated separately. The synagogue custom goes back some two thousand years. The spectacle of worship degenerating into Bacchanalian or libidinous orgies had been witnessed by the Biblical Hebrews among their Canaanite neighbors and by the later Jews among their Roman neighbors. As a safeguard, it was found desirable on festive occasions to place the men and the women in separate enclosures in the Jerusalem Temple area so as to offset any tendency to unbecoming frivolity. The remains of some synagogues excavated in Israel from Roman times show a gallery which was approached by a staircase on the outside of the building, an architectural feature which was paralleled in the second Mill Street Synagogue in New York. In interesting contrast, today it is only at an informal festive religious occasion, such as a wedding or the naming and blessing of a child, that men and women sit together in the Shearith Israel Synagogue.

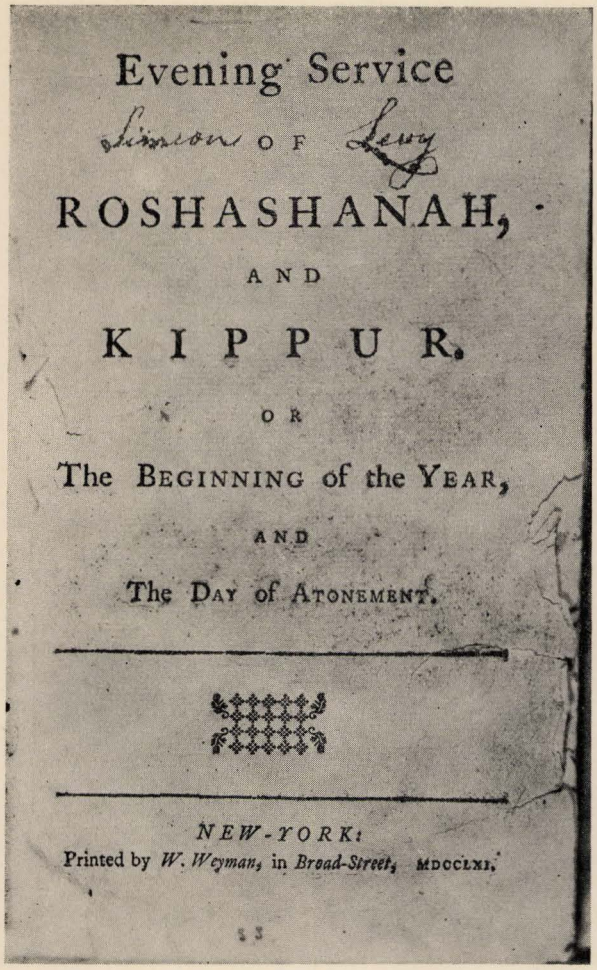
The quest of beauty in every aspect of its religious service characterizes Shearith Israel. When Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, he acclaimed the God of their salvation in words which may be rendered, "This is my God and I shall make beauty for Him." [6] How, ask the rabbis, can one make beauty for God who is the source of all beauty? By carrying out the commands of religion in beauteous forms, they reply. "Build for Him a harvest booth of beauty; take a beautiful palm branch; use a beautiful ram's horn for your shofar; vest yourself with beautiful fringes on your garments; use a beautiful scroll of the Torah that is written for Him on beautiful parchment with a beautiful pen dipped in beautiful ink." In this spirit Moses, Aaron, and the artist Bezalel made the tabernacle in the wilderness a shrine of beauty. Rich purple and crimson, fine linen, the best of leather, the purest oil, most carefully compounded incense, precious stones, and all the finest materials obtainable, were wrought in skilful artistry "for glory and beauty." King Solomon made surpassingly beautiful the Temple of Jerusalem, with its cedar wood, its sumptuous hangings, its finely wrought altars and ceremonial

articles. Of the Temple built in the last century before the common era, the rabbis said that he who had not seen that Temple had never seen true beauty in a building.[7]

In this spirit there have come to Shearith Israel through the generations many gifts of ceremonial and ritual articles in which the beauty of holiness bespoke the faith of the donors. These gifts of parchment scrolls of the Torah, bells for their crowning, and pointers to aid in their reading, ewers and basins for rituals of purification, goblets for the wine of rejoicing and sanctification, parchment scrolls of the Book of Esther, ram's horns for the call to penitence, lamps to symbolize the light of religion and of the undying soul, and many others such as mantles to clothe the scrolls of Torah, and decorative hangings and table pieces used in the harvest booth, reflect for the present generation and those who are to come the warmth of spiritual beauty which the congregation has kindled in the heart of the men and women who for three centuries have assembled in it for worship. These ritual objects, some of which are of high historic and artistic value, are not static museum pieces. They are in use continually, bespeaking a religion that is living, that is lovely and is loved, and that responds to the call of the Psalmist "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." [8]

Many generations and conscious effort have contributed toward achieving and maintaining that beauty which brings the worshiper nearer to his Maker. In the successive synagogues on Mill Street with their limited size, intimacy rather than dignity must have marked the services. There were in them neither the awe and grandeur of architecture nor physical comfort and ease, if we may judge by their narrow hard wooden benches some of which are still in use in the Little Synagogue of the congregation. Whether the opening of a particular window involved ventilation or a draft might readily, and we know sometimes did, disturb the mood of prayer. During the overcrowded services of the High Holy Days there often was a great to-do in finding seats for the children, whose conduct, as we can read between the lines of the records, was that of normal children. Moreover, with each generation there arrived new congregants from overseas. The more free and easy deportment to which they had often been accustomed in their European synagogues had in each generation to yield before the hidalgo Sephardi tradition, usually with good grace and gladness, but now and then reluctantly.

The greatest importance was attached to quiet, decorum, and devoutness



Evening Service

Simeon OF Levy

ROSHASHANAH,

AND

KIPPUR.

OR

The BEGINNING of the YEAR,

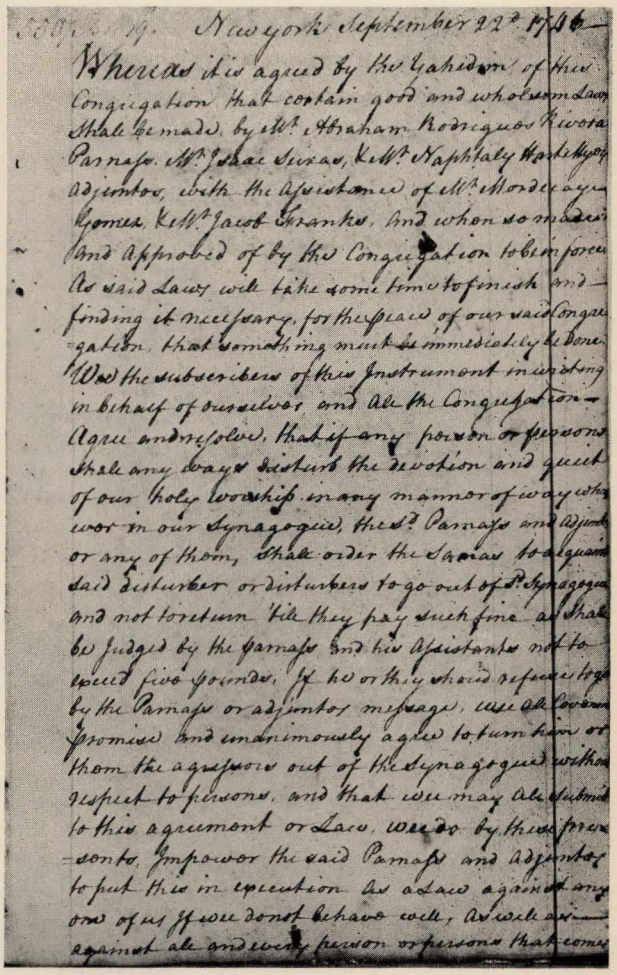
AND

The DAY of ATONEMENT.

NEW-YORK:

Printed by W. Weyman, in Broad-Street, MDCCLXI.

The first English Jewish prayer book, 1761



New york September 22d 1746

Whereas it is agreed by the Gahidom of this Congregation that contain good and wholesom Laws shall be made by Mr. Abraham Rodriguez Rivera Parnass Mr. Isaac Seixas, Kellr. Naphtaly Hartogh adjemtos, with the Assistance of Mr. Moorden Cayn Gomez, Kellr. Jacob Franks, and when so made and Approbed of by the Congregation to be inforced As said Laws will take some time to finish and finding it necessary, for the peace of our said Congregation, that something must be immediately done. We the subscribers of this Instrument in writing in behalf of ourselves, and all the Congregation Agree and resolve, that if any person or persons shall any ways disturb the devotion and quiet of our holy worship in any manner of way whatever in our Synagogue, the Parnass and Adjemtos or any of them, shall order the Sexton to acquaint said disturber or disturbers to go out of the Synagogue and not to return 'till they pay such fine as shall be judged by the Parnass and his Assistants not to exceed five pounds. If he or they should refuse to go by the Parnass or adjemtos message, we all Covenant promise and unanimously agree to turn him or them the aggressors out of the Synagogue without respect to persons, and that we may all submit to this agreement or Law, we do by these presents, Impower the said Parnass and adjemtos to put this in execution as a Law against any one of us if we do not behave well, As well as against all and every person or persons that come

Grace of decorum at synagogue service is solemnly pledged in covenant of congregants in 1746

THE FORM

OF

DAILY PRAYERS,

ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM

OF THE

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE JEWS.

AS READ IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, AND USED IN THEIR FAMILIES.

Translated into English from the Hebrew, by

SOLOMON HENRY JACKSON.

The Hebrew Text carefully Revised and Corrected by

E. S. LAZARUS.

FIRST EDITION.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY S. H. JACKSON, AT THE HEBREW AND ENGLISH PRINTING OFFICE, 23 MERCER-STREET.

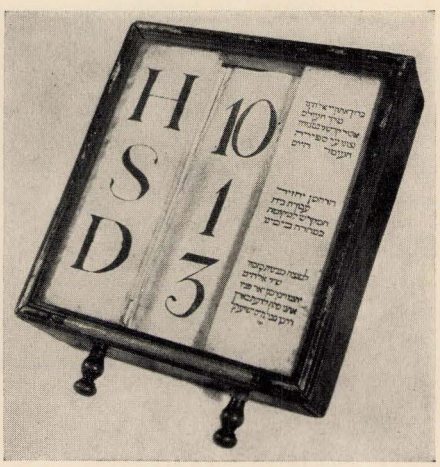
A. M. 5586.

סדר התפלות

כמנהג ק״ק ספרדים יזיו״א

נו-יארק

A prayer book in Hebrew and English was published for the first time in America in 1826



Colonial Omer scroll marking the days between Passover and Pentecost

in the synagogue. Only once in the year, on Purim, was there a generally accepted unbending in the standards of propriety associated with a house of worship. Then in the carnival spirit of the holiday, during the reading of the Book of Esther the children and some of the adults would delight to knock on the wooden benches or stamp their feet when the name of Haman was mentioned, or even bring into the synagogue mechanical noise-makers, just as in 1662 John Greenhalgh reported that in the sister synagogue in London "they use great knocking and stamping when Haman is named." Shearith Israel has long excluded from its services any such disturbing features even on that evening, and the reading of the Purim story proceeds uninterruptedly before a quietly relaxed, happily smiling congregation. On all other days of the year, great has been the importance attached to quiet, decorum, and devoutness in the synagogue services. This was not always readily attained in the past, and departure from exemplary conduct in the synagogue was not unknown.

Occasionally a congregant used the synagogue for exercising self-assertiveness. In a drastic effort to cope with such contingencies, forty-seven members of the congregation in September, 1746, signed the following covenant making disturbance in the synagogue a costly indulgence:

> Finding it necessary for the peace of our said Congregation that something must immediately be done, we the Subscribers of this Instrument in writing in behalf of ourselves and all the Congregation agree and resolve, that if any person or persons shall anyways disturb the devotion and quiet of our holy worship in any manner of way whatever in our Synagogue, the Sd Parnass and adjuntos or any of them shall order the Samas to acquaint said disturber or disturbers to go out of Sd Synagogue and not to return 'till they pay such fine as shall be judged by the parnass and his assistants not to exceed five Pounds.

This procedure should have sufficed. But suppose the disturber of the congregational order were an inveterately excited and obdurately unruly individual? Or suppose that perchance one of the forty-seven signers should lose his self-control?

> If he or they should refuse to go by the Parnass or adjuntos message wee all covenant promise and unanimously agree to turn him or them the agressors out of the Synagogue without respect to persons, and that wee may all submit to this agreement or Law, wee do by these presents Impower the said Parnass and adjuntos to put this in execution as Law against any one of us if wee do not behave well, as well as against all and every person or persons that comes to the Synagogue and misbehaves. . . .[9]

Eighteen years later the controls were extended beyond the synagogue walls when it was agreed that anyone causing disturbance "in the Synagogue, the yard, or Street, leading thereto, in going to, or coming from, worship, shall be subject to such penalty, as the Parnassim, and their assistants shall judge proper." [10]

The refrain continues. In 1768 and 1769 strong action was taken against a group of six recalcitrant members who made "scandolous offerings, in Contempt to the Parnas" and who were guilty of disturbing "our Holy Worship . . . to the great disquiet of the Congregation." [11]

Seven years later came the Revolution. Then the country as a whole was disrupted. Open disregard of law and order prevailed widely and became an accepted condition of war. Within the synagogue there was a noticeable letdown in decorum. Finally came the peace. In 1784, Hayman Levy took office as president of the congregation. His first message was an appeal for improvement in synagogue deportment which had "been for some time neglected."

> As a just Tribute due to Omnipotence, the Parnass request the Congregation, that the stricter attention may be paid to the Rules of Decency & Decorum which have a natural tendency to excite Devotion especially in Time of divine Service, which he is sorry to observe has been for some time neglected, but is in Hopes to see this holy Congregation placed on such a Footing as to command Respect, instead of Contempt which they incur by some evil Practices that have obtained thro' the Means of a few Weak & inconsiderate set of Men such as Leaving the Synagogue in times of Prayer, talking & laughing with & to each other—he assembles in this Place & most earnestly exhorts them to consider in whose Presence they are & to Whom they address themselves, & know that it is the Supreme King of Kings, who penetrates the most secret recesses of the Heart, & who is ever ready to hear those who call upon Him in Truth.
>
> He more particularly requires of those who are Parents to enjoin their Children not to commit those Misdemeanors which are so highly reprehensible, but to admonish them on everything that tends to Indecency.[12]

Ay, there was the rub—what was to be done with the children? Here was a problem of decorum with which the congregation recurrently had to cope. In the small Mill Street Synagogue, the question arose where to seat the boys so that they would still be under supervision when they came to a service without their fathers. As a rule they were gathered in the southwest corner in the charge of their schoolmaster, the "ribbi." At one period they were seated as a group behind the officiating hazzan. The trustees' confidence in the abilities of their minister was great indeed. He had to stand facing the Ark while

officiating, and at the same time he was required to keep in order the children behind him and guide them in the prayers. Small wonder that Gershom Seixas informed the trustees that he would relinquish no less than £10 of his salary if someone else would take charge of the boys during worship.[13]

Among other regulations pertaining to the guidance of the young it was laid down that boys should not be sent to the gallery to get books or to take books to the women seated there. Earnest appeals were made to parents and guardians to see to it that the young did not create any disturbance.[14] Under the by-laws of the constitution of 1805 it was ruled that no children under three years of age were to be admitted to services in the synagogue unless the service were held especially for them, as in the case of circumcision, the naming and blessing of a daughter, or other personal prayers.

Many of Shearith Israel's rules of devotional propriety derive from the rabbinical principle that a standard of sanctity may be raised but never lowered. Within a synagogue the standard of conduct must be higher than one which may sometimes be accepted outside. The intent of numerous congregational injunctions, important and unimportant alike, is to preserve the synagogue as a shrine of holiness. The parnas has constitutional authority to command order. If any person or persons persist in interrupting the service, the parnas may "cause the offenders to be removed." In the regulations of old in Jerusalem it was laid down that one might not use the Temple area as a short-cut, nor should one at any time come into the Temple enclosure with staff, dusty shoes, or purse. In the same spirit the by-laws of Shearith Israel require "that all umbrellas and canes, excepting canes carried by lame persons, shall be left at the door." On leaving the synagogue too, the congregants "shall retire in a quiet and orderly manner and avoid going out together, or in bodies, and more particularly during the reading of the Torah and haftarah." [15]

In the confined life of Eastern European Jewry the synagogue was virtually the only place where the Jew could forget the harsh cramping of his soul by the outside world. In his synagogue he felt a sense of freedom and release. There he was at home. It is easy to see how his sanctuary of worship became also the center of sociability and neighborliness. But free and easy conversation, not always *sotto voce*, impairs the quietude and decorum of a religious service which must mean communion with God. Regulations were therefore enacted in Shearith Israel to forfend communication between congregants. These forceful legislative injunctions were supported by the will

of the congregation. Later generations reaped the reward of earlier groping. Through both inward and outward compulsion a high standard of devotional worship developed in an atmosphere of reverent, esthetic, and warm impressiveness. In the contagion of reverence conjoined with enthusiasm the appeal of free and easy indecorum vanishes even for uninhibited individuals. Each worshiper gains something of the cumulative devotional strength and outpouring of spirit of the whole congregation.

The mood of prayer is enhanced by song. But here, as one might expect, individualism is apt to assert itself markedly. The chanting of the service has never been committed to writing. It is therefore astonishing that in a period of over three hundred years there have developed only such comparatively slight modifications as inevitably enter into an oral tradition. Each successive hazzan with a more or less accurate musical ear, or with a penchant for the higher or the lower ranges, whether he came from Amsterdam, from London, from Surinam, from Gibraltar, or elsewhere, inevitably brought with him to New York local variations of chanting which often left their mark, however much he might try to adapt himself to the niceties of Shearith Israel's own local tradition. Be it said that these variants, slight or even minute as they might seem to be, did not come painlessly to birth, for there were keen ears, watchful eyes, and sharp tongues guarding Shearith Israel's minhag.

A letter dated 1789 is on record, which caustically attacks this element of flexibility and variation within the congregational tradition. Before the Revolution, Manuel Josephson, a member of the New York Jewish community, had more than once been at odds with the congregation and had had to be severely disciplined by it.[16] Perhaps we hear an echo of something of these old disagreements when from Philadelphia he penned this diatribe to Moses Seixas in Newport:

> As to our North American congregations, not much can be said in that respect, as in reality they have no regular system; chiefly owing (in my opinion) to the smallness of their numbers, and the frequent mutability of its members from one place to another. . . . And every new comer introduces something new, either from his own conceit and fancy, or (what is more probable) from the custom of the Congregation where he was bred, or the one he last came from. This I can aver from my own observations to have been the case frequently at New York ever since I knew it, as well by transient persons as the several Hazanim they have had there from time to time, the present one not excepted, who during his being in office has collected some materials from one and another place and patched up a system of ceremonies of his own, which would be followed during the time

he remains in office, but no sooner another one succeeds, some new customs and formalities will be introduced, especially if he happens to be an European, he will alledge (as most of the narrow minded part of them are apt to do): What did your late Hazan know about these Matters or indeed how should he? seeing he never was out of America, etc., etc. . . .[17]

Many of the congregation's hazzanim during the last two centuries came from the London Sephardi congregation. This presupposes a certain continuity in the details of the congregational tradition of chanting and further discounts Manuel Josephson's caustic indictment.

The most scrupulous of the watchmen over the congregational tradition were the trustees who were its official guardians. It was not the minister who had the last word. In the year 1835, questions of details in the service were raised three times with Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas. In the first case he replied that he was following the minhag of his predecessor and teacher, Gershom Mendes Seixas. In the second case he was requested to use the same tunes in the coming Holy Days as had been used by Gershom Mendes Seixas. In the third instance he was asked whether in the matter of the kaddish for mourners there had been any deviations since the lifetime of Gershom Seixas, and if so what were the reasons for them and by whom they had been introduced.[18]

In the same way, seven years later Hazzan Lyons, who was meticulous in preserving written memoranda on every detail of minhag in the services, was

requested to inform this board, on what authority the version of the blessings made on the late anniversaries of the consecrations of our places of Worship were entirely changed from their original adoption, those of the first shool having been adopted one hundred twelve years since, and never heretofore altered by any of his very highly respectable and learned predecessors. And those for the second shool from their original form.

His reply was that he followed the minhag that had been given to him. Whereupon the trustees resolved to

collate and transcribe in a book all the Mesheberachs said on the different holy days and anniversaries, and all matters appertaining to the minhag of this congregation and that the same be submitted to the trustees.[19]

In these ways there has been preserved a tradition in which minor elements served to strengthen the major, and all together, small and great, united to make one time-resistant whole.

The course of the congregational minhag, as we see, was not always unruffled. From time to time even before the second half of the nineteenth cen-

tury there were ominous rumblings and even explicit suggestions for changes in the ritual and in the ancient observances. Deviations, however, were promptly legislated out. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in 1805, as has been told, it was laid down in the constitution that the fixed prayers should forever be read in Hebrew according to the minhag of the Sephardim. In 1825, the board of trustees ruled that no person "who is in our Holy Place of Worship, Wilfully neglecting to wear a talet at the time and period it is the Custom so to do, Shall be entitled to any Mitsvot whatsoever." This statement of policy was based on the following report of a committee:

> The Committee appointed by a resolution of the board of trustees to report on the subject of persons not wearing the Talet in Synagogue, have had the same under their deliberate consideration; and after a careful examination of our Constitution and bye-laws, they cannot find any law relating to this particular subject nor can they ascertain that the Wearing of the Talet is a law of imperative religious obligation, but in as much, as it has always been strictly observed in this Congregation from its first establishment the committee cannot but view a departure from it as an innovation, which if permitted to pass unnoticed, may lead to other deviations, and ultimately to the subversion of all the venerable and established usages of this Congregation.[20]

The impact of the Reform tendency was felt as early as 1834. Sixteen years earlier, in 1818, Mordecai M. Noah had been the orator at the dedication of the second Mill Street Synagogue. Then he said of even those rabbinical institutions which were most difficult of observance:

> Who is he that can amend them? Once encroach upon their connection, once impair or affect their essence, once innovate upon their principles, and who can say where it will end: what dangers may not arise, what destruction may not be anticipated.

At the dedication of the Crosby Street Synagogue, however, sixteen years later, with dashing inconsistency and inappropriateness, he startled his congregation by criticising some of the ceremonial elements of Judaism. He gave his approval to the changes made in synagogue worship by Reform Judaism in Germany. Further, he thought it desirable that worship should be conducted in the vernacular, though in his sermon at the dedication of the Mill Street Synagogue he had roundly declared that "With the loss of the Hebrew language may be added the downfall of the house of Israel." [21] Whether his change of attitude stemmed from echoes of the Reform movement in Charleston, or whether his well-known flamboyant personality was dramatically

seeking effect, his sudden enthusiasm for radical changes in tradition had no impact on his listeners in Shearith Israel.

In 1841, the Reform secession from the Sephardi congregation in London was rocking that community to its foundations. The London congregation then officially sent a warning letter to Shearith Israel in New York. The lengthy reply which Moses L. Moses, the president of Shearith Israel, officially addressed to Moses Montefiore, Judah Guedalla, and J. Jalfon, the governing board of the London congregation, stated

> . . . the authorities of our congregation fully participate with you in feeling and decided disapprobation of the alteration made by a portion of your congregation, whom we always looked up to as our Alma Mater in religious affairs. To this time we have in our congregation steered clear of the rock of innovation, the most trifling, or immaterial has not been permitted in our public worship, fearful that it might afford argument for farther, and more important alteration. What has kept us together as brethren under the influence of the Divine Presence for so long a period, but a strict and uniform adherence to our ceremonial laws and customs? And what assurance can any set of men of the present day have, that their new fangled notions will continue for any length of time as they may have formed them? Not withstanding they may suppose them to be the nec plus ultra of perfection; for no sooner shall their authors have passed from this transitory life, than, a new set coming into power and fancying themselves wiser than their predecessors, must of course substitute their plan of Public Worship; and so on, from one set to another until little or nothing remains of the beautiful order and consistency in our ritual as established by the sages and wise men of our nation, and has stood the test of so many ages. As it is, let any of us arriving from almost any part of the world, meet, we feel ourselves at home, and join in the service of the synagogue, on any day, at any time, even to the different tunes.[22]

The middle decades of the nineteenth century placed upon the shoulders of Hazzan Lyons the not easy task of resisting the inroads of German Reform Judaism which was cumulatively attracting a number of American synagogues. He led his congregation in firm refusal to abandon the orthodox tradition. When he died, pressure was renewed in favor of changes in the services. A proposal was made at a meeting of the electors held on December 10, 1878, that the fixed prayers should be fewer in number and that repetitions should be avoided. The same resolution asked that the prayers be read more deliberately and devotionally. By a close vote of twenty-six to twenty-three it was decided that "there is no occasion for any measures having in view any change in the ritual of the congregation." [23]

At the distance of three quarters of a century the strains and stresses behind

that narrow margin of victory tend to disappear. But the echoes of the discussions remained as a challenge to the congregation to seek improvement in its services in harmony with its own best traditions. In 1879 the board of trustees expressed the belief "that our synagogue service is susceptible to improvement without innovation upon our time-honored constitution and minhag." They appointed

> a committee to consist of the Rev. H. Pereira Mendes, Hazan, the President of the congregation and one member of the Board of Trustees . . . to suggest such alterations and improvement as may tend to be conducive to religious influence, always observing in their deliberations the inviolability of our constitution.[24]

As New York's irrepressible expansion progressed with the years, the residential district became more and more remote from the synagogue at 19th Street. This markedly weakened the influence of the synagogue on its members. Attendance at its services was alarmingly reduced. Once more there were those who felt that the introduction of reforms in the services would give new strength to the congregation. In this situation a committee on rituals submitted a report on February 12, 1893, proposing a radical shortening and rearrangement of the Sabbath morning service. This report was accepted by the board of trustees and also by the electors, but there was such strong opposition to it within the congregation that no action was taken.[25]

When it was decided to leave 19th Street and build a new house of worship, an attempt was made once more to have reforms introduced in the new synagogue. The board of trustees then took strong action to silence those who advocated such changes. On February 20, 1895, it resolved unanimously that in the new synagogue the arrangement of seating

> men in the auditorium and women in the galleries as in the present synagogue be enforced, and further that the custom of wearing hats during divine services and talethim at such services as it is at present the habit to use them, together with the prohibition of instrumental music in the new synagogue be strictly maintained.[26]

At a congregational meeting held some three months later, ninety-six women submitted a resolution in which they protested earnestly against the proposal to introduce pews and an organ and other changes in the new synagogue. They characterized this movement as a change in the congregation's time-honored custom and ancient form of worship. They also pointed out that where these changes had been made they had not in any way increased

Sabbath attendance or general synagogue attendance in any proportionate degree, or respect for the Hebrews in the eyes of the general community.

At that meeting there were but three speeches made, all in opposition to the motion that in the new synagogue the sexes should sit together. These speeches were by Adolphus S. Solomons, Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, and the young lawyer Benjamin N. Cardozo, "Mr. Cardozo making a long address, impressive in ability and eloquence." When the vote was taken, the test resolution permitting the sexes to sit together in the new synagogue was lost by the overwhelming vote of seventy-three to seven.[27] Shearith Israel's classic traditionalism was again vindicated to remain as the inviolate quality of America's first synagogue.

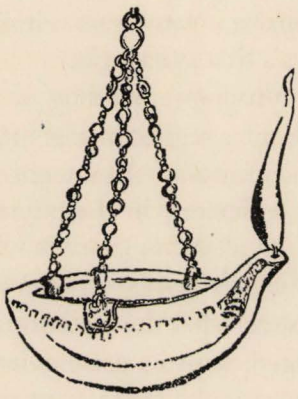
The synagogue building of today is more impressive than were the small intimate synagogues in the little town of yesteryear. Its cushioned seats are more comfortable than were the hard wooden benches of yore. There is modern efficiency in the physical setting. No longer to be seen are the unsightly wood-burning stoves which were so grossly serviceable on cold winter days. Electric lights replace the fragile incandescent mantles and the gas which succeeded the traditional candles. But the service of worship remains unchanged, with its pristine inspiration enhanced by the cumulative emotion stored up for the generations to come by three centuries of faith and spiritual uplift, no small part of which inheres in its traditionalism.

IV. Panorama of Faith

Its ways are ways of pleasantness

and all its paths are peace.

PROVERBS 3:17



A CARDINAL REQUIREMENT for conducting a complete congregational service is the presence of a minyan. This is the religious quorum of ten Jewish men over the age of thirteen, the required age of induction into religious responsibility. The primacy of the number ten goes far back in Jewish lore. Abraham pleaded for the saving of Sodom if there could be found in it fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and finally even ten righteous men. That colloquy of Abraham with God is deeply engraved in the Jewish psyche. Remembered also is the experience in the Sinai desert. Moses appointed captains over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and the ultimate unit was captains over tens.[1] When the minyan of ten is lacking, important parts of the service have to be omitted, such as the prescribed reading from the Torah, the invocation of the priestly blessing, the mystic triple sanctification, "Holy, holy, holy,"

and the kaddish sanctification, the keystone prayer, "Exalted and hallowed be His great Name in the world He has created."

In all the recorded history of Shearith Israel, no Sabbath morning service has had to be curtailed for lack of the minyan of ten, even during blizzards or storms, or when an epidemic caused many of the congregation to seek safety outside of town. On the Sabbath morning of November 25, 1950, there was a gale with violent rainfall and tempestuous winds. At the corner of 70th Street and Central Park West the winds blew with hurricane force. The heavy sheet and plate glass doors of the 70th Street entrance to the synagogue were blown open and the thick glass in one of the doors was completely shattered. Sections of the copper roof covering were ripped off by the wind. During the day passers-by would take refuge in the synagogue, sometimes slightly hurt, and in the case of one woman with a cut in the head and a broken arm. Nevertheless, no less than forty men and fourteen women of the congregation found their way to the synagogue services on that Sabbath morning, and all the services of the day were held as usual.

Although services of prayer thrice daily are enjoined on the Jew, there were times when in the very small Jewish community of early New York these services were not held in the synagogue on ordinary weekdays. We may assume that they were not omitted on the inauguration of a new month (Rosh Hodesh), on minor fasts and festivals, and during the penitential period prior to the Atonement Day when the ram's horn with its pristine penetrating call is sounded daily.

The contract with Hazzan Machado that was drawn up in 1728 required him to attend synagogue and lead in prayer twice each weekday (morning and evening), and three times on Sabbaths and festivals. The records of 1728, which are the earliest spared by the ravages of time, do not suggest that there was any innovation in this requirement. They tell us further that the shammash, Valentine Campanal, was charged with the responsibility of seeing that the required minyan for complete service was never lacking. It was his duty to "call the Yehidims that they may assemble togeathere at the usuall hours." Sometimes a service was held at an hour which did not encourage a large spontaneous outpouring of worshipers. The lengthy supplications (selihoth) of the penitential period which comes to a climax with the Day of Atonement, have to be chanted at least an hour before dawn. To assure the required attendance at that difficult time, it was the duty of Shammash Campanal "to

call to Selihoth such persons as shall be given him by the Parnas in List." This assessment of the duty of prayer, which assured everyone in turn the opportunity of fulfilling his religious privilege, was in no wise designed to close the doors on anyone himself eager to race the dawn in prayer.

Further concessions to human frailty were made in the middle of the nineteenth century when there was adopted the expedient of assuring a minyan through the regular presence in synagogue of elderly pensioners. This system has the advantage both of insuring a congregational quorum at every service, and of giving to a number of elders, whom Israel Zangwill dubbed "minyanaires," a small honorarium, an opportunity for recurring activity, and a sense of spiritual significance.

In the two synagogues on Mill Street all religious services were held in the sole auditorium which the building possessed. But the Crosby Street Synagogue of 1834 boasted the facilities of a basement. Weekday services were then held in a small basement room that was made over into a chapel. In the Nineteenth Street Synagogue a chapel was built on the vestibule floor. In the present building on Central Park West there is a small synagogue adjoining the main synagogue auditorium. A large stained glass window set in the wall between them symbolizes their oneness. Weekday services are held in that Little Synagogue, a chosen place for intimate personal prayer, for small weddings, the naming of a baby, or the blessing of hagomel in thanksgiving for recovery from illness or escape from danger.

The weekday morning services last about one hour. They are ushered in with blessings for the new-born life on the new-born day, followed by readings from rabbinic writings and from the Psalms. Central in the daily prayers that follow are the Shema and the Amidah. The Shema, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," is the Jew's classic acknowledgment of God's unity. The Amidah "Standing Prayer," during which the worshiper stands in reverence, consists of solemn blessings, eighteen (or nineteen) in number, which consecrate various aspects of the life of the individual and of the Jewish people. On most weekday mornings, prayers of introspective penitence are also recited.

At every service opportunity is given for a mourner to recite the traditional mourner's kaddish. That ecstatic hallowing of God's name and prayer for its greater revelation among men comes like a grand Amen at the close of sections of the service. Over the ages it became also the memorial prayer

recited to hallow the memory of one's departed kin. Neither words of mortality or immortality occur in the text. It is a triumphant exaltation of God's name and man's absolute submission to divine will. Its prayer for the well-being and salvation of all Israel is taken humbly to include the bereaved supplicant. In Ashkenazi synagogues congregants other than mourners usually sit during the recitation of the kaddish. In Shearith Israel the whole congregation stands every time this prayer is recited.

In the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost there is added to the daily evening service the mounting enumeration of each day as the harvest festival of early summer approaches. Reminiscent of that is the name *Omer* (sheaf) given to that counting. As a guide to the congregation and to forfend any error in the progressive counting of the days, a box containing a parchment scroll is set up on the south wall of the synagogue. This gives in Spanish initials the number of days of the "*Homer*" followed by the breakdown into the number of weeks (*Semanas*) and days (*Dias*). Thus, for the popular festival *Lag La'omer* occurring on the thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer the parchment reads, H 33, S 4, D 5—that is thirty-three days, or four weeks and five days after the first day of Passover. The Omer scroll now in use is the one which the congregation used even before the consecration of its first synagogue building in 1730. In 1954, as a tercentenary gift from Elward J. Phillips there came to the congregation a box, made out of a cigar box, containing an Omer scroll with the numbers and the accompanying blessings and Psalm. This was made by Joseph Phillips, a son of Jonas Phillips, for his use while serving in the War of 1812.

All Sabbath services are conducted in the main synagogue. A choral service ushering in the Sabbath eve is read on Friday evenings at times varying from four o'clock in winter to eight o'clock in summer according to the varying time of the setting of the sun. The frequent changes in the time for this service and the necessity of reading it on short winter days in mid afternoon have made for a poor attendance at synagogue on the Sabbath eve. It is not easy for men coming from work to reach the synagogue in time as they must first go home to prepare themselves for the Sabbath. For the women the all-consuming domestic duties on Friday make difficult their attendance at synagogue by sunset. In 1748, Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist, bore indirect testimony to the concentrated domestic duties of the Jewish mother and housewife on Fridays when he wrote:

During my residence at New York this time and in the next two years, I was frequently in company with Jews. I was informed among other things, that these people never boiled any meat for themselves on Saturday, but they always did it the day before: and that in winter they kept no fire during the whole Saturday.[2]

It has often been asked why Shearith Israel does not hold an informal Friday evening gathering in addition to the required sunset service. It has remained the hope that the solemnity and beauty with which the regular Sabbath eve service is endowed may succeed in encouraging attendance at the earlier hour and make for a more complete home Sabbath observance following it. Whenever late Sabbath eve services have been proposed, the response of the congregation has been largely negative. The traditional family Sabbath gathering within the home would be curtailed by the late services, and it is held that nothing should be allowed to weaken the beautiful age-old spiritually enriching custom of the Sabbath eve meal at a festive table with the sacrament of family reunion, home prayer, and song. Rather than be hurried to its close, that reunion should be lengthened into an evening of domestic and guest friendship in the illumination of family life and religion within the home. Even those living alone or away from their home circle, to whom a late Friday evening in synagogue would personally have been a boon, have opposed its introduction because of the paramount call of the Sabbath eve as the family home night.[3]

The Sabbath morning service, chanted word for word from its opening to its close, fills the morning from eight o'clock to noon. The introductory prayers with Biblical and rabbinic readings, and twenty-two psalms, called Zemiroth, are almost always chanted by a congregant, preferably by one of the younger men. A congregant also chants the Haphtarah, the reading from the prophets that follows the Torah reading.

Since the construction of the Elias Social Room in 1930, the congregation has assembled there after the close of morning services on Sabbaths and festivals to join in the kiddush, the blessing of sanctification of the day. After kiddush the minister announces the educational and social activities for the coming week, and an informal friendly postlude constitutes a welcome successor to what older congregants remember as the "sidewalk salon" of former days. Before the kiddush gathering was initiated, the synagogue steps and the sidewalk were crowded, weather permitting, after the services for lingering sociability and greetings of "Shabbat Shalom."

The Sabbath kiddush takes on special character when a Bar Mitzvah is celebrated in the synagogue. The gathering in the Elias Social Room brings the added touch of personal friendliness and conviviality to the formal allocution and blessing which the lad receives from the pulpit. It gives to the whole congregation an opportunity of sharing in the family rejoicing when the lad reaches the age from which he is counted as a congregant qualified by both age and knowledge to take his part in the services of the synagogue.

Impressive also is the kiddush when a girl who has passed her twelfth birthday qualifies through study and religious devotion for a ceremony of consecration. She has the special privilege of addressing those assembled at the kiddush on what Judaism and the synagogue mean to her. Her essay follows the successful completion of a prescribed course of study. She receives the gift of a prayer book from the Sisterhood and a Pentateuch from the Men's Club, and the priestly blessing is spoken over her by the rabbi.

During the short days of midwinter, after the Friday evening synagogue service at sunset, a Sabbath eve kiddush for children was held for a time in the Elias Room. At those brief happy gatherings there were the singing of Hebrew Sabbath songs, informal discussion of Sabbath themes by the children, and some goodies to eat.

For some time also a Sabbath noon luncheon club met in the Fidanque Room in the winter months after the close of the Sabbath morning services. This was to bring to those living alone the spirit of the Sabbath meal with its songs and benedictions.[4] From early morning to nightfall, the services, the study hour, and the song and instruction of the sociable Oneg Shabbat gathering, fill the day with meaningful experience. Aimé Pallière, the French mystic Judaizer of Catholic birth, characterized the Sabbath he thus spent in Shearith Israel as a memorable day in his spiritual life.

A congregational memorial list of names, called the Perpetual List, has been compiled over two centuries. The earliest name entered on this record is that of Esther Gomez, who died in 1718; the first man's name, that of Mordecai Burgos, does not appear until 1736. In 1954, the list numbered three hundred and fifty-four men and two hundred and fifty-nine women. They are all recalled on the morning of the first day of each Hebrew month and on the Day of Atonement. Individuals whose names have been inscribed on the list are also memorialized on the Sabbath following the anniversary of their death.

The emotional urge for association with departed loved ones often finds

solacing expression in the custom of offering a personal prayer before the open Ark, or when one is called to the reading of the Torah. *In memoriam* prayers are recited on the Sabbath afternoon during the first eleven months after the death of those who have been given burial in the congregational cemetery. The custom of memorializing the dead on the last day of a festival, a custom which in the last century has taken an ever growing hold on Ashkenazi congregations, has not entered the Shearith Israel tradition.

Other memories evoked within Shearith Israel's orbit of prayer are associated not with sorrow but with historic commemorations of the five synagogues which Shearith Israel has built over its three hundred years. The consecration of each of them was a high mark of spiritual experience that is recalled on the anniversary of each of them. Then in the morning service, the sixty-seventh Psalm is sung, "that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving power among all nations," expressive of the supreme purpose of all worship.

On the seventh day of Passover, the anniversary of the consecration of the first Mill Street Synagogue, prayers are said each year in memory of leading benefactors of that synagogue: Lewis Moses Gomez, Rodrigo (Benjamin Mendes) Pacheco, Moses Michalls, Jacob Franks, Rachel Luiza (Lewis), Bilhah Abigail (Mrs. Jacob) Franks, and Simhah (Mrs. Joseph) de Torres. The consecration of the second Mill Street Synagogue is recalled on the Sabbath preceding Passover. Abraham Touro, Harmon Hendricks, and Naphtali Judah are recalled as the most generous contributors to the building of that synagogue. The consecration of the Crosby Street Synagogue on June 12, 1834, is commemorated on the first day of the festival of Shabuoth, and the dedication of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue in 1860 is marked on the Sabbath before the New Year. Finally, on the Sabbath following the Hebrew date Iyyar 18, the consecration of the present synagogue is recalled, and the memory of the leading spirit in its building, L. Napoleon Levy, is blessed.

At intervals a formal junior Sabbath service is conducted by the youth of the congregation. This began in the 1930s not as a demonstration but as an expression of a religious experience. It was designed to give the children greater familiarity with the service through their personal participation and responsibility for its conduct. Their monthly reading of the Musaph-Additional Service on Sabbath mornings in the Little Synagogue was climaxed when the Young Men's Club began from time to time to conduct the complete



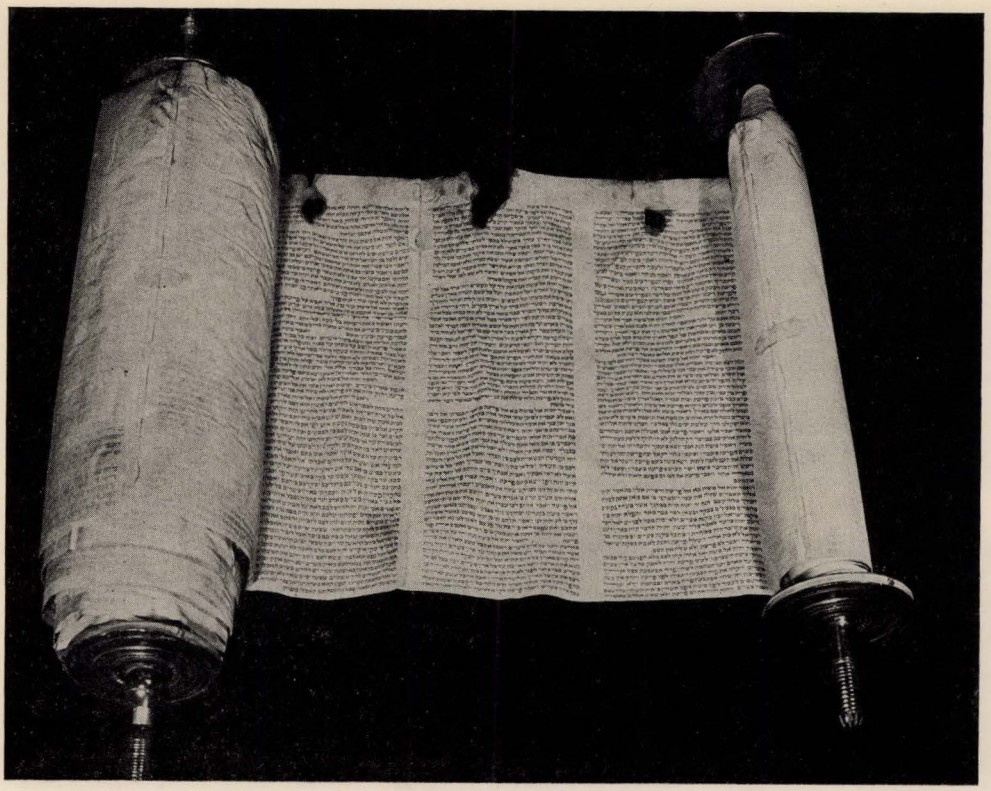
Laver set given by Solomon Simson, 1852, used whenever a Cohen invokes the priestly blessing



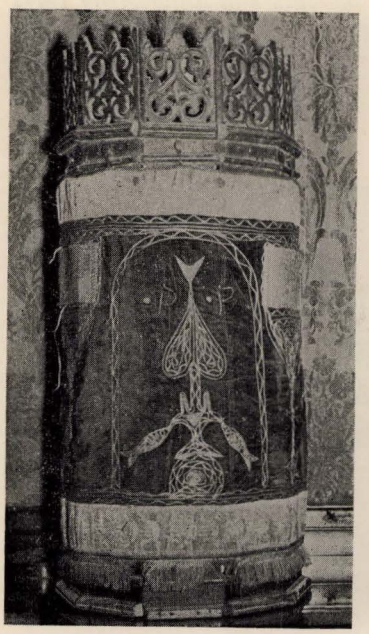
A kiddush set (on right) and a habdalah set (on left) used to bless and bid farewell to the Sabbath and other Holy Days

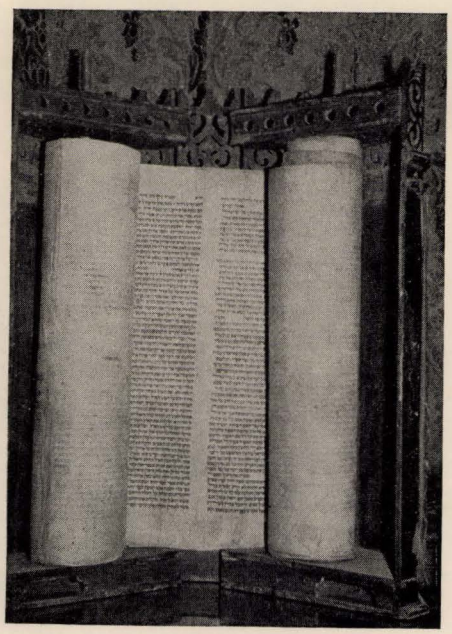


Hanukkah lamp in use since Colonial days, its glow recalling light of the Maccabees



Torah scroll desecrated by two British soldiers during the Revolution





Historic Torah, gift from Holy City of Jerusalem on its three thousandth anniversary to American Synagogue on its three hundredth

Sabbath morning service in the synagogue chapel. Outdoing their elders, boys read the whole service including the Sabbath portion of the Torah, and in the spirit of the democracy of the synagogue of old the sermon also is given by a member of the junior congregation.[5]

The study of the Torah, the rabbis say, takes precedence over prayer itself. The two are united in mystic oneness at the morning and afternoon Sabbath services. The central point of the Sabbath morning service is the weekly portion (parashah) of the Torah. In the afternoon service, the first section of the portion of the following week is read in spiritual preparation and continuity. The reading must be from a parchment manuscript scroll prepared according to strictest rules. Shearith Israel possesses twenty-eight such Torah scrolls.

The ritual scribe (sofer), artist calligrapher of the scroll, is a dedicated pietist essentially anonymous. He may not record his name or that of the one for whom he has written the scroll, the date or place of his writing, or any other information on any part of the scroll itself. He may in no wise add a word, a letter, or a sign, or a mark of any description to the canonized holy text. A special ritual precedes the initiation of the great moment when before he begins to write he dips his special quill pen in specially prepared jet black ink. Clarity which rules out any possible misreading must characterize each scrupulously written precious letter on the columns of the scroll that are measured and ruled on the parchment with reverent precision. Each column of the written Biblical text should be of equal length from top to bottom, containing an equal number of lines all written with the most painstaking accuracy. Although no comment or note of any sort may be attached to the traditional text of the five books of Moses, on the wooden handles by which the scroll is horizontally rolled and by which it is carried there is sometimes attached the name of the donor. In Shearith Israel this has not been the prevailing custom, and all too often we have to seize a casual hint here or some written note there to rescue something of the history of some of these consecrated parchments. The earliest scrolls used in Nieuw Amsterdam must have come from Amsterdam. Whether the Jews who arrived in 1654 were able to bring a Torah from Brazil to Nieuw Amsterdam on their perilous journey we do not know. Unlikely as that would seem, we know of family traditions about Marranos carrying a Torah with them on their hazardous escape from Portugal.

The first record of the gift of a Torah in America is that of the bequest

of £10 by Rachel Luiza (Lewis) in 1737 toward buying a Torah for Shearith Israel.[6] It may be assumed that this scroll was imported from across the Atlantic Ocean, for we know of no one in New York at the time who had the combination of technical knowledge, calligraphic skill, and piety, required for the writing of a Torah scroll. From a memorandum made by Hazzan Lyons in 1860 we know that then on the handles of one of the congregation's scrolls there was a plate inscribed with the words in Hebrew, "And this is the Torah which Moses set before the children of Israel. The year 5497." That was the year 1737, the year of Rachel Luiza's gift to the congregation.

The two oldest scrolls which can be identified are sacredly kept in the Ark of the Little Synagogue, but they can not be used because they bear the marks of wanton desecration by two British soldiers during the Revolution some time early in the occupation of New York. The two men were caught, and the British military authorities punished them with so severe a flogging that one of them unhappily succumbed to his injuries.[7] One of these scrolls belonged to the congregation, the other, wound on ivory rollers, was the property of Uriah Hendricks.

A century ago, the Reverend Mr. Lyons described a scroll as torn and stained by sea water. This one, like the scroll of 1737, is no longer in the possession of the congregation, for when a Torah becomes torn or, because of age and use, too worn for repair, it must be reverently set aside in the congregational genizah, the repository of sacred objects and books no longer usable, and eventually be given formal burial.

From time to time scrolls of the Torah have been entrusted to the congregation for safekeeping. One was transferred from Savannah in the middle of the eighteenth century when the few Jews there were no longer able to maintain a congregation. Others which had been in use in the synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, were placed in the New York synagogue early in the nineteenth century when all Jews had left Newport and its synagogue was closed. These and other scrolls temporarily deposited with Shearith Israel have been returned to their owners.

In 1794, a scroll of the Torah was formally put in the Ark of the Mill Street Synagogue by Ephraim Hart, appropriately enough on the first day of Shabuoth, the festival of the giving of the Torah. This scroll of twenty-three-inch parchment wound on rollers with black rosewood handles was subsequently purchased by the congregation from his widow.[8]

One of the scrolls that demonstrably has been in the possession of the congregation for at least a century is written on a twenty-six-inch parchment of goatskin. Attached to its rosewood handles are silver rings inscribed "KKTT No. 10." The initials and the comparatively high number would indicate that it came from the great Sephardi Kahal Kadosh Talmud Torah (Holy Congregation Talmud Torah) in Amsterdam.

In the days of Hazzan Lyons one of the synagogue's scrolls of the Torah was associated with the name of Samuel Judah, the father of Bernard S. Judah, and another, together with a pair of silver bells, was associated with the name of Lewis Cohen.

In 1829, Ellen Zuntz, daughter of Alexander Zuntz, left almost alone in the world, expressed the desire to sell to the congregation her family's Sefer Torah, so as to be enabled with the money so obtained to place the names of departed members of her family on the Perpetual Memorial List, and pay for a tombstone for her brother Judah who had died in that year. This scroll of the Torah, on twenty-one-and-a-half-inch parchment and with thin hickory handles, was purchased by the congregation for $125.[9]

A quarter of a century later, Philip Friedman deposited with the congregation a large scroll with parchment sheets no less than twenty-nine-and-a-half inches from top to bottom.[10]

A fifteen-inch parchment scroll together with silver bells was presented by Menasseh Barsissa in 1866. This man, who came from North Africa, was a learned and pious attendant at the synagogue.

The small Sefer Torah on fourteen-and-a-half-inch parchment that is regularly used at weekday morning services held in the Little Synagogue was the gift of Alfred A. Marcus of Boston in 1880. This he gave together with robes, bells, and breastplate, in grateful appreciation of the address which Dr. Mendes had given to his congregation in Boston in August of that year.

A large scroll made up of twenty-seven-inch parchment had earlier belonged to one Shalom, the son of Tsevi, from the Chelm congregation. This was shipped to the port of New York, but perhaps due to some of the lack of wisdom associated in Eastern European Jewish folk humor with the people of Chelm, it was not claimed. The government therefore put it up at auction with other goods, "unsight-unseen and unopened," for non-payment of duties. Isaac Phillips, then an appraiser of the port, bought it. In 1889, on the death of Isaac Phillips who had served as clerk, as trustee, and as president of Shearith

Israel for many years, the congregation received this Sefer Torah as a gift from his family.[11]

In 1897, Hazzan Abraham H. Nieto completed his fine writing of a scroll with twenty-one-inch columns and presented it to the congregation on the occasion of the opening of the new synagogue building.[12]

In 1913, as a thanksgiving offering for his recovery from illness, Dr. H. Pereira Mendes gave to the congregation a scroll, also written by Abraham H. Nieto, on twenty-one-and-a-half-inch parchment. In 1920 Miss Sarah Lyons formally presented a Sefer Torah written on a twenty-eight-inch parchment which had belonged to her father, Hazzan Lyons, and which had been deposited for many years in the Ark of the synagogue.[13]

Samuel A. Hartogensis in 1932 gave to the congregation a small Sefer with parchment measuring thirteen inches. In 1948 the congregation learned from Mrs. Samuel H. Jessurun that in memory of her husband, Dr. Samuel H. Jessurun, and her father, Abraham Raffel, she intended donating two Torah scrolls which were being written in Israel, together with silver bells and mantles for them. These were formally presented at a special service on April 9, 1950.[14]

Three scrolls of the Torah came to Shearith Israel from the Sephardi congregation of The Hague. During the Nazi occupation of Holland, the Hague congregation transferred its Torah scrolls and other religious objects for safe keeping to the mother synagogue in Amsterdam that was protected as a national shrine. Chief Rabbi Solomon Rodrigues Pereira of Amsterdam presented to Shearith Israel three of the scrolls that had been used in The Hague. One of these was brought over from Holland in 1950 by Robert Salomon, and two more in 1952 by Mr. Alexander de la Fuente, a member of Shearith Israel who had been the last president of the Hague Sephardi congregation. One scroll which was ready for use was formally presented at a religious service throbbing with overtones of sorrow, suffering, and bereavement.[15]

The congregation also possesses a Sefer Torah written on twenty-three-inch parchment, with heavy hickory handles. This had belonged to Harmon Hendricks. Among the largest of its scrolls is one on parchment twenty-nine inches in length that is associated with the name of Israel J. Salomon. Another on twenty-four-and-a-half-inch parchment is associated with the name of Samuel N. Hart, and one on twenty-three-and-a-half-inch parchment is known as the Solomon L. Cohen sefer.

The last Sefer Torah to be consecrated in Shearith Israel united sorrow with

joy, death with life, the future with the everlasting past. As Shearith Israel was preparing for its tricentennial in 1954, Jerusalem, the Holy City, was celebrating its trimillennium. For New York's commemoration of Jerusalem's three thousandth anniversary, the city of Jerusalem sent a Sefer Torah as the historic symbol of the bond between Israel and America and the Jewry of both lands, "for from Zion shall go forth the Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This scroll was put together by ritual scribes in Jerusalem from Torahs violated by the Nazis but subsequently rescued from their insensate hands. Before it left Israel, it was reconsecrated and blessed by Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog at a special religious ceremony at the tomb of King David atop Mt. Zion. Even its case was precious with associations. Who can tell at what risk and sacrifice a treasured wooden encasement six hundred years old was brought to Israel from the distant land of Yemen? It was both symbolic and significant that Shearith Israel was chosen as the peaceful and serene sanctuary for that memorable Torah scroll which bore witness of both tragedy and faith from so many centuries of Israel's troubled history.[16]

In the tabernacle carried in the Sinai wilderness and later in the Temple in Jerusalem the high priest wore a richly ornamented costume. "Upon the skirts thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the skirts thereof, with bells of gold between them round about, a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about." [17] Tradition tells that there were seventy-two such brightly colored woven balls in pomegranate shape along the hem of the high priest's skirt, with golden bells between them so that the congregation should hear the sweet sound of the bells as he officiated in the seclusion of the holy place within the Temple. In echoing memory of the Temple of old, the fully robed scroll of the Torah is very often crowned by elaborately worked silver ornaments vaguely suggestive of the pomegranate in shape, to which are attached small silver or golden bells. The Hebrew name by which these ornaments are known in the congregation is *rimmonim* (pomegranates). In English they are called finials, or more popularly, bells.

The congregation's pineapple-shaped bells date back to the year 1737. The Hebrew date 5497 can still be read engraved on them. In that year, five days after the close of Passover, died the widow Rachel Luiza, who, as we have recorded, "at her decease did by her will leave ten pound toward buying a Sefer Torah for the use of this congregation." May we not assume that this

pair of bells bearing the date 1737 became the property of the congregation together with the scroll of the Torah associated with the name of Rachel Luiza? [18]

Noteworthy for beauty is a pair of bells bearing the name of their maker, Myer Myers, a famous New York goldsmith and silversmith who was three times president of Shearith Israel. This artist and craftsman, who lived between 1723 and 1795, was for a time president of the New York Gold and Silversmiths Society.[19]

In June, 1823, a pair of bells was purchased for $275 from Ephraim Hart in his old age. Thirty years later, in 1853, Solomon Jessurun, in appreciation of his being chosen to be hatan torah, gave the congregation $100 for the purchase of a pair of bells in the name of his father, Elias Jessurun, of the Sephardi Congregation Shaar Hashamaim in London.[20]

As the preparations proceeded for the consecration of the new synagogue on 19th Street in 1860, it was realized that the congregation did not possess as many pairs of bells as it had sefarim to place in the new Ark. Three additional pairs were therefore ordered at a total cost of $603.75. Each of these bells, which are all identical in design, weighed fifty-five ounces. At that time the congregation also purchased two iron safes for the keeping of its treasures.[21]

In 1866, the congregation came into possession of a Sefer Torah and a pair of round silver bells tapering at the top into the shape of a golden pineapple. On the base of these is inscribed in Hebrew the name of the donor, Menasseh Barsissa, "Menasseh son of Shesheth Joseph, the Sabbath, 26th of the month of Elul, in the year 5626."

In 1873, the congregation received from Samuel N. Hart of Charleston the gift of a pair of silver bells, a silk mantle for the Torah, and a silver pointer. These bells bear a Hebrew inscription on their base: "Nathan the son of the late Rabbi Zanvill Berstadt of Mannheim." [22]

Other gifts of bells which the congregation has received have been from Rebecca King (1897) and from Mr. and Mrs. David H. Nieto on the occasion of the dedication of the present synagogue building; from Elizabeth Lyon (1904), with a cloak for the Torah, a pointer and curtains for the succah; from Nettie Schratter (1913) in memory of her parents, Moses and Dorothy Schratter; and from George Haas (1915).[23] In 1933, the family of the beloved choirmaster Leon M. Kramer presented a pair of silver bells in filigree work to mark his golden jubilee of service in the congregation, and in 1934, Albert R.

Louis donated a pair of bells made in Jerusalem, together with a silver pointer, in memory of his wife, Della Rose Louis.[24]

Shearith Israel has not the custom of decorating the Sefer Torah with a breastplate or with a crown. The scrolls are usually robed in mantles that are uniformly of Spanish red silk damask. But on the High Holy Days and on Hoshaana Rabbah silk damask mantles are used which are white, symbolizing the purification of spirit that is sought more particularly on those days. On festivals and the days when the consecration of one of the five synagogues is recalled, the scrolls are vested in richly varicolored but carefully harmonized mantles of fine silk damask of attractive designs.

To facilitate the reading from the unpunctuated text of the Torah scroll, and to obviate touching or rubbing the written letters during the reading, it is traditional to use what is called a pointer. Like all objects intended for ritual or ceremonial use, the pointer has been the subject of devoted artistic craftsmanship. The characteristic of all pointers is the tiny hand with a pointed index finger at the end. Pointers are made usually of wood or of silver. No two pointers in the synagogue's possession are alike. In addition to the silver pointers mentioned, there is one donated by Alfred Tobias (1846). Another, given by J. S. Abecassis (1846), has a gilt top and hand. Two were presented by the Reverend J. J. Lyons. Others which are engraved have been given by A. J. Bloomberg (1904), Esther Attias in memory of her husband and her sons Abraham and Moses Attias (1930), and David and Tamar de Sola Pool (1942) in honor of the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of the president of the congregation, Henry S. Hendricks and Rosalie Gomez Nathan.[25]

In September, 1819, a silver pointer belonging to a member of the congregation was purchased for ten dollars. This was probably the small silver pointer with a gilt hand that had belonged to State Senator Ephraim Hart. In 1883, Alfred A. Marcus of Boston added to his other gifts a pointer, and olive wood handles for the Torah that were made in the Holy Land in the ancient city of Hebron. In 1918, the widow of Meldola de Sola, in memory of her husband, minister of the Sephardi Congregation Shearith Israel of Montreal, presented to Shearith Israel in New York a silver pointer "in grateful recognition of their unfailing courtesy to him." [26]

Another silver pointer in the possession of the congregation is inscribed in Hebrew with the words "Consecrated by me, Elyakim Turiel, to the Congregation Shalom of Rhodes, the first of Ab, 5668 [1908]." This was brought

by the Turiel family from the once flourishing historic Jewish community of the island of Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Victim of wars and political upheavals, that community has almost disappeared, its surviving members having for the most part scattered to North and South America, to Central Africa, and other parts of the earth.

Still another pointer bears an elaborate inscription in Hebrew which tells that it "Belongs to Rabbi Israel son of Jonah (and his mother's name was Reichle daughter of Isaac) and to his wife Sarah daughter of Baruch Halevi, New York. The Great Sabbath, 5650 [1890]."

The last pointer which came to the congregation was brought over in 1954 from Holland by Chief Rabbi Solomon Rodrigues Pereira as a tercentenary gift to the congregation. It is a graceful silver piece some two hundred years old which had been used by the Congregation Honen Dal in The Hague.

The New Year and the Day of Atonement, the most solemn and consecrated days in the Jewish religious calendar, are ushered in by penitential prayers (selihoth). These are recited both morning and evening every weekday in Elul, the month before Rosh Hashanah, and until Yom Kippur. On the day preceding the Holy Days, penitential services begin an hour before dawn. At the evening selihoth services throughout that month the clamant call for repentance is sounded on the shofar (ram's horn). The congregation owns a number of these ram's horns, but ordinarily it is difficult to date them and identify their donors. One was presented in 1804 by Simon Moses Hart of Charleston, and another was purchased from Ephraim Hart in 1819. Early in the nineteenth century a third was in the possession of the family of Eleazar S. Lazarus and Emma Lazarus. It was given in 1880 by Mrs. Sarah Lazarus to the Reverend, later Bishop, Henry C. Potter. Subsequently it came into the possession of Irving Lehman, Chief Justice of the New York State Court of Appeals, who presented it in 1945 to Congregation Shearith Israel, to which the Lazarus family belonged.[27]

At the opening of the service on the eve of Rosh Hashanah the theme of the holy day is sounded by a moving poem, "The Little Sister," by Abraham Hazan Gerondi. Farewell to the old year of woe, welcome to the new year; the chant reflects yearning hope. With its tones the penitential mood deepens. The two days of supplication of Rosh Hashanah followed by seven days of introspective penitence reach their climax in the contrition and fasting of the tenth day, the Atonement Day. Over the centuries, every section of

Jewry has incorporated in its body of prayer something of the outpouring of spirit of Spain's latter-day Hebrew psalmists. The Sephardi services, however, are especially richly endowed with an abundance of deeply spiritual hymns, called in Hebrew "Piyyutim," by Spanish Jewish poets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as Jehudah Halevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Abraham and Moses ibn Ezra, David ben Bekudah, and Joseph ibn Abitur. The associations of the traditional chant of each hymn, preserved from generation to generation, heighten its impact on the congregation.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, called Kal Nidrei night, most august of Jewish religious convocations, the spiritual solemnity is dramatically expressed by the Torah procession from the Ark to the hazzan's platform. Fifteen scrolls in glistening white mantles are taken from the Ark by congregants selected for this honor. Those bearing the Torah, formally dressed in evening attire, high silk hats, and gleaming white prayer shawls, stand in reverence during the call to the cleansing of spirit implicit in Kal Nidrei. This early medieval declaration of absolution does not apply to obligations toward a fellow man, but only to vows exacted under duress in ruthless persecutions which forced many to violate the behests of their Judaism. In fearsome secrecy they would find their way back to their people on this night of nights. Then release from vows of renunciation of their faith which they had made under mortal compulsion was solemnly invoked so that they could join with their brethren in prayer, the broken and the strong, the bound and the free, all united before a forgiving Deity who can cleanse men's frail and stained spirits.

Before the scrolls are returned to the Ark, and while still under the spell of reverence and awe of the Kal Nidrei declaration, the hazzan invokes God's blessing on the government of the United States of America. Following this come benedictions on the congregation of today and those congregations which helped found America's first synagogue, the historic Congregation Talmud Torah (Learning of the Law) in Amsterdam, Shaar Hashamaim (Gate of Heaven) in London, Mikveh Israel (Hope of Israel) in Curaçao, Berahah Ve-Shalom (Blessing and Peace) in Surinam, and the other communities whose help assured the completion of the Mill Street Synagogue of 1730. A blessing is then invoked on the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Following that, a prayer is offered up for those held in captivity. For a time this seemed to be only a memory of the troubled past. But when the twentieth century brought its ruthless dictatorships, political prisons, concentration

camps, and world wars, this prayer became reinvested with tragic cogency and for many a congregant of today it carries immediate and personal poignant remembrance. The prayer originally offered up for those in the merciless grasp of the Inquisition, *a todos nossos Irmaos prezos pella Inquisicao,* has been retranslated into even more cruel experience for those in our day who did not escape the inhuman tyrants of Germany. Finally, lest anyone, anywhere, of the House of Israel be forgotten in the all-inclusive prayers of the Atonement Day, a blessing is invoked in a prayer for all our brothers who are journeying on their way, be it by sea or land. This prayer, read today in Hebrew, in the past was read in Portuguese, *A todos nossos Irmaos que andao por caminhos tanto por mar como por terra.*

Shearith Israel adds two prayers not found in other Sephardi rituals, one for those who are ill, the other for the women of the congregation. This last blessing was added to the service probably in 1730, for the wording used in the middle of the eighteenth century mentioned in Portuguese the merit of the women "for the mitzvah which they did in presenting to the synagogue the white decorations for the holy scroll of the Torah of the congregation, and the curtain of the holy Ark for use on the High Holy Days." [28]

The High Holy Days always attract the largest number of worshipers. In the past the problem of providing accommodation for them on New Year and on Atonement Day was partly met by placing additional temporary seats in the already crowded synagogue. In 1878, a decision was made to hold additional services on the Day of Atonement in the basement of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. But on reconsideration the trustees agreed to rent a room as near the synagogue as possible for the holding of free additional services on that day.[29]

In 1907, ten years after the congregation had moved its synagogue to Central Park West, free services in its assembly hall were held "to accommodate all persons who desired to attend divine worship on the Day of Atonement without reference to membership in this congregation." These were attended by several hundred persons. In the following year, 1908, such services were held on both New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement "for the benefit of all our brethren of the House of Israel without regard to congregational affiliation." [30] These overflow services have been conducted as needed every year since. The number of those served by these facilities rapidly increased beyond the point of comfort and safety, so that it became necessary for the

worshipers to make reservations in advance. Even with this control, on the eve of Yom Kippur in 1939, some hundred persons who had not made reservations clamored to be admitted. With the friendly cooperation of a policeman it became possible eventually to crowd most of them into an overfilled auditorium.[31]

In the early years of the twentieth century a considerable proportion of the attendants at these overflow services were Sephardim recently immigrated from Turkey, Greece, and Syria. A special usher knowing the languages spoken by them was appointed to help welcome these newcomers. In later years, numerous German-speaking new Americans came to these services. One could not fail to sense in their prayers at the dawning new year of life their thanksgiving for their newly found land of refuge and its freedom, their grim hope of rescue for those remaining overseas, and the heartbreak of their memorial prayers for their martyred dead.

For nearly fifty years the leaders of these overflow services on the High Holy Days have been members of the Guedalia family acting as volunteer hazzanim: Moses Guedalia, his sons Jacob and Hiram Guedalia, and his nephew Jacob L. Guedalia. Others who have shared as volunteer readers in these services have been Morris Brandon, Alexander de la Fuente, Jacques M. Habib, Herman Salomon, Joel Schneierson, and men experienced in the Jewish ministry, such as Meyer H. Battan, Isaac C. Edrehi, Raphael H. Melamed, Henry S. Morais, and Abraham H. Nieto.

Four short books of the Scriptures, the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, and Esther, are read as part of the synagogue service on four occasions in the year. Most dramatic is the setting for the chanting of the Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah on the eve of the fast of Ab. This fast, observed in midsummer on the ninth day of the month of Ab, marks a series of national catastrophes which centuries apart yet befell the Children of Israel on the selfsame day of the year. Primarily it commemorates the disaster of the year 586 before the Christian era when the army of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered the Jewish commonwealth, overran Jerusalem, and razed its Temple. Six and a half centuries later, in the selfsame month of Ab on the ninth day in the year 70 C.E. the Roman legions under Titus captured Jerusalem and burned its Temple after 600,000 Jews had lost their lives in a protracted siege of the Holy City. The exile of nineteen centuries began. A rebellion led by Bar Kochba against the Roman subjugation of Judaea collapsed on

the ninth of Ab in the year 135 C.E. One thousand three hundred and fifty-seven years later, in 1492, the edict of expulsion of the Jews from Spain took effect on the eve of the ninth of Ab. All these cumulatively intensified tragic memories crowd in on the consciousness of the Jew on the fast of Ab. The synagogue Ark and reading desk are draped in black. Congregants abstain from leather footwear, reminiscent of the Biblical custom of going barefoot in mourning. The hazzanim in their black gowns do not stand at their post of honor at the reading desk in the center of the synagogue. Instead, they take a lowly place at a plain table covered with a black cloth set below the reader's dais. At the evening service the only illumination in the pervading gloom is a wax candle for each reader. Each worshiper as he enters has always been given a candle, though of late years for greater security from fire, a small electric torch has been set to enable him to read the dirges and laments, while the synagogue itself remains wrapped in darkness.

In sheer contrast with this is the free and easy festival of Purim when a carnival spirit is encouraged. The Book of Esther, in which the Purim story is commemorated, is then chanted with gusto by the hazzan at both the evening and the morning religious service from a handwritten parchment scroll (megillah). The large one used by the hazzan in the services in Shearith Israel is written on parchment fourteen inches wide. It belonged to Rebecca, daughter of Hazzan Machado, who became Mrs. Jonas Phillips in 1762, and who in 1831, died at the ripe age of eighty-five. She bequeathed that megillah to the congregation. Fifty-seven years later, in 1889, Naphtali Taylor Phillips, her great-grandson, presented another megillah to the congregation. In that same year, Alfred A. Marcus of Boston added a megillah to his other gifts of ritual articles.[32]

While among Western Jews the parchment scroll of the Torah is severely simple without any ornamentation whatsoever, the megillah which each individual congregant is expected to hold and read on Purim is not infrequently rolled in a richly decorated case. One such megillah in a handsome silver and gold case made by Mayer Amstrom in Austria in 1862 was presented to the congregation by Adolph and Felicia Leon during the tercentenary year 1954 in memory of relatives who were victims of Nazi brutality in Paris. At times not only the container of the megillah is decorated, but, unlike the stark simplicity of the Torah scroll, the megillah parchment is illuminated with decorative motifs or pictures illustrating the story of Esther.

In the depth of winter in the Hebrew month of Kislev corresponding approximately with December occurs the festival of Hanukkah. On it are recalled from twenty-one centuries ago heroic victories of the Maccabees that rescued the light of the religion of the Bible from being extinguished by persecution. They thereby made possible the survival of Judaism and the eventual birth of its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam. During Hanukkah, on eight successive evenings lights are progressively kindled in the synagogue as in the Jewish home until on the last evening the whole of the eight branched Hanukkah lamp is aglow with their brave flaming.

The Hanukkah lamp used in the synagogue is of beaten brass. It is of a type that bespeaks its origin in Holland either toward the end of the seventeenth century or in the early years of the eighteenth century. Congregational tradition associates it with the first Mill Street Synagogue.

With spring comes the joyous Passover festival of freedom. An elaborate ritual prepares the home for its observance. The reading of the Haggadah on the first two memory-charged evenings is cherished as an essential, precious element in Jewish life. In it history and philosophy meet, theology and charades, meditation and jollity, stark justice and charity unlimited. It is attuned to those of every age, from the babbling child to the ancient of days. Through the synagogue Bulletin, members for whom the preparation of a seder has not been possible are put in contact with homes with doors opened for guests, so that never need a member be deprived of participation in the fulfillment of this religious behest.

On the first day of Passover a prayer of exquisite spirituality and wondrous love of nature is chanted. It is the prayer for dew, a brilliant compilation of poems by Solomon ibn Gabirol (1020–1069) and other medieval Spanish Jewish poets. In this, nature's physical rebirth in spring becomes the call for a rebirth of spiritual salvation. Man's earthborn appeal for gentle fructifying dew to bring life to parched fields is answered in a divine proclamation which makes life-giving dew a symbol of sustenance of the spirit.

On the afternoon of the Sabbath occurring during the Passover week, the Biblical book of the Song of Songs with its idyl of spring is read in synagogue to a happy ancient chant, verse by verse in succession by individual congregants.

On Holy Days and festivals, the invocation of the priestly blessing on the congregation is given by descendants of the priests of old. In a world in

which all too few can trace their lineage for more than a few generations, an extraordinary genealogical phenomenon has persisted in Jewish history. Descendants of a Cohen or priest and of a Levite or assistant servitor in the Temple of ancient Biblical days, preserve the unquestioned title to the family name and lineage, and are to this day accorded recognition for certain religious functions. In the repetition of the first Amidah in the morning service of the three festivals and Rosh Hashanah, and in all the services on the Atonement day except the afternoon service, congregants who are descendants of the ancient priests stand at the head of the steps before the Ark, and with prayer shawl over their heads and hands uplifted and outstretched they bless the people as did their ancestors of old. Before the chanting of the priestly blessing, a Levite helps the Cohen in the ceremonious ritual washing of his hands. The laver set used for this in Shearith Israel is a handsome silver ewer and basin presented to the congregation in 1852 by that picturesque personality and philanthropist, Sampson Simson.[33] In the early days of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, the Cohen who blessed the congregation was Alexander Peixotto of Jamaica, B.W.I., and during the last half century those who have continued the tradition have been Albert Lucas, Harold C. Stern, Reuben Farro, Joseph L. Andrews, Charles Bendheim, and Moses Acohen.

Seven weeks after the beginning of the spring festival of Passover comes the early summer festival of Shabuoth, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. As on many other occasions in the calendar of Judaism, interweaving strands create an harmonious pattern. On Shabuoth, the Bible's festival of the early harvest, the synagogue is bedecked with an abundance of greenery, plants, and flowers. Expressive also of the harvest festival is the reading of the Book of Ruth, reviving perennially its rural charm. The book is read in two parts on the two afternoons of the festival to an ancient traditional chant. Individual congregants reading in turn verse by verse draw aside the curtain of time and recreate the tenderness and faith which led Ruth, the young Moabite widow, to follow the footsteps of Naomi, the mother of her Jewish husband.

Historically, Shabuoth, the Pentecost, also marks the end of the seven weeks between the Passover escape from bondage when the Red Sea was crossed and the day of the revelation at Mount Sinai. In the whole history of Israel, no single fact exceeds in religious, moral, and human significance the promulgation of the Decalogue. That world-shaking event is relived in the solemn reading of the Ten Commandments on the first morning of the fes-

tival. The congregation, which is ordinarily seated during the reading of the Torah, stands throughout the chanting of these divine behests. The hazzan raises his voice to his utmost power. With clarion call he slowly intones the words of the Decalogue from "I am the Lord" to the last words of "Thou shalt not covet. . . ."

The rabbis counted in the five books of Moses no less than 613 commandments. These have been skilfully woven into a unique poem, the *Azharoth* (Ethical Injunctions) by the eleventh-century Spanish poet Solomon ibn Gabirol. Introducing the two afternoon services of the festival this poem, with an introduction by the twelfth-century poet David ben Eleazar Bekudah, is chanted verse by verse by individual congregants. On the first afternoon the 248 positive commandments and on the second afternoon the 365 negative commandments are thus enumerated.

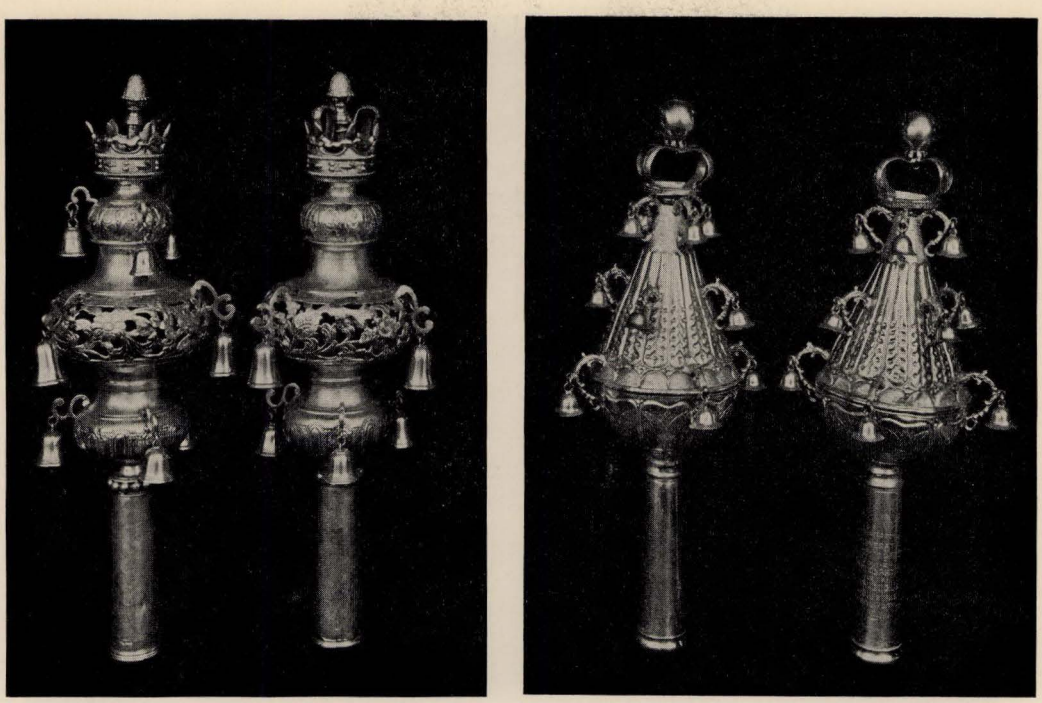
On the autumn harvest festival, the Feast of Booths, Tabernacles, or in Hebrew, Succoth (booths), the synagogue takes on a festal character in marked contrast with the penitential mood which permeated the days shortly preceding it. A joyous circuit around the synagogue is made each day (except on the Sabbath) with the citron and palm branch cluster held in the hand. To the chanting of hosanna and hymns by the tenth-century Spanish poet Joseph ibn Abitur, three- or fourscore men and boys form a colorful and happy procession in these circuits. Little boys as young as four years of age are seen marching together with octogenarians.

The observance of the festival of Passover in the home has become increasingly easy since the days a century or more ago when a man like Sampson Simson would bake his own matzoth in his home. Today anyone can purchase in the open market an abundance of delicious matzoth and other food specially prepared for Passover and can obtain attractive Haggadahs almost for the asking. But under the irresistible impact of Manhattan's architectural development, the Festival of Tabernacles has become increasingly a congregational festival. In an age of apartment dwellers, to attach to one's home a succah or temporary harvest booth in which to live and take all one's meals for the eight days of the festival is an unattainable goal except for the relatively few. Therefore, on Succoth the Jew in New York finds himself increasingly turning to the synagogue to linger for a little in its succah in symbolic fulfillment of the festival's essential observance of dwelling in the succah. Because of that, in increasing measure congregants lavish upon the congregational succah

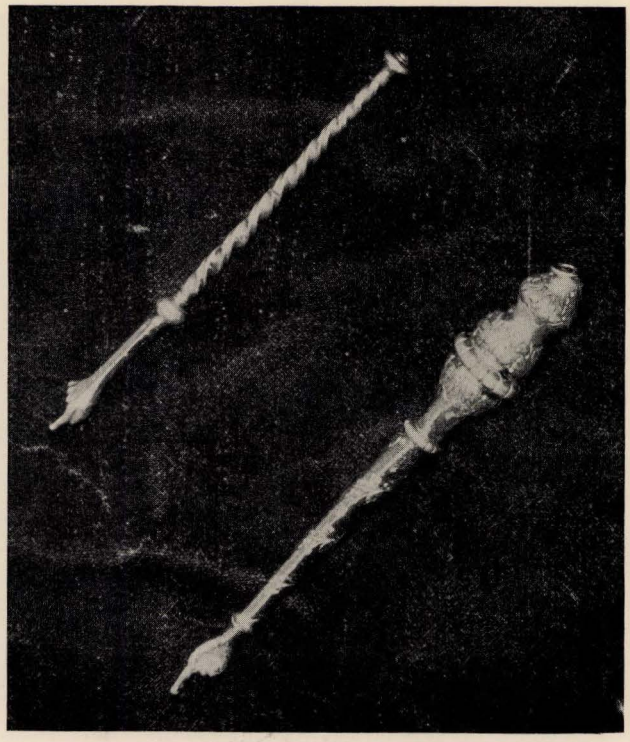
the greatest devotion. It has become a festival symbol of great charm and beauty and a happy focus of gatherings throughout the week. Under the chairmanship of Miss M. Rosina Samuel, a member of a distinguished Anglo-American family, the harvest booth in the 70th Street Synagogue grew each year in loveliness until it was rightly acclaimed as a classic expression of the harvest joy. It set an example and a standard of worship and of what the Psalmist calls the beauty of holiness. Visitors flocked to the Shearith Israel succah and carried back to their own congregations the grace, color, harmony, and bounty that made the succah of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue famous. Henriette van Nierop Stern, Mrs. Henry Kendall, and Rose Hirsch Harte followed in the line laid down by Miss Samuel, and continued the tradition with the glad assistance of a large number of women and children of the congregation. The day before Succoth, children, even as young as seven or eight years of age, hasten from school to string cranberry festoons, and help make a giant cluster of deep blue plums. Hung at the entrance to the succah, these seem as though they might have been grapes gathered from the vines by the brook of Eshkol that had to be strung from a pole to be carried on the shoulders of two men.[34]

Year by year familiar decorative objects reappear: the Damascene lamp once hanging in a home in Aleppo, the multicolored maize that came from the fireside of an Indian cliff-dweller in New Mexico, the west wall cover of bright red jute velour woven under water, the fresh orchids set in the handsome crystal vase which graced a stately dining table a century ago, and all the other appurtenances of the succah ceremonial's living testimonies of faith. Especially favored and set out for all to enjoy and admire are the four dozen plates made for the succah depicting the emblems of the festival. On them the palm branch, willow, myrtle, and citron of Succoth are drawn like a garland around the central seal of the congregation that proclaims that the world stands upon the pillars of justice, righteousness, and truth. There is much else that betokens the love of the succah, and always there are the fragrant flowers, the choice fruits, the decorative hydrangeas and waving reeds which congregants gaily bring, as if each were erecting for his very own the thanksgiving booth of all.

During the eight days of the festival congregants gather in the succah for a simple breakfast after each morning service. Throughout the festival hospitality in the succah is overflowing and is enjoyed by the throngs which gather in the booth to share in the harvest. It is customary to send to those who are



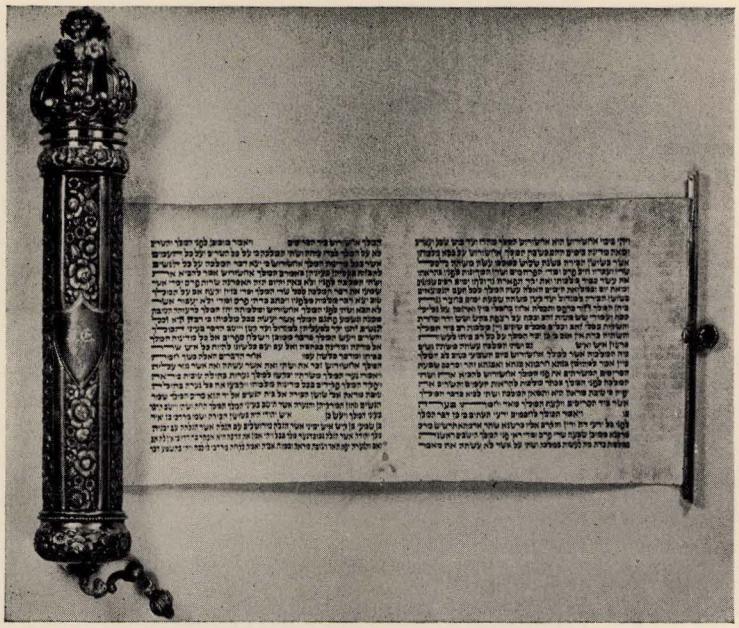
Torah bells: left, made by Myer Myers; right, dated 1737



Pointers, traditionally used to guide the reading of the Torah



On the Ninth of Ab, anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple and of the second, Jeremiah's Lamentations are chanted by candlelight in a darkened synagogue



Megillah, parchment scroll of the Book of Esther, read on the Purim festival

shut-ins, invalids, and aged members of the congregation, a little box of bread and fruit that bears with it the blessings of the festival in fellowship. Many Christian neighbors see in the succah, as they do in the synagogue, vivid illustrations of the Biblical life and faith whence their religion sprang. Gathered around the festive table, all alike partake of the harvest bounty, and all together share in the blessings and songs. According to the rabbis, the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem, albeit destroyed, is reborn at a table such as this where the Spirit dwells.

On the eve of Hoshaana Rabbah, the seventh day of the Tabernacles festival, from ten o'clock to midnight the Book of Deuteronomy is read in the harvest booth. For some, the midnight vigil, called in Hebrew *mishmarah*, continues with readings from the Bible and from rabbinic literature throughout the night, in mystic preparation for the service of the great Hosanna which begins the next morning at seven o'clock. Seven Torah scrolls are then ceremoniously brought to the reader's desk. As on the Day of Atonement, the Ark, scrolls, pulpit, and reading desk are robed in glistening white. The Torah scrolls are held before the congregation while seven circuits are made in which the palm branch, willow, myrtle, and citron are borne around the synagogue by young and old. There is also the sonorous blowing of the ram's horn, the shofar, after each circuit. This is a strikingly impressive service, strangely solemn and remote from the workaday world, yet little known even to many congregants. When the service is over, all assemble in the succah for breakfast and singing, and go forth more chastened to the daily tasks.

The most distinctive feature of the service on the eighth day of that festival period is the prayer that the coming winter be blessed with rains to replenish springs, wells and streams, revive the soil parched from the summer drought, and give promise of abundant harvests, in keeping with the words: "Then will I send rain for your land in its due season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, that you may gather in your corn, your wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your field for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied." [35] This promise, born of Israel's agricultural origins in the Promised Land, is conditioned on faithfulness to the moral law. Like the Passover prayer for dew it presents the union of God with the world of His creation and of Israel, Judaism, and life itself joined with ethical living. Religion, nature, and man are integrated in the moral law.

The festival closes on the ninth day with Simhath Torah, the Rejoicing in

the Torah. That singularly Hebraic rejoicing is as unique a celebration as the festival is unique. Using the happy symbolism of marriage, the congregation chooses one elector to be Hatan Torah—Bridegroom of the Torah, for the honor of being called to the reading of the two closing chapters of the Pentateuch. Another is chosen to be Hatan Bereshith—Bridegroom of Bereshith, the opening chapter of Genesis that is read immediately after the closing chapter of Deuteronomy. The fusing of the end and the beginning into an unbroken unity is interpreted by the rabbis as a reflection of the unending quality of God's law and man's continuous duty to make it his own.

On the eve of this festival special blessings are chanted for the Bridegroom of the Torah and the Bridegroom of Bereshith. In many Sephardi synagogues, as in Ashkenazi ones generally, the service is characterized by circuits with the Torah which become a mystical dance of the Law, the rabbi, with the Torah lovingly clutched in his arms, leading the joyful procession in rhythmic measure. This custom has never developed in Shearith Israel. But since 1940, at the close of the evening service in the synagogue the children gather in the school auditorium and there conduct their own festal circuits, with scrolls of the Torah, waving of flags, and singing of joyous Hebrew songs. Sweets and gifts complete their celebration.[36]

To the time-honored services inherited from its Jewish past, Shearith Israel has added special religious convocations born out of the heart of America and the American experience. In addition to Thanksgiving Days, the most authentic national expression of faith, gratitude and hope, many were the occasions before and since the birth of the Republic when men of faith responding nationally to the urge for prayer besought a Higher Power to guide their lives. Some of these memorable days were unique, some recurrent; some were for remembrance, some for succor and appeal, some for comfort in sorrow, strength in trial, courage in dark hours. Most of all, they expressed the joy of thanksgiving.

In 1789, George Washington proclaimed Thursday, November 26, a day of national thanksgiving to God:

> For His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of His providence, in the course and conclusion of the late war: for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed: for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one

now lately instituted: for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge: and, in general, for all the great and various favors, which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

To this first presidential call for a Thanksgiving Day Shearith Israel responded with a special service in its Mill Street Synagogue. This included a prayer by Hazzan Seixas, and Psalm 95: "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving"; Psalm 105: "O give thanks to the Lord"; Psalm 30: "I will give thanks unto Thee for ever"; and Psalm 33: "Give thanks to the Lord."

This first Thanksgiving Day of the Republic had been preceded by others in Colonial days. In 1760, aligned with the forces of Britain, the colonies experienced the first surge of national consolidation. They had helped add Canada to Great Britain's dominions, and they were thankful. On October 23, 1760, "being the Day appointed by proclamation for a general thanksgiving to Almighty God" for Canada's union with the land on its southern border, Shearith Israel was at one with other American congregations in holding a special service. After the regular morning worship, there were read the following thanksgiving Psalms: Psalm 117: "Praise the Lord, all ye nations"; Psalm 118: "The Lord is my strength and song"; Psalm 136: "O give thanks to Him . . . who hath delivered us from our adversaries"; Psalm 75: "We give thanks to Thee"; Psalm 33: "A king is not saved by the greatness of an army"; Psalm 8: "That Thou mightest still the enemy"; Psalm 111: "He hath sent redemption to His people"; and Psalm 150: "Praise God in His sanctuary." A prayer for King George's generals followed. Then Psalm 144: "Blessed be the Lord, my Rock, who traineth my hands for battle," and Psalm 67: "Let the peoples give thanks to Thee."

The prayer for the government was followed by Psalm 21: "O Lord, in Thy strength the king rejoiceth"; Psalm 30: "I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou . . . hast not suffered my enemies to exult over me"; and Psalm 96: "Sing to the Lord all the earth," followed by the last verses of Psalm 145: "My mouth shall utter praise of the Lord, and let all living bless His holy name for ever and ever"; Psalm 115: "We will bless the Lord henceforth and forever. Hallelujah"; and Psalm 29: "The Lord will give strength to His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace." Finally the service closed with the usual hymns of the festivals.

We may confidently assume that this was not a Thanksgiving Day of protracted turkey eating. For a comparatively brief recess for lunch carried the

congregation on to the regular afternoon prayers of the day. These in their turn were followed by a second patriotic service in which were chanted Psalm 1: "The Lord regardeth the way of the righteous"; Psalm 46: "He maketh wars to cease"; Psalm 98: "His right hand and His holy arm have wrought salvation"; and Isaiah 25:1–10, "We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." The prayer for the government preceded Psalm 133: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity." A prayer composed for these services by Hazzan Pinto "and translated into English by a Friend of Truth" was published and sold for fourpence. This, issued in 1760, constitutes the first Jewish publication in North America. Three years later, on August 15, 1763, Hazzan Pinto delivered a thanksgiving sermon based on the text Zechariah 2:10, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold I am coming and I shall dwell in the midst of the earth, saith the Lord."

On occasion it was the municipality which called for public thanksgiving. In 1799 the corporation of the city recommended that February 5 should be observed as "a day of Thanksgiving, Humiliation and prayer, and to abstain on that day from all servile labor." A service was accordingly held in the synagogue on that morning at eleven o'clock.

Before that year was over the clergy of the city asked their congregations to observe Thursday, December 19, as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. For that occasion Gershom Mendes Seixas arranged an elaborate service. This included

> the 3 first Verses of Ps. 95th Praise ye the Lord, call on . . . Chaunted as on the Festivals, then the following Psalms according to their respective tunes 30th, 33d, 34th, 90th, & 91st, the following discourse by the Hazan, Prayer for the Government & the Administrators & Rulers &c &c, Prayer for the Congren. a short introductory discourse on the subject of free will offerings to the Fund appropriated for private Charities & after the offerings then the Psalms 67th, 122d, 124th, & 150th Chaunted by the Hazan & Kahal, Concluded as on a festival day from *All Israel —Veshalom* [and peace].[37]

In the following year the city clergy requested that Thursday, November 27, be observed as a day of thanksgiving and prayer. The trustees then decided

> the hazan may if he thinks proper deliver a "discourse" on the Sabbath following the day recommended by the Clergy. . . . But if the corporation of this city designates a day, the Hazan requested to deliver a "discourse" on the day itself.[38]

Five years later, on December 8, 1805, at the instance of both the clergy and the corporation of the City of New York there was observed "a day of

Thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God for preserving us through the late Epidemic of yellow fever." At the service held in response to the joint call Hazzan Seixas delivered "an appropriate discourse in English." [39]

The Thanksgiving Day service in 1812 was held on Thursday afternoon, November 5. The Ark was opened before the afternoon service was commenced. The singing, of which there was a great deal, was led by "the class" of the congregational religious school. It included the two first verses of a Hebrew hymn written by the head of the school, Rabbi Dob Pique. After the prayer for the government and Psalm 89 had been recited by Hazzan Seixas, and four Psalms had been sung by "the class," the evening service was read with considerable additional singing. It was closed with the singing of Yigdal and a special "hymn for the occasion." Apparently there was no sermon delivered during these lengthy exercises.

The first Thanksgiving Day service in the second Mill Street Synagogue was held on Thursday afternoon, November 5, 1818. It was a notable occasion. The congregation was honored by the presence of De Witt Clinton, Governor of the State of New York, Cadwallader D. Colden, the mayor of the city, and other distinguished visitors.

In 1817, New York State established the annual observance of Thanksgiving Day. On two subsequent Thanksgiving Days, 1849 and 1854, the synagogues of the city felt constrained to refrain from conducting special services because the governor of the state had addressed his proclamation to "a Christian people" instead of to Americans of all faiths.[40]

In the twentieth century Shearith Israel has invited sister congregations of the neighborhood to joint services on Thanksgiving Day, with a visiting rabbi occupying the pulpit. Greater New York and nearby communities have lent their spiritual leaders for the services of the day. For a number of years pupils from the Sisterhood's Talmud Torah and other Sephardi Talmud Torahs in the city were specially invited to share in these beautiful choral services, with the Sisterhood treating the children to a gay repast in the L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium after the service.

In 1953, New York celebrated the three hundredth anniversary of its incorporation as a city. The week culminating in Thanksgiving Day, November 26, was designated as Religious Freedom Week. Official tercentenary services were held that Thanksgiving Day, attended by representatives of the city and the chairman of the New York Tercentenary Celebration, Lee Thompson

Smith. Dr. Pool's sermon recalled other outstanding Thanksgiving Day services held in the congregation since Colonial days. He closed with the three hundred year old prayer that inaugurated municipal government in Nieuw Amsterdam in 1653.

In May, 1762, while the French and Indian War in the New World and the Seven Years War in the Old World were still dragging on, there was held a service of "solemn humiliation before the Almighty God with prayer and fast." This service included Psalm 27: "Deliver me not over to the will of mine adversaries"; Psalm 35: "O Lord, battle with them who fight against me"; Psalm 46: "He maketh wars to cease"; Psalm 144: "Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of strangers"; and Psalm 67: "That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations."

On this occasion, the New York *Gazette or the Weekly Post* of May 13, 1762, wrote that "Friday last being the day appointed by proclamation for solemn humiliation before the Almighty God with prayer and fast . . . sermons to suit the occasion were preached in all the public places of worship in this city." Hazzan Pinto preached the sermon in the synagogue. He aptly took as his text the last verse of Psalm 60: "God with us we shall wage war; and He it is who will tread down our enemies." As reported in the New York *Gazette*, the rabbi's theme was drawn from the rabbinical source Midrash Debarim Rabbah, "And Israel has not done the will of the Lord, they are gone without strength before the pursuer. But when Israel does the commandments of God, they increase in strength and might, and with the help of God they are able to destroy the enemy."

The years which followed saw the gestation of the Republic. It was born in the travail of the battlefield. With the roar of the Revolution, however, there was also heard the voice of prayer. Congress officially set May 17, 1776, as a day to be observed with humiliation, fasting, and prayer. On that occasion Gershom Mendes Seixas prayed God to soften the heart of the oppressor and bring peace everlasting, and

> to put it in the heart of our Sovereign Lord George III, and in the hearts of his Councellors, Princes and Servants, to turn away their fierce wrath from against North America . . . that there may no more blood be shed in these countries . . . Thou mayest once more plant an everlasting peace between Great Britain and her Colonies.[41]

That "everlasting peace" was not forthcoming. The war for independence was to be fought to its conclusion, for Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Six weeks

later, the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, the culmination of a great patriot vision. In church and on commons throughout the colonies the liberty-seeking Americans were compared with the Children of Israel seeking freedom from serfdom in Egypt. The prayer which Gershom Seixas offered later on in the Revolution left no doubt as to the patriotic dedication of the pastor and his flock:

> May He bless, guard, preserve, assist, shield, Save, supremely Exalt, and aggrandize to a high degree His Excellency the President, & the Honble Delegates of the United States of America, in Congress Assembled; His Excellency George Washington, Capt. Genl. & Commander in Chief of the Federal Army of these States, His Excellency the President, the Honble the Executive Council, & Members of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth, and all Kings & Potentates, in alliance with North America. . . .
>
> May the supreme King of kings through his infinite mercies, save and prosper the Men of these United States, who are gone forth to War; the Lord of Hosts be the shield of those who are Armed for war by Land, and for those who are gone in Ships to war on the Seas, May the Lord fight for them. May they, their Rulers, their Leaders, and all their Allies joining them in battle, equally experience Thy goodness . . . And may a permanent Peace subsist between them, and the Kings & Potentates, in alliance with them, and Establish to them a Covenant of Peace, until time shall be no more, so that Nation shall not lift up their sword against nation, neither shall they combat or make war any more, Amen. . . .
>
> We Beeseech thee, O Most gracious and Merciful king, to whom peace Pertaineth, that Thou wilt cause us to enjoy a firm Peace & Tranquility, & Spread over us the Tabernacle of peace everlastingly, & speedily permit, that among us may be heard, "the Voice of him who bringeth glad tidings, announcing that, 'The Redeemer Cometh to Zion,' " Amen. So may it be.[42]

A generation later, the young nation found itself again at war in a struggle for neutral rights. At the beginning of the War of 1812, President Madison recommended that August 20 be observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. The congregation responded and opened the synagogue for prayers both at seven in the morning and at four in the afternoon. Following the regular afternoon service, prayers were offered for peace and for the President. Selected Psalms were sung by the congregation. Because of the physical indisposition of Hazzan Seixas, the sermon was delivered by a literary layman, Isaac Gomez, Jr., son of Moses and Esther Gomez.[43] In the following year, on September 9, 1813, the congregation again held services, both morning and evening, in response to another call from President Madison.[44]

Poignant were the prayers on January 4, 1861, when the congregation met in solemn worship in response to President Lincoln's appeal for fasting and

prayer that the heart of the country might be moved to avert the threatened calamity of disunion.[45]

Something of the somber march of events in one of the darkest half centuries in all the blood-drenched history of mankind can be traced in many of the special services held by the congregation in the first fifty years of the twentieth century. In those grave years, many were the special services of prayer and intercession for surcease of suffering for the sorely beset and savagely persecuted Children of Israel. In the opening years of the twentieth century, on a world beamingly acclaiming the progress of liberalism and human understanding, there had come like a thunderbolt the Kishinev massacre of 1903, and the general Russian pogroms of 1905. A dazed congregation met in December, 1905, in a service of painful emotion dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Russian massacres. In a similar spirit, in October, 1929, on the Day of Atonement special prayers were offered up in memory of those killed by Arab attacks on Jews in the Holy Land. In March, 1933, when Nazi fiendishness came out into the open, and the tragedy overhanging the Jews of Germany began to be revealed to an incredulous world, a solemn service of mourning and prayer was held. On Sunday morning, November 20, 1938, another service of intercession and prayer was held for German Jewry against whom there had then been unleashed the full force of Nazi organized mass murder.

When war came, prayers for the country, for the victory of its just cause, for the healing of the wounded, for the solace of the bereaved, all helped strengthen the spirit and the courage of the people. On Thursday, May 30, 1918, the congregation responded to the call of President Woodrow Wilson to observe "a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the American arms in the present war with Germany." A solemn service was held on January 1, 1942, three weeks after the attack at Pearl Harbor, in response to a call from President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He designated the opening day of the year as a day of prayer to ask forgiveness for shortcomings in the past, consecration to the tasks of the present, and divine help in the days to come. On that day Shearith Israel joined with the rest of the nation in prayer, "strong in the conviction of the right, steadfast to endure sacrifices, and brave to achieve a victory of liberty and peace."

When Holland was invaded by the German hordes, a special service of prayer was held for the Dutch victims of the war. That service, held on May

26, 1940, was attended by J. Eburt Schuurman, the Consul General of Holland. The sermon was preached in Dutch by the Reverend D. A. Jessurun Cardozo. On November 24 of that year a service for the suffering people of Greece was held in a crowded synagogue. This was arranged by the Jews of Greek origin in the city. Some of the Hebrew readings were also read in Greek translation. Archbishop Athenagoras, the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church of America, later called to Istanbul to become the Cosmikos Patriarchis of the Greek Orthodox Church, attended the service together with a representative of the Greek Embassy, the Greek consul general Lely and several of his aides, and representatives of Greek veteran organizations. Following the service, a cabled message was sent to the king of Greece, from whom a gracious reply was received.

In 1942, the congregation held a service of prayer on the second anniversary of the invasion of the Low Countries by the Nazi forces. Many Dutch and Belgian Jews were present to join in prayer for the suffering people of their homelands. A similar service was held in May of the following year. At both of these services the sermon was given by the Rev. D. A. Jessurun Cardozo. Two years later on May 13, 1945, the Netherlands Jewish Society, a group which had been organized in the synagogue and which had its home there, gathered for a service of triumphant thanksgiving and prayer to celebrate the liberation of Holland and the return of the Dutch queen to her land. Among those present were the Dutch ambassador, Dr. A. Loudon, and the Dutch consul-general of New York. In that year, May 13 was Mother's Day, a happy day on which to celebrate the return of the Dutch Queen Mother to her people and her land.

On June 6, 1944, for D-Day, the day of the allied invasion of France in World War II, two special services were held. One of these was formal. The other was a spontaneous prayer meeting arranged for a group of working girls from the neighborhood of the synagogue who used their lunch hour to come to the synagogue for prayer. VE-Day, marking Victory in Europe, Tuesday, May 8, 1945, was observed by prayers at the close of the evening service. In keeping with a proclamation of the President, also the following Sunday, May 13, was observed as a day of special prayer. A service was held in the morning for the children of the school, and in a mood of solemn joyful thankfulness special prayers were added to the evening service. This was repeated in intensified degree on August 15 of that year, VJ-Day, which marked

victory over Japan. Four days later, on Sunday, August 19, in response to Presidential proclamation another service was held to mark the end of the agonizing struggle of World War II.

The final victory which brought liberation to most of Europe did not bring an end to Jewish travail. The doors of the land of Israel were still closed to the surviving remnants of the holocaust, despite the promises explicit and implicit in the Balfour Declaration, and despite repeated passionate appeals that the doors of Palestine be opened to these desperate survivors that were voiced by Jewry the world over, Christian spiritual leaders, President Truman, and men and women in all walks of life, high and humble alike. Under the auspices of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers and the Synagogue Council of America there was held in the synagogue on October 4, 1945, a service instinct with spiritual solidarity with the homeless, and conviction that prayer to God and appeal to men of good will would help open the doors of the Holy Land and make of the Jewish National Home a fact as well as a name.

For Presidents of the country stricken down while in office, the congregation has held memorial services. On May 4, 1841, the reading desk was covered in black as a sign of mourning for President William Henry Harrison, who had died but one month after taking office. Hazzan Lyons conducted the memorial service. After Psalm 49: "Man in his glory cannot endure," and Psalm 20: "The Lord answer thee in the day of trouble," a Hebrew prayer and a discourse in English followed by an English prayer, Mr. Lyons read a specially composed Hebrew hymn forty-eight lines in length.

In 1865, Shearith Israel, grief-stricken as was the entire nation, held a service in consecrated memory of Abraham Lincoln. The traditional memorial prayer, the hashcabah, was recited for the martyr President, in dramatic acceptance of Abraham Lincoln's transcendent spirit of universal humanity.[46] The Reverend Mr. Lyons then prayed that Lincoln's "love of liberty and justice tempered by the spirit of forgiveness and conciliation inspire us all to aim at the consummation of the same great object; that a universal love may soon bring about peace and harmony to the North and the South, to the East and the West, to all men on earth."

Special prayers were offered up in the synagogue in 1881 after the assassination of President James A. Garfield, and in 1901 in memory of President William McKinley. On August 20, 1923, a service identical with that which had been followed forty-two years earlier for President Garfield was held

on the death of President Warren G. Harding. Five other congregations and one Hebrew school joined with Shearith Israel in this service.

The news of the sudden passing of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia, reached the synagogue late on the afternoon of April 12, 1945, just before the daily afternoon and evening services were to be held at six o'clock. Special memorial prayers were added to the synagogue service, making this possibly the first religious memorial service held anywhere for the President. A little later that evening, Rabbi de Sola Pool joined representatives of other religions in a nation-wide radio broadcast memorializing the President. At ten o'clock on the following Sunday morning, April 15, 1945, the time set for the funeral of the President, the congregation held a memorial service. The ritual followed was the one all too often used for Presidents who died in office. That was but three months after a service had been held in the synagogue in celebration of his inauguration as President.

When in 1901 Queen Victoria of England died, a special prayer in her memory was recited and the American flag was hung at half-mast on the synagogue building. When the first President of the State of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, died, an impressive memorial service was held in the synagogue on November 16, 1952, under the auspices of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations. More than fifty delegates to the United Nations, representing many nations, came to the synagogue to share in the memorial tribute. Abba S. Eban, Israel's Ambassador to the United States and its representative in the United Nations, gave the eulogy from the pulpit, after a solemn invocation and an address by Rabbi Pool. Rabbi Louis C. Gerstein chanted the memorial prayer. Kaddish was recited by Shlomo Ginossar, son of Ahad Ha'am, a member of Israel's delegation to the United Nations and former ambassador of Israel to Italy.

With similar solemnity the congregation had reverently bowed before God's will when in 1885, Sir Moses Montefiore, luminary of the Sephardim and of world Jewry, died in his one hundred and first year. In 1884 his hundredth birthday had been marked in the synagogue by prayers of thanksgiving. On his death, special morning and evening services were held in the synagogue during all the seven days of mourning. At the end of thirty days a memorial service was held. The Reverend Abraham P. Mendes of Newport, Sabato Morais of Philadelphia, and Meldola de Sola of Montreal, were invited to participate with the Reverend Dr. H. Pereira Mendes in this service.

In June, 1939, a service was held in memory of Jacob Meir, Sephardi Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land. All too soon another Sephardi religious leader passed away. The dynamic organizer of Sephardi community life in Europe and America, Rabbi Nissim J. Ovadia, was prematurely stricken down in 1942. A service arranged by the Sephardim of the city was held in the synagogue in his memory.

While it is in keeping with the tradition of the congregation to hold memorial services in the synagogue, funeral services have been conducted within the sanctity of the synagogue only for its religious leaders. Such funeral services in the synagogue were conducted for Gershom Mendes Seixas, Moses L. M. Peixotto, Jacques J. Lyons, and H. Pereira Mendes.

In the past, especially early in the nineteenth century, not infrequently religious services were held in the synagogue to launch a philanthropic appeal. The congregation also gathered in the synagogue for services on the occasion of a critical emergency. President Zachary Taylor called for Friday, August 3, 1849, to be observed as a day of "fasting and prayer to Almighty God to suspend the ravages of an afflicting disease [cholera] now prevailing throughout the country." That afternoon was the eve of the Sabbath when in Jewish tradition the aura of the coming Sabbath joy bans expressions of sorrow. Yet because of the exceptional emergency, the doors of the synagogue were opened at six o'clock and a lengthy service of special prayers was held, including an address by the Rev. Mr. Lyons, prior to the regular Sabbath eve services.

Many have been the historic commemorative services held in the synagogue. On Saturday, November 25, 1905, a service was held commemorating the right of settlement in America that was granted to the Jews two hundred and fifty years earlier by the Dutch West India Company. All the scrolls of the Torah robed in white mantles were carried in procession around the synagogue in joyous celebration.[47]

In March, 1935, on the first day of Passover the octocentennial was marked of the birth of Moses Maimonides, the greatest Jewish savant of the Middle Ages. In February, 1932, a religious service was held commemorating the bicentenary of the birth of George Washington. The sermon preached on that occasion by Dr. Pool was later published in a volume of selected sermons issued for the United States government by the George Washington Bicentennial Commission.

Seven years later, on April 30, 1939, the sesquicentennial of George Wash-

ington's inauguration as President was commemorated, the form of service being the same as that which had been used on two previous occasions, fifty years, and a hundred years earlier on the hundredth and the fiftieth anniversaries. Present at that service were Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and representatives of the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Legion, the Jewish War Veterans, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the United Synagogue of America. Present in full force were the members of the Asser Levy Garrison, the congregation's veterans' organization. Among the worshipers were many descendants of those who one hundred and fifty years earlier participated in the observance of Washington's inauguration.

In October, 1942, Shearith Israel was chosen by the Synagogue Council of America as the historic congregation for sponsoring a special service commemorating the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of America.

In 1954 Columbia University celebrated its two hundredth birthday anniversary. It designated seven houses of worship in the city for special bicentennial commemorative religious services. The synagogue chosen was historic Shearith Israel which had had so many official and personal relations with the college from the early days of Columbia College. In the congregation assembled on Sunday morning, January 24, 1954, were a number of notable representatives of the university. The sermon delivered by Dr. Pool was devoted to the theme of the college bicentennial, "Man's right to knowledge and the free use thereof," with special reference to the historic relations of members of Shearith Israel with the college, and the broadly inclusive religious spirit given to the college by its first president, Samuel Johnson, an ardent lover of the Hebrew language.

Impressive ceremonies of consecration have been held whenever the congregation entered into a new synagogue. Services of rededication have also been held after major renovations of a synagogue building. On September 25, 1921, after the interior of the synagogue had been completely repainted, a special service of rededication was held. Congressman Jefferson M. Levy rekindled the perpetual lamp which had been presented to the synagogue by his brother, L. Napoleon Levy, and the four lamps along the Eastern wall of the synagogue were rededicated in memory of four young men of the congregation, Corporal James Henry Florance, Lieutenant Frank J. Felbel, Private

Adolph R. Jungman, and Judge-Advocate Captain Julian M. Strassburger, who had lost their lives in the First World War.

In the tradition of Shearith Israel, commemorative services marking its own historic anniversaries have held a prominent place. The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first Mill Street Synagogue was celebrated on the seventh day of Passover in 1880. Nine scrolls of the Torah were taken from the Ark and carried in circuit to the chanting of the choir. Fifty years later, in 1930, the two hundredth anniversary was similarly marked. Many of the participants in that service were descended from congregants who two centuries earlier had consecrated that historic structure.

The hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the second Mill Street Synagogue occurred during the first World War, on April 17, 1918. Because of the sobering anxieties of the time, the announcement of the special service called for that day declared that

> These are times for expression of human emotion as Americans and as Jews. Therefore there will be a special prayer for those fallen in the war and for the safety of our sons at the front, and a sermon on "The Bible Aspects of the War" by our minister, the Rev. Dr. H. Pereira Mendes.

The centenary of the consecration of the Crosby Street Synagogue was observed on the first day of Shabuoth, May 20, 1934, with additional prayers at the close of the regular festival service of the day. On May 7, 1947, the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the present synagogue building was marked by a special service of prayer. N. Taylor Phillips, who was clerk of the congregation when it was dedicated half a century earlier, opened the Ark, and most of those who carried a scroll of the Torah in the circuit of the synagogue were sons of men who had taken part in the consecration service of the synagogue fifty years before.

Climactic to the many anniversary observances over the generations, was the service of reconsecration on the three hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Jews in America and of the founding of the congregation. Held on Sunday, September 12, 1954, exactly three hundred years since the first Rosh Hashanah was observed on Manhattan Island a brief week after the landing of the Founding Fathers, that service marked also the official inauguration of the national American Jewish tercentenary. In synagogues throughout the country local celebrations were initiated with worship, thus expressing the essential religious character of the American Jewish tercentenary.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Denver, Colorado
September 9, 1954

Dear Mr. Nathan:

I send my warm greetings to all members of the Congregation Shearith Israel as you celebrate the tercentenary of your synagogue.

On this occasion you recognize with veneration the sacred belief and inspired deeds which have helped preserve your Congregation from its difficult beginning through three hundred years, and which have led to striking accomplishments in social and community service. May you on this anniversary renew with ardor your faith in the religious principles which give men strength to do good works and which, in turn, intensify the meaning of religious principles by bringing them alive into personal experience.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Mr. Edgar J. Nathan, 3rd
Chairman, Tercentenary Committee
The Congregation Shearith Israel
Central Park West and Seventieth Street
New York 23, New York

The synagogue was filled to overflowing. Hundreds of worshipers were accommodated in the assembly hall where loudspeakers relayed the service, and hundreds more were crowding the street. The newspapers, magazines and radio stations throughout the nation recorded and repeated the prayers of a great thanksgiving day. Among those present were representatives of the state and city of New York; of the mother-synagogue Talmud Torah of Amsterdam; of the sister congregations Shaar Hashamaim of London, Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia, Shearith Israel of Montreal; of the daughter congregation Bnai Jeshurun; of the kin communities of Surinam and Panama; of the Sephardic Community, and of the national American Jewish Tercentenary. On behalf of the people of the Land of Israel, the Israeli Minister of Education and the Israeli Consul-General sat as guests of honor. Among the honored guests also were representatives of the Collegiate Church, the Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush, Trinity Church, and St. Paul's Church. Officers of the College of the City of New York, of the New-York Historical Society, of the Sons of the American Revolution and of many educational, welfare and religious organizations shared in the services. A direct descendant of Domine Polhemus who had arrived at the Battery with the twenty-three Jews in September, 1654, symbolized the dramatic unity and historic fellowship of American life. Members of Shearith Israel from distant cities came especially to participate in the memorable rededication.

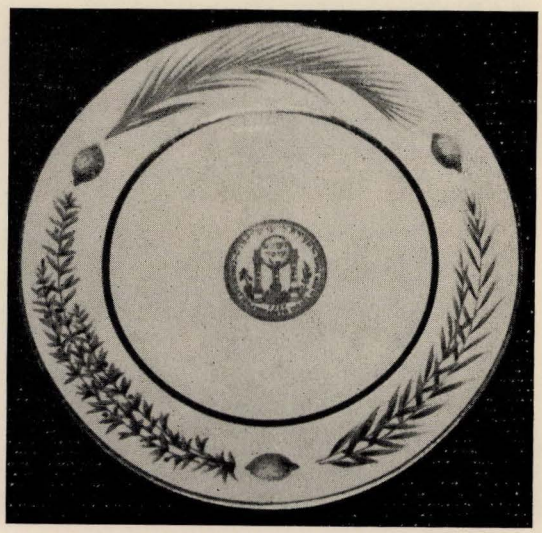
The order of service re-echoed the spirit and the prayers of the 250th commemoration, the 200th, and other landmarks in Shearith Israel history. It evoked also the solemnity and awesomeness associated with the High Holy Days.

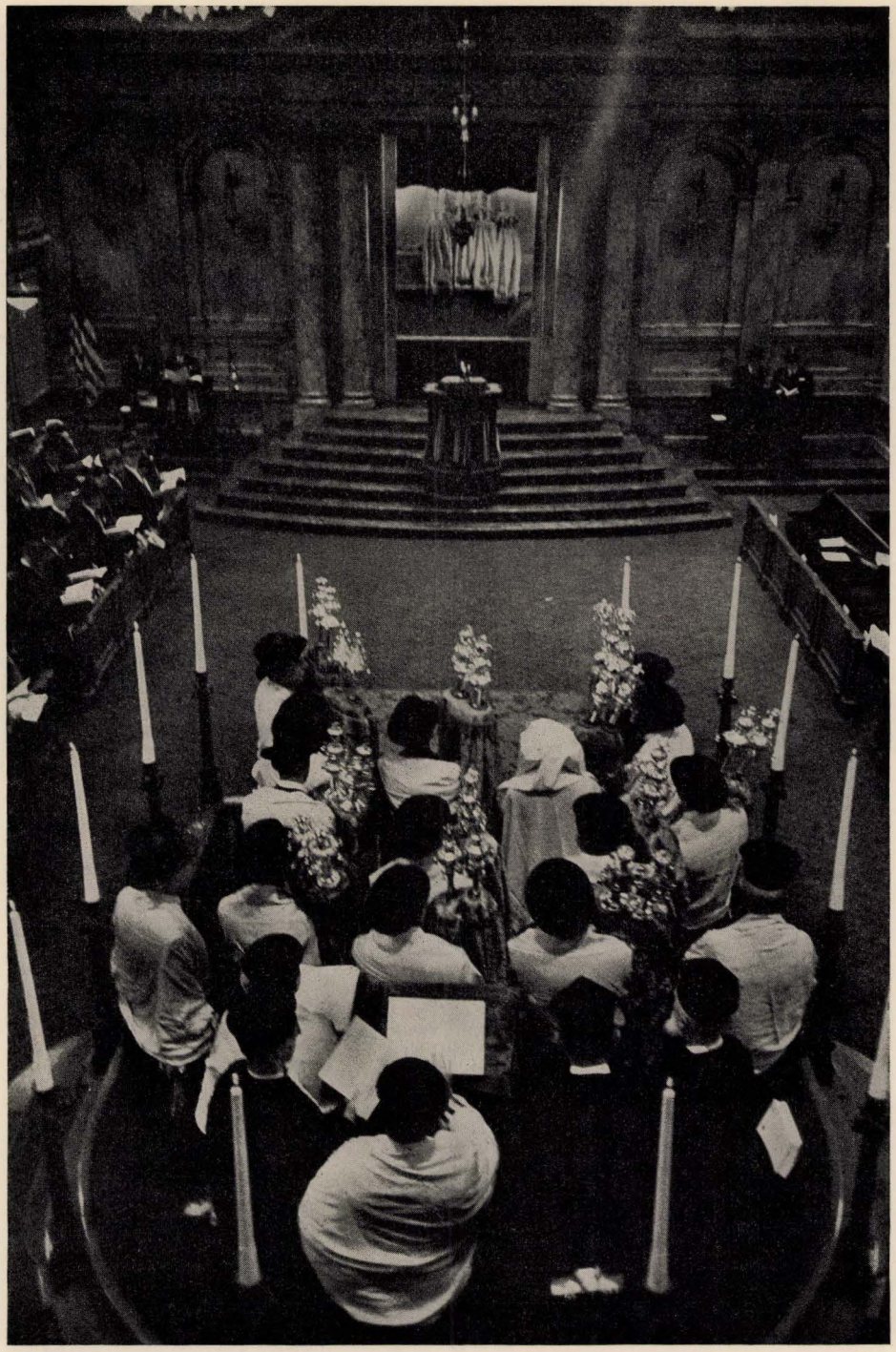
The doors of the synagogue were opened as in the consecration of a synagogue anew by the former president and the honorary president of the congregation. As the rabbis, trustees, delegates, and guests of honor marched in processional to their seats, the choir chanted the psalmist's blessing of welcome. At the side of the Ark, by the seat of the parnas, upon an antique pedestal, the perpetual light of the Little Synagogue shed its glow. That was America's oldest perpetual light continuously burning, for it was the very lamp kindled at the consecration of the Mill Street Synagogue more than two centuries earlier (and which had been in use before that), by the parnas' great-great-great-great-grandfather.



The harvest booth of Tabernacles is bright with light, flowers, wine, and fruit

Plates portray symbols of succah festival and Shearith Israel's seal





A reconsecration service with traditional religious ceremonial and solemnity inaugurated the national tercentenary of American Jewish settlement

Following the opening hymn, the congregation led by the ministers stood for the recitation of the Shehe'hianu, Israel's immemorial thanksgiving blessing. The stark brevity and simplicity of the ancient words were that day charged with the overtones of historic memories of three centuries of faith, of labor, of achievement. Those who lived to see that hour of recall heard the wings of time in the three Hebrew words of life, blessing, and fulfillment.

The heart of the reconsecration was symbolized by the processional of the Torah around the synagogue. The Holy Scrolls in glistening white mantles as on the Atonement Day were taken from the sanctuary by men in formal attire and wearing the ceremonial Taleth. Those chosen for the signal honor represented the trustees, the societies of the congregation, the Sephardi synagogues of Amsterdam, London, Philadelphia, and Montreal, and American Jewry as a whole through the National Tercentenary Committee.

Solemnly, the Shema, the proclamation of faith, was followed by the supplicatory prayers for the government of the United States of America, for the synagogues of the land, and for Zion. Psalm 67 was chanted to the ancient melody, and Psalm 100 to original music composed by the choir master. The souls of the departed were recalled in a memorial prayer for the founders and for those after them whose lives strengthened the faith of the Jew.

The sermon called for loyalty to the past, responsibility in the present hour, dedication to the challenge of the future. "Rendezvous with History" was the title and theme of the sermon, and its message sought to mark the transition between commemoration and rededication. The first three hundred years ended in a great thanksgiving. The fourth century began with faith renewed. Thus the heritage of the past was pledged as a trust for the generations yet to be born by those whose lot it was to see in dramatic realization the meaning of faith in freedom.

The synagogue has witnessed numerous other special services, such as those to mark National Defense Day and Memorial Day. It has welcomed within its walls prayer gatherings of Girl Scouts, Masons, of survivors of the Theresienstadt concentration camp marking the fourth and fifth anniversary of their deliverance, Jewish war veterans, and other organizations which sought the hospitality of its shrine to share in prayer. It has had special Sabbaths when it was host to organizations such as the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congrega-

tions, Hadassah, the Council of Jewish Women, and of course Shearith Israel's own societies. All these memorable services have borne eloquent testimony how Shearith Israel's spiritual tradition has been recognized and revered over the generations far beyond the range of a single congregation.

Besides being the home of all regular congregational services and all such special services, the synagogue has always been open for individuals seeking communion with the divine or to consecrate moments in their personal lives. Yet a wedding within the precincts of the synagogue was not readily permitted in the early history of Shearith Israel. The now very popular use of the synagogue for weddings has developed but slowly. Today, to conduct a wedding in the synagogue is considered to be the most fitting sanctification (*kiddushin*) of the troth. In the early days of Shearith Israel's history, a marriage ceremony in the synagogue was rare. In warmer lands outdoor weddings on a terrace or in the synagogue courtyard were apt to be favored. For climatic reasons, this has not been the custom in New York where for the first two centuries of the congregation's history the accepted place for a Jewish marriage was the home.

Early in the nineteenth century began a not uniformly successful struggle to hold marriage ceremonies in the synagogue. It was not until April 25, 1836, that the board of trustees decided to permit marriages there. This seemingly revolutionary innovation was repeatedly challenged. In 1843, a proposal to restrict weddings to the synagogue basement was defeated by the chairman's casting vote. A month and a half later the matter was brought up again. Again the proposal to rescind the permission for weddings in the synagogue did not pass the board of trustees.[48]

A newspaper of the time in reporting the marriage on November 1, 1843, of Theodore J. Seixas, a son of Gershom Mendes Seixas, and Anne Judah stated that, "We understand it is rather an innovation upon the ancient practice to have these weddings solemnized in the synagogue." The reporter described the picturesque close of the ceremony. The bridegroom and bride partook of the second glass of the wine of blessing. Then, symbolizing the remembering of Jerusalem and setting the loss of Zion above one's "chiefest joy," the bridegroom dashed the glass to the ground. Whereupon "the crowd rather unceremoniously pressed in upon her [the bride] as she stood under the canopy, and caused some degree of agitation on her part. But the groom gallantly bore her off as soon as they were one."

The "innovation upon the ancient practice" apparently was an attraction not only to the invited public, but also to the uninvited, who felt free to crowd into a house of prayer and enjoy the happy occasion. Concerned by the possibility of resultant damage to the synagogue building, Naphtali Phillips offered to the board of trustees the following resolution:

WHEREAS on several occasions the performance of the marriage ceremony in the synagogue has attracted from the motives of curiosity a large assemblage of spectators of all denominations filling the building to its utmost capacity, and then proving insufficient to contain all anxious to effect an entrance, and the interior of the building having sustained some injury thereby, which on a future occasion might prove serious: And Whereas a majority of the members of this board are not in favor of prohibiting such ceremony being performed in the synagogue, and as it is the special duty of the trustees to protect the property of the congregation from injury, RESOLVED that hereafter prior to the synagogue being used for the performance of the marriage ceremony, the party applying for the same shall in a written communication to the president of this board agree to be responsible for, and make good immediately after such performance of such ceremony any damage that may be incurred by reason of the building having been used for that purpose.

The proposal was tabled. But drastic action ensued. A little more than two months later, on February 6, 1844, it was unanimously resolved to rescind the resolution which authorized marriages being solemnized in the synagogue.[49] This prohibition prevailed for a number of years. In 1853, Aaron L. Gomez asked that his daughter be married in the synagogue. Permission was not given.[50] Four years later resistance began to crack once more. In 1857, Lionel Moses asked that his wedding be performed in the synagogue. Permission was granted for the ceremony to be conducted in the synagogue basement.[51]

When the synagogue in 19th Street was opened, the lenient attitude was strengthened. The elector Isaac Lopez asked permission to be married in the synagogue. This was granted him on condition that all persons should be excluded except those seat holders having cards of admission. Finally, in 1864, without any conditions or reservations John D. Jackson was allowed to have his daughter's wedding solemnized in the synagogue. Yet because of fear of overcrowding the building, as late as 1880 when Frederick Nathan and Maud Nathan were to be married, their request that the ceremony be in the synagogue was granted on condition that the entry of invited guests would be only by cards of admission.[52]

One other question of policy in connection with weddings in the synagogue was keenly discussed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century—whether or not instrumental music should be permitted at a marriage ceremony in the synagogue. Early in 1881 it was officially decided that an organ might be used at a synagogue wedding. Three years later instrumental music additional to that of a melodeon was explicitly permitted. But eight months thereafter it was ruled that under no circumstances was instrumental music to be allowed at any service held in the synagogue. However, a little over two years later this ruling was overlooked, and to this day bride and groom are married in the synagogue with an organ adding its harmonies to the joyous ceremony. The organ used in the main synagogue today was originally George Gershwin's. It was given to Shearith Israel by the composer when he left New York to make his home in California. The silver wine cups used by bride and groom were the gift of the shammash Charles Steinberg on the occasion of the marriage of Dr. and Mrs. Pool.[53]

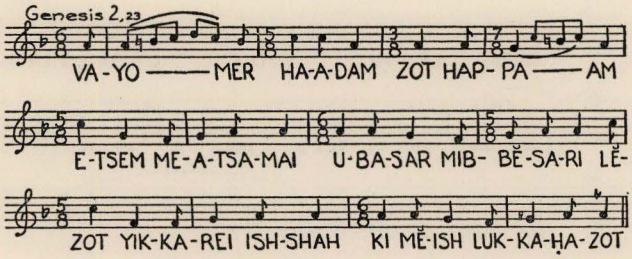
Those who witness the impressive simplicity and spiritual beauty of a wedding in Shearith Israel may find it difficult to understand the long resistance to so happy an extension of the use of the synagogue. Yet perchance the loveliness of the synagogue wedding today owes something to the hesitant solicitude of earlier generations that there should be no lessening of the sanctity of their house of worship. The betrothal blessing and the sevenfold blessings over the married couple are chanted in the prayerful mood engendered by the sanctuary. The wedding within the religious shrine most clearly expresses religious transformation of the contract of marriage into a consecration of two souls uniting to face life together under God.

Music plays an important part in expressing the reverent spirit of the synagogue. In the Temple of old in Jerusalem musical instruments were used, but after its destruction, in chastening memory of that disaster the only instrument heard in the synagogue has been the ram's horn (shofar) sounded on the penitential days. Its stern, weird, and commanding tones, the same as those which stirred the Children of Israel in Biblical days, are all the more dramatic because they link the present with the centuried past.

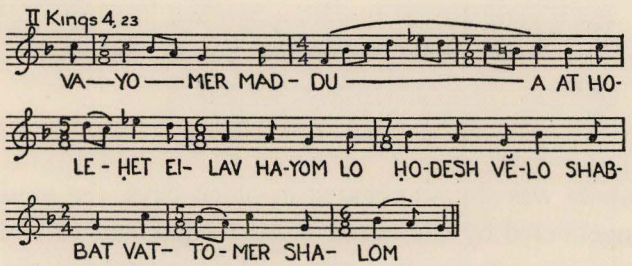
The oldest chanting in the synagogue is rooted in the services held in the Temple in Jerusalem twenty centuries ago, which in their turn were derived from the services chanted in the Temple of Bible days. This is the cantillation of the Bible reading which is in reality a development of the vary-

ing tones of expressive speech. There are no punctuation marks in the written scroll of the Torah, and no division into sentences. The traditional chant expresses meaningful phrasing, correct grammatical nuances, and fine shades of meaning. Centuries later, perhaps around the seventh century of the common era, this chanting, which then had already long been traditional, was put into written form. Its signs or neumes represent not single notes but whole musical phrases, and in considerable part follow forms used in classic representation of musical motifs in ancient days. The Hebrew zarka is the same shape as the sinuosa, azla the same as the virgula, rebia as the quadrata, seghol identical with the tripunct, and so on. In the Jewish tradition the Bible was always read to a chant, just as among Moslems the Koran, and in the Eastern Church the gospels are chanted. The varying cantillations of the Pentateuch, the prophetic portions of the Bible, the Song of Songs, the Book of Ruth, Lamentations, and the Book of Esther heard in Shearith Israel are the most ancient elements in the music of the synagogue.

TORAH-CHANT



HAFTARAH-CHANT



Less familiar than these weekly chants are those used for other parts of the Bible.

SONG OF SONGS



RUTH



LAMENTATIONS



Poetry likewise was always chanted in olden days, the music intensifying the feeling engendered by the poetic words. The chant to which the Psalms are sung in the congregation is a cultural bridge between the East and the West. The motifs are shaped in the Oriental manner, and have retained the use of a special closing motif as in Bible cantillation.

PSALMS

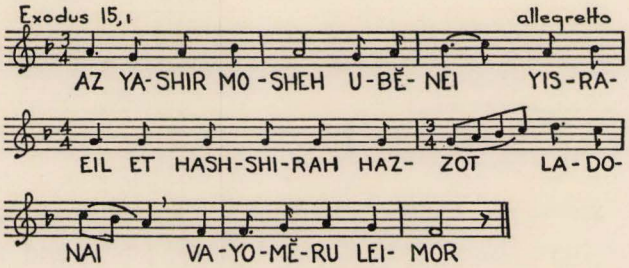


In the same spirit, the congregational prayers composed centuries later than the Psalms have always been chanted. Their poetic and often ecstatic mood is heightened by the tones of music. The dominant emotion of the day in a measure affects the nature of the chant. The regular Amidah chant has a characteristic modification on penitential days that is associated only with those days. In the longer set prayers, such as the Amidah or Yotser, the original free parlando has become a fixed recitative. Such chants are simple, within a range of not more than five notes and without melismatic ornamentation. They are elastic, and marked by repetition or modification of short musical phrases in adjustment to the rhythmic stresses and the length of the passage that is being read. Therefore these traditional Sephardi chants have remained simple enough to be joined in by all those present, however modestly some may be gifted vocally. The simplicity of the melody welds the congregation into a fellowship of worshipers, while more elaborate compositions would sometimes tend to induce the atmosphere of an audience at a concert of sacred music.

Less old in the music of the services are the melodies to which hymns and sometimes single verses are sung. Many of these have been brought down to our day from the communities which flourished in Spain in the Middle Ages. These melodies have preserved some of the characteristics of early Peninsular music, whether in the simpler melodic lines of Northern Spain or in the more ornate character of Moorish Spain. None of these synagogue melodies was written down until modern times, so that not a small degree of variation is found locally between a melody as sung in Shearith Israel in New York and that same melody as sung in Curaçao, or London, or Amsterdam.

These old tunes are uniformly of a simple melodic framework suited to congregational singing. Sometimes an ancient flexible chant becomes a fixed melody, such as that to which is sung the song of Moses, a chant which is reminiscent of a trumpet call.

AZ YASHIR MOSHEH



At times the melodic theme will be a brief, fragmentary one in which the grouping of words is sometimes compressed and sometimes expanded as the melodic theme is repeated basically unchanged over all the sentences, whether brief or long, in a paragraph. This is illustrated by a Rosh Hashanah theme which is adjusted to the priestly blessing with its three verses of uneven length, a melody to which is sung also the *Hashkibei'nu*, an evening prayer for peace and serenity with the night's repose.

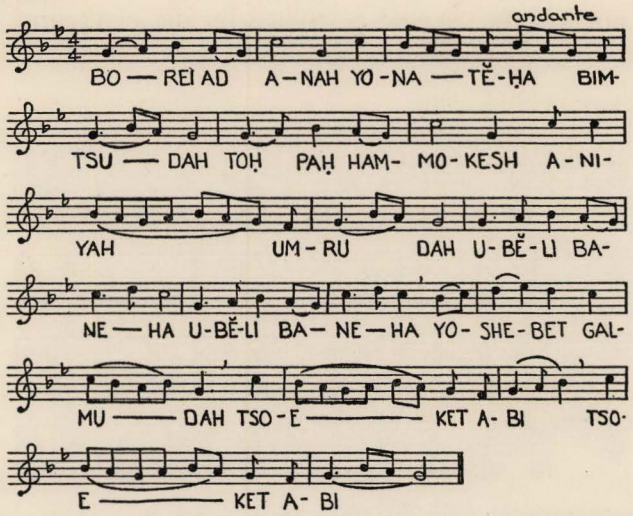
HASHKIBEI'NU



The dirge *Borei ad anah* (How long, O Creator?), by one Benjamin, is sung on the black Fast of Ab to a melody which puts into musical form the melancholic plaintive wailing of a smitten and bereaved people.

Before the day is over, the theme of solace and promise triumphs over the moaning of lamentations, and in the later prayers of the day threnody drifts into a comforting mood.

BOREI AD ANAH



Aḥot Ketannah (The Little Sister), the hymn opening the service on the eve of the New Year, gives melismatic expression to the mood of solemnity.

AḤOT KETANNAH



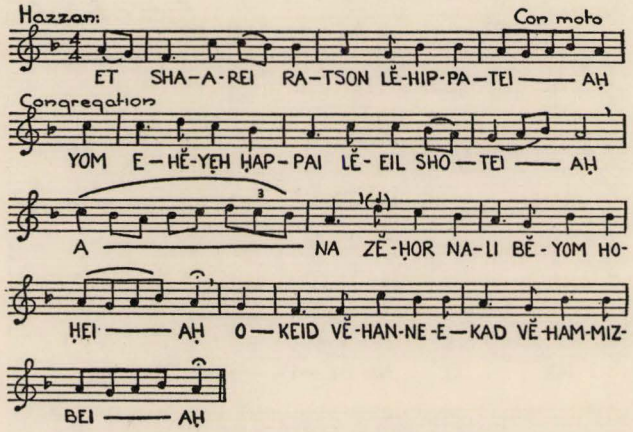
The characteristic theme of Rosh Hashanah to which *Ein Kelohei'nu* and certain other prayers are chanted is evoked by the penitential mood which gravely echoes the piety of generations.

EIN KELOHEI'NU



Another characteristic melody with its narrow pentatonic range and its ending on the third note in the scale, and which seems to show the influence of Moorish Spain, is that of *Et shaarei ratson* (Gates of mercy open now), a twelfth-century poem by Judah Samuel Abbas.

ET SHAAREI RATSON



The traditional Sephardi melody to which are sung Psalm 117 in the Hallel of praise and a part of the Passover prayer for dew has become familiar to Jews the world over as the melody of *Hatikvah*. Asher Perlzweig of London adapted the ancient Sephardi theme to Naphtali Herz Imber's hymn *Hatikvah*, the Zionist song of hope adopted by Israel as its national anthem.

LEḤ LESHALOM GESHEM



The cumulative effect of the continuous chanting in unison of simple medieval recitatives, which have retained their modal character without the expanded polyphony of modern harmony, creates an exotic atmosphere. To ears attuned to the tonalities of modern Western music, the effect is often strange, the more so because a sentence or a paragraph very often comes to an end on the third instead of on the tonic note, giving the impression of the chant's being unfinished and never ending. In the story of her visit to the synagogue in 1841, Lydia Maria Child, the Boston feminist, characterized the singing as "unmusical, consisting of monotonous ups and downs, which when the whole congregation joined in it, sounded like a continuous moan of the sea." [54]

Ensign Caleb Clapp, who visited the synagogue on May 4, 1776, was similarly impressed by the limited range of the chanting and by the constant participation by the whole congregation both in the chanting and in the melodies.

They . . . were engaged very deeply either in reading or singing, but their discourse being in Hebrew, and their tune so strange to me that was not able to distinguish between reading and Singing only as they sometimes raised their voises (then I concluded it was singing) the whole time of Exercise, they all sang and read with the Minester.[55]

That little word "with" reflects a problem at times not taken lightly. The congregational constitution of 1805 imposes a certain control on musical individualists:

Every member of this congregation shall previous to the singing of any psalm or prayer, remain silent until the Hazan shall signify the tone or key in which the same is to be sung, and those who are so inclined may then join therein, with an equal voice, but neither higher or louder than the hazan.[56]

While individuals with loud voices may tend to dominate the congregational singing in the section of the synagogue where they are seated, nevertheless the chanting as a whole is notably reminiscent of the words spoken by Moses as he came down from Mt. Sinai, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, nor the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the sound of them that sing do I hear."

From time to time modern compositions have been added to the ancient treasury of the congregation's music. Some of these were composed by men associated with the congregation, such as Jonas B. Phillips, Julius J. Lyons, Leon M. Kramer, H. Pereira Mendes, and D. de Sola Pool. Others are the work of European composers such as Solomon Sulzer, Samuel Naumbourg, M. Moss, and D. A. de Sola. In all these melodies, whether modern or old, or ancient, the worshipers wholeheartedly join. Yet the formal organization of congregational singing has had a long and a curiously checkered history. In 1812 the singing at the special service held on Thanksgiving Day was led by "the class" of the Polonies Talmud Torah. For the special dedicatory services of the second Mill Street Synagogue in 1818, the musically gifted Jacob Seixas, a son of Benjamin Mendes Seixas, prepared a congregational chorale of "fifteen ladies and ten gentlemen" of whom two women and three men were members of the Seixas family. This trained congregational singing was strikingly impressive. Seven years later when Jacob Seixas was visiting Philadelphia, as "the leader, teacher and principal performer" he organized a choir which sang at the dedication of Congregation Mikveh Israel's new synagogue building, with his sister Miriam leading the women. In the words of Rebecca Gratz, "all who were there acknowledged that there has never been such church music performed in Philadelphia." [57]

After the consecration of the Mill Street Synagogue, several young men of the choral group that had been created and trained by Jacob Seixas turned to the board of trustees with the suggestion that they form a singing class to improve the singing. This proposal anticipated the present Shearith Israel Chorale by 135 years. The plan of organizing a formal class was not then accepted for reasons lengthily but at this distance not convincingly given, even though the idea of training the congregation for harmonious singing was warmly endorsed.

The Committee to whom was referred the letter of a number of young gentlemen of the Congregation, who propose forming a class, with a view to improve the sing-

ing in the Synagogue, and for that purpose to rehearse occasionally in the meeting room of the Trustees and asking permission of the Board thereto. Report.

That . . . they are of opinion that the gentlemen associated are entitled not only to the thanks and approbation of the board, but of the whole congregation for their good intentions, and consider that it affords full evidence of their ideas of the propriety of conducting our worship in a manner different from what it has been heretofore performed, and to give to the service that solemnity that our prayers and psalms should have.

So far so good. The committee admits that there is room for improvement in the congregational singing. However, suppose the suggested choir were to become so dominant as to be indispensable. Members of a choir are only human. The trustees therefore feel that they

must view the application in all its leanings, its disadvantages as well as the advantages to be derived . . . if in process of time this association from practice and talents acquire so great a control over the rest of the congregation, as that the whole or the greater part of the service should by general consent devolve on them, what we ask would be our situation, when . . . from private pique, jealousy, resentment, or other cause, several of the association should refuse to continue longer members of the same, but withdraw themselves, and even discontinue their attendance at Synagogue, another objection is, that they may be called from this City to reside elsewhere, and as the number is small, sickness or other casualty may prevent their attendance and from a discontinuance of the old form, we might find ourselves in a very unpleasant situation much worse than at present.

Let the proposed choir, they conclude, not be limited to its present few members with good voices; let it be open to all the congregation.

Your committee are therefore of opinion, that it would be inexpedient to grant the request in the manner as we conceive is contemplated by the association. . . . They are however of the opinion, that the association may do great good, and for that purpose invite them to commence their rehearsals without delay, with a full and entire understanding that any member of the congregation may attend the same, join therein, as well as in the synagogue, under such rules and regulations as shall be adopted.[58]

Thus was disapproval expressed of any choir which might become an exclusive musical group dominating the congregational singing, or socially, perchance, a snobbish association. This diplomatic verbiage embalmed for the nonce the organization of a synagogue choir, but it had the merit of reaffirming the need of an inclusive democracy in congregational singing. The idea of a choir, however, did not die. Some sixteen years later, in 1834, for the consecration of the Crosby Street Synagogue a special choir was again organized. A Christian reporter for a Philadelphia newspaper wrote of it: "The choir

was superior to any I have heard. The full toned bass, the high tenor, the second and counter were so well blended in harmony that you would have thought it but one voice which was preserved throughout without the aid of organ." The *Times* spoke of "a solo by the leader, a gentleman possessing one of the finest voices we have ever heard, with the accompaniment of a full chorus. . . . Indeed, we have never heard more impressive church music or a choir composed of finer voices."

In his dedicatory oration on that occasion Mordecai M. Noah urged that more music be introduced into the synagogue. For, he said, it is "a singular fact that a people so distinguished in early times for their music should for a long time have wholly renounced it."

Yet the road was still a long one before a professional choir was established for the regular Sabbath and festival services. In 1825 a committee was appointed

> to enquire into the expediency of regularizing the service in the synagogue in relation to the chaunting of the Psalmes etc. and if expedient to take measures to carry same into effect under their superintendence and that of the Hazan.[59]

In the same spirit it was ruled that Hazzan I. B. Seixas

> be required in future not to set and continue the tone or key so high as to preclude the Congregation from taking part in the singing, and thereby causing disorder & confusion.[60]

The lack of a choir sometimes led to strange results. Thus we find to our surprise that what we might call a concert in the synagogue was organized alongside the service at the dedication of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, and that the choir of eighteen voices included several members of the Italian opera company. The chorus, as in this case it might well be called, was trained for the occasion by the accomplished conductor, D. Miranda. The singing was strengthened by the Nelson sisters and the voluntary participation of Miss Laura Josephs and Miss Rosa Dusseldorf. The cost of the choral part of the exercises amounted to the high figure of $622.12.

By this time the question of whether or not there should be a permanent choir in the synagogue had to be finally settled. In 1856 Congregation Bnai Jeshurun had organized in its synagogue on Greene Street a choir of men and boys, and the New York *Daily Times* called it "a novel feature in the religious services of the Jews in this city." [61] By 1859, three congregations, Bnai Jeshurun, Anshe Chesed, and Emanu-El, had choirs. At long last the trustees of Shearith Israel were ready to advertise for a permanent choirmaster. But the

electors still "do not approve the establishment of a choir for this congregation." [62] Thirty years of experimentation followed while all kinds of questions were thrashed out. Who was to be the choir director—a professional leader or the hazzan? What was to be the relation of Hazzan Lyons to the choir? How large was the choir to be? Was it to be a men's choir, a boy's choir, or a choir of men and boys? Should women be allowed in the choir? Since "offerings of praise and song are permitted to forty or to two hundred ladies when singing in the congregation, shall they be forbidden to four when grouped in a choir in the congregation?"

Other questions developed. Was the choir to sing elaborate compositions, or was it to be limited solely to leading the congregational singing? How much was it to cost? Did the choir meet all reasonable expectations? Should it be maintained or abolished? Must all the members of the choir be Sabbath observers? Where should the choir be placed in the synagogue, in the second gallery or behind the reading desk? Should the choir sing at the brief Friday evening service as well as on the Sabbath morning?

Over years of vacillating policy, these and similar questions were repeatedly raised, but despite many setbacks the congregation's choir of men and boys progressively established itself. Except during the three weeks of mournful memories preceding the Fast of Ab, the choir has been heard for many years at every Sabbath eve and Sabbath morning service, on festivals and Holy Days, at special services such as on Thanksgiving Day, and at weddings in the large synagogue. Old misgivings have been allayed. The choir has become one more element of beauty and dignity in the synagogue service. Its leadership of congregational singing, its finely rendered choral music, and its expert direction, give a high musical character to the service.

Leon M. Kramer, skilled choirmaster and musicologist, has a unique place in the history of the Shearith Israel choir. He had studied music at the Royal Academy of Arts in Berlin, and had been assistant to the famous composer of Jewish liturgical music Louis Lewandowski in the Jewish community of that city. In Shearith Israel he succeeded Daniel Korn in 1883 and served sixty years until his death in 1943. In 1933, to mark his jubilee of service he undertook to compile and transcribe all the music used in Shearith Israel. The distinctive and historic character of most of this music, shared in the United States only by Philadelphia's Congregation Mikveh Israel, made this undertaking important for the student of synagogue music. A modest gift of $500 which was

presented to Mr. Kramer at the celebration of his jubilee was used by him to initiate a Shearith Israel Music Publication Fund. On his passing, the congregation mourned one who had given

> selfless devotion, enthusiasm and love to raising the choral service of worship to the highest standard of beauty. His notable musicianship and gifts as a composer enriched our synagogue service with numerous movingly spiritual compositions. . . . His kindness, gentleness, modesty and unfailing readiness to share his gifts with the congregation on every occasion made him a beloved figure in the congregational life.[63]

In the last year of his life Leon M. Kramer compiled the choral melodies used at the Sabbath eve service. After his death these were put into final form by his successor as choirmaster, Oskar Guttman, and published as the first volume of the synagogue music.

Dr. Oskar Guttman, an accomplished musician with much experience in directing synagogue music in Germany, took office in the fall of 1941. His expert knowledge of music and his talents promised much for the future, but his service ended all too soon with his untimely death in 1943. The work of conducting the choir was then carried on by Raphael Bress, a devoted member of the choir since 1917, who stepped into the breach and who for ten years maintained the synagogue's choral traditions with great fidelity. At the end of 1953, Siegfried Landau took over the direction of the choir. Mr. Landau received his early training in Berlin and London. In New York, to which he came in 1940, he headed the operatic and orchestral department of the New York College of Music. A member of the faculty of the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, he was also conductor of the Kinnor Symphonietta of the Hebrew Arts Foundation. One of his first undertakings in Shearith Israel was to create and direct a chorale, consisting of some fifty men and women endowed with pleasing voices. Enthusiastic direction, discipline, assiduity, and a sense of comradeship transformed these voices into a sensitive musical unity that enriches the singing in the synagogue and adds to congregational spirit. Mr. Landau also continued the program of making recordings of synagogue chants and melodies that had been initiated by the Shearith Israel League under the chairmanship of Arthur Bergman. The second volume of these records was made possible through the Sophie and Ivan Salomon Music Fund.

Thus has been established the musical tradition of Shearith Israel. The hazzan remains the leader in prayer, and he chants the Torah. While pleasing

musical rendition is expected of him, he is not called on to sing the involved note groupings of the Oriental Sephardi tradition, or the coloratura cadences often heard in Ashkenazi synagogues. Hazzan and choir guide the congregational singing. The choir leads in responses and in hymns, enriching the melody with harmonization, but essentially the service of worship remains with the congregation. Indeed, in some of the most familiar and best-loved hymns the choir is expected to follow and not lead the congregation.

Simple ancient chants and modern musicology join to express worship through music. As the most universal of the arts and the most moving form of expression known to man, it brings its mead to the enrichment of the religious services, uniting traditions of untold generations with modern musical self-expression in a continuity which partakes of the joy of creation.

In this lengthy chapter we have tried to follow with congregants, old and young, a religious zodiac around the year. We have joined in festivals and in reverent solemnity vibrant with the echoes of three hundred and of three thousand years. We have shared in daily and Sabbath worship, and in special services of supplication, thanksgiving, and commemoration. Together with words of prayer we have heard ancient chants and more modern melodies. To these have been added "the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride," making the beauty of the marriage ceremony in the synagogue a precious consecration of the Jewish family. Such a panorama of faith can make vivid the meaning of religion in the life of the Jew, and the relation of the synagogue to the history of the Jewish people.

v. Servants in the House of the Lord



Let Thy servitors be robed in righteousness.

PSALM 132:9

WHO HAVE BEEN the religious leaders in Shearith Israel's synagogues?

Jewish life draws but a faint line between lay and clerical religious leadership. Few were the functions left to the descendants of the priesthood after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem almost nineteen centuries ago. Any man of good character, loyal to Judaism, with the requisite knowledge, and preferably with a pleasant voice, and married, is qualified to conduct the services in the synagogue. Not a clerical caste but piety and learning in Jewish lore have provided the spiritual leadership of the Jewish community.

Throughout the generations there has been almost universal literacy of Jewish males. It can therefore confidently be assumed that there was someone who could lead in divine worship among those who quietly gathered for the first observance of the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement in Nieuw Amsterdam in September, 1654. In the Dutch settlement and in early

Colonial New York, laymen with sufficient knowledge of Hebrew and of Jewish ritual conducted the services, officiated at marriages and funerals, acted as shohet and bodek or supervised others who undertook these functions of providing kasher meat, entered new-born boys into the covenant of Abraham, and taught the children the elements of Jewish knowledge. Asser Levy, who was among those to arrive in 1654, unquestionably was a competent shohet and bodek. But the few facts at our disposal do not reveal the names of the leaders of services in the early years of the nascent congregation.

In 1685, thirty years after the arrival of the first Jewish settlers, the mayor and common council of New York still ruled "the Jews worship not to be allowed." Yet we cannot altogether assume that until that time there had been no officially recognized hazzan-minister of the group. For twenty-five years later, Abraham Haim de Lucena made the claim, which was not disputed, that "ministers of the Jewish Nation . . . by reason of their ministerial function have from time to time been exempted by ye Government" from giving military and other types of service. Were these "ministers" laymen possessed of the necessary knowledge who served as religious leaders of the group? Or was the municipality's ruling of 1685 more for the record than the practice? The answer to these questions no doubt varied at different times.

SAUL PARDO ?–1702(03?)

It was in that same year, 1685, that there came to New York Saul Pardo, the first known regular reader of services. He was a lay leader who belonged to a family with a distinguished tradition of Jewish learning. His Spanish family name, Pardo, through some slight color blindness in translation (Pardo meaning grey) became Brown. His grandfather was Joseph Pardo of Salonica and of Venice, who later became the first rabbi of Beth Jacob, the first Jewish congregation in Amsterdam. David Pardo, a son of this Joseph and father of our Saul, was the first rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel in Amsterdam. Saul Pardo's brother Joseph was hazzan in Amsterdam and London. Another brother, Josiah, was rabbi in Curaçao and Jamaica. His uncle David, another son of Joseph Pardo, was rabbi of the community in the Joden Savanne in Dutch Guiana, and his nephew, Josiah's son David, was rabbi in Surinam. The world was the parish of the Pardo family.[1]

Saul Pardo, spiritual leader of Shearith Israel, first appears in American an-

nals as a merchant in Newport from 1677 to 1685. After 1685 he was a merchant in New York. He was successful in business if we may judge from the fact that in 1695 the house in which he lived was assessed at the high figure of £100. Yet he found time not only to attend to his business, but also to act as religious leader of the Jewish community. In 1695, the Reverend John Miller in his "Description of New York" mentions him as the minister of the Jews. Some time between September, 1702, and September, 1703, Saul Pardo died, leaving a widow, Esther, and four children: Josiah, Abigail, Sarah, and Hannah.

ABRAHAM HAIM DE LUCENA (1703)–1725

Saul Pardo's successor, Abraham Haim de Lucena, was also both merchant and hazzan.[2] The earliest mention of his name is found in New York City records of 1701. Chronological considerations make impossible the formerly suggested identification of him with the Abraham de Lucena whom we have met when he arrived in Nieuw Amsterdam in 1655. But the two men may well have been closely related. One may wonder whether Hazzan Abraham Haim de Lucena may not have been a grandson of the earlier Abraham de Lucena. The later Abraham became a freeman on July 6, 1708. He was an importer and exporter of such goods as wheat, wine, other varied provisions, and "Jewish beef." In 1705 he joined with sixty-five other merchants of the city in a petition concerning fair valuation of foreign coins.[3] In 1711, in Queen Anne's War he was one of those who supplied the American expedition against Canada with flour, bread, butter, and peas. It was in that year also that he contributed £1 toward building the steeple of Trinity Church.

In his capacity as religious head of the Jewish community of New York he addressed a petition on September 13, 1710, "to his Excellency, Robert Hunter, Esq., Captain General and Governor in Chief of the Provinces of New York, New Jersey and Territories thereon depending in America and Vice Admirall of the Same . . ." In this petition he claimed as "Minister of the Jewish Nation"

> That your Petitioner's Predecessors, ministers of the Jewish Nation, resideing at the City of New York by reason of their ministerial ffunction, have from time to time beene Exempted by ye Government, not only; from bearing any office Civil or Military within this City, but likewise been Excused from Severall Duties and Services Incumbent upon the Inhabitants of this city.[4]

The convention that ministers of religion be at all times free to perform their appointed tasks was deeply ingrained in the spirit of New York since its earliest days. It came to final and formal expression two-thirds of a century later in the first constitution of New York State that was adopted at Kingston on April 20, 1777. This closes in its thirty-ninth article on the solemn note that

> The ministers of the gospel . . . ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their function; therefore, no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatsoever, shall, at any time . . . be eligible . . . to any civil or military office . . . within this state.

De Lucena's wife, Rachel, bore him a daughter, Rebecca. She became the wife of Mordecai Gomez in 1741. Their daughter Eve Esther became the wife of Uriah Hendricks in 1762. Through this daughter and granddaughter, Abraham Haim de Lucena became the progenitor of leaders in the congregation in every generation down to our own day. On February 12, 1716, "by God's Grace proceeding on a voyage to Jamaica, and considering the dangers of the seas," he made his will. In this he wrote, "I bequeath my soul unto the hands of the Almighty God of Israel, my Creator, trusting in His mercy for pardon of all my sins, and hoping for a joyful Resurrection to Life Eternal." He left his estate to be divided equally between his wife and their five children: Moses, Samuel, Esther, Judith, and Rebecca. But it was not until nine years later, on August 4, 1725, that he passed away.

MOSES LOPEZ DE FONSECA ?–1736

In the first extant records of the congregation Moses Lopez de Fonseca appears as its hazzan in 1728.[5] He may have served from the time of de Lucena's passing three years earlier. The time had come when the growing congregation needed a man who could give full time to conducting the daily and other religious services, supervising the provision of kasher meat, teaching the children, and caring for all the religious interests of the community. The regulations drawn up in 1728 state that:

> The Hazan Mosses Lopez de Fonseca shall be oblidged to atend at the Sinagog at the custumary hours twice every week day and three times on the Sabath & feasts to preform prayers & what more belongs to his function as is custumary in othere Congregation & that he Also (in case the Bodeck be indispos'd) shall assist in his Room for the which he shall have his Selary of fifety Pounds and Six Cords of Wallnut Wood per annum, also Passover Cakes for his family, all which shall be Payd him out of the Tsedaca.

Moses Lopez de Fonseca was the religious leader of the New York community when its first synagogue building on Mill Street was built and consecrated. He was descended from Haham Eliao Lopez of Curaçao. Late in 1736 he went to that island where his forebears had been since the beginnings of that Jewish community, and where the son of Haham Eliao, Abraham Haim Lopez de Fonseca, had been hazzan from 1708 to his death in 1722. On January 30, 1737, he wrote to the New York congregation that he had there accepted a call as hazzan. Not climate but family and the then more vigorous Jewish activities of the Dutch island colony, closely integrated with the mother-center in Amsterdam, enticed de Fonseca away from the northern city of New York, which was still a struggling provincial center. In the forty years from 1728 to 1768 there were no less than six changes of hazzan in New York's community. Today's congregation in contrast recalls that in a hundred and fifteen years there have been but three senior ministers of the congregation: Hazzan Lyons, who served from 1839 to 1877; Dr. Mendes, who served from 1877 to 1920; and Rabbi Pool, who came to Shearith Israel in 1907.

DAVID MENDES MACHADO 1736–1747

When late in 1736 de Fonseca left, Shearith Israel was fortunate to have among its own members David Mendes Machado, who was ready to succeed him.[6] According to the tradition transmitted by his descendants, Hazzan Machado began life as a Marrano, that is a Jew who could practice the faith of his fathers only in the secrecy of his heart and hearth. His older brother, whose loyalty as a Jew was discovered before he could escape his tormentors, was burned at the stake. In 1732, David Machado, it is said, escaped from his spiritually strangled existence in Portugal and came in the following year, 1733, to Savannah proudly professing his Judaism. Though there is no reason for doubting the basic story, the dates call for revision. The records of the congregation show that already in 1728 David Mendes Machado was one of its contributing members. This earlier date explains how in 1736 he could enter the Jewish ministry after a life of Marranoism in which Jewish observance was a perilous matter of life and death, and the acquisition of Hebrew learning was virtually impossible. For a Marrano brought up under the watchful eyes of the Inquisition who wished to return to Judaism, there was much

both to learn and unlearn, and in addition in order to be minister in Shearith Israel he had to acquire a knowledge of English. More than eight years of freedom of worship in New York could well have opened for him the gates of Hebrew knowledge, and given him familiarity with the synagogue ritual and acquaintance with the complex rules of shehitah, enabling him to become the religious leader of the synagogue.

On March 3, 1737, the congregation stated that

Wee do with mutual accord nominate, elect and apoint Mr. David Mendes Machado to act as hazan or reader to this our K. K. de Seherit Israel. The Said Mr. Machado promising and obliging himself to exercise said office, and also promises and obliges himself to keep a public school in due form for teaching the hebrew language, either the whole morning or afternoon as he shall think most proper.

His salary as hazzan was to be but £40 a year (£10 less than de Fonseca had been receiving) as well as wood, and also matzoth for Passover.

And if it should so happen that the Parnass (for the time being) at the closing of his accots find the Tsedacka is not indebted and that their is money, then he shall pay the said Mr. Machado Ten Pounds more so to make up the sum of Fifty Pounds.

Later, the Reverend Mr. Machado had to keep school in the Hebra building, mornings from nine to twelve and afternoons from two to five. For this he received for each pupil an additional eight shillings a quarter and one load of wood yearly, though children of the poor, as always before and since his day, had to be taught without fee.

Another of his duties was to give a certificate of kashruth for all kasher beef exported to the Caribbean communities. For this service it was agreed in October, 1747, that he would be paid six shillings for every twenty barrels of kasher beef, so as to make up the relatively large increment of £20 a year that had been voted him. Less than two months later, on December 4, 1747, he died. The congregation paid £18.7.0 for funeral charges and for clothing for his widow and children. He was given a worthy tombstone with the epitaph inset on a lead plate. Some thirty years later during the Revolution, that lead was taken from his tombstone. (In those days lead, needed for bullets, was taken from windows, from the weights on fishing nets, and even from tombstones.) Therefore Hazzan Machado's memory is preserved not through any tumulary inscription, but in a living line of descent that was outstanding in every generation in Shearith Israel's history. His wife was a daughter of the Marrano

Dr. Samuel Nunez, who had the distinction of belonging to the first group of settlers in the colony of Georgia in 1733. They had a daughter, Rebecca, who was born on Stone Street in New York, on November 17, 1743. She was eighteen when she became the wife of Jonas Phillips in Hickory Town, Pennsylvania. Descendants of that union, besides those who have been active leaders in the congregation in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, were also to be found in Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia and in Jeshuat Israel in Newport in the early days of those communities.

BENJAMIN PEREIRA 1748–1757

Faced once more with the problem of finding a religious leader, the congregation called back to New York Benjamin Pereira, who some years earlier had left the city and gone to Richmond, Virginia.[7] He accepted the invitation to return and serve as hazzan, the congregation paying £9.12.5 as the expenses of his journey. On March 17, 1748, a little over three months after the death of Hazzan Machado, Pereira took office at the same salary as his predecessors, £50, as well as perquisites of his office, to which was added £20 for certifying the kasher beef that was exported. The cost of his journey from Richmond, and the £18 paid for the funeral of his predecessor and for mourning clothes, make Pereira's salary of £50 look small. While perquisites may have helped somewhat to rectify the situation, the economic life of the hazzan was not an easy one. Because of his frail health, Benjamin Pereira remained in office but nine years. In September, 1756, he was excused from keeping school on Sunday afternoons. In August of the following year he felt compelled to give up his position because of "his want of Health that disables him from officiating any longer." He subsequently went to Jamaica, B.W.I. In 1760 the New York congregation turned to him there with the urgent request that he find for them a teacher.

ISAAC COHEN DA SILVA 1757–1758

When Benjamin Pereira resigned in 1757, the congregation was hard put to find his successor. Isaac Cohen da Silva, a member of the congregation whom we shall meet again, took over and acted as hazzan in 1757 and 1758 while the congregation looked for a permanent religious leader. They appealed to the Sephardi congregation in London asking them to recommend

A young man, of good morals and strictly religious, with the advantage of an agreeable voice and capacity for teaching of Hebrew and translating it into English as well as Spanish.

The London community replied that no suitable person worthy of recommendation had yet presented himself. Whereupon New York expressed its readiness to compromise somewhat on the qualifications of the paragon it was seeking, and wrote,

Wee have no Objection to a married man, but would choose one, rather if with a Small Family and not Attended with much Charge, as our Congregation is Small, and few that are Able to Contribute to the support thereof.

JOSEPH JESSURUN PINTO 1758–1766

In reply the London community wrote that the man they first recommended "declined going," and their next choice had fallen on Joseph Jessurun Pinto,[8] who was "very well versed in the Reading of the Pentateuch and in the functions of a Hazan." Pinto was a man with high qualifications for the position. Born in Amsterdam in 1729, he had gone from there to London. He knew both Spanish and Portuguese besides Hebrew, Dutch, and English. He responded to New York's call and served Shearith Israel from 1758 to 1766. He had left behind him in London his fiancée. When he came to New York he commissioned a judge in the London religious court, the Dayyan David de Castro, to act as his proxy and affiance to him *in absentia* Rebecca, daughter of Moses de la Torre. She then joined him in New York as his wife. In the marriage contract he settled on her the impressive sum of £700.

Hazzan Pinto was descended from the Haham Raphael Jessurun of Curaçao who had responded so enthusiastically to New York's appeal for financial help in building its first synagogue. In addition to conducting the religious services, Hazzan Pinto served the congregation in other ways. The calendar by which to this day the congregation sets the time of its Sabbath eve services was drawn up by him in an approximate adaptation of the calendar used in the parent congregation in Amsterdam. He was neither an astronomer, however, nor a geographer, and the times set in his calendar not infrequently vary rather widely from the time of sunset in New York. In October, 1760, he arranged a thanksgiving service and composed a special Hebrew prayer on the British acquisition of Canada from the French. A year and a half later

he arranged and conducted a special service of prayer and fasting because of the French and Indian War. The sermon which he preached on that occasion is the first of which we have any record as being preached in a synagogue in what is now the United States.

Pinto's ministry marked a high point in the struggling congregation's spiritual development. He was well versed in Hebrew and rabbinic literature, and was markedly spiritual. These two characteristics are eloquently attested in a long introspective letter which he wrote in Hebrew to the board of trustees of the congregation. In this, with numerous quotations from the Talmud and Midrash, he fervently examines his own soul. He recalls how

> it happened that when I was on board ship, I had no strength to fast, and I was forced to forego three fasts, one for the soul of my father, one for the soul of my mother, and the third for the tenth of Tebet. And I vowed still another fast to give thanks to God for bringing me hither and delivering me from the waters of the sea. . . .
>
> Having completed this introspection, and having found myself guiltless save in the instance above-mentioned, I determined to do penance for all the transgressions of my life—above all for evil thoughts. . . .
>
> And since I have come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord my God has given me but have not benefited from it so far, I will vow that henceforth I shall do nothing unseemly in the eyes of God and man. . . .
>
> And if you so will, and I find grace in your eyes, you may try me from now to Rosh Hashanah without any pay to see whether I do my duty. Moreover, you may put upon me whatever conditions you will, and I will agree thereto and sign my name to the contract. Should I fail to carry out any of the conditions, you will not be obliged to pay anything, and I shall leave my profession for ever. . . .

Hazzan Pinto lived by the East River on Rotten Row, the uneuphonious and hardly respectful British mispronunciation of Route du Roi, later named Hunter Quay. He had a wife and two children. He finds that this family "requires more Expence than he is at present able to support." So we can well understand why he tried to eke out his income by teaching. In an advertisement he offers himself to "All persons inclinable to learn the true way of reading and writing Hebrew grammatically, with the perfect pronunciation of that language; also Spanish and Portuguese in the most concise manner and on easy terms."

For teaching Hebrew his easy terms were £1.8.0 by the month or the bargain rate of £3 by the quarter. Spanish and Portuguese apparently were much easier to teach. Those languages could be acquired at virtually half the cost of Hebrew—sixteen shillings a month or £1.16.0 a quarter. Hazzan Pinto

became a naturalized citizen in New York on January 22, 1766. But his ministry in America came to an end soon thereafter. He found it necessary to go to Europe to recover a small estate. In December, 1765, he informed the congregation that as of May, 1766, he intended resigning. This purpose he carried out. The congregation paid £50 for his and his family's passage to London. Later he became hazzan in the Sephardi community in Hamburg.

ISAAC COHEN DA SILVA 1766–1768

When the learned and efficient Joseph Jessurun Pinto was about to go back to Europe, Moses Calo of Curaçao applied for the vacant position. The congregation, however, turned once more to its own member, Isaac Cohen da Silva,[9] and on June 8, 1766, da Silva was re-elected to the office of hazzan "during his good behaviour" at a salary of £80 and not more than £20 for house rent, as well as wood and matzoth. His "behaviour" seems to have been satisfactory for some two years. On March 6, 1768, it was arranged that Abraham I. Abrahams, the teacher and occasional assistant hazzan, would vacate the synagogue house so that Hazzan da Silva could move into it. But in the next fortnight, da Silva got into serious financial difficulties. By the twenty-first of the month he was discharged as hazzan. Destitute and in hiding from his creditors, he asked financial aid from the congregation so that he could leave the city. The "ribby" Abraham I. Abrahams temporarily took over his functions.

GERSHOM MENDES SEIXAS 1768–1776 (1784–1816)

Once again the congregation found itself in search of a minister. In the past it had usually turned to its sister Sephardi congregations overseas to find its religious leader. Now a significant point was reached in the maturing of the American Jewish community, for one of its own sons, born and trained in New York, was available for the position. There was before the congregation one candidacy submitted three years earlier, that of Moses Calo of Curaçao. But the congregation did not turn to him despite the certificate which he had submitted that he was "a very Deserving, Virtuous and Honest Person and in all Respects Entirely Qualified, Capable and Fit for the Employment of Chanter as also to occupy Said Office In Any of Our Congregations Wheresoever." [10]

On July 3, 1768, two and a half months after da Silva's connections with

the congregation had been summarily terminated, Gershom Mendes Seixas, born and bred within the congregation, applied to fill the position of hazzan. On the following Sunday afternoon, this young man, twenty-three years of age, was "Unanimously, and without one Negative, voted by the Parnasim, assistants, and all the present Yaheedim, to the said office of Hazan." He had obtained his Jewish education and training presumably from the learned Joseph Jessurun Pinto, and probably also from the learned layman, Abraham I. Abrahams. It was Pinto who had been the religious head of the congregation in the adolescent years of Gershom Seixas. When Pinto left the country Seixas was twenty-one years old. Two years later when da Silva disappeared from the scene, Seixas felt himself fully qualified to offer to serve as hazzan, occasional preacher, teacher, shohet, and mohel.

We need not recount here the story fully told elsewhere [11] of his life and the devoted leadership he gave to the congregation during the forty-eight years of ministry. Those were years of destiny in the history of the nation which came to birth in an hour of great vision, with much sacrifice, and through soul-testing trial.

Early in August, 1776, when it was clear that the British troops would gain possession of New York, he led his congregation in their patriotic determination not to remain in the captured city but to scatter and live where American freedom reigned. Hazzan Seixas packed up congregational scrolls of the Torah, and in another chest gathered "sundries" belonging to the congregation. Then, bidding farewell to New York on August 27, he took these with him as he and his family set out for Stratford, Connecticut. There he stayed from 1776 to 1780. How he met the expenses of living in those years we do not know, for he had left New York with half a year's salary due him, and there was no trace of a congregation to which he could minister in Stratford. In 1780, he went from Stratford to Philadelphia to assume the position of religious leader of Congregation Mikveh Israel which had taken on vigorous new life with the influx of patriot citizens from New York.

Hazzan Seixas took to Philadelphia the holy ceremonial objects he had had in safe-keeping at Stratford. The cost of the transportation in the pell-mell journey from New York to Stratford in the days of cheaper living in 1776 was but one-tenth of the cost of moving these ritual objects from Stratford to Philadelphia four years later during the Revolution, as the following bill reveals:

Dr.

Aug.t 22d 1776

To 6 Mo.s Salary @ £120 pr annum from Ros Hodes Nisan 5536 to Ros Asana 5537 £60.0. 0

To Expenses Occur'd by moving Sundries to & at Stratford, belonging to K. K. 10.6

June 6th 1780

To Cash pd for transporting the Sepharim & Chest belonging to the K. K. from Stratford to Philadelphia at the Request of Mesrs Hayman Levy & Isaac Moses. 5.6.8.

Novr 26th 1783

To Cash pd for mending a Box for the Sepher & Nails 2.0 4

£66.3.2

We shall meet Seixas again on his return to New York after the Revolution.

ISAAC TOURO 1780

In the difficult years of the Revolution, the New York synagogue fortunately escaped being taken over by the occupying British forces, and religious services continued to be held in it, though irregularly. Abraham I. Abrahams probably acted as the hazzan at that time. But there were two men whom the hazards of war later brought to the city and who conducted services professionally.

The first was Isaac Touro who gave "a short period of service." [12] The course of his life before he came to New York is not altogether clear. It seems that he was born in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1738. He is said to have come to New York from Jamaica in 1760, moving on in that same year to Newport, R.I. In 1773, he married Reyna, daughter of Judah Hays in Boston. He served as hazzan in Newport until the capture of the town by the British forces in the Revolution compelled the scattering of the largely patriot congregation. Eventually, in 1780 he also left that town, and we find him again in New York, where in the absence of Seixas he acted as hazzan. But once more, despite his Tory sympathies, he did not remain long in New York. Perhaps in search of health, he went back to the Jamaica, B.W.I., from which he had come twenty years earlier, and there not long afterwards, on January 8, 1784, he died at the early age of 46. His name and his memory have been vividly kept alive in the New York congregation through the munificent benefactions of his sons, Abraham and Judah Touro.

JACOB RAPHAEL COHEN 1782–1784

A second man whom the fortunes of the Revolutionary War brought to New York conducted the religious services there during the last period of the struggle for independence. This was Jacob (Raphael) Cohen.[13] He was born in North Africa, but in 1778 we find him in London. In response to a request received there early in that year by the Sephardi congregation, he was sent to Congregation Shearith Israel of Montreal to serve as hazzan, shohet, and teacher. Three or four years later a dispute as to his salary was decided against him in the Canadian courts. Then he and his wife, Rebecca Luria, left a badly divided community in Montreal, intending to return to England. But the ship on which they set sail in 1782 was diverted to New York, and there was taken over for the movement of British troops. When he found himself stranded in New York, he gladly gave his services as hazzan to the loyalist remnant of the local congregation.

At the end of 1783, after the British troops had finally evacuated the city, the New York congregation began to be reorganized by the returning patriots. Jacob Cohen then agreed to serve until Gershom Mendes Seixas resumed office; for it was understood full well that when Hazzan Seixas would return to the city the congregation would reinstate its popular former religious leader. In February, 1784, Cohen was granted £10 additional to his salary "towards providing himself with a more comfortable habitation, as his wife's present condition requires it." Eventually, on the ninth of May of that year, he was given a certificate that "he has behaved during his residency among us, with propriety and decency, and that his dismission is caused by our former Hazan's returning to his office." When Gershom Seixas resumed his duties in New York, Jacob Cohen took the position of minister of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia which Seixas had left. He is there best remembered as one who arm in arm with two Christian ministers marched in the procession in Philadelphia's celebration of the adoption of the United States Constitution on July 4, 1788. He served Congregation Mikveh Israel until his death in 1811.

GERSHOM MENDES SEIXAS (1768–1776) 1784–1816

As has been told in the extensive story of his life in *Portraits Etched in Stone*, Gershom Mendes Seixas carried out his exacting duties as hazzan of the con-

gregation for the next thirty-two years with faithfulness and vision. At the beginning of the post-Revolutionary period, New York was a war-shattered city. In the years of the war it had been not much more than a prison camp. It had suffered acutely from lack of sorely needed supplies. It had known extensive destruction from fires. Widespread disorder had been in a measure checked by military justice. This partly ruined city now had to go through a long struggle to re-establish itself. Its Jewish congregation had to reconstitute itself legally and reinstate itself economically. Gershom Seixas shared acutely in these financial difficulties. Indeed, at one time in those years the congregation took drastic action on

Our Distressed Situation being Indebted to the different officers upwards of Two Hundred Pounds and our Inability to pay them. In justice to the Officers, and ourselves, we have come to the following Resolutions, That the Hazan, Shohet, Shamas and Clerk have written Notice given them by the President that the Congregation from their reduced Situation, are under the Disagreeable Necessity of Informing them that they are discharged in Tamuz next ensuing.

This decision was not put into effect, but the salary of Hazzan Seixas was several times reduced. Notwithstanding, his family was rapidly increasing. He managed to eke out his meager income by enlarging his functions. He was at once hazzan, mohel, and teacher. To income derived from these varied sources he may rarely have added an additional two shillings and sixpence, if he did not lose double that amount, because in his duties as laid down in 1795 it was stated that

It shall be the duty of the Chazan to peruse the Parza of the Week in the same Sepher Torah, which is to be read the succeeding Sabbath or Holiday; and that he be allowed 2/6 for each Error he may find out and correct in the same by the owner thereof; and pay a fine himself of 5/ for any Error that may be discovered in the same when read in public, by any person.

We shall later catch glimpses of service given by Seixas as mohel and as teacher. We shall see him active in the Hebra Gemiluth Hasadim, and as the moving spirit in the Hebra Hased Va-Amet. We shall meet him as the organizer of the Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether (Charity Fund "Gift in Secret"), and through his appealing sermonic words raising the funds needed by that organization "to assist . . . poor or sick persons of our society."

In his days, the sermon was given on special occasions, such as on days of national thanksgiving or supplication. It was not yet part of the regular weekly Sabbath services. But at that period there was established what is now the

common practice of using the pulpit for the furtherance of important philanthropic causes. On such occasions Hazzan Seixas gave the sermonic address. His sermons, the wording of several of which has come down to us, testify to the innate ability, good judgment, and strong Jewish feeling of the man. They bear witness also to the validity of the historically not unusual American pattern of self-education. Though his formal schooling did not take him beyond the elementary grades, Seixas, like many another great American, found that he could be his own teacher. In that one man school there was no granting of a degree to suggest that his studies had come to an end, and he continued his whole life through to store his mind. His sermons were marked by a responsiveness to current issues, clear thinking, clear writing, and the stimulation derived from the Biblical word. They reflect the exhilaration of spirit that belonged to the era of the American Revolution, and the fervent patriotism which created a free nation. He believed that because he was a Jew a greater measure of gratitude should be his for the proclamation and the realization of the self-evident truths that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men. Wholeheartedly he gave "gratefull thanks for the many and various blessings that have been graciously bestowed on us." In celebrating Thanksgiving Day with the other inhabitants of this city, he said, "I conceive we are more called upon to return thanks to benign Goodness in placing us in such a country, where we are free to act, according to the dictates of conscience, and where no exception is taken from following the principles of our religion."

This love of his native land was always with him, and in the school as in the synagogue he would impress on the children "the knowledge of our holy law, which teaches you every duty toward God—your country—and your fellow creatures." [14]

His faith never allowed him to forget the age-old prophecy of the restoration of Zion. Over and over again he would pray for the people of Israel that God "restore us to our own land wherein we may dwell in Peace and in happiness according to the words of our sacred Prophets . . . Let us beseech him to fulfill his divine promise of restoring us to our land, as declared in the prophecies, and that his sanctuary may again be built where we may perform our daily obligations."

Similarly, in a sermon of appeal for the philanthropic society Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether that he gave in 1807 he said, "There is not a Prophet from Moses to Malachi, (with the rest of the inspired writers) but what takes notice of the remarkable events, that have attended us, from the commencement of our general captivity, even unto the present day. Twice have we been redeemed according to the sacred history, and we have every reason to expect, the third time is nearly (& rapidly) approaching, when we shall be established forever." [15]

His sermonic appeals evoked a positive and constructive response among his admiring flock, sometimes beyond the immediate limits of his appeal. At times the desire was expressed to put his words into print. Sometimes the enthusiasm was given a generously practical turn as in 1807 when the trustees put on record "thanks for his excellent Discourse delivered in English in the Synagogue on the eleventh day of January, and that he be requested to accept as a further token of their approbation Fifty Dollars for a Suit of Cloathes." [16]

Elsewhere in this volume there is recalled something of the public interests which this modest, home-loving man expressed in his varied service to the general community. In more ways than one he was a pioneer. The patriot rabbi of the Revolution was the foremost interfaith citizen among the Jews. He was a trustee of the Humane Society, a member of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, and a regent and then a trustee of Columbia College for nearly a third of a century. It was eminently fitting when in 1943 the Jewish Students Society at Columbia University took the name of Seixas Society.

In all the years from 1784 to 1816 he was the sole religious leader of New York's Jewish community. He was deeply loved and he has remained a living memory in the congregation. It was his duty to conduct all Jewish religious services both in the synagogue and outside of it. When the burden became too heavy for him, he would be helped by individual members of the congregation such as Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto, or by Emanuel Nunes Carvalho, the head of the congregational religious school from 1808 to 1811. After some years of failing health, Gershom Mendes Seixas passed away on July 2, 1816. Some days later, Carvalho, who was then the religious head of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, said of him,

His aspect was so benign, and his manners so courteous, that those with whom he conversed could not but feel themselves in the presence of a friend, & follow

him with their attachments; and there was about him such an air of dignity, as always secured to him due respect . . . In a degree not common he possessed the happy talent of being alike agreeable to all men, and of adapting himself with promptitude and propriety to every temper, & to every combination of circumstances; still, however, appearing like himself, and preserving the consistency, the dignity, and sanctity of his character.

He had been truly a man who, in the words spoken by Dr. Jacob de la Motta at his funeral, had been

the inspired minister, the delight of a beloved congregation. The kind and attentive husband, the fond and indulgent parent, the pleasing and instructive friend. . . . The Rev. Mr. Seixas, from an early period in life, was endowed with no commonplace intellect . . . Pursuing undeviatingly the most correct deportment, admired by all; esteemed alike in every grade of society. . . . Prosecuting uninterruptedly a line of conduct that obtained for him the love, respect, and esteem of all sects.

On the centennial anniversary of the Hebra Hased Va-Amet, that society erected in the synagogue a memorial tablet to Gershom Mendes Seixas, finely characterizing him with the Biblical words, "a man in whom was the spirit."

MOSES LEVI MADURO PEIXOTTO 1816–1828

When after completing his three score years and ten the well-beloved Hazzan Seixas passed away in his seventy-first year, his "esteemed friend" Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto,[17] a man almost fifty years of age, offered to serve as hazzan in his place on the generous condition that the salary and emoluments of the office should go to the family of the late Hazzan Seixas. This offer was gratefully and unanimously accepted.

Peixotto was born in Curaçao on February 11, 1767. After the death of his first wife, Rachel, daughter of Isaac Jessurun Sasportas, he went to Amsterdam. There, in 1797, he married Judith, daughter of Samuel Lopez Salzedo. He was "a dark featured, square-built, middle-sized man, greatly addicted to snuff taking." [18] At the age of forty he came to New York, arriving on June 11, 1807, with his wife and six children. He was a merchant and he went into business, but he found time also to be active as a freemason, a trustee of the synagogue, and occasional hazzan. He was a close personal friend of Hazzan Seixas. After the death of Seixas when Peixotto and Eleazar S. Lazarus took over the hazzan's duties, he continued for four years to maintain his business activities alongside his ministry. But in March, 1820, he wrote to the board of trustees

I hold it undignified to continue the duties of hazan with that of a merchant . . . now must make my election either to offer myself as Hazan of this congregation or return to the pursuits of commerce. I do not hesitate to say that I prefer the former.

Needless to say, this man for whom everyone had a good word was elected. He gave up his business, and on becoming the congregation's full-time minister he resigned from membership on its board of trustees. He had then been officiating regularly for four years with great devotion if not with musical distinction. Indeed, so limited were his musical gifts that at points in the service where the congregation had to chant a hymn he would often stop and wait for some member of the congregation to give the key and the melody. On one occasion when a congregant raised a question about his confusingly unmusical chanting of the Torah, he replied, "Please remember that it says in the Torah that the Lord said to Moses or He spoke to Moses, never that He sang to him." The wide popularity of this reader of the services despite his musical limitations indicates wide compensatory qualities.

It was Peixotto who conducted the service at the funeral of Hazzan Seixas, and it was he who led the service of dedication of the second synagogue on Mill Street. In 1825 he took part in the consecration of the first synagogue of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun and of Congregation Mikveh Israel's Cherry Street synagogue in Philadelphia. After becoming officially the hazzan, although in his fifties, he applied himself to the study of the English language. Eventually he was able to deliver sermons in English on Thanksgiving Day and on other special occasions. His son, Dr. Daniel Levi Maduro Peixotto, said of him that

occasional Discourses on moral and Religious Subjects were composed with a facility derived in part from a familiar acquaintance with the language of the Scriptures and from native strength of intellect; but an irrepressible enthusiasm for the cause in which he labored had by far the greater share.

Rebecca Gratz wrote of "the humble yet dignified figure of the venerable Mr. Peixotto" that he "has since his clerical appointment studied and become as learned as he is intelligent."

When he passed away in his sixty-second year, on July 16, 1828, he was given all the honors of a synagogue funeral. This friendly, helpful, modest man had won the affection and respect of all his community. The oration at the memorial service held under the auspices of the Hebra Hased Va-Amet was spoken by New York's most notable Jewish citizen, Mordecai M. Noah.

Peixotto was buried in the congregation's cemetery at Chatham Square. After 1825 the city had allowed no burials below Grand Street except under penalty. But so much had he become a part of the congregational tradition that it was decided to lay him to rest in that officially closed Chatham Square ground, the city's penalty of $250 being paid by Harmon Hendricks. In the course of time when the New Bowery was cut through that cemetery in 1855 his grave had to be removed to the burial ground on West 21st Street where it may still be seen.

ISAAC BENJAMIN SEIXAS 1828–1839

With the passing away of Hazzan Peixotto, the mantle of office fell on Isaac B. Seixas, the third of the twenty-one children of Benjamin Mendes Seixas and Zipporah Levy, and a nephew of Gershom Seixas. Born in Philadelphia on November 22, 1781, he was at the time of his call forty-six years of age. In 1805, when he was a young man of twenty-five, he pledged £1.11.0 toward the fund for establishing a branch of the Mill Street Synagogue far uptown in Greenwich, now the downtown district called Greenwich Village.[19] In 1808 we find him in business in Richmond, Virginia, where on one occasion his store was robbed. In the following year, on May 31, 1809, he married in Richmond his cousin Rebecca, daughter of Hillel and Abigail Seixas Judah. Isaac Seixas served in the War of 1812; in 1813 he was serving in the Richmond Light Infantry Blues.[20] As the years went on, he found it progressively harder to provide for his growing family of children: Abigail, Hillel, Zipporah, Benjamin, Gershom, and Rachel. Two children, Benjamin and Sloe Virginia, died in infancy. Of all his children only the last did not bear a Biblical name.

When the hazzan of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, Emanuel Nunes Carvalho, died in 1817, Isaac B. Seixas was offered the vacant position at a salary of $800. He did not accept this offer. When the new synagogue building in Richmond was consecrated on the eve of Rosh Hashanah in September, 1822, it was he and Isaac Judah who conducted the services of dedication together.

One was likely to find both Hebrew knowledge and vocal gifts in a son of Benjamin and a nephew of Gershom Mendes Seixas. The prolific, cultured, and musical Seixas family provided the leader and five of the members of the special choir which was organized for the service of consecration of the

second Mill Street Synagogue in 1818.[21] Isaac B. Seixas had a voice with which he loved to soar in the upper registers. He was one of those of whom God's prophet had said, "My servants shall sing for joy of heart." [22] In reporting the service which he conducted at the consecration of the Crosby Street Synagogue in 1834, the *Times* speaks of "the impressive voice of the reader of the congregation."

To him the New York congregation turned on the death of Hazzan Peixotto with the request that he serve as temporary reader. When the trustees asked what would be his terms, Seixas left the decision to the liberality of the board. At that time, the trustees were under financial pressure, and with more economical efficiency than liberality they set his salary at $50 a month, with the right to live in the house of the hazzan.[23] The result was that in September a year later he felt himself compelled to write to the board that he was without food for the coming winter, his children were without clothing, and he was largely in debt for "the common necessaries of life." With his characteristic suavity he did not venture to ask for the salary of $100 a month which his predecessor Peixotto had been receiving, but he did modestly ask for a sufficiency to keep him out of debt "and to support that standing in society which the character I bear ought to." [24]

In the following year, 1830, Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas had again to appeal for financial aid, especially because of the marked drop in the gifts he had received. In his first year of service these had amounted to $300; in his second year they dropped to $75; now in his third year it looked as if they would reach only half of that meager sum. He was re-elected in December at a salary of $700 and the use of the hazzan's house on Mill Street. He was told that this was "the utmost the funds of the congregation can afford." [25]

At the time the financing of the congregation was beset with difficulties. The reason for this was that the synagogue was left far downtown in what had become the business district of Mill Street, while the majority of the congregation had moved uptown. After this condition was corrected and the new synagogue had been built in Crosby Street in 1834, his salary was raised to $900 a year, and in 1837 it was increased to $1,080. A two-story house with a twenty-foot front was built for his use at 56 Crosby Street next to the synagogue.

In the congregation's contract with Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas there are stipulations which do not recur in the agreements with subsequent hazzanim. In

1830 it was quaintly specified that whenever the synagogue was to be opened for divine service, he must be there within a quarter of an hour *after* the time for commencing the service, just as it had been required of his uncle Gershom Seixas to be at all services in the synagogue "within quarter of an hour after the limited time." The contract with Isaac Seixas also stipulated that he was not to introduce into the synagogue "any profane melodies or those used in Christian churches."

In 1829, he officiated at the dedication of the 21st Street cemetery, the fourth burial ground acquired by the congregation as it was progressively compelled to seek sepulture for its members on the outskirts of the city which expanded ever northward along Manhattan island.

Hazzan Isaac Seixas carried a full burden of official responsibilities. Even if occasionally he may have taken advantage of the permissive quarter of an hour of lateness that his contract stipulated, yet the reading of all the services and teaching in the Polonies Talmud Torah, not to mention the endless personal calls on a minister's time and strength, if they did not weaken his spirit, certainly impaired his physical resistance. From 1834 to 1836, the shohet Gustavus Poznanski assisted in the conduct of the High Holy Day services, as did the liturgist Eleazar S. Lazarus in 1837 and 1838. Hazzan Seixas suffered from a life-long malady of recurrent seizures, the last attack coming a week before he died on August 10, 1839, in his fifty-eighth year. The funeral took place from his home. The leading rabbi in the country at that time, Isaac Leeser, came from Philadelphia to conduct the funeral service. As was customary in the congregation, for thirty days the reading desk in the synagogue was shrouded in black and the members of the board of trustees wore crepe on their left arm in mourning for this well-liked religious leader.[26] The man who stepped into the breach and conducted the services until a successor to Isaac B. Seixas took office was the Hebrew editor of the first Hebrew and English prayer book published in the United States, Eleazar S. Lazarus.

JACQUES JUDAH LYONS 1839–1877

Three weeks after the death of Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas there came to New York a man who over the next third of a century was to make a deep impression on Congregation Shearith Israel. This was Jacques Judah Lyons.[27] He came from Richmond, Virginia, to offer himself as candidate for the position of hazzan in the New York congregation. Congregation Beth Shalome

in Richmond, where he, like Isaac B. Seixas, had been hazzan, could not spare him from the exacting services of the Day of Atonement, and he had to return to Richmond for that day. In the absence of a professional hazzan, the Atonement Day services in the New York congregation were conducted that year by Eleazar S. Lazarus, assisted by Aaron Levy, Moses B. Seixas, Myer Levy, and Asher Kursheedt. For the New Year the Richmond congregation had consented that Mr. Lyons remain in New York. On that Holy Day and on the two preceding Sabbaths Mr. Lyons conducted the services in what the trustees found to be a "dignified, impressive, and appropriate manner," besides giving an "able and interesting discourse in commemoration of the fifty-sixth centennial of the creation." The electors immediately approved him as hazzan at a salary of $1,500 a year, a substantial increase over the $1,080 finally paid Hazzan Isaac Seixas. By the middle of October he had said farewell to Richmond and he came to New York ready to assume his duties.[28]

His parents, Judah Eleazar Lyons and Mary Asser Levy, were born and were married in Philadelphia. Thereafter they made their home in Surinam where their son Jacques was born on August 25, 1813. At the age of 20 he became hazzan of the Neve Shalome congregation there, serving it from 1833 to 1837. Then he left Surinam for his parents' native city of Philadelphia. A few months later he received a call from the congregation in Richmond, Virginia. There he officiated for two years.[29] The commendations which he brought to New York from Surinam, Richmond, and Philadelphia testified to his qualifications, which were apparent. He was conscientious and a good hazzan. His reading of the services with his tenor and sometimes falsetto voice was most acceptable. He was somewhat tall and of dignified appearance and gracious manner. Above all, his religious sincerity and his studied courtesy to all endeared him to his congregation. In 1842, he married Grace, daughter of Seixas Nathan and Sarah Mendes Seixas. Genealogical charts would show how in the intricate pattern of the First Families of Shearith Israel he became a central figure in the midst of a group which for a long time had played a large part in guiding the affairs of the congregation.

Mr. Lyons was a painstaking diarist. He noted in writing details about the weather, the personal contacts which he made, the synagogue services, and the administration of synagogue business. What has come down to us of these records makes it all the more regrettable that the bulk of his notes were done away with by his family. He had a strong interest in American Jewish

history, especially as it touched on Shearith Israel and the congregation in Newport. He dreamed of writing a history of American Jewry, but this he did not achieve. His collection of historical material was transferred in 1908 by his daughter and his sons to the American Jewish Historical Society. At the time of his death important selections from the congregation's archives happened to be in his home. These also are included in the Lyons Collection in the library of the American Jewish Historical Society, and all together those papers constitute a valuable source for the study of American Jewish history.

Jacques Judah Lyons is remembered in the printed word by *A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years.* This was published in Montreal in 1854 under the joint editorship of himself and Rabbi Abraham de Sola. This little volume contains besides calendaristic material many valuable and now historic facts about Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, and the West Indies. Mr. Lyons also published a booklet, *Sunday School Lessons for Young Israelites.*

He was one of those who took part in the founding of Mt. Sinai Hospital, then called the Jews' Hospital. His name is also found among the directors of the Sampson Simson Jewish Seminary and Scientific Institute. His work with the Polonies Talmud Torah School and with the development of the congregational choir is touched on elsewhere in this volume. He was a convinced opponent of Reform Judaism and an ardent advocate of the unswerving preservation of the religious tradition of his congregation. During most of his term of service the congregation's pulpit was silent as he was not prepared to fill it, but on special occasions, and before the closing service on the Day of Atonement, he would dramatically read an English address in the synagogue. A proposal that he be requested to deliver an English lecture every alternate Sabbath and on the first days of the festivals was not adopted.[30] It was a function that he could hardly have filled satisfactorily despite his many qualifications for the ministry. Nevertheless, both he and his disciples resisted the appointment of a preacher.

When Mr. Lyons was on vacation, or when he was ill, or on a day of exhausting service such as the Day of Atonement, his brother Ellis was often called in as assistant reader. The sweet voiced Ellis Lyons served as hazzan in Richmond from 1841 to 1848, and in Boston. Sometimes a man such as the Reverend Jacob M. de Solla of Baltimore was available, or Michael M. Allen, the teacher in the congregational school, or some of Shearith Israel's own members such as Dr. Joseph Saltheall, or its president Samuel Lazarus, or Myer

Levy. In Mr. Lyons' later years, this function of occasional hazzan was not infrequently filled by Judah S. Abecassis, who was at times president of the congregation, or Mordecai Cohen, or Asher Kursheedt, later also a president of the congregation.

When in the fullness of his years he died on August 13, 1877, the funeral services were conducted by H. Pereira Mendes, officiating with Rabbis Samuel M. Isaacs and Frederick de Sola Mendes of New York, and Sabato Morais of Philadelphia. The coffin was placed on the platform of the reading desk in the synagogue, and seven circuits were made around it as the traditional lament was chanted. No less than fifty carriages with mourners followed the remains to the burial ground in Cypress Hills. In a lengthy resolution expressive of the congregation's sorrow at his passing, the trustees declared that "his influence and example have been a token of good to the whole house of Israel." They spoke of his benign ministrations, his gentleness, religious love and abiding faith, his unremitting industry in the pursuit of his holy calling, his warm-hearted and open-handed charity, and his fearless and unyielding defense and support of the doctrines and rules of the religion of Israel against every assault.[31]

Emma Lazarus, who was his niece, wrote a tribute to him in which she said:

> Ripe of years was he,
> The priest, the good old man who wrought so well
> Upon his chosen glebe. For he was one
> Who at his seed-plot toiled through rain and sun.
> Morn found him not as one who slumbereth,
> Noon saw him faithful, and the restful night
> Stole o'er him at his labors, to requite
> The just man's service with the just man's death.

Twelve years before Mr. Lyons died, a committee had been appointed "to consider the propriety and expediency of selecting a suitable lad to be educated at the expense of the congregation for the office of assistant hazan." [32] In the following year, 1866, both the electors and the trustees felt that the time had come to find a permanent assistant for Mr. Lyons. But nothing came of this. Consequently when Mr. Lyons died, the newly elected preacher, H. Pereira Mendes, had to take over the chanting of all the synagogue services. These were the morning services every Monday and Thursday, morning and evening services at the beginning of every month and on minor fast days

and festivals, the five services of the Sabbath including the exacting task of a meticulously accurate chanting of the Pentateuch in consecutive long weekly readings over the year, and the long services of festivals and Holy Days. In addition, there were weddings, funerals, and prayers in the house of mourning. With innumerable other ministerial and communal functions devolving on him, the Reverend Mr. Mendes clearly needed an assistant hazzan. Various candidates offered themselves for the position. The congregation favored Elias Nunes Martines of St. Thomas. In the spring of 1878, he cabled that he was coming to New York to apply for the position. But when Mr. Martines came, he felt that the salary offered him was not adequate and he returned home.[33]

DAVID HAIM NIETO 1878–1886

Finally in July, 1878, almost a year after the death of Hazzan Lyons, David Haim Nieto of New Orleans was elected assistant hazzan.[34] He had served as a volunteer in the Union forces in the Civil War. For some years he had been in business, but on his application to the New York congregation he was appointed and he served for eight years. There was no doubt as to his fine vocal gifts, his masterly reading of all services, and his gentlemanly bearing within the congregation. But when he took off his white tie, his social bearing was not always in accord with the standards the congregation expected of a minister of religion. In May, 1886, his resignation was unanimously accepted.

ABRAHAM HAIM NIETO 1886–1901

The congregation was then considering bringing over Moses Massiah from Leghorn, Italy, to serve as hazzan. But a little over a month after the severance of relations with David H. Nieto, his brother, Abraham Haim Nieto, arrived from London.[35] His was a picturesque personality. He and his brother were both born in London where in the first half of the eighteenth century their ancestor David Nieto had been the distinguished chief rabbi of the Sephardim of England. As a young man Abraham Nieto was occasional hazzan of the Sephardi community in London. From 1869 to 1883 he served as hazzan in Jamaica, B.W.I. He was a man of parts. His resonant voice and his accuracy in reading gave a fine quality to his rendering of the services. He was a masterly Hebrew scribe, who delighted in writing a parchment scroll of the

Torah. When he undertook to teach a boy the chanting of a Sabbath prophetic reading, he not infrequently wrote out the whole text which the boy had to learn. He was also a skilled mohel. In 1717 Haham David Nieto had published in London a Jewish calendar for eighty-three years from that date to 1800. Nearly two centuries later, his descendant, Hazzan Abraham H. Nieto, published in New York in 1902 *Nieto's Jewish Almanac*, a detailed and elaborate juxtaposition of the Hebrew and secular calendar years from 1902 to 2002. This is an accurate and an eminently useful volume.

Nonetheless, his relations with his congregation were anything but smooth. He was individualistic, and impatient of the discipline which organizational life necessarily imposes. His non-cooperative attitude strained the good will of the trustees. Over a considerable period of his incumbency he was reelected for terms of six months or three months or even one month, instead of the customary term of one or two or three years. Through most of the year 1899, Shearith Israel tried to induce him to accept the less demanding position in Newport, but to no avail. Eventually the break had to come. At the end of 1901, after fifteen years of service, A. H. Nieto's relations with the congregation came to an end. But the official friction had not marred personal relationships. His forthrightness and good-heartedness could not be overlooked, and these, together with his high ability as hazzan, kept for him a warm place in the heart of Shearith Israel. At various times thereafter he was called on to take charge of the congregation's overflow services on the High Holy Days. He passed away in 1919 at the age of eighty-two.[36]

ISAAC A. H. DE LA PENHA 1902–1907

Some months after severance of official relations with Abraham Nieto, Isaac A. H. de la Penha was called from Holland in May, 1902, to fill the vacancy.[37] Mr. de la Penha, a native of Amsterdam, was a diamond polisher. He was devout and thoroughly familiar with the religious services as conducted in the historic synagogue of the Dutch capital. But his voice, which had marked resonance, was lacking in musical quality. For that reason and that reason alone the congregation continued to seek a musically better qualified candidate while holding tenaciously to him for the much needed services he was able to give. They re-elected him annually because at that time the position of assistant minister had not yet been filled. They were unwilling to let him go when in 1904 he asked to be released from his contract in order to become

hazzan in the Dutch-speaking community of Curaçao where he would have felt much more at home. But in 1908, Mr. de la Penha became hazzan of Congregation Shearith Israel of Montreal, taking with him the good will of everyone in the New York congregation.[38] During his residence in Canada he unsuccessfully revived an old claim of his family to the territory of Labrador on the basis of a grant made to one of his ancestors, Joseph de la Penja, by William III of England in 1698.

ISAAC A. HADAD 1911–1913

The severe illness of Dr. Mendes in 1911 and his subsequent prolonged leave of absence placed on the younger rabbi, David de Sola Pool, all the duties of both men in the pulpit, the conduct of the services, the religious school, adult education, along with the always numerous communal and public responsibilities of the American ministry. At that juncture, in the spring of 1911 the trustees appointed Isaac A. Hadad to assist in the reading of the services.[39] He was a young man from Aleppo, who had been hazzan in the United Congregation in Kingston, Jamaica, from 1906 to 1910. He served Shearith Israel as an assistant hazzan for some three years, subsequently studying for the rabbinate to which he gave a short period of service.

Another who at that time helped regularly in the reading of the early part of the Sabbath morning service and the services on Monday and Thursday mornings was Elias Sabbetai, a Greek Jew from the historic community of Janina.

Eventually, Dr. Mendes became sufficiently restored to health to resume congregational duties. Then he and Dr. Pool together continued to conduct the services while also carrying out their multifarious other congregational and communal activities. They, and Dr. Gerstein a generation later, gave an example of rabbis who consider it a spiritual privilege to lead the congregation in the chanting of prayers.

JOSEPH M. CORCOS 1919–1922

Dr. Mendes had returned to his duties in 1912, but with impaired health. He had served the congregation since 1877, and physically he was compelled to consider the need of retrenched activity. After he had celebrated his fortieth anniversary in Shearith Israel, in October, 1917, at the suggestion of Dr. Pool a special committee of the board of trustees was appointed to seek out a

young man who might be trained to become an assistant hazzan.[40] As with a similar committee set up half a century earlier in Mr. Lyons' declining days, no success crowned the committee's search. At the beginning of 1919 Dr. Pool left the country to take up work in the Holy Land. At that critical juncture Joseph M. Corcos came forward to assist in reading the synagogue services and make it possible for the elderly Dr. Mendes to continue the congregational and communal activities which distinguished his ministry.[41]

The Reverend Joseph Corcos had served as hazzan in the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of Kingston, Jamaica, for two years, from 1893 to 1895. He then left Jamaica to be the hazzan of Congregation Mikve Israel of Curaçao, returning to Jamaica after five years. He served there once more from 1900 to 1903, and then left for the United States where he engaged in business. When he saw the need in Shearith Israel, he offered to serve as voluntary reader of its services, and in May, 1919, he was unanimously elected assistant hazzan. In October, 1920, after Dr. Mendes retired, the congregation felt that the services of Mr. Corcos so willingly and capably given should receive financial appreciation. He continued to act as hazzan until Dr. Pool returned to the congregation in the fall of 1922. Mr. Corcos then accepted a call from Shearith Israel in Montreal, where he served as hazzan until 1925. Then he returned to New York and engaged in business once more, but a heart attack closed his life in January, 1926, at the early age of fifty-three. His widow was a well-loved figure in the congregation for a quarter of a century after his passing.

JAMES MESOD WAHNON 1921–1941

An attendant at the synagogue who at times had served as hazzan in the summer and at the congregational overflow services on New Year and Atonement Day was James M. Wahnon.[42] He was born and reared in Gibraltar, and he had benefited from the strong religious character of that gateway community. For many years he had been in New York earning his living as a maker of cigars, but he had not cast aside the religious instruction he had received in the synagogue of his childhood. After Dr. Mendes retired from active service, early in 1921 the trustees were glad to engage Mr. Wahnon to share the reading of the services with Mr. Corcos. He then devoted himself entirely to the synagogue services for twenty years. He was an innate gentleman of unaffected modesty who gave sincere, simple, and unobtrusive service.

Because of failing health, in the summer of 1941 he was made emeritus assistant hazzan. He passed away two and a half years later at the end of 1943 at the age of sixty-eight.

ABRAHAM LOPES CARDOZO 1946–

In 1936 David A. Jessurun Cardozo was invited to become assistant minister and hazzan. He served until 1943 when he accepted the position of minister and hazzan in Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. At the beginning of 1946 Abraham Lopes Cardozo came to the congregation from Surinam. He was born in Amsterdam, where his great grandfather, David Lopes Cardozo, had been rabbi from 1852 to 1890. Abraham Cardozo received his Hebrew training in the Etz Hayyim Seminary of that city. After that he served for six years as hazzan of the Jewish community of Paramaribo, Surinam, which like the New York synagogue has its tradition rooted in the historic mother synagogue in Amsterdam. In New York he married Irma M. Robles, whose father was president of the Surinam Jewish community. He has served the congregation as reader of its services, teacher of liturgic singing in the Polonies Talmud Torah School, and as teacher of Hebrew.[43]

This long story of the hazzanim who for three hundred years have led the prayers in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York is characterized by the high regard in which the men who held this office have been held by the congregation. For over two centuries the hazzan was its religious leader. To his function of reader he added what personal, synagogal, and community services it may have been in his capacity to render. But primarily he was expected to lead his flock in congregational singing. He has been not a professional soloist rendering elaborate compositions, but one of the congregation who in the common outpouring of religious fervor come to "serve the Lord with joy, and come before Him with singing." Occasionally he has also been a man of considerable Jewish learning; at other times his special qualifications did not extend far beyond the correct chanting of the ancient Hebrew liturgy.

However, the time did come, not without the pangs of change, when Shearith Israel looked for more learned rabbinic leadership than even the most devoted hazzan was likely to possess. In the middle of the nineteenth century a pressing demand made itself felt in the congregation for a ministry characterized by Jewish scholarship and the gift of the spoken word.

In early days of the settlement in America, itinerant rabbis would from time to time arrive from the Near East, and especially from the Holy Land, to raise funds for Jewish communities stricken by political oppression, earthquake, fire, or other disaster. After collecting what money they could, these scholarly emissaries would move on in their mission to some other Jewish community, near or far. Very rarely did they remain in New York. These traveling rabbis filled a useful function in bringing high standards of Hebrew learning and contacts with Old World Jewry and the Holy Land to what must have seemed to European and Oriental Jewry to be a remote Jewish outpost. While they were in the town, the congregation was glad to turn to them to gather the fruits of Hebrew learning. Thus, in 1773, the learning of Rabbi Haim I. Carigal of the Holy Land, and in 1774 that of Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac Keyser was drawn on, in the one case to decide a question of kashruth and in the other to examine a shohet as to his proficiency.[44] As late as 1847 the congregation contributed toward the passage to Europe of Rabbi Moses Bogen, otherwise known as Moshe Noach, "in view of his having answered several religious questions for the congregation." [45]

At the end of the Revolution there was in New York Rabbi Hendla Jochanan van Oettingen, who cooperated with Hazzan Jacob Cohen in the composition of a Hebrew prayer for the heads of the new government, George Washington, Governor George Clinton, and their counselors.[46] When the second Mill Street Synagogue was dedicated in 1818, it was the teacher in the congregational school, Rabbi Dob Pique, newly arrived from Bordeaux, who wrote a Hebrew poem for the consecration service.

Not infrequently it was the shohet, such as Benjamin Elias at the beginning of the eighteenth century, or a business man such as Israel Baer Kursheedt at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who had the Talmudic learning to which the community, including the hazzan, would turn for responsible rabbinic guidance. When in 1758 Hazzan Pinto needed to authorize a proxy for officially betrothing to him his bride, across the ocean, he called into being a court of three members qualified by rabbinical knowledge. This consisted of three laymen in the congregation: Jacob Franks, Manuel Josephson, and Joseph Simson. At times there would arise the need for making a major religious decision, such as whether it was permitted under certain conditions to disinter bodies from a cemetery. Having no rabbi of its own, the congregation would lay such serious problems before the rabbinical court of the

Sephardi congregation in London. Minor questions, such as examining a candidate for the position of shohet in order to be assured of his knowledge and competence, would ordinarily be decided by a small group of Jewishly learned laymen of the congregation together with the hazzan.

In 1728, according to the earliest records, the statutes of the congregation called for the services of a hazzan, shohet-bodek, and shammash, but no mention is made of a rabbi. The constitution drawn up in 1761 in like manner empowered the electors to elect or displace a hazzan, shohet, and shammash. The present constitution of the congregation, adopted in 1805, similarly declares that "there shall always be a Hazan, Shochet and Shammas chosen by the Congregation, to perform the services required of them in their several departments." No constitutional provision is made for a rabbi, despite the fact that in the parent Sephardi congregation in Amsterdam and in the sister congregation in London there had been in the eighteenth century rabbi-preachers, some of whose sermons were esteemed highly enough to be printed.

As the nineteenth century progressed, a growing number of Ashkenazi congregations in New York began to be served not only by a hazzan-reader but also by a rabbi-preacher. In the metropolis, and increasingly in other cities in the eastern part of the country, orthodox Jewish congregations would take pride in the prestige accruing to them from the distinction of their pulpit and from the community services rendered by rabbinic leaders such as J. K. Gutheim, Samuel M. Isaacs, Max Lilienthal, Morris J. Raphall, Henry Vidaver, and Isaac Leeser. Shearith Israel did not provide for a pulpit even architecturally, though Hazzan Pinto, Hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas, and in a measure Hazzan Peixotto, on occasion acted as preacher. Other incumbents in the position of hazzan might have been embarrassed had they been asked to act as preacher.

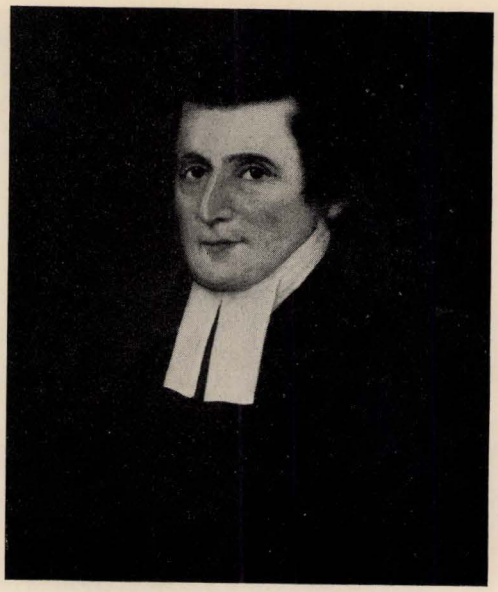
In those days it was distinguished laymen who were called on to deliver an English address on stated occasions such as the dedication of a synagogue, an official celebration, a service of national thanksgiving or supplication, or making a public appeal for some benevolent cause. It was Mordecai M. Noah who gave the oration at the consecration of the second Mill Street Synagogue in 1818. He was also called on to give the address at the consecration of the Crosby Street Synagogue in 1834. In that later address he advocated that sermons be given in the synagogue. Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto preached on behalf of the Hebrew Benevolent Society and gave the address on the second



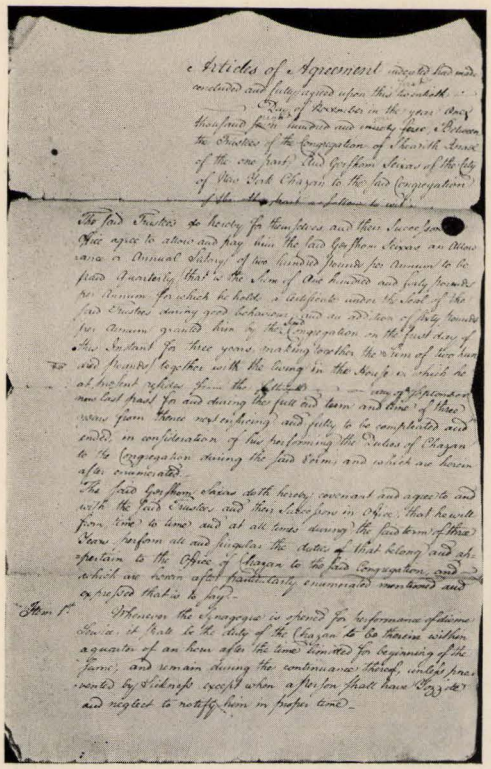
Contemporary silhouettes of early American Jewish religious and lay leaders: Samuel Myer Isaacs; Isaac Mendes Seixas; Isaac D. Walter; Jacques Judah Lyons



Gershom Mendes Seixas in old age



Gershom Mendes Seixas, patriot rabbi
served 1768–76 and 1784–1816



Articles of Agreement

Item 2d

Item 6th

Item 4th

Item 5th

Item 6th

Item 7th

Contract between trustees and the Reverend Seixas
lists many duties, modest rewards

anniversary of the Hebrew Relief Society. When printed, this filled forty-seven pages. The address at the funeral of Gershom Mendes Seixas in 1816 was delivered by the Reverend E. N. Carvalho, who was called in from Philadelphia, and it was Naphtali Phillips who delivered the memorial address in the synagogue. For the funeral of Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas in 1839, the Reverend Isaac Leeser was hurriedly asked to come from Philadelphia to pay the final tribute. To cover this general situation, the board of trustees were empowered by the constitution of 1805 to "direct the hazzan or any other suitable person on a public thanksgiving or other special occasion to deliver an address, sermon, or moral lecture in English." There was still no preacher-rabbi in Shearith Israel.

By the middle of the nineteenth century there were those in the congregation who dogmatically considered this condition to be a tradition zealously to be preserved. This was the reverse side of the medal of popularity fastened upon Hazzan Lyons. His devotees could not brook seeing him assume what they thought would be a secondary position, thus implicitly according to preaching the importance they outwardly denied. They looked with disfavor on the suggested innovation of appointing a lecturer or rabbi in Shearith Israel.

This question first became an issue in 1842, when the Reverend Benjamin Carrillon arrived in New York. He was a native of Amsterdam who had served as preacher and hazzan in Surinam, St. Thomas, Richmond, and Philadelphia, and he brought with him testimonials as to his character and his professional capability. His request that he be accorded the opportunity of giving one sermon in the synagogue was granted. Later in the year he was asked to assist in conducting the services on the Day of Atonement. But when thereafter he asked that he be made minister or hazzan to alternate with Hazzan Lyons, "delivering English discourses without fee or reward," he was thanked for his valuable services on Yom Kippur, but told that it was inexpedient to comply with his proposition. Not long thereafter he was helped to move on with his family to St. Thomas where he remained until 1845, when he went to serve as hazzan in Kingston, Jamaica.[47]

Again the sphinx-like riddle arose: what would be the relation of a lecturer or rabbi to Mr. Lyons, the hazzan who had so long served as the sole religious official of his congregation? But the demand that the congregation appoint a lecturer was growing stronger and more vocal. In October, 1854, by a vote of 17 to 4 the electors agreed that

Whereas the necessity strongly exists of improving our Synagogue service by restoring the ancient and most Valuable Custom of instructing the Congregation by Suitable discourses in the language of the land we dwell in, . . .

THEREFORE Resolved that it is the Wish of the Electors of this Congregation that the trustees take Measures to invite Candidates in Order to fill the Office of Teacher & Lecturer.

A year later the electors again formally requested that the trustees secure a lecturer. In reply, the trustees invited J. K. Gutheim of New Orleans to fill the position. He had delivered an "able and instructive lecture" in the synagogue in the preceding year. Rabbi Gutheim declined the offer at this juncture, although in the following summer, 1856, he delivered several lectures in the synagogue.[48]

ARNOLD FISCHEL 1856–1861

When in December, 1855, Rabbi Gutheim had declared himself unable to accept the invitation to become the congregation's "lecturer," the trustees turned to Dr. Arnold Fischel, a Dutch Jew then in England, and invited him to be a candidate for the position. A month and a half later they asked him to come over as a candidate.[49] He sailed for New York at the beginning of September, 1856, and was given full opportunity to deliver sermons. In November he was appointed lecturer. He was also called on to teach in the Polonies Talmud Torah School. It was he who preached the sermon at the dedication of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue in 1860. He showed an interest in the history of the Jews in America, in 1859 reading a paper on this subject before the New-York Historical Society.

But Dr. Fischel had his difficulties. He had learning and devotion, but he had not the personality or the eloquence of an effective preacher. More than once he was earnestly requested by the board of trustees to write out his lectures and read them from the manuscript. Furthermore, Hazzan Lyons was not given to viewing his efforts sympathetically. Nevertheless, Dr. Fischel was steadily reelected until in October, 1861, he declined reelection.[50]

Those were the days of the Civil War, and he immediately offered himself as army chaplain. Under the regulations of the time that position was officially closed to him as he was not a regularly ordained clergyman of a Christian denomination. Nevertheless, Colonel Max Friedman chose him to serve as his regiment's chaplain-designate. Thereupon Rabbi Fischel made every effort to have the regulation changed so that he could receive a commission and serve

not as a civilian but as a military chaplain, but to no avail. Soon after, in 1862, he left the country, returning to Holland.[51]

In that same year 1862, the electors again expressed their desire to have a lecturer. In the following year they requested the trustees to advertise for one. Thereupon there was inserted in six issues of the *Jewish Messenger* of New York, the *Occident* of Philadelphia, the *Jewish Chronicle* of London, and one other European Jewish publication, the following advertisement:

WANTED

for the Congregation Shearith Israel, New York, a competent Lecturer of orthodox principles and theological education. One familiar with the Portuguese minhag and capable of assisting in the service, if required, will be preferred. Address J. S. Abecassis, President, Box 481, P.O.N.Y.[52]

This international search proved fruitless. Five years passed, and then in 1868 the president, Judah S. Abecassis, was given full power to find a competent lecturer. A letter was written to the Reverend Moses M. Nathan of St. Thomas, who was planning to visit New York, inviting him to give six lectures and to be the congregation's guest while in the city. He came, he lectured, and he was politely thanked, while the hope was expressed that he would afford the congregation some further opportunity of hearing him preach.[53] Still no one to fill the post! Three more years passed, and in 1872, the Reverend Charles H. Moïse of Sumter, South Carolina, came to New York and delivered three lectures in the synagogue during Passover. His application for the position was not accepted by the electors.[54] But they were still of the same mind that "the necessity of a lecturer is daily becoming more urgent," and a committee of the congregation was formed to assist the board of trustees in finding the needed man.

HENRY SAMUEL JACOBS 1874–1876

In the following year, 1873, the committee on procuring a lecturer wished to go so far as to invite certain gentlemen from Europe to give a series of lectures to the congregation, the congregation paying their traveling expenses to America and back, and their expenses while in New York. Finally in 1874, no less than thirteen years after Arnold Fischel had stepped out, Henry Samuel Jacobs entered the scene. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, he had studied in that Sephardi community under the Reverend Moses M. Nathan. He left Jamaica in 1854, and served for a time as rabbi in the Sephardi Congregation Beth

Shalome of Richmond, Virginia. He had also been rabbi in Charleston, another strongly Sephardi community. At the time, he was rabbi in New Orleans in the Sephardi Congregation Nefutsoth Jehudah (Dispersed of Judah). As a result, over and above his general qualifications he was well prepared to serve in Sephardi Shearith Israel. In April, 1874, the congregation invited him to come to New York to preach. All his expenses would be paid, and in addition he would be given generous compensation. At first he replied that because of existing engagements he could not come, but he did come and he preached. Jacobs was a handsome man with striking, kindly, spiritual eyes and an impressive beard. His was a distinguished and lovable personality. He had the gift of eloquence. Little wonder that immediately and unanimously he was elected preacher. After all the long years of groping and searching, the congregation had at last found eminent leadership in the pulpit.

When his two year contract as preacher was approaching its end, he earnestly asked that it be canceled. He had not found in his work the freedom and cooperation for which he had looked. The devoted disciples of Hazzan Lyons and the hazzan himself had not known how to accommodate themselves to the new situation. Through fear of impairing the hazzan's position in the congregation they lost for Shearith Israel an outstanding leader whom it sorely needed. Rabbi Jacobs gave up his position without a word of reproach or recrimination. His sermon of farewell was a deeply spiritual message into which no personal considerations were allowed to enter. He was not lost to the rabbinate of the city, however, for immediately he became the rabbi of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun to which he gave eminent leadership until his death in 1893.[55]

HENRY PEREIRA MENDES 1877–1920 (1937)

Again Shearith Israel found itself without a preacher. The congregants who had been strengthened and inspired by the message which Rabbi Jacobs had brought were all the more determined to fill the vacant position without delay. From time to time Dr. Frederick de Sola Mendes of Congregation Shaaray Tefila was called on to fill the pulpit. The Reverend Mr. Lyons at the time was sixty-three years old. Shearith Israel realized that ideally it now required a man who could both fill the pulpit and assist the aging hazzan in the reading of the services. Dr. de Sola Mendes happily called attention to his younger brother, Henry Pereira Mendes, who at the time was both hazzan and preacher

in the Sephardi congregation in Manchester, England. At the beginning of 1877 the younger Mendes was invited to come over and deliver four sermons. He came, he saw, he conquered, and he was conquered. In him the congregation found a man with musical gifts and a love for reading the services of prayer, as well as eloquence born of spiritual emotion. With his election there came to a close a third of a century of struggle over the question of whether or not the congregation should have a teacher and preacher in the pulpit. That question was never again raised.[56]

Scarcely had the new minister arrived when the death of Hazzan Lyons set upon his young shoulders the responsibilities of every aspect of religious leadership of the congregation.[57] With spiritual courage he accepted this as a challenge to his innate deep sense of dedication. He had always felt himself to be predestined for the Jewish ministry. Both on his father's and on his mother's side, the rabbinate was an outstanding characteristic of the family tradition. At the time when he was born, April 13, 1852, in Birmingham, England, his father, Abraham Pereira Mendes, was minister of the Jewish congregation in Birmingham. His grandfather, David Aaron de Sola, translator of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi prayer books and author of learned works in English, Hebrew, German, and Dutch, was the hazzan and preacher of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London, and the one who was the first to preach in English among the Sephardim of England. His uncle, Abraham de Sola, Professor of Hebrew and of Spanish literature at McGill University, was minister of the Sephardim in Montreal. Later, another uncle, Samuel de Sola, became hazzan of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London, and his older brother, Frederick de Sola Mendes, continued the family tradition by entering the rabbinate.

His mother's mother, Rica Meldola de Sola, was the daughter of Raphael Meldola, Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim in England. For thirteen unbroken generations Meldolas had been rabbis in Mantua, Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, Bayonne, and Amsterdam.

Henry Pereira Mendes was not the first of his family to minister to Shearith Israel. It will be recalled that an earlier member of that family, Benjamin Pereira, had served the congregation as hazzan from 1748 to 1757.

The young Mendes received his early education at Northwick College, a boarding school which his father founded and directed in London. Not a few of the pupils of that school attained positions of distinction in later life,

among them the industrial chemist Raphael Meldola, and Rufus Isaacs who became Lord Reading, Chief Justice of England, and Viceroy of India. From 1870 to 1872, Mendes studied at University College, London, while continuing his Hebrew studies under his father and the Reverend H. L. Harris, father of Rabbi Maurice H. Harris of New York City.

There was in the de Sola and the Meldola families a tradition not only of rabbis, but also of physicians. Samuel Meldola was body physician to the Duke of Mantua (17th century), and Benjamin de Sola was court physician to William V of the Netherlands. Mendes felt the call to be a rabbi-physician, and early in his ministry in New York he took up the study of medicine, graduating from the medical school of New York University on June 8, 1884. For a time he was uncertain whether he would give himself wholly to the rabbinate or to medicine, but as his position in the congregation became more assured, he gave up the thought of practicing medicine. In 1904, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America bestowed on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, and in 1937 the Jewish Institute of Religion honored him with the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature.

In 1875, Dr. Benjamin Artom, the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim in England, had offered him the choice of becoming minister either in St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, or in the newly formed Sephardi congregation in Manchester, England. He chose to go to Manchester, where he became the first hazzan and minister of its new congregation. He served in Manchester for over two years, from 1875 to 1877.

On coming to Congregation Shearith Israel it was no easy task for the young stranger from abroad to take the place of Mr. Lyons who had been bound to the congregants by nearly forty years of devoted service and the most intimate of family ties. But the young minister's tenderness of nature, vivid sympathy, deep spirituality, and firm faith, rapidly made him a spiritual father to his congregation. However occupied or weary he might be, no call ever found him other than ready to respond. In his life he exemplified the religious ideals which week by week he voiced from the pulpit. He never accepted for himself fees or emoluments for personal religious services which he rendered. At first he would return such gifts, but later he decided to accept them for charitable distribution, a precedent and a policy followed by his successor, which enabled them to build a charity fund and do many an act of unheralded helpfulness.

On October 15, 1890, he took to wife one of his pupils, Rosalie Rebecca Piza, daughter of Samuel and Rachel Piza of St. Thomas, Danish West Indies. She had rare social grace and with it a rarer and ceaseless spiritual striving in which she was constantly stimulated by her husband. In the early days of their married life before her health became impaired she was active in work for young Jewish working girls and in the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. She and Dr. Mendes traveled much, especially after his retirement. The highlight of their years abroad was their stay in the Holy Land. In her widowhood, the memory of this markedly strengthened her inward life and intellectual growth, even in old age. She became a stalwart defender of Zion, and until the end an avid reader of all that concerned Israel.

As a preacher Henry Pereira Mendes was gifted with a clear ringing voice of unusually sympathetic quality, precision of diction, and a rich and poetic vocabulary. His emotional and hortatory messages lifted him to a spiritual and tender kind of oratory. The Bible was the constant source of his inspiration. From 1917 to 1920 as teacher of homiletics in the Yeshiva Isaac Elchanan he helped set the stamp of his spiritual dedication on the orthodox Jewish pulpit in many parts of the United States.

Dr. Mendes found time to work for innumerable Jewish causes. We recall him frequently intervening with city authorities to prevent the introduction of sectarian exercises into public schools. We find him organizing Jewish schools and societies to counteract the excessive ardor of missionaries. We meet him safeguarding the religious interests of Jewish patients in city and state institutions. We see him active in having examination dates in colleges and universities set on some day other than a Jewish holy day. He intervenes with the government or with local authorities to obtain furloughs for Jewish soldiers and civil servants on the Jewish festivals and holy days. He is a prime mover in organizing and furthering the work of the Jewish Sabbath Observance Society of which he served as vice-president. We find him writing and speaking, and addressing a hearing in Washington, to protest against illiberal immigration laws. We see him going to Albany to plead against Sunday laws which would penalize the Sabbath-keeping Jew, or he is on the watch to offset a campaign to outlaw shehitah. We see him fearlessly upholding the good name of the Jew in the secular press. He conducted a class for the newly organized Young Men's Hebrew Association in the second season of its existence, 1877–78, and thereafter, during all the years of his life, we find

him constantly lecturing and speaking from innumerable platforms, and co-operating with all faiths in public causes.

He was one of the first Zionists in the United States in the days when Zionism was still unpopular and misunderstood. Theodor Herzl asked his cooperation in organizing the movement in the United States, and he was elected vice-president of the Federation of American Zionists, and a member of the Actions Committee of the World Zionist Organization at the Second Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1898, and again in Basel in 1899. All his life he remained an eloquent exponent of what he called "Bible Zionism" or "Spiritual Zionism." On his death bed, with the threat of partition menacing the Land of Israel, the last spoken words he whispered were, "Palestine without Jerusalem is unthinkable."

We see him collecting funds for the relief of sufferers from flood, earthquake, and other disasters. We watch him visiting the sick and the suffering in hospitals and other public institutions. We see him in his office adjoining the synagogue busy from morning to night with callers of every description —distinguished citizens inviting his cooperation in some important movement; a Sabbath observer for whom he finds employment; a rabbi or Hebrew teacher seeking a position; a lonely old person for whom he procures admission into a home for the aged; a family whom he unites after an estrangement; a widow to be cared for; a troubled soul looking for counsel and solace; a poor distracted applicant for aid—and no one is denied. Indeed, on March 5, 1892, Dr. Mendes, taking up his humanitarian work the moment Sabbath was over, almost gave his life, falling at the door of his home severely wounded by a bullet fired at him by a man demented from misery.[58]

Elsewhere in this story of Shearith Israel it is told how his initiative contributed to calling into existence such institutions as the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the Montefiore Hospital. In 1885 he organized a branch of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and became its president; later he served as vice-president of the New York branch of the Alliance. It was Dr. Mendes who stirred his congregant Mrs. Israel Unterberg to create the Young Women's Hebrew Association, and who inspired another congregant, Mrs. Joshua Piza, to undertake her pathfinding work for the Jewish blind.

At one time it was brought to Dr. Mendes' attention that there were many Jewish deaf-mute children in the city. With characteristic energy, he caused

the public schools to be circularized in order to obtain accurate figures. The returns were appalling. Dr. Mendes thereupon helped organize an adult Hebrew Congregation of the Deaf. To care for the deaf children he founded a society called The Horeb Home and School for Jewish Deaf-Mutes, of which he was made the president. He then set to work to gather funds to enable this society to open a sorely needed school. While engaged in this, it came to his notice that the large school for deaf-mutes on 67th Street and Lexington Avenue might be obtained for his purposes. For the comparatively small sum of $30,000, which he raised, he was able in 1908 to take over the whole of that institution and reorganize it as a communal school for Jewish deaf-mute children.

He was one of the founders of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers in the early 1880s, and its first secretary, a position which he filled for a quarter of a century. Later he became its president.

Dr. Mendes gave his active support to the organization of the first Sephardi offshoot of his own congregation in New York City, the Montefiore Synagogue in Harlem. In 1885, he opened its religious school, and in the following year, and again in 1886, he consecrated the synagogue buildings successively occupied by that congregation.

Dr. Mendes was no less active in the general community. As early as January 24, 1878, within a year of his entering the Shearith Israel ministry, he was called on to be a speaker at the third anniversary meeting of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, together with Joseph H. Choate, Felix Adler, Chauncey M. Depew, General Horace Porter, and the Reverend Henry C. Potter. On April 24, 1888, he opened the session of the United States Senate with prayer.

In 1896, Bishop Potter of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of New York invited Dr. Mendes to join the Guild for Crippled Children, of which he became a vice-president. He was also made chairman of the committee appointed to organize and open a school for the Guild in the crowded East Side. This school, which became the Crippled Children's East Side Free School, was opened in 1901 under the chairmanship of Dr. Mendes. He was appointed a member of the Mayor's Committee on the Hudson-Fulton celebration in 1909, and he opened the ceremonies with prayer at the Metropolitan Opera House. He was a member of the Committee of Fourteen for the suppression of the abuses in connection with the Raines Law Hotels.

On the occasion of the 275th anniversary of the founding of the city of New York he was one of the speakers at the official celebration in City Hall. On May 26 1903, the 250th anniversary of the establishment of municipal government in Nieuw Amsterdam was celebrated in the Aldermanic Chamber of City Hall in New York City. The list of speakers included Mayor Seth Low, Elihu Root, then Secretary of War, Governor Benjamin B. Odell, Justice John Clinton Gray, Bishop Henry C. Potter, and Dr. Mendes. The next day the newspapers reported that the feature of the exercises was the masterpiece of oratory which Dr. Mendes delivered in the name of the Jews of New York.

In masonry, he was chaplain of the Albion Lodge No. 26, F. and A.M., and later the first Jew to attain the honor of being grand chaplain of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York (1895–1897).

Notwithstanding these multifarious communal and public activities Dr. Mendes was continuously engaged in literary work. His style was marked by emotional vigor and poetic quality. Prolific though he was in many literary genres—journalism, children's stories, textbooks, commentaries, sermons, prayers, poems, dramas—his varied writings are instinct with religious purpose and touched with spiritual fervor. Many of his editorials, articles, poems, stories, and translations from the Hebrew are to be found in the early pages of the *American Hebrew*. Many sermons, essays, and articles from his pen were republished in pamphlet form, such as "The Position of Woman in Jewish Law and Custom" (1884), "The Sphere of Congregational Work" (1885), "The Lifting of the Veil" (1888), "Why I Am a Jew," "The Solution of War," "Peace Anthem," his "Farewell Message" (1920), and his "Fiftieth Anniversary Sermon" (1927).

In 1897, he published *England and America, The Dream of Peace*, an impassioned poetic appeal for an Anglo-Saxon union between England and America. In 1899, there issued from his versatile pen a remarkable study in anticipations entitled, *Looking Ahead*. In this volume he conjured up with startling foresight scientific and technical discoveries of the twentieth century, such as steering airships by radio, at a time when neither the airship nor the radio was anything more than a scientist's dream. In the same volume, he anticipated the World War which crashed on the nations some fifteen years later, as well as the modern rebirth of the Land of Israel.

Dr. Mendes was gifted with a whimsical sense of humor, and in lighter vein he published *Stories About the Bible but not in the Bible*. He also published

In Old Egypt, a volume for children. In more serious mood he was one of the American Board of consulting editors of the *Jewish Encyclopedia.* To meetings of the American Jewish Historical Society he contributed papers dealing with the history of his own congregation (1887), the Jews of Newport (1899), and notes (1898 and 1901), a glossary to the twenty-seventh volume of its Publications, as well as a memorial tribute to his father (1902), and one to the Reverend Abraham H. Nieto (1922). He also wrote an article included in the brochure "Early Religious Leaders of Newport" published by the Newport Historical Society in 1918.

Among his numerous publications in verse may be mentioned "Shivath Hanneroth," a poem "for Sunday School commencement, in commemoration of the opening of the new synagogue and school rooms" (1897), "A Ballad of Purim," a Purim drama "Esther and Harbonah" (1917), a Hanukkah play published in the *American Hebrew*, and a number of hymns included in the "Jewish Hymns for Jewish Schools" which he published. In connection with his Purim plays he composed the melodies for the incidental songs, and some of his compositions have found their place in the services of the congregation alongside of melodies composed by his grandfather, D. A. de Sola, "the learned hazzan," and other members of his family.

In the field of liturgy he issued jointly with David de Sola Pool *The Burial Service as Used in the Congregation Shearith Israel of New York* (1910), and *Mekor Hayim, The Mourner's Hand-Book* (1915). In the evening of his days, in commemoration of the completion of sixty years of ministry, he compiled and published *Derech Hayim, The Way of Life* (1934), a collection of prayers and meditations for home use. In the Hebrew titles which he gave to four of his books, he ingeniously included the word *Hayyim* (life) which was also his name in Hebrew.

As far back as 1882 he published a *First Hebrew Reading Book.* The first volume of his *Jewish History Ethically Presented* covering the period of the Pentateuch saw the light first in 1895, the fourth edition appearing in 1909. In 1895 he wrote *Nishmat Hayim* [The Breath of Life], *The Jewish Religion Ethically Presented*, a second edition of which was called for in 1912. This was followed in 1917 by *Ruach Hayim* [The Spirit of Life], *Jewish Life Ethically Presented*, a work which he dedicated to his congregation in commemoration of his forty years of ministry. Most of the copies of these books were given away by Dr. Mendes in his religious zeal for spreading the knowledge and love

of Judaism. In the last years of his life he wrote *Bar Mitzvah for Boyhood, Youth and Manhood.* This book of eighty-eight pages calling on the Bar Mitzvah boy to be proud to be a Jew was published after his death by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America in 1938, and in a second edition in 1945.

In 1902, the congregation celebrated Dr. Mendes' twenty-fifth anniversary of service and created the parsonage next to the synagogue for his home. His thirty-fifth and fortieth anniversaries were also celebrated. In 1927 on June 5, the first day of Shabuoth, he preached a sermon in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of his association with the congregation. That occasion and his seventy-fifth birthday were made memorable when at a reception in his honor Dr. Mendes was informed by the presiding officer, Judge Benjamin N. Cardozo, then of the New York Court of Appeals in Albany, that his friends had established an H. Pereira Mendes Foundation, the income of which Dr. and Mrs. Mendes were to enjoy during their lifetime. The ultimate purpose of this foundation is that of "promoting education in the principles and traditional practice of the Jewish religion among Jews residing in the City of New York or within fifty miles therefrom, and so far as may be practicable and advisable among those known as Sephardim." [59]

When he was seventy-six years old, an "invisible dinner" was given to him by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, together with a nation-wide tribute over the radio. On his eighty-fifth birthday, in 1937, he had the joy of seeing his congregation present a three-act drama on the story of Esther that he had written and produced fifty-seven years earlier as a protest against intermarriage.

But shadow had not been absent from Dr. Mendes' days. Though he long felt the effects of the bullet which almost took his life in 1892, eighteen years of restless activity followed, until in November, 1910, he was stricken by desperate illness. Over half a year later, after a long convalescence, he was carried on board ship, and for the next year and a half he sought to regain his health in Europe far from the calls which gave him no rest in New York. On his return to America in 1912, he began to take up his activities once more as strength slowly returned to him. But in March, 1915, he was compelled to ask for leave of absence for two more years. Thereafter, his indomitable desire to be of service triumphed over his shaken health. On July 1, 1920, when he

was approaching his seventieth year, the congregation elected him Minister Emeritus.

With a concentration of purpose which seemed to grow with the years, he interpreted the status of Minister Emeritus as a transfer from the active ministry in a single congregation to the status of minister-at-large wherever he might be. Increasing years did not weaken his purpose. Transcending physical limitations, he continued to serve with serene unawareness of age. But in the middle of October, 1937, frail nature could no more. For a few days he lingered, and then with the well-loved prayers and the name of Jerusalem on his lips, on October 20 his soul passed to the realm of the God whom he had served with so deep a love and so fervent a devotion.

Of him President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote, "As rabbi of the historic Congregation Shearith Israel and as a scholar of world-wide repute, Dr. Mendes was long a commanding figure in our religious and intellectual life who will be sadly missed and widely mourned." Herbert H. Lehman, then Governor of New York State, recalled that "his spiritual and beautiful life was a constant inspiration to those of our faith, and his example a potent influence in good citizenship."

Though his funeral service was held in the synagogue, Dr. Mendes had left in writing his express "desire that my body be not taken into the Holy Synagogue. I desire that no praises of me, a human being, be recited in an auditorium built and consecrated for the praises of God." Consequently while the service was read his coffin stood in the vestibule. With the simplicity that he desired and which so rightly befits death he was laid to rest beside his parents in the Cypress Hills cemetery of the congregation of which he had been for two generations spiritual leader, father, and friend.

Small of stature, he was yet possessed of a benign dignity which emanated from within. Soft-spoken, courteous, fatherly, and tender, he won all hearts. The words ring true which were addressed to him at the celebration of his twenty-fifth anniversary in the congregation when the electors expressed "their continued affection and great appreciation of his unselfish and devoted service to the glory of Almighty God not only in this congregation, but throughout the whole Jewish community of the City of New York." Shearith Israel will remember their pastor of "meek and gentle spirit possessed only by the ideal clergyman."

DAVID DE SOLA POOL 1907–

In the year 1902, the twenty-fifth year of his ministry and the fiftieth of his life, Dr. Mendes had looked to the future of Shearith Israel's spiritual leadership. His assistant was Isaac de la Penha, a competent hazzan in reading the services. "There is a strong desire to have one who can be also minister and succeed me," he wrote to his cousin in London, Eleazar S. Pool. "I hear your boy David is preparing for the ministry." But the boy was only sixteen years old at the time, and to the chagrin of Dr. Mendes, "the trustees thought him too young."

Time soon filled in the deficiency of years. On December 30, 1904, the trustees invited the rabbinical student to visit New York so that the congregation and he could become acquainted with one another. He replied that he was holding two scholarships in London, and he therefore felt that he could not leave for any prolonged period of time. Moreover, he was planning a course of postgraduate studies in Germany upon completing his work in London. The trustees were not in favor of so long a course of study at such a distance and they expressed their regret at David Pool's "inability to take the position of Assistant Minister." However, in 1906, the invitation was renewed "informally to visit the city at the time of the Holy Days, to become acquainted with one another." [60]

In mid-September, 1906, David de Sola Pool arrived in New York. A month later, on October 15, he was elected assistant minister of the congregation to assume his duties from August 1, 1907, or not later than January 1, 1908.

The call to the ministry had come to him very early in life. He began to conduct services in 1901 at the age of sixteen. His childhood spiritual home was the Mildmay Park Synagogue in London where his father was honorary secretary for twenty-five years, and around which much of the family life and interest gravitated. It was a neighborhood branch of the Bevis Marks Synagogue where grandfather Solomon Pool had served as president. In 1905, David Pool graduated from University College of the University of London with first class honors in classics and humanities. At Jews College, the theological seminary of English Jewry, he pursued concurrently his rabbinic studies under the guidance of inspiring teachers such as Michael Friedlander and Israel Abrahams. In Germany, he took additional courses in Berlin at the Rabbinic Seminary and at the University, and graduated *summa cum laude* in 1907 from Heidelberg University. His doctorate thesis, *The Kaddish*, was

first published in 1908, and reprinted in 1929. Before leaving Europe to enter the active ministry in New York, he attended for a short time the Rabbinical College in Florence, Italy.

On December 21, 1907, David de Sola Pool began his ministry in Shearith Israel. As assistant to Dr. Mendes he shared in the multifarious duties of hazzan, preacher, teacher in the school, leader of adult educational groups, lecturing, pastoral work, and personal community service. From 1910 to 1912 and from 1915 to 1917 when Dr. Mendes was given leave of absence because of impaired health, Dr. Pool took over all the duties of religious leadership in the congregation. In 1917 he married Tamar Hirshenson, daughter of Rabbi Haim Hirshenson, Talmudic scholar of world renown who published some twenty volumes of searching studies, including several on modern problems and religious observances in the light of Talmudic laws in the reborn Jewish commonwealth. On both her father's and her mother's side she was descended from a long line of rabbis and pioneer teachers. Prior to marriage, Mrs. Pool had won an international travel scholarship for postgraduate studies at the University of Paris, and had taught French, Latin and Greek at her alma mater, Hunter College.

During the years of the First World War, the trustees enabled Dr. Pool to give during various periods intensive service to the men in the armed forces throughout the country. A contemplated period of service overseas was canceled on the termination of the war. In December, 1918, a month after the armistice, Dr. Pool was invited to join the Zionist Commission that had been set up to assist the mandatory government in Palestine in implementing the Balfour Declaration. The call for personal participation in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home had for Dr. Pool the aura of miraculous fulfillment of the prayers of well nigh two millennia. However, the trustees did not feel justified in sanctioning Dr. Pool's further absence so soon after their generous cooperation in his war work. The chance expiration of his contract made it unnecessary for them to take negative action and left him free to respond to what he felt was a compelling historic call. Early in January, 1919, Dr. Pool left, and he and his family sailed across the mine-infested seas to arrive in Jerusalem some two months later.

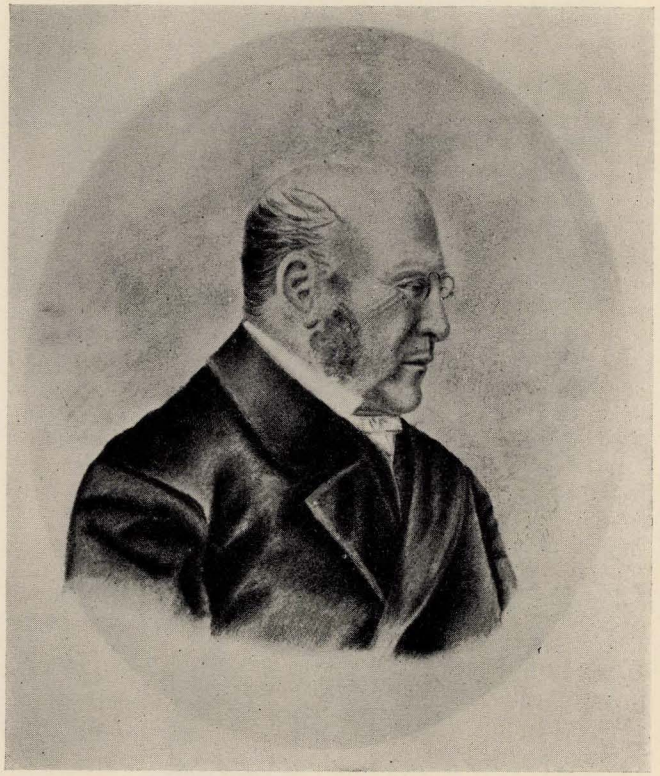
In 1920 Dr. Mendes was made rabbi emeritus. Mr. Corcos and Mr. Wahnon were acting as hazzanim, but there was an acute need of a preacher in the pulpit. Many candidates were considered, men already serving in the American

rabbinate and others who were in Canada, England, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Shanghai. One New York rabbi after appearing as a guest preacher was finally elected, but he decided not to accept the call.

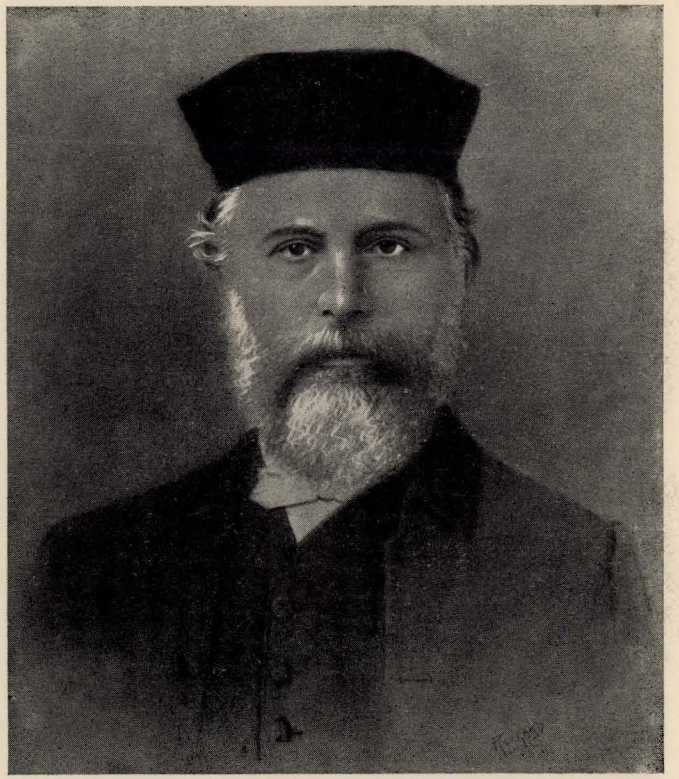
By the end of 1921 the post-war American Jewish relief and reconstruction program in Palestine was tapering off to a normal peace time tempo. Dr. Pool came back to New York at the beginning of 1922 to undertake for the newly formed Jewish Education Association the organization of Jewish religious education on a city-wide basis. While he was directing this work, he was called on May 1, 1922, by the electors of the congregation to take up again his work as hazzan and minister. This action was unanimously endorsed and ratified by the board of trustees. He accepted the call, feeling that the relief work he had directed, the experience of intimate contact with the Land of the Bible, and the associations with the early efforts of pioneering Israel, had been abundantly spiritually rewarding. In his long connection with Shearith Israel, he looked back on the time he had spent in the Holy Land as Sabbatical years of enriching experience.

The pulpit in Shearith Israel has always been completely free and unhampered. For fifteen years from 1922 to 1936, the sermons of the year were organized as a course of religious thought. Each year before Rosh Hashanah, the congregation received a religious calendar listing the weekly Bible reading from the Pentateuch and the prophets together with the titles of the coming sermons. These were coordinated around a consistent theme and philosophy. A number of these sermons were published in volumes of *The Best Sermons of the Year*, and in collections published by the Rabbinical Council of America and other homiletic compendia. Beginning with 1922, congregants have received a New Year pastoral message dealing with some dominant issue of the time, viewed in the light of the teachings of Judaism.

Early in his ministry, Dr. Pool began to translate anew the ancient synagogue liturgy, so as to make it more meaningful to the modern worshiper and help maintain and strengthen traditional Sephardi minhag. In the period of two decades, four comprehensive volumes for Sabbath and week-days, the New Year, the Day of Atonement, and the Festivals were published by the Union of Sephardic Congregations. On the completion of the Sephardi editions of these prayer books, the Rabbinical Council of America, representing the orthodox rabbinate of the country, invited Dr. Pool to prepare a volume of the Ashkenazi Sabbath and festival prayers.



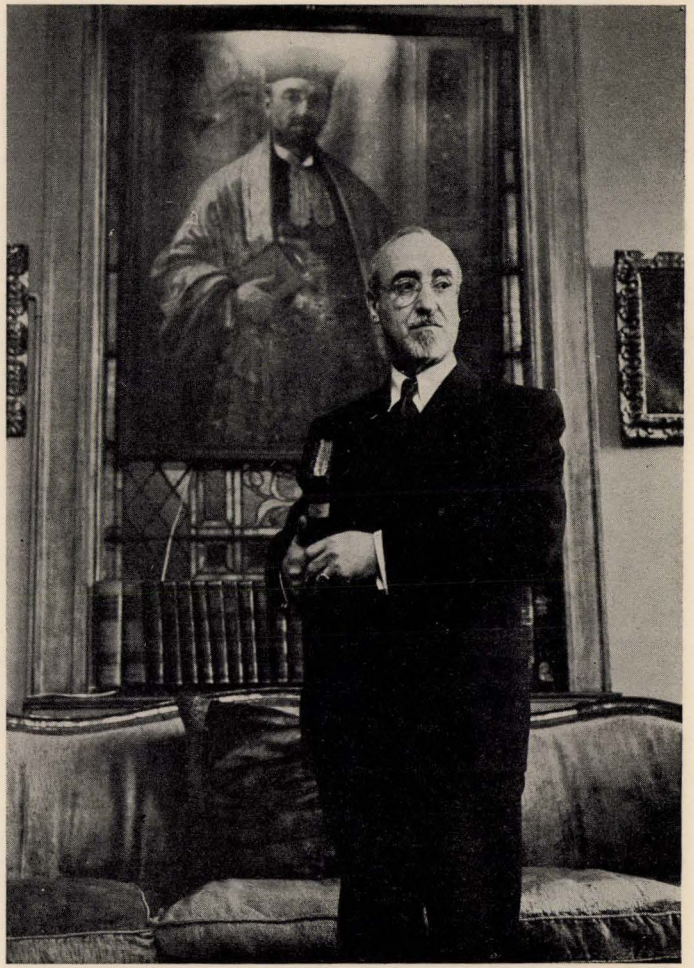
Jacques J. Lyons, popular minister-hazzan served from 1839–77



Henry S. Jacobs, rabbi and preacher, served 1874–76



H. Pereira Mendes, religious leader and community worker, was appointed in 1877, retired 1920



David de Sola Pool began his ministry 1907
He edited, translated comprehensive Sephardi liturgy

Under the auspices of the Hebra Hased Va-Amet, he published the order of service for preparing the dead for burial. In cooperation with Dr. Mendes, he edited *The Funeral Service* and *The Mourner's Handbook*. Following these volumes came the joyous rendering of *The Song of Songs* as a poetic drama. He prepared an edition of the Haggadah of Passover which was extensively used by the armed forces for a number of years.

In the general Jewish community he was president of Young Judaea, of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, and of the Synagogue Council of America. As president of the Union of Sephardic Congregations Dr. Pool represented it at national and international conferences and the United Nations. From 1940 to the end of the Second World War he was again called on to resume war work in a program which went far beyond what he was called on to do in the First World War.

Both in war and in peace the congregation always readily enabled Dr. Pool to give such national service. During the First World War he was a member of Herbert Hoover's Food Conservation Staff in Washington, specializing in the relations with the Jews of the country. He was a member of the National Youth Administration under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. With several members of the congregation he shared with Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish ministers and lay leaders in the long study of interfaith understanding in America that led to the organization of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He represented the congregation and often the Jewish community in numerous civic activities, commemorative celebrations, and official functions sponsored by the state, the city, and leading public institutions. When the City of New York entertained heads of foreign states and of the United Nations, Dr. Pool as rabbi of its oldest synagogue was often called on for participation in the program alongside the representatives of the Catholic and the Protestant communities. He appeared on radio and television programs, sending messages overseas in English, Spanish, and Hebrew on programs of the Voice of America, or sending a Rosh Hashanah message to Europe through the Office of War Information. He acted as moderator on a two year series of religious discussions on the radio, called "Candles in the Dark." At the New York World's Fair of 1939, his name was included on the Wall of Fame among those of Americans born in other lands who had made outstanding contributions to American culture.

The history of Shearith Israel as America's oldest Jewish congregation

captured Dr. Pool's interest almost immediately after he entered its ministry. In 1909, together with Rosalie Solomons Phillips he published the first study of the old Hebrew inscriptions in the "Burial Place for the Jewish Nation" below Chatham Square. In 1930, on the 200th anniversary of the dedication of the Mill Street Synagogue he wrote the history of the country's first building designed for a synagogue. This story filled a gap in the records of Shearith Israel and of early New York Jewry. In 1934, he published a similar history of the Crosby Street Synagogue on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of its dedication. A companion history of the Central Park West Synagogue, the present house of worship, appeared in 1947 in commemoration of its fiftieth anniversary. A biography of Dr. Mendes, whose ministry carried the congregation from its sanctuary on 19th Street to its latest home, was published as a booklet, and in shorter form as a chapter in the American Jewish Yearbook. To the Brandeis Avukah Annual of 1932 he contributed a study of the rabbinical emissaries from the Holy Land who came to the congregation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

For over forty years, from 1908 to 1952, Dr. Pool collected information about the early settlers and the founders of Shearith Israel. Of many only the name is left while of many not even their names are remembered. Whatever facts he could trace he gathered from every available source, the crumbling stones in the cemetery, congregational archives, city records, old newspapers, and family Bibles, albums and papers. He sought out members of families that had been in the congregation of old to learn what they remembered of the family traditions. All this came together in his book, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682–1831*. This volume of 543 pages, with a special de luxe edition for the committee of sponsors, was published by Columbia University Press in November, 1952, with a second printing in January, 1953. The book was impressively launched by the board of trustees of Shearith Israel and Columbia University Press at a ceremony held at the New York Historical Society. Among those taking part were the Director of the Society, Dr. R. W. G. Vail; Robert F. Wagner, then president of the borough of Manhattan; the Reverend Dr. Edgar F. Romig, Senior Pastor of the Collegiate Church of the Dutch Reformed Church, which was the first religious organization in Nieuw Amsterdam; and Justice Edgar J. Nathan, Jr., the president of the congregation. Descendants of old congregational families appeared in costume and lent colorfulness to the occasion, a recording of which rests in the archives of Shearith Israel.

As a member and later as the president of the American Jewish Historical Society, Dr. Pool contributed to it numerous studies, among them many touching on the history of the congregation. A number of these were printed in the *Publications* of the Society. His monograph (1911) on *Hebrew Learning among the Puritans of New England Prior to 1700* threw added light on the Hebraic influences in early New England and on the general pattern of American culture. Other historical contributions appeared in volumes of the Dictionary of American Biography for which Dr. Pool was invited to write biographies of American Jews prominent in the religious sphere. For a number of years he was the author of the survey of Jewish religious life in the annual supplementary volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica. His study of Jews from the Levant immigrating to the United States that was published in the American Jewish Yearbook of 1913, and his presentation of their problems at an annual convention of the Jewish Social Service Association, helped in 1914 to focus public attention on these interesting new Americans.

In the field of Hebraica, Dr. Pool's digest of the Shulhan Aruh's traditional laws and regulations of Jewish education was published in the *Menorah Journal*, and reprinted by the Jewish Education Association. His interpretation of Jehudah Halevi's *Defense of his Faith* (Al Khazari) appeared in the Jewish Library, a series of volumes on Judaism in the modern world. A comprehensive analysis of Judaism as a religion in the American community appeared in the Hadassah textbook *The American Jew*. The *Columbia University Quarterly* published his study "The Place of God in Modern Life," and the American Academy for Jewish Research published "The Constructive Use of Kol in the Book of Psalms." A detailed analysis of an aspect of Jewish law contained in his *Capital Punishment among the Jews*, and a much reprinted pamphlet, *Intermarriage*, threw the light of Jewish thinking on these two problems. He also wrote articles for the Hebrew Encyclopedia, Otzar Yisrael, and for the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. In 1942 the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity; in 1953 he received the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters from the Chicago College of Jewish Studies. In the Jewish tercentenary year 1955, New York University awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago gave him renewed rabbinical ordination with the title of Moreinu (our teacher). From Columbia University he received the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology.

In observance of his sixtieth birthday, the congregation presented to the

construction fund of the synagogue's educational and social center $10,000 in his honor. Two years later, on December 1, 1947, forty years after he entered the service of Shearith Israel he was elected minister for life. For minister and congregation alike, this was not a routine administrative gesture. In community of faith and philosophy of living, trustees, congregants and rabbi walked and worked together along the pathways of service enjoined on a synagogue. In a near half-century, at this writing, a living bond had been welded between two and three generations of Shearith Israel and Rabbi Pool. Joy and sorrow, birth and bereavement, achievements and failures, honors and problems, when they came into the lives of the congregants entered also the life of their minister and the union between them partook of the intimacy and sanctity of the family tie.

D. A. JESSURUN CARDOZO 1936–1943

As had happened in the ministry of Dr. Mendes, there inevitably came the day when an assistant had to be called on to share in the minister's responsibilities. Dr. Pool's obligations were continually increasing with the holding of religious services both morning and evening every day in the year, a growing congregational membership, and expanding horizons of new activities such as the Sabbath afternoon Seudah and study group, the Men's Club, junior groups, a daily school taking the place of the former Sunday School, and more active programs by the Sisterhood and the League. It was then that the congregation turned once more to England to find an assistant minister, and in 1936 a call was extended to D. A. Jessurun Cardozo.

Born in Amsterdam, he had received his first Jewish training in that city. At the time when the call of Shearith Israel came to him he was serving the small community that was using the synagogue of the virtually inactive Montefiore College in Ramsgate, England. He accepted the call, and for seven years he was assistant minister in Shearith Israel's pulpit, in the reading of the services, the direction of the school, and general ministerial work. He was especially interested in drawing to the synagogue those associated with the Dutch Jewish Club. Made up of members who had recently escaped from a Holland at first threatened and then invaded by the Nazis, this club found a welcome and a home in Shearith Israel.

In 1942 the head of the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of New York, Rabbi Nissim Ovadia, died. Then by agreement with the congregation the

Reverend Mr. Cardozo gave part-time service to directing the work of that organization. A year later, at the end of 1943, he left New York to become the minister of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia.[60] That position he filled until 1950 when he returned to New York to serve for three years as the head of the Sephardic Jewish Center of the Bronx.

LOUIS COLEMAN GERSTEIN 1942–

Meanwhile the work of organizing religious service for the Jewish men in the armed forces during the war was making mounting demands on Dr. Pool's time. The search for a man who could serve both as a Sephardi hazzan and a preacher once more became pressing. It found its solution in the fall of 1942 when Dr. Louis C. Gerstein was elected. Dr. Gerstein was born in New York, a son of a devout rabbi of the old school, Rabbi Solomon, and Rachel Zisser Gerstein. His studies in the public schools and in the Yeshivah of Brooklyn were followed by his admission to New York University from which he eventually received his Ph.D. He was the recipient of its A. Ogden Butler Philosophical Fellowship. He served as special lecturer in philosophy in 1942 and 1943. In 1943 he graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary. From 1943 to 1951 he was lecturer in philosophy and religion at its School of Jewish Studies. He received his rabbinical ordination (semichah) from Rabbi Eli Russoff. He married Amy Vivian Levinson, a student at Columbia University and the Seminary School of Jewish Studies.

Dr. Gerstein wrote *Metaphysical Foundations of Bergsonian Ethics* (1938). His *Conception of God in Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas* was published by the New York University Press in 1947. *Faith in Our Times*, published in 1947, put into printed form a series of religious broadcasts which he had delivered. For many years he has been the editor of the Shearith Israel Bulletin.

While sharing in all the ministerial activities of the congregation, Dr. Gerstein specialized in its educational program. He directed the religious school, guided the youth and post-Bar Mitzvah groups, and conducted adult classes and lecture courses. He organized and led the Young Marrieds. His vocal gifts made him also an unusually competent hazzan, thus enabling him to continue Shearith Israel's lengthening tradition of the hazzan-preacher-minister happily combined in one man.

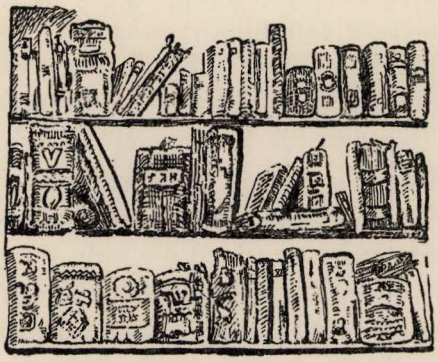
The story of the religious leadership of Shearith Israel has been a long one. We have come to know some men whose function was almost exclusively the

chanting of the services, others who were qualified primarily to occupy the pulpit, and still others who served in all the varied aspects of the ministry of Shearith Israel as reader-teacher-preacher-pastor-communal worker. Since the congregation always had to have someone able to read the services and conduct its elaborate ritual, not unnaturally almost all its twenty-six religious leaders have come from a Sephardi background. Six of these ministers were born in Holland, four in England, three in the United States, two in North Africa, and one each in Syria, Gibraltar, Portugal, Jamaica, Surinam, and Curaçao. Of five of them we have no information as to the land of their birth.

In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the religious leaders of the congregation had to rely almost entirely on their own knowledge and capacity, for the small congregation was distant from all other Jewish communities. It is true that when through sickness, absence from town, or for any reason, the official reader of the services was unable to officiate, there could always be found in the congregation one layman or more to act as temporary reader. But of the hazzanim of the congregation who gave Shearith Israel such faithful service it can truly be said, "These were they . . . set over the service of song in the house of the Lord . . . and they ministered with song."

When after two centuries, opportunity came for the congregation to receive complete rabbinic services, Shearith Israel was well prepared by its earlier leaders for the demands reciprocally and mutually incumbent upon a congregation and its rabbi. Religious devotion, valor of spirit, and loyalty to Jewish tradition, characterized the readers, teachers, and spiritual leaders in the little Jewish community which had to wait long for scholars to flock to it, and for the libraries of global eminence and the atmosphere of Jewish learning that make the road easier for the rabbinate in New York today. The story of the ministry in Shearith Israel has been within the context of an enlarged family a happy and fruitful offering to man of service to God.

VI. "Diligently Unto Thy Children"



That which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us, we will not withhold from our children.

PSALM 78:3

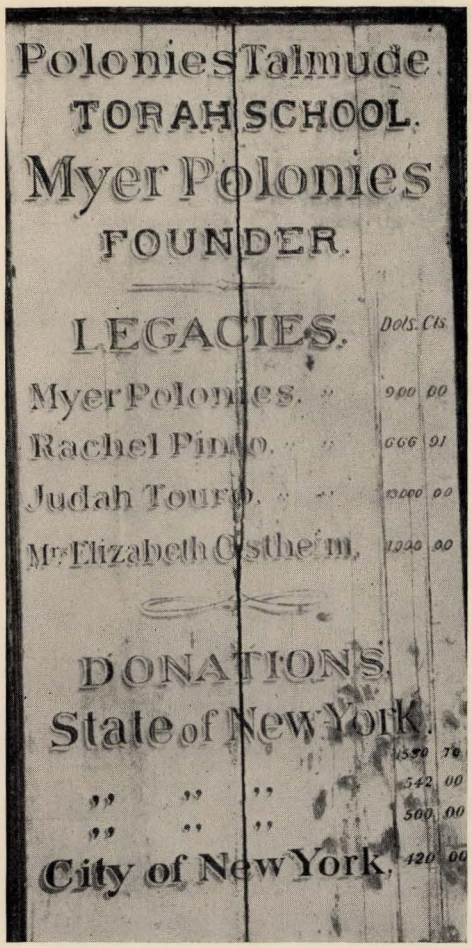
THE PRIMACY OF LEARNING is indelibly stamped upon Jewish life.[1] The rabbis who listed seven cardinal virtues of conduct in the moral world said that the seventh encompassed all the others. That seventh one is the study of the Law of God, called in Hebrew the Torah. The fruit of such study reaches beyond man's terrestrial existence. But its earthly rewards are also abundant. The study of the Torah "invests man with modesty and reverence, and leads him to piety, virtue, uprightness and faithfulness . . . wisdom, understanding, might, authority, and insight into justice," and much else that is noble and good.[2] With education thus exalted, the school traditionally found a place of primacy within the synagogue. Eighteen and a half centuries ago in Rome the Jewish group was known as a *schola*, the name given to a school or sect. The name by which a synagogue is most generally known among Ashkenazim is the *shool*, i. e. the *Schule*, the school. This identification of the synagogue and the school has been brought about through a deep conviction that only

through learning can the Jewish heritage be transmitted from generation to generation. The rabbis say that you may sell a synagogue to build a school, but the reverse is forbidden, for the sanctity of the house of study is higher even than that of the synagogue. One may not interrupt the instruction of the young even for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, say the rabbis.

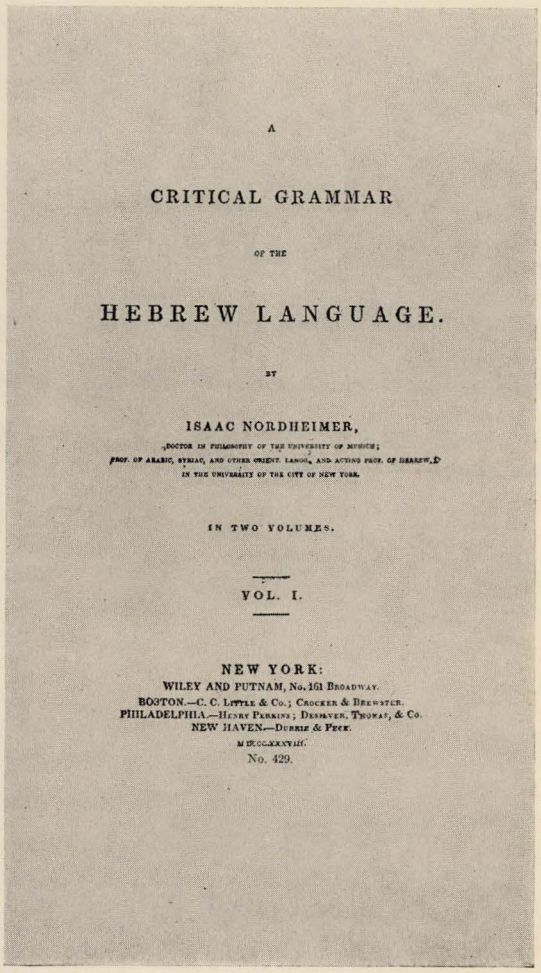
The tradition of universal education remained virtually unbroken among Jews wherever they dwelt. In Recife, Brazil, from which the first Jewish settlers came to New York, there was both a Talmud Torah—elementary school—with its ribbi (teacher) for the younger children and the Etz Hayyim advanced school for Talmudic study.[3] In Dutch and Colonial days in Nieuw Amsterdam and New York education was almost entirely denominational. As a rule it was the church which provided not only the religious but also the secular training of the young. The earliest extant records of the congregation, the minutes of 1728, refer to the aged pensioner, Benjamin Elias, as "ribbi," the teacher. He had been the congregation's shohet, and as the authorized provider of kasher meat he must have had far more than the modicum of Hebrew knowledge needed for giving the children their Hebrew education. The requirements for receiving certification as a shohet include beyond the skill of the operator also knowledge of Hebrew and of the elaborate Hebrew code of laws controlling the practice of ritual slaughtering. Indeed, the shohet is looked upon as a religious functionary. In its early days, the small community inevitably had to double up on some of the duties of its officials. Whether Saul Pardo and Abraham Haim de Lucena, business men who served as hazzan in the synagogue, had time also to conduct a school, is at least doubtful. In the listing of the officers and officials of the congregation in 1728 there is no mention of a teacher. But since the congregation then had a professional hazzan, Moses Lopez de Fonseca, we may assume that the duty of teaching was implicit in his duties. In his days, in 1731, a building was dedicated for educational purposes. When his successor David Mendes Machado took office in 1733, it was clearly specified that he was

> promising and obliging himself to keep a publick school in due form for teaching the Hebrew language, either the whole morning or afternoon as he shall think proper, and any poor that shall be thought unable to pay for their children's learning they shall be taught gratis.

This reads like the formulation of an accepted status with no indication of any innovation. The hours of instruction were set from nine to twelve in the



The Polonies Talmud Torah formalized long-established Jewish education, "for the poor, gratis," in New York City



A

CRITICAL GRAMMAR

OF THE

HEBREW LANGUAGE.

BY

ISAAC NORDHEIMER,

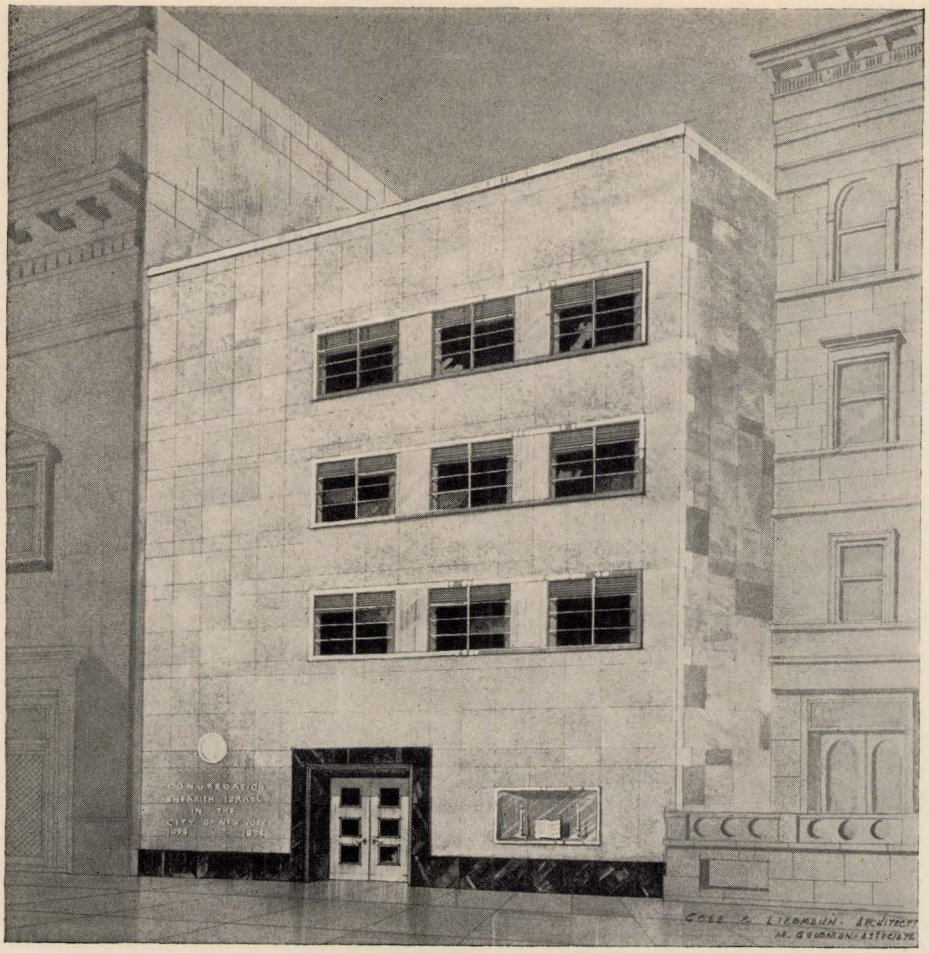
DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH;
PROF. OF ARABIC, SYRIAC, AND OTHER ORIENT. LANGS., AND ACTING PROF. OF HEBREW,
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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Hebrew Grammar by Isaac Nordheimer, professor at New York University



Tercentenary gift to the future—a new school and community house



Louis C. Gerstein from 1942 continued the tradition of Shearith Israel's ministry to lead in worship and religious education

morning and on Thursdays from two to five. For each paying pupil Machado was to receive eight shillings a quarter and a load of wood yearly. The little school was subject to weekly inspection by one of the trustees of the congregation.[4]

In July, 1744, one Joshua Isaacs died. He left a legacy of £50 the income from which was to be for the support of a Hebrew school to teach poor children the Hebrew tongue.

In 1748, Hazzan Benjamin Pereira came on the scene. In 1755 it was agreed that he conduct the school not in the Hebra building, which had been dedicated in 1731 as a Beth Hammidrash (House of Study) for the pupils, but in his own house. Except on Friday afternoons, Holy Days and fast days, this school was open every day in the week in summer from nine to twelve and two to five, and from ten to twelve and two to four in winter. The curriculum called for the teaching of Hebrew, Spanish, and English, as well as "writting and arithmetick." The children of the poor were as always to be admitted without charge, and the school was to be inspected monthly. In the following year when Hazzan Pereira's health was impaired, he was excused from teaching on Sunday afternoons.[5]

In search of health Hazzan Pereira gave up his office and went to live in Jamaica, B.W.I. Hazzan Pinto who succeeded him in 1758 apparently did not serve regularly as the ribbi, for in the fall of 1760 we find the congregation writing to their former Hazzan Pereira in Jamaica asking him to

> Engage a suitable Master capable to teach our children ye Hebrew language: English and Spanish he ought to know: but he will not suit unless he understands Hebrew and English at least; this must require your particular care: a single: modest: sober: person will be most agreable . . . he must oblige himself to keep a publick school at the usual hours of the forenoon on every customary day at our Jesiba. Children whose parents are in needy circumstances he must teach gratis: his salary shall be at first at forty pounds New York money per year . . . and all other children he teaches must and will pay him as has been done heretofore.[6]

Apparently Benjamin Pereira could not find in Jamaica the man for whom New York Jewry was looking. Therefore, falling back on their own local resources, in 1762 they engaged a learned Ashkenazi member of the congregation, Abraham I. Abrahams, though he knew probably no Spanish. In May of that year Abrahams undertook to keep a "publick school" in the Hebra building of the congregation, teaching Hebrew reading and translation, as well as English, reading, writing and cyphering. In synagogue it was his duty

to look after all the children seated together in the southwest corner of the building.[7]

Following the Revolution, the school had to be organized anew. In the winter of 1785–86, and again in 1792, the congregation was looking for someone both capable and ready to conduct its school in the Hebra building. In September, 1793, Simeon Levy applied for and was given the position. He agreed to teach for half a day all children under thirteen years of age, the pupils providing the necessary books and other school supplies. He was expected to pay "strict attention to the morals as well as the religious duties of all the youths that shall be committed to his care." At synagogue services all the school children were to be under his watchful direction.[8]

But Simeon Levy was not sufficiently well qualified to keep a public school; therefore, at the close of his contractual year the congregation turned to Hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas. In the thirteen articles of the long contract made with Mr. Seixas for these additional duties it was agreed that he be paid a salary of £170 and be provided with the necessary tables and benches. He was also to receive a stove, but he had to supply the firewood himself. Not more than thirty pupils from the age of five years and upwards were to be in his charge, and school hours were to be from Monday to Thursday in the afternoon, and on Sunday from ten to one. Seixas undertook to prepare boys for their Bar Mitzvah without extra payment. In anticipatory recognition of his friendly informality, it was laid down that "No scholar be employ'd either in domestic or menial services under any pretense whatever unless it be to make fire for the use of the scholars while at school." Of the twenty-one pupils pledged in the first month, no less than six were children of his brother Benjamin. A month later the committee of the trustees reported favorably that the method and assiduity pursued by Mr. Seixas promised progress in the children.[9]

It was not until the early 1800s that the congregational school developed into an institution in its own right with a measure of organizational autonomy under the general authority of the board of trustees.[10] When Myer Polonies died in 1801, he left the congregation a legacy of $900 "for the express purpose of establishing a Hebrew School." This sum the trustees invested in 8% stock of the United States, and they applied the interest toward the maintenance of "a charity school" to be called the Polonies Talmud Torah, for teaching the Hebrew language.[11]

The constitution drawn up for this school provided for its being housed in

the Hebra building adjoining the synagogue. It was to be open three hours on week-day afternoons and on Sunday mornings. There were to be admitted seven free pupils and twenty-three pupils paying $4.50 a quarter. A suitable master was to be provided and Gershom Mendes Seixas was appointed to this post. The school was to be under the immediate direction of the board of trustees, and inspected by them at least once a month.[12] In 1802 the number of parents wishing to enter their children in the school exceeded anticipations,[13] and on May 2, 1803, the Polonies Talmud Torah was formally opened.

The trustees took their supervisory responsibility seriously. Witness is borne to this by the elaborate pedagogic disquisition which accompanied a call to a parents' meeting for April, 1804. The response to this call was truly disappointing in the history of parent-teacher cooperation. For whether the dicta therein so completely represented parental conviction as to make attendance at the meeting superfluous, or whether the parents felt helpless before such sage pronouncements, we can only surmise. Only the trustees attended the meeting. A century and a half later, we may read again with interest what was finely set down in 1804.

It is now two Years since the School has been established, and the numerous advantages that have arisen therefrom must be obvious to every deserning mind. In order to make your Children truly Virtuous you must rear them in the strict principles of our Holy Religion, and this cannot be efficiently done without they understand what they are saying when addressing the deity. It is thus that religion becomes the soother of all our sorrows and the source of all our real Joys, and which will pervade our thoughts and actions in order to answer the design of God in our Creation.

Education generally speaking is the first thing which ought to be pursued in Life in order to constitute us rational, how much more there is to be expected from having in addition thereto a complete and full knowledge of the Hebrew Language being that in which all our prayers are read. Yet notwithstanding this it is with regret that it is perceived few, very few indeed are concerned about it.

An Opinion has been expresd by many of our Congregation that Children are incapable of profiting by Instruction till their reason is matured. This is conceived to be Erroneous in the extreme, for there are instances of Children having preferred the good to the evil without knowing why they did. They are directed by the Eye to follow the examples before them hence the necessity of an early and Scrupulous Education— We are admonished "to train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." And this maxim generally holds good. Let us wisely begin early to plant those seeds from which we wish to reap fruit, let us root up the Weeds and Prune off what might hinder the growth. But those things must be done at a proper time for if the season be suffered to slip away, much, if not all may be lost.

25th April 5564 [1804]

AARON LEVY I. B. KURSHEEDT NAPHTALI PHILLIPS[14]

In those days the trustees had constant difficulty in finding a satisfactory teacher, for Hazzan Seixas was not able to continue in that capacity, and for some time the school led a very precarious existence. In 1804, Abraham Jacobs was chosen as tutor for a Hebrew and English school and given the use of the synagogue's schoolroom. Eventually in the spring of 1808, the congregation felt that there was in New York someone who could solve the basic problem of the school, that of finding the right teacher. This was Emanuel Nunes Carvalho. He was thirty-six years of age at the time. Born in London in 1771, he went when he was twenty-seven years old to Barbados to be the religious leader of its Congregation Nidhe Israel. Because of his and his wife's health, after seven years he gave up that position in 1806 and came to New York. There he set himself up as professor of oriental and modern languages and belles-lettres, drawing some of the Christian clergy to himself as his pupils. In order to encourage him to stay and serve as schoolmaster, the congregation took up a special subscription for establishing a Hebrew and English school. This raised $584.50, and eventually the fund reached a total of $743.50. A contract with the Reverend Mr. Carvalho was drawn up and the constitution for the new school was printed.

In that "Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Talmud Torah, Established in the City of New York on the first day of Sivan, in the year 5568, corresponding with the 27th day of May, 1808," we read something about the community's renewed interest which brought about this reorganization of the school. A meeting of those who had contributed to the subscription that had been taken up was held on May 15, 1808, with Jacob Hart, Sr., in the chair, and Isaac M. Gomez acting as secretary. It was then

> Resolved—That a Committee of three subscribers be elected by ballot, who shall be empowered to co-operate with a Committee of the Trustees, to draft a plan, rules and regulations for the establishment of a Hebrew and English School, to contract with a suitable teacher or teachers and to do every other thing requisite.

The committee so chosen consisted of Gompert S. Gomperts, Judah Zuntz, and Dr. Joel Hart, while the three appointed by the trustees were I. B. Kursheedt, Moses L. Moses, and Mordecai Myers. In the "plan, rules and regulations" drawn up by this committee it was decided that tuition was to be given six hours a day, "the mornings to be appropriated to the study of the English language and the afternoon to the Hebrew." There were to be from thirty to thirty-five pupils, none under the age of six years. The subjects of instruc-

tion were to be spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, reading and translating Hebrew. The aims of the school were,

> . . . firstly, to improve the understanding and to instruct the scholars, thoroughly, in the principles of religion and morality: and secondly, to have a strict attention paid to their actions, in order to make them conformable to the aforementioned requisites.
>
> To accomplish the above object, the scholars are to be inspired with a sense of honor—a sense of shame—and above all, a sense of emulation. . . .
>
> The task of informing their minds and maturing their judgment must necessarily devolve on the Teacher, who should by the plainest arguments, unassisted by those abstruse speculations that generally tend to distract the judgment and injure the memory, impress on their minds the excellencies of our *belief*. A certain time before or after the hours of study, should be appropriated to *devotion*, and the usual service ought to be performed by one of the scholars competent to the task. A sense of decorum during divine worship must be strongly inculcated, and a certain grade of punishment should be instituted for inattention to this observance. . . .
>
> To instil in the youthful mind a love of learning, a veneration for religion and morality, and an attainment of useful instruction; whilst all visionary and impracticable schemes should be rejected on the one hand, just as salutary maxims ought to be adopted on the other.[15]

In keeping with all this, the first article of the new constitution declared

> . . . that a School denominated Polonies Talmud Torah be established for the purpose of teaching the Hebrew & English languages in all their concomitant branches.

In June, 1808, the school was opened with four free pupils, and sixteen boys and six girls as pupils paying $6.25 a quarter. Carvalho received a salary of $800 as well as fuel and the use of the congregational schoolroom in the Hebra. The trustees supplied ink but no stationery. Six months later, in January, 1809, the inspectors reported that the program of the Polonies Talmud Torah School "has answered the most sanguine expectations." [16]

But in March of that year Carvalho wrote to the trustees

> . . . that my Health obliges me to seek its re-establishment in a warmer Climate, I have been unwell since my arrival . . . the enormous expence of House Rent, Fuel, etc. etc. . . . I have found my Salary considerably deficient already. . . . The Gentlemen of the K.K.B.E. [Beth Elohim] in Charleston . . . have very friendly offered me again the situation of their permanent Hazan . . . the position . . . being lucrative permanent and with the chance of recovering my Health.

In reply to the question of the trustees as to what increase of salary he thought would improve his health, he wrote about

> the pleasure of residing in a place where I have found so much kind attention . . .

and if the salary were increased by $500 . . . it would enable me to obtain the attendant Comforts necessary. . . . I then should think myself happy in continuing my abilities in the service of this Kahal.

Mutually satisfactory financial terms were agreed on, and Carvalho remained as head of the school. When called on he would help the aging Gershom Mendes Seixas in the reading of the synagogue services. But after three years he left New York to become the Jewish religious leader of the Charleston community. In Charleston were living his brother David, the business man who later became a judge, and his nephew, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, the portrait painter and pioneer traveler. He served in Charleston until 1815, when he became the religious leader of the Mikveh Israel congregation in Philadelphia. There he issued his "Key to the Hebrew Grammar." This was the second work of Hebrew scholarship to be published in this country by a Jew, the first having been Isaac Pinto's prayer book translations of 1761 and 1766. When Gershom Mendes Seixas died in 1816, Emanuel N. Carvalho was called to New York from Philadelphia to give the memorial address. He himself died in the following year at the early age of forty-five.[17]

When Carvalho left New York in 1811, once more the school passed through a period of inadequacy and sometimes complete disorganization because of the lack of an able and qualified teacher to serve as its head. In the meanwhile, however, the school had attained new official status because of the recognition given it in 1811 by the state legislature. Under the acts of 1801 and 1806 certain Christian schools of the city had been given grants from the state. The congregation therefore petitioned the state legislature of New York early in 1811 presenting the facts

That from the year 1793 a school has been supported from the funds of the said Congregation for the education of their indigent children. That on the 8th of April, 1801, certain school monies were distributed among seven charity schools of the said city, supported by religious societies. That the free school of the Roman Catholic church and that of your memorialists were overlooked in this benevolent distribution. That on the 21st of March, 1806, a law was passed placing the school of the former on the same footing as the others. That your memorialists also made application to the legislature, but did not succeed owing as they presume to the pressure of business. Your memorialists fully persuaded that the Legislature will look with an equal eye upon all occupations of people who conduct themselves as good and faithful citizens, and conscious that nothing has been omitted on their part to deserve the same countenance and encouragement which has been exhibited to others, do most respectfully pray your Honorable body to extend the same relief to their charity school which has been granted to all others in this city.[18]

The reply of the state was to grant to the Polonies Talmud Torah School $1,565.79. It was decided that the interest on this sum was to be used for free pupils.[19] The legacy of Myer Polonies and this substantial grant from the state were commemorated in 1814 on a large board tablet set up in the schoolroom, a tablet which is still preserved. The school received smaller grants from New York State funds in 1814, 1815, 1816, and in 1819, 1820, 1821, and 1870, and one grant of $20 from the Board of Excise.[20]

The movement for the establishment of public schools developed in the early part of the nineteenth century. It had its birth in the establishment of the undenominational Free School Society in 1805. At the beginning of 1812, Benjamin S. Judah was appointed the congregation's representative to a convention of delegates of churches of the city who were planning to present a memorial about a bill pending at Albany concerning the establishment in the state of what were called common schools. The act was passed on March 12, 1813.[21] In order that from that time on there should be no doubt as to its character as a school that could be recognized under the new law of the state the Polonies Talmud Torah was given the repetitive name of the Polonies Talmud Torah School. The change in its character from a general school which also gave Hebrew instruction into a specialized Hebrew school did not take place definitely until 1821. The school had been reorganized in 1812 as a general school, and in 1813 the number of free pupils between the age of four and fifteen which it admitted was increased from fifteen to twenty to conform with the new law. At that time the teacher was Simeon Levy. He had filled that position twenty years earlier in 1792–93, and had then been adjudged not qualified to teach. But he had been reappointed as the best man available in the recurrent difficulty of finding a head for the school.[22]

A learned but in other ways an unfit teacher for some years was Rabbi Dob Pique of Bordeaux. On the urging of Mr. Lambert Morange of the congregation, the rabbi's passage was paid, and he with his wife and son left France late in 1817 to come to serve the New York community. As a learned rabbi in a community that had none he was warmly welcomed. Board and lodging were found for him. Gershom Mendes Seixas having passed away, Rabbi Pique was consulted on religious questions such as the program of consecration of the second Mill Street Synagogue. In 1818 the Polonies Talmud Torah School was opened once more. Rabbi Pique was appointed its teacher. He was given two small rooms in the school house for himself and his family. In addition

to the tuition fees of all pupils who were not among the five admitted free, he received a salary of $300, and in addition any offerings that might be made for him in the synagogue. The tuition fee for the Hebrew school was set at $5 a quarter; for the English school, the fee was $7 a quarter for Hebrew and English writing, arithmetic and geography, or $9 when French was added. The French-speaking Rabbi Pique had to engage an assistant for the English department of the school.

The tenure of Rabbi Pique was not destined to be a long one. While the community profoundly respected his Hebrew learning, parents were unwilling to entrust children to him because of his propensity for strong drink. By the beginning of 1821 he had only one paying pupil in addition to the five free pupils. In May of that year he ceased to be head of the school.[23]

This severance of relations solved one problem only to introduce another. Two months later, the trustees made an agreement with the next incumbent, I. Alvares de Leon. Almost immediately, in September, 1821, they found themselves obliged to write him the following letter:

> The Trustees finding that no disposition exists on the part of families to send their children to the school under your superintendence and that the objects for which you were engaged are frustrated, are compelled to announce to you that your duties as teacher are terminated, considering however that you may have been disappointed in your expectations, the Trustees actuated by friendly feelings toward you, have agreed to appropriate to your order the sum of Fifty dollars.

Mr. de Leon would not accept the check, refused to move out of his rooms in the school building, and insisted that the trustees keep their agreement with him. Finally "by judicial process" he was forced to vacate his apartment, and we hear no more of him.[24]

The community which had such difficulty in finding one teacher was about to find itself faced with the problem of having two teachers. In March of the year 1822, Abraham Rodrigues Rivera, a member of an old family which had its roots in Newport, announced that he intended opening a school and that he had already obtained a number of pupils. His request that he be given the use of the schoolroom was granted. He died suddenly nine months later.[25]

Three months after permission had been given for his school to meet in the synagogue room, nineteen congregants signed a memorial asking that Rabbi Moses Haim Morpurgo, who had just arrived from Surinam, be appointed teacher. He had a knowledge of Judaism and of French, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. How well he understood English we are not told.

Since he was promised nineteen or more children three afternoons a week if he were to head a school, the trustees engaged him. The use of the schoolroom having been given to Rivera, they assigned to Morpurgo the room adjoining the congregational ritual bath and the two upper rooms in the building adjoining the synagogue.[26]

The school of Moses Haim Morpurgo did not last beyond the first year. In the summer of 1823 Rabbi Morpurgo was helped to go to Curaçao. In the fall of that year, the Reverend Abraham H. Cohen was granted a salary of $225, use of the schoolrooms, and the other usual contractual conditions on his reopening the school. This school continued for three years, though not without some difficulties. Then, in August, 1828, a letter addressed to the trustees came from Richmond, Virginia, in which Abraham H. Cohen asked to be released as the teacher of the Polonies Talmud Torah School, as he had agreed to become hazzan and shohet in Richmond. The resignation of this son of Jacob Raphael Cohen was necessarily accepted.[27]

The congregational school continued its checkered history. Sometimes it had difficulty in finding pupils. There were times when the school was temporarily closed because of the lack of a teacher. When in 1834 I. B. Seixas became hazzan of the congregation, the school was reorganized once more with him as its teacher.[28] Four years later it had become necessary to find for the hazzan a qualified assistant in his many duties, and a search began for one who would also be a competent and suitable teacher.[29] On January 7, 1839, circulars were sent far and wide, asking for

> . . . a well educated young man, or one with a small family, capable of teaching the Hebrew with the Spanish and Portuguese pronunciation, and also the rudiments, if not more advanced parts, of an English education . . . also . . . should be able to aid our hazan in the discharge of his duties, as occasion may require: as in the case of sickness, &c. for which purpose he must understand the manner of chaunting the prayers and reading the sefer torah according to the minhag Sefardim or be possessed of a clear voice and distinct enunciation.
>
> . . . he must be a man of unblemished morality and piety, strict in his religion, devoted to his duties, and of good temper and address. To a person thus qualified, an income of one thousand dollars per annum, may be calculated on; with a prospect of doing better, should his services be every way acceptable, and his course of conduct popular with the Congregation.[30]

The difficulty of finding a suitable teacher was accompanied by difficulties of financing. In November, 1841, the committee on finding financial aid to help establish a school mournfully stated that "attempts have frequently been

made by the trustees to establish a school which have generally failed." [31] Half a year later, in June, 1842, Mordecai M. Noah and Lewis J. Cohen again raised the question of the establishment of a Hebrew school. The committee to which their letter was referred stated in its report that they regarded

> the communication of Messrs. Noah and Cohen as of vast importance and with great satisfaction. It is to them very substantial and positive evidence, that the members of the congregation are beginning earnestly to feel the necessity of finding means to perpetuate the Holy and beautiful language of our faith, without which its essence and purity would be endangered; and they deem it the duty of the board promptly to respond to the call and to lend their aid to carry out the wishes of the congregation in the manner in which they have the power.
>
> Indeed any further delay on the part of the trustees to discharge the benevolent trust imposed on them by the donors of the school fund, might warrant the belief that they had lost sight of a most important duty, and were neglectful of a charge of vast importance to the rising generation.

On receipt of this report it was

> resolved that the board of trustees will establish a school for instruction in the Hebrew language according to the Portuguese custom or mode of reading, under the name of the "Polonies Talmud Torah" as early as the requisite arrangements can be completed; said school to be held in the room under the synagogue known as the school room.[32]

Elaborate regulations for the conduct of the school were drawn up and in due course it was opened. But this reorganized school did not last long. Three years later, in May, 1845, steps had once more to be taken to reestablish the Polonies Talmud Torah School. This time it was to be headed by Hazzan Lyons. Two years earlier, in 1843, Mr. Lyons had been given the use of the schoolroom for a class in Hebrew when the room was not otherwise in use. In the following year, 1844, he was granted fuel for the use of his school. In the fall of 1845 he was appointed the teacher of the Polonies Talmud Torah School. Fourteen rules governing the school were printed, and at last all looked well. Eight months later, in May, 1846, ill health compelled Mr. Lyons to resign his office as teacher of the school. This contretemps aroused much indecisive discussion, while classes were suspended. But five months later, Mr. Lyons announced that his health was restored, and in November the school was again reopened.[33]

So the school jogged along its rugged road until 1854. Its meager support had been derived mainly from the interest from the legacies of Myer Polonies ($900) and Rachel Pinto ($666.91), from occasional grants from the state,

from free-will offerings of congregants, and from some tuition fees from pupils. Appropriations from the synagogue's general fund balanced the meager budget. On January 13, 1854, Judah Touro died. By July of that year, under his historic will the congregation received a legacy of $13,000 for the Polonies Talmud Torah.[34] A committee was immediately appointed to work out a plan for extending the usefulness of the school, just as had happened half a century earlier when the legacy of Myer Polonies became available. Sixteen recommendations made by this committee were printed. The Polonies Talmud Torah School was no more to be just an afternoon Hebrew school. On April 22, 1855, the school was opened as a general school in which Hebrew was one of the subjects taught. The "superintendent and Hebrew instructor" was Hazzan Lyons; Thomas B. Sandford and Harriet Ruden were the teachers of the other subjects. The daily sessions were conducted on weekdays from nine to three and on Fridays until noon. There was a half-hour recess for girls from a quarter of twelve to a quarter after, and one for boys from half-past twelve to one. The classes were held in the "renovated and appropriately fitted up" basement of the Crosby Street Synagogue. The secular subjects of instruction were "alphabet, conversations on common things, spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, composition, writing on slates, and penmanship." The "scholars" were expected to attend religious services regularly in Shearith Israel's synagogue. The Sunday morning sessions from nine to twelve were given up exclusively to "lecture and rehearsal of prayer." All sessions were opened by a reading from the scriptures given by Mr. Lyons.[35]

This was an ambitious chapter in the history of the school, but a brief one. For it came a decade too late in meeting the need of general primary education for the children of Shearith Israel. In 1842 the Free School Society yielded to the city-sponsored system of public schools to which Jewish parents were happy to send their children. It became difficult for the congregational school to continue functioning as a general school. One year after the reorganization of the Polonies Talmud Torah School it was decided to discontinue the comprehensive secular and Hebrew curriculum. Once more it became a school limited to free Hebrew instruction for children of the congregation.[36] Sessions were held only on Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. For more than two generations, until early in the twentieth century, it retained this character of a modestly planned religious school, although on the shelves of its library books of the old curriculum were retained for a number of

years. Cornel's *Primary Geography*, Thompson's *Table Books and Arithmetic*, Brown's *English Grammar*, Scott's *United States History*, *Conversations on Common Things*, and McGuffey's Primers, Spellers, and First, Second, Third and Fourth Readers, were to be seen alongside of Hebrew prayer books, English Bibles, and textbooks for Jewish teaching, such as Henry's *Class Book* and J. J. Lyons' *Sunday School Lessons for Young Israelites*.

The failure of the combined secular and Hebrew school to maintain itself strengthened the view of the trustees that it was

> inexpedient at the time to take any part in the establishment of Jewish Free Schools believing that the Public Schools already established are all sufficient for the education of Jewish children aided by the Hebrew Schools now in existence under the supervision of the respective Hazanim of the different Congregations.[37]

Nevertheless, in the middle of the nineteenth century some parents in the congregation preferred to place their daughters in a private school. In 1841, the eminent Hebraist Dr. Isaac Nordheimer planned to open a school which would freely take in poor pupils, and in consideration of that would receive financial backing from the Polonies Talmud Torah Fund of the congregation and from the Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion.[38] This plan was not realized because of Nordheimer's frail health. He died in the following year.

Altogether different in character was the school in which many of the girls and some of the boys of the congregation at that time got their education. This was a typical fashionable "finishing" school for children conducted by the Misses Rachel and Judith Palache, members of the congregation, "two accomplished ladies of our persuasion, in whose house, not alone their mental and moral culture will be cared for, but where also that essential, that breath of life of the Hebrew's existence, his own religion, will be imparted, and enforced by pious example." They advertised their school as a Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies of the Jewish faith. It was housed at 97 Thompson Street. The fee for tuition together with board was only $50 a quarter. The subjects taught made up an impressive list. They included the inevitable writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, composition, and history, and also music, singing and drawing, and even astronomy, philosophy, and mythology. The school advertised further that "The Hebrew language is taught free of any charge until the pupils are sufficiently advanced to require the aid of a Master." The Jewish faith was taught in part in French, the children learning it from

memorizing the French catechism prepared by Rabbi S. Cahen of Paris. At times a public examination of the Hebrew attainments of the "scholars of Miss Palache's Academy" was held "in the Sunday-school room attached to the Hebrew Synagogue in Crosby Street . . . before . . . the elite." [39]

By 1866 the capital fund of the Polonies Talmud Torah School had risen to well over $20,000. In that typical year, the income of the school amounted to $1,281.50, while the salary paid to the sole teacher, the Reverend Mr. Lyons, was only $250.00. This salary was increased in that year to $500.[40] The congregation in times of financial pressure would borrow a large part of the school's capital, paying the customary interest to the accumulating school fund. In 1867 the school received a legacy of $1,000 from Mrs. Elizabeth Ostheim of Galveston.[41] Twenty-one years later, Isadore Dyer of that same city left the school another legacy of $1,000. Washington Hendricks also bequeathed $1,000 to the congregation for educational purposes, a bequest which was eventually paid over to the Polonies Talmud Torah Fund.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the school was handicapped by the fact that the synagogue was progressively left downtown in the business district of 19th Street while most of the pupils lived farther uptown. To meet this problem, the school held its sessions from 1875 to 1879, and again from 1882, not in the synagogue building but in the Harvard Rooms at 42d Street and Sixth Avenue, and later in the building of the Conservatory of Music at 128–130 East 58th Street. These moves increased the enrollment of pupils. In the academic years 1881–82 the registration of pupils reached the number of 218.

In the early 1870s Michael M. Allen, who had been the first to serve with the armed forces of the United States as a Jewish chaplain, assisted Mr. Lyons as teacher in the Polonies Talmud Torah School.[42] In 1877, after Mr. Lyons died, his daughter Sarah became principal of the school. She filled this position conscientiously and ably for thirty-six years. She was a woman of keen mind and ready wit, and she exercised a strong influence in the congregation. In 1913 she was retired with the title of Honorary Consulting Superintendent. She passed away in 1934, leaving to the school her total estate amounting to almost $34,000. Two years later a bronze tablet was unveiled in the hall of the school in which she had served so faithfully. This recalls her as

Principal and Superintendent of the Polonies Talmud Torah School of the Congregation Shearith Israel 5638–1878——5694–1934, Founder of the Sisterhood of

the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue 5656–1896 and a Director until her death. "Give her of the fruit of her hands and her own works shall praise her in the gates." Prov. XXXI—31.[43]

Another woman whose name was notably associated with the school in the middle of the nineteenth century was Alma Hendricks. She showed a constant interest in its work and founded the Alma Hendricks prize for moral improvement. After her death in 1879, that prize continued to be given for a number of years in her memory.

During the last half century the school has been strengthened by some notable gifts. Among these may be mentioned those of Adolph Wallach, Alfred L. M. Bullowa, P. H. Toledano, and Mrs. Maxwell Blumenreich. The interest on these gifts is used for prizes.

Among the trustees appointed as chairman of the school committee who have given unremitting personal attention to every detail in the running of the school have been two vice-presidents of the congregation, Henry Belais and Ephraim Berliner.

During the last quarter of a century steps were taken to intensify the Hebrew curriculum of the school. This meant a departure from the limited program of a Sunday school, some few of the pupils of which attended also on Wednesday afternoons. The school now holds its sessions on four afternoons in the week in addition to Sunday mornings. With this change the teaching staff was necessarily placed on a professional basis. The volunteer Sunday School teachers had served faithfully and had given the school and its pupils an example of fine devotion. They had written an encouraging chapter in human relations. The new educational approach and the professional teachers whom the school was fortunate to draw in involved for the pupils no loss of the friendliness and personal intimacy that had characterized the school in the past. Expertness in pedagogy and a high attainment in Hebrew learning were increments of strength which have brought the school to its high scholastic standards. Dr. Arthur Spier, once head of a large Jewish school in Hamburg, was principal of the school from 1943 to 1948, and Mrs. Solomon Feffer has served as assistant principal for over two decades, bringing to the school visual, dramatic, and project methods of teaching.

To qualify for Bar Mitzvah, a boy must pass an examination in the observances of Judaism, and show a knowledge of the Jewish calendar with its festivals and Holy Days, the synagogue service and ceremonial, the Ten Command-

ments, the elements of Biblical history, and the principal Hebrew prayers.[44] In recent years a ceremony for the consecration of the adolescent girl has also been introduced.[45]

During the last generation a sustained effort has been made to continue the work of Jewish education among both boys and girls in their high school and early collegiate years. One of the most eloquent evidences of this has been the "junior services" conducted entirely by youth of the congregation, sometimes including the reading by the young men of the whole of the weekly section of the Torah.[46] When registration warranted, a kindergarten class has been conducted.

In 1887, an Alumni Association was formed. Although short-lived, it has to its credit the pioneering organization of a special program of service for Jewish working girls in New York City. In the early years of the twentieth century it was reborn as the Polonies Talmud Torah Association. Its members were former pupils or graduates of the school, and for a number of years it exerted a useful, stimulating influence on the school's activities. Its functions were inherited in 1936 by a progressive Parent-Teachers' Association, later called the Parents' Council.[47] This has assumed jointly with the professional staff of the school sponsorship of extra-curricular activities such as school outings, celebrations of festivals, educational lectures for parents, and home gatherings. For the tercentenary of the congregation it organized a city-wide prize competition for children of Jewish schools. Of recent years its presidents have been Mrs. Joseph Adlman, Mrs. Harold M. Marks, Mrs. Simon Mateles, Mrs. Harry Jompulsky, and Mrs. Arthur Arsham.

The development of the congregation's organized Jewish educational work among adults began in the nineteenth century. In contrast with the Dutch Jewish settlement in Brazil, no rabbi was sent over from Amsterdam to Nieuw Amsterdam, nor was any rabbi sent from London to Colonial New York to be the minister and teacher of the community with which it had many ties. In June, 1773, the much-traveled Rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal of Hebron informed Ezra Stiles that there was a rabbi in Jamaica, another in Surinam, and a third at St. Eustatius or Curaçao. On this Stiles commented in his diary, "Thus there are now three Rabbis settled in America. There are none on the Continent of North America." New York had to engender and develop its Jewish educational program from its own limited resources. Yet it was through the generosity of Jacob Mendes da Costa in London that the building of the Yeshibah

Minhat Areb was consecrated in 1731, "for the use of Congregation Sheerit Israel and as a Bet Hamidras for the pupils." [48] Notwithstanding the name Yeshibah, which usually denotes a Talmudic academy, in practice the building was used for meetings and the general purposes of the congregation, and for the children's school rather than for adult and advanced Hebrew study.

Nevertheless, in every generation there were to be found in the congregation men such as Hazzan Pinto, some of the shohatim, and individual laymen such as Joseph Simson or Abraham I. Abrahams, who had rabbinic learning and who without doubt were happy to share it with others. There was always someone who could be called on to check on the knowledge and the expertise of the various shohatim who appear in the long story. In marriage contracts from time to time the bridegroom is described as having more than rudimentary knowledge of Jewish law and lore by being given a title such as *maskil venavon* (scholarly and enlightened). When Judah Samuel died in 1702, a Hebrew Bible and five other Hebrew books were listed as part of his estate.[49] As early as 1713, John Sharpe, who had served in New York for eleven years as chaplain to Her Majesty's Forts and Forces in the Province of New York, on the eve of his departure for England wrote that

> It is possible to learn Hebrew here as well as in Europe, there being a synagogue of Jews, and many ingenious men of that nation from Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc.[50]

The Hebrew learning of the various migrant rabbis who flit across the scene was both respected and consulted. An occasional individual New York Jew from those early days made a serious study of Hebrew. One not too happy illustration would be Judah Monis. He came to New York probably from Italy, and he became a freeman of the city in 1716. Later he was appointed instructor in Hebrew at Harvard College. In 1722 he abandoned Judaism, though in writing about him Bishop White Kennett of London expressed himself as "doubtfull of the Sincerity of Converts." The Harvard committee which reported on the manuscript of the Hebrew Grammar which Monis had prepared stated that "Mr. Monis is excellently well skill'd in ye Hebrew Tongue." [51]

Until the appointment in 1768 of Gershom Mendes Seixas as hazzan, every one of the men who served as hazzan or shohet in the community received his Jewish education overseas. Before the publishing activity of Solomon H. Jackson (1824–1826), the printed Jewish material issued by New York

Jews had been Hazzan Joseph Jessurun Pinto's five-page thanksgiving prayer (1760), Isaac Pinto's English translations of the Hebrew prayerbook (1761 and 1766), some sermons of Gershom Mendes Seixas (1789, 1798), and the Form of Service as well as Mordecai M. Noah's discourse at the dedication of the second Mill Street Synagogue (1818).

In 1800, Sampson Simson, one of the pupils of Hazzan Seixas, graduated from Columbia College. He chose for the theme of his commencement address, "Historical Traits of the Jews from their First Settlement in North America," and gave this address in Hebrew in St. Paul's Church.[52]

From the second half of the eighteenth century, growing immigration of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe brought to the city individuals with higher Jewish learning. There appeared on the congregational scene men like Manuel Josephson and Israel Baer Kursheedt who before coming to the United States had drunk deep of Jewish learning in Europe, and American-born Jewish laymen such as Eleazar S. Lazarus, coeditor with the English-born Solomon H. Jackson of a Hebrew and English prayer book published in New York in 1826. The bachelor surgeon Dr. Simeon Abrahams (d. 1867), for many years treasurer of the congregation and the one who blew the shofar on the High Holy Days, filled his leisure time with the study of Hebrew literature.[53] Occasionally the community could point to a man such as the German-born Isaac Nordheimer. He had been trained both in the Yeshiva in Presburg and in German universities. In his brief life in America which began in 1835, he served as acting professor of Hebrew, German, and oriental languages at New York University. He published a two-volume *Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language* (1838–1841) and *A Grammatical Analysis of Selections from the Hebrew Scriptures* (1838). He died in 1842 at the age of thirty-three. His grave may be seen in the congregation's cemetery on 21st Street.[54]

The time was ripening for a congregational organization of courses of lectures for adults in Jewish subjects. Individuals such as Dr. Simeon Abrahams, Professor Nordheimer, and Montgomery Moses were among the sponsors of the Hebrew Literary and Religious Library Association. In 1840 permission was given to the newly organized Association to use the Crosby Street Synagogue schoolroom.[55] Montgomery Moses gave a course of Sunday evening lectures for adults in the basement room. Simeon Abrahams conducted a class in the translation and explanation of Jewish laws and customs, and Professor Nordheimer led one class in reading Hebrew and another in translating He-

brew. It was around this time, in 1842, that a committee of the board of trustees stated that "the members of the congregation are beginning earnestly to feel the necessity of finding means to perpetuate the Holy and beautiful language of our faith, without which its essence and purity would be endangered."

When in 1874 Henry S. Jacobs became the congregation's preacher, a committee once more recommended "the necessary utility and practicability of the weekly evening meeting for religious instruction for adults." The Reverend Mr. Jacobs was ready to undertake this work, but nothing came of the proposal. From 1877 when H. Pereira Mendes became preacher and minister of the congregation, adult education took a constant place in the regular program of congregational activity with but an occasional hiatus. Under Dr. Mendes and under his successors, Dr. Pool and Dr. Gerstein, many such groups have been conducted. For example, in 1922 a broad adult educational program was organized and conducted which integrated the weekly Sabbath morning sermon with planned studies. On Mondays and Thursdays Hebrew courses were held from elementary to advanced grades and a class in Hebrew conversation. On Tuesday evenings there was a lecture course on problems and tendencies in Jewish life in America, Jewish problems, and Jewish thought. The audience then adjourned for a social hour as guests of the minister. Through community singing the congregation learned the chants and hymns of the synagogue. The chanting of the haftarah or prophetic reading was taught in a special class. Saturday afternoons were reserved for readings in Jewish history from original sources, or for an interpretive course in the ethical wisdom of the fathers that is collected in Pirke Aboth. Once a month a popular Sunday evening forum discussed topics of general interest.

Between the Sabbath afternoon service which must be read by daylight and the evening service which may not be read before sunset, there is usually a pause which tradition has consecrated to a unique form of sociability. Singing, a little study, a very light repast, and social friendship are endowed by the oversoul of the Sabbath with an enchanting quality that has earned for that vesper hour the name of Oneg Shabbat (The Joy of the Sabbath). It is also known as the Seudah Shelishith (the Third Meal). The congregation introduced the Seudah not long after it was popularized in the Holy Land by the beloved folk poet Haim Nahman Bialik.

In 1930 the construction of the Elias Social Room gave to this function a gracious abode. Then the Shearith Israel League undertook to conduct these Sabbath afternoon gatherings as a permanent educational and social project.

Members of the congregation take their turn in providing refreshments. A speaker provides the intellectual stimulation. The widest variety of subjects has been drawn on over the years, such as discussion of the sermon of the day, current Jewish events, book reviews, national and social problems, Jewish community endeavors, education, or music. Each year on the Sabbath falling during the mid-winter vacation, the Seudah is given over to Shearith Israel's college generation. An exchange of ideas on campus life in relation to the religious needs of the students away from home has over the years given a bird's-eye-view of Jewish life on many a major college campus in the country from the point of view of youth itself. The children of the Polonies Talmud Torah also have their special Sabbath when they give a program of their own choosing, with the Parents' Council acting as hosts. Each congregational society in addition chooses a special Sabbath for convocation of its membership at synagogue service in the morning and at the Seudah in the afternoon, the program of which is fitted to the objectives of the group.

An outgrowth of these Sabbath afternoons that has developed alongside the Seudah is the Maimonides Talmud Circle. In 1933, Dr. Pool initiated a group which studied the Mishnah, the first rabbinical written digest of the development of Biblical law that had been orally transmitted over the generations from Bible times. Thereafter, under the leadership of D. A. Jessurun Cardozo the group turned to the study of the consummately ordered code of rabbinic law drawn up in the Middle Ages by Moses Maimonides. Finally it devoted its attention to the Talmud itself. Week after week, every Sabbath throughout the year unfailingly, Talmud readings and interpretations are led not only by the rabbis, but as often by congregants versed in the intricacies of the Talmud. For a number of years an advanced Talmud study group met also on Thursday evenings under the leadership of Mr. Isaac Allen. He further served the educational program of the congregation by giving under the auspices of the Sisterhood two series of lectures on Talmudic laws affecting the status and life of the Jewish woman of today.

In the first century and a half of its history, the congregation had to struggle in its educational work with major handicaps which time and the maturing of the metropolitan community have fully removed. In Colonial New York the acute shortage of books of Jewish learning and the limited number of those able to conduct educational courses retarded the growth of a local tradition of organized study for adults. As the nineteenth century progressed, the congregation and the metropolis as a whole offered a rich opportunity for Jewish

study at every level and for those of every age. For the last three quarters of a century Shearith Israel has at one time or another offered on every day of the week except Friday, which is traditionally given over to intensive preparation for the Sabbath, educational classes, at times in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, often in the evening, for women as well as for men, for adults as well as for children and youth.

In the days before the popular development of public libraries, until a generation or so ago the Polonies Talmud Torah School of the congregation provided a general library for its pupils. Today the congregation maintains alike for adults, for youth, and for children, a library specializing in Hebrew books and in books of Jewish interest. In it one may find standard works of Jewish reference such as encyclopedias, Hebrew dictionaries, the American Jewish Year Book, and the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society. The library also includes the Hebrew Bible with commentaries, volumes of the Talmud, and a growing collection of standard works of Hebrew literature. A third division is made up of works in English of general Jewish interest for adult readers, while another, and the most popular, section consists of Jewish story books, poems, and plays, for juvenile readers.

The Authors Library, a special collection of books and pamphlets written by members of the congregation, includes publications going back to the days of Mordecai M. Noah and Emma Lazarus. Though it is still little more than a beginning, the collection already numbers upwards of 150 titles. It contains volumes of poetry, novels, medicine, chemistry, economics, sociology, history, music, law and international law, Zionism, rabbinics, Hebrew grammar, the Jewish calendar, Jewish law, Jewish ritual, Jewish education, and very much besides of general and of special interest.

Truly has the Torah been for Shearith Israel what the master of Proverbs called "a tree of life" and "length of days." It has been through the transmission from generation to generation of an understanding faith founded on a knowledge of the Jewish heritage that Shearith Israel has maintained itself in an unbroken continuity spanning three centuries. Members of the congregation have been privileged to give much to their country as citizens, but their Hebraic culture rooted in the Bible and transmitted by the synagogue has constituted their most distinctive contribution towards enriching the spirit of America and undergirding its moral purpose.

VII. Centrality of the Synagogue



It is a tree of life for those who cling

unto it. Happy are they who uphold it.

PROVERBS 3:18

FOR ALMOST A CENTURY AND THREE QUARTERS, Shearith Israel Synagogue was for New York Jewry the sole nucleating focus of organized Jewish life. During all that period, in addition to its primary function of holding religious services, the synagogue consistently endeavored to serve its congregants in as many aspects of Jewish life as possible. Purposively it made itself the unifying center around which Jews could gather.

In Colonial New York, many influences and forces were at work tending to weaken Jewish affiliation. Jews were very few, and the eighteenth century saw but slow growth in their numbers. From 1654 until the end of the eighteenth century the congregation was remote from the intensive and creative centers of Jewish life and learning in Europe. During virtually all the first century of its life the New York Jewish community was isolated as the sole Jewish group in all North America, with the exception of the small body of Jews who came to Newport, Rhode Island, beginning with 1658. The Jewish community there did not become truly established until the middle of the

eighteenth century, at about the same period as in a place such as Philadelphia the settlement of individual Jews began to develop into a congregation. There were no Jewish groups in neighboring Long Island, Westchester, or New Jersey. Therefore for its first century New York Jewry was to all intents and purposes isolated in North America, and for three quarters of its second century it was still physically distant from other Jewish communities. It had to be completely self-sufficient in its Jewish *élan vital.*

There was much free social mixing between Jews and their Christian neighbors. In America there was no ghetto and no restrictive segregation such as was nearly everywhere imposed on Jews in Europe. The unifying English language very rapidly displaced the segregatory mother tongues which most immigrants brought with them. Within the synagogue itself, unlike conditions in the parent community of Amsterdam or London, there was no rabbinate and therefore no authoritarian hierarchy to exercise a centralizing influence. Because of this lack of rabbinic leadership, Jewish education and culture tended to be thinly spread. Finally, the discouragingly limited marital choice within a community so small in numbers, many of whom were already related by marriage, too often favored a relatively large proportion of mixed marriage and intermarriage which nearly always led outside of the Jewish fold.[1]

Despite these disrupting influences and the many losses they caused, the congregation managed to maintain itself, and even grew. One factor which contributed materially to the preservation of the community in those days was its adherence to the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply." This had been a characteristic of the Jewish people since the days when Pharaoh in Egypt feared the multiplying of his Hebrew population. In the days of the ancient Greeks, the philosopher Hecataeus cried out in scandalized amazement that Moses obliged the Jews to raise up all their children and therefore the Jewish nation was always rich in children. The cultured Roman writer Tacitus similarly expressed his astonishment that the Jews regarded it as a crime to kill a single child that was born. Not celibacy but the family, was regarded as the ideal moral state, with the wife a fruitful vine and the children like olive plants around the family table. In Colonial days and in the early days of the nineteenth century, families in the congregation with half a dozen children were not uncommon, and the figure rose to heights such as the twenty-one children borne by Rebecca, daughter of Hazzan Machado, to Jonas Phillips, or the equal number of children borne by Zipporah, daughter of Hayman Levy, to

Benjamin Mendes Seixas. With such families, a loyal remnant was sufficient to maintain the congregation of "the remnant of Israel."

It is true that the rate of mortality was high. New York was still a town of unkempt streets, dust or mud, and with pigs and other animals roaming about. Conditions of public health were wretchedly poor. There were no sewers, and the contents of the cesspits were dumped into the river. Frequent virulent epidemics of yellow fever, smallpox, and other diseases now virtually unknown in the city, added to the high rate of mortality, especially among children. Even as late as 1874, Zipporah Phillips Benjamin, widow of Lewis Benjamin, lost five children from diphtheria in nine days. Virtually no one came into her house for the funerals, the friends, however poignant their sympathy, remaining outside in the street.

Another potent cause of the community's survival from the very beginning, even in 1654, was the accession of numbers through immigration from overseas. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this was but a trickle, but it did much to offset the loss from the high rate of mortality and from those leaving the Jewish fold. It also reduced inbreeding. Around the middle of the eighteenth century other Jewish communities began to spring up in Savannah, Newport, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Montreal. Then, notwithstanding distance and difficulties of travel, personal relations were maintained with individuals in those growing new communities. New York Jews developed not only business relations but also family kinship with those towns. Isolation which had cramped the New York Jewish community before that time, began to break down.

The centrifugal tendency which drew individuals away from the city to Westchester, Long Island, and other regions began very early notwithstanding that these virtual suburbs of today were then accessible only with considerable difficulty. The congregation made several attempts to stem this drain on its human resources. In 1737 it adopted the following resolution:

In the Name of our bless'd God. Amen. Where'as we Abraham Isaac's Parnas presedente & Daniel Gomez Ajunto, for this present year, having consulted the whole body of our Congregation, find we are not able to defray the charge of the Congregation without the help & assistance of our brethren dwelling in the Country, and do by the Consent of the majority of this K: K:, order that every family or private person, that carries on trade in the Country, & that is in circumstances shall pay yearly for the use of this K: K: to the Parnas for the time being the Sum of forty Shillings, if his Publick offerings do's not amount to that Sum, which if less the

whole shall be included in said forty Shillings, & those that offers more than sd Sum shall not be charged with said article of forty Shillings aforesaid.

And it is further resolv'd and agread upon that in case any of the above persons that are deficient in their offerings should refuse to pay or cause to be paid the above Sum of forty Shillings when demanded by the Parnas for the time being, such person or persons shall be excluded of being a member of this Congregation, and shall receive no benefit nor Mitzvah from this congregation untill he pays the above Sum if he be in circumstances to pay the same. THIS to take its BEGINNING or to comence the first day of Tisrey anno mundi 5498 & to continue in force.

THIS WE SIGN the tenth day of *Menahem* 5497 [August 7, 1737] New york.
K : K : Sherit Israel

ABRM ISAACKS Parnos
DANLL GOMEZ adjunto [2]

Twenty years later, further force was added to this coercive ruling, and the following resolution was read in synagogue on the holy day of Yom Kippur. This called for loyal adherence to Jewish religious tradition from all members of the congregation in suburban districts.

The Parnasim & Elders having received undouted Testimony That severall of our Bretheren, that reside in the Country have and do dayly violate the principles of our holy religion, such as Trading on the Sabath, Eating of forbidden Meats & other Henious Crimes, and as our Holy law injoins us to reprove one Another agreeable to the Commandments in Liviticus *Hocheach tocheeach et ameetecha* thou shalt surely reprove thy Neighbour and not suffer sin upon him, the consideration of this Divine Precept has Induced the Parnasim & Elders to come to the following resolution in order to check the above mentioned growing evil & as our *Hachamim* observe *Ein onshin ela mazhiro* That is no one is to be Punished unless First admonished, therefor whosoever for the future continues to act contrary to our Holy Law by breacking any of the principles command will not be deem'd a member of our Congregation, have none of the Mitzote of the Sinagoge Confered on him & when Dead will not be buried according to the manner of our brethren. But like Nehemiah who treated those of old that transgressed In the same manner he ordered the gates to be shut against Them, so will the Gates of our Community be shut intirely Against such offenders, but those that repent & obey the precepts of the Almighty, We beseech the Divine goodness to open to them the Gates of Mercy, & all their Enterprizes be attended with the Blessing of Haven. *Vechol hashomeia' yabo eilav berachah.* (May blessing descend on all who hearken.) [3]

This earnest expression of determined moral injunction proved to be gratifyingly effective. Six months later the following declaration was read in synagogue:

The Almighty directs the Prophet Isaiah to call upon the Sinners of Israel with this Encouragement Capr. 44th & Verse 22 *Machiti cha'ab pesha'echa veche'anan chato-*

techa shuba elai ki gealticha I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions & as cloud thy sins, return unto me.

The Prophet Jeremiah also exhorts, but in much stronger terms Chaptr 3 Ver 22d *Shubu banim shobabim erpa meshubotechem* Return ye Backsliding and I will heal thy Backslidings.

Both these Texts prove that sinners are not cast off & that our Good God offers his assistance to erring minds and as the divine Attributes are plac'd before us for our immitation as far as human Nature permitts It is therefore an indispensable duty in the heads of our Community to ivite & cherish our week Bretherine. The above Declaration of the Prophets has induced the Parnasim and Ealders to reconsider the admonition read last Kippur and flatter themselves their pious intentions has in some measure succeeded, that they may now declare with the Prophet Isaiah Chapr 26 Ver 2d *Pitchu she'arim veyabo goi shomer emunim* Open the Gates that the Righteous Nations which keepeth truth may enter.

Therefor whsoever may thinck that they are qualified, but wrongfully debard being called to Sepher or any other Mitzote in Sinagogue, they are requested of themselves or their Friends for them to acquaint the Ruling Parnaz of the same, that none who are worthy may be unjustly neglected or deprived Thereof. The Parnasim like faitful Sheeperds call into the fold the wandring sheep, leaving the ways of men to the Righteous God, not doubting but every member of this Community is convinced the Parnasim & Elders had anything else in view in the last exhortation but the establishing & supporting our holy religion, in which endeavour they hope every member exerts his best abilities thereby to meritt the blessing of this life & after a fulness of days, injoys the reward of Everlasting happiness.—Amen.[4]

Congregational pressure could also be brought to bear on trouble makers. During the whole of the eighteenth century disturbing individuals were faced with loss of all rights in the congregation unless they expressed their regret, or paid a fine. One particularly obstreperous member "for the disturbance he raised in and about the Synagogue" was fined twenty shillings. This added so much fuel to his belligerency that three weeks later

It was Resolv'd unanimously that XX for the frequent disturbances he has occasioned in the Sinagogue & and scandalous things he has reported of us about the city, that for his sd: offences he be no more look'd upon or deemed a member of our Holy Congregation, and that it is the request of the above sd elders & Parnasim, that no member communicate or converse with the above sd XX for whosoever acts to the contrary will be deem'd as the above sd XX Therefore the publication of this is ordered to be made on the Sabath following. & then every three months 'till such time he has given proper satisfaction to the congregation

It was also Resolv'd that the charge that shall attend the deffending the Suit commenced at the Suit of the King by the above sd: XX be born by the Congregation.

We do not know what was his response at the time to this drastic decision, but somewhat more than four years later

XX appeared & made proper submission for the Injuries done the Congregation, promised to do so no more, paid Twenty Pounds fine & gave a bond . . . to deliver up a certain book in his possession wrote against our Society, in consideration of same is again admitted to be a member of this Kaal. Salom hal Israel.[5]

The fact that until 1825 there was but one synagogue as the sole center of every aspect of Jewish life in New York was a powerful force in drawing to and holding within the Jewish fold everyone coming to the city who wished to remain a Jew, whatever may have been his background, and irrespective of Sephardi or Ashkenazi provenience. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the synagogue in New York held a virtual monopoly of many aspects of Jewish religious life besides the holding of public religious services. This helped it potently in holding individuals within the Jewish community. From birth to death the Jew in the city, and not infrequently the Jew living even far beyond its suburban area, had to turn to the synagogue for various forms of Jewish service. Until almost the close of the first third of the nineteenth century it was Shearith Israel alone which provided and controlled the supply of ritually permitted food for New York Jewry.

The congregation was the only source through which the Jew could obtain his unleavened bread for Passover. It would appear that at times the synagogue also undertook to provide some other needful Passover supplies besides matzoth. In 1738–39 an item of twelve shillings and sevenpence appears on the congregational accounts for haroseth, the confection made of apples, almonds, raisins, wine, and other fruits, used to mitigate the sharpness of the horseradish partaken of at the Passover eve ceremonial table. In the sister congregation in London, haroseth was supplied by the congregation for those who needed it from the earliest days until as late as 1939.[6] The preparation of matzoth was an annually recurrent congregational obligation which had to be scrupulously organized. The congregational administration would make an estimate of the total amount of matzoth required in that year for sale to individual families and for free distribution to synagogue officials and the poor. In the eighteenth century Shearith Israel usually had its own oven for baking unleavened bread for Passover. The contract for baking in this special oven was then given out to some Christian baker, but with the strict stipulation that the baking was to be done only under the supervision of the shammash. In 1825, the matzoth were baked in a patented new type of oven which eliminated the use of the shingle boards that had at times raised a question as to whether or not the matzoth baked in the old ovens were completely free from leaven.[7] As late as the middle

of the nineteenth century when the congregational monopoly of supplying matzoth had been outlived a committee consisting of the Jewishly learned layman Israel Baer Kursheedt, Mr. Lyons, and Benjamin Nathan, president of the congregation, was appointed to superintend the baking of matzoth and see that it was done in full accord with the requirements of Jewish religious tradition. In 1858 Shearith Israel joined with eleven other congregations in an attempt to regulate the distribution of matzoth and Passover relief. The chairman of the committee which undertook this difficult task was Asher Kursheedt.[8] Until late in the nineteenth century matzoth were distributed from the synagogue free to the poor. In 1874, 322 families received their free matzoth from the synagogue schoolroom. The crowd on 19th Street was described as "terrific."

Until 1813 the provision and control of kasher meat was a responsibility which the synagogue bore alone not for one week as with the food for Passover but throughout the whole year. From time to time individual men in the community learned the practice of ritual slaughtering in order to insure a supply of meat for their family when living in their country homes. But otherwise the Jews of the city were dependent on the synagogue for their kasher meat.[9] In 1660, in Nieuw Amsterdam, Asser Levy and Moses de Lucena were sworn in by the city as butchers but were exempted from having to slaughter hogs. In 1665 Asser Levy was sworn in again as a slaughterer by the British administration of the city. In 1683 Symon and David Valentine were given official recognition by the city as butchers. When admitted as freemen, Joseph Isaacs in 1698, and in 1713 Valentine Campanal, who was later the congregational shammash, were described as butchers. In 1728 when the extant congregational records begin, the elderly Benjamin Elias was the pensioned shohet and bodek (slaughterer and ritual examiner) of the community, and Samuel Myers Cohen was the congregation's functionary who was then carrying out those duties. In the middle of the eighteenth century there was active exporting of kasher beef from New York to Jamaica, B.W.I., and Curaçao. On one occasion it was resolved that since there was

> . . . complaint being made to the Parnasim and Elders of this K.K. that the Congregation is often left without Beef and fatt for the use of their families occasion'd by the great Exportation thereof and therefore in order to remedy the same for the future and that the Kaal may be fully supply'd it is agreed by the Parnassim and Elders aforesaid that whoever takes any beef or fatt on any fryday or Hereb Yomtob [eve of a festival] for Exportation or Sale shall be subject to a fine of Forty Shillgs for every such offence.[10]

In the post-Revolutionary period there was repeated difficulty in finding a man to fill the position of shohet-bodek for the community. Among the qualifications for the position were unquestioned piety, precise knowledge of the very numerous regulations of shehitah which Jewish law has codified, manual dexterity, skill, readiness to live under the eyes of zealously scrupulous congregants always on the watch for the slightest deviation from standards, and ability to handle cattle and deal with butchers and with trustees, all this together with the ability to care for one's family on an uncertain but always very modest income. Jacob Hart, the congregational shohet in the years before the Revolution, had to wait until the summer of 1789 to be paid the £4.3.4 due him for services as shohet "previous to the late war." [11]

A. A. Van Ottingen served as shohet until 1790, when he offered his resignation. Benjamin Jacobs was then sent to Philadelphia at the expense of the congregation for the more competent authorities there to examine him as to his fitness for the position. They reported that he was not qualified because of want of practice. Van Ottingen temporarily continued to keep the congregation supplied with kasher meat, while Michael Gratz and three former New Yorkers at that time living in Philadelphia, Manuel Josephson, Jonas Phillips, and Hazzan Jacob Cohen, were asked to help Benjamin Jacobs perfect himself as a shohet. Despite this imposing phalanx of instructors he did not reach the desired optimum standard though he did show improvement and he was elected. In the summer of 1794 the congregation would not increase his salary. Thereupon he offered his resignation, which was accepted. At the end of 1795 he applied once more for the position as shohet, but when he was examined by Hazzan Seixas, Jacob Hart, Henry Daniel, and Alexander Harris, this committee found him not sufficiently qualified to fill the post satisfactorily.[12]

In the emergency, a member of the congregation, Henry Daniel, stepped in to the position so that the community should not be left without any kasher meat. After less than a month Daniel found that he could not continue because service as shohet meant neglect of his business. At that juncture, at the end of January, 1796, another member of the congregation, Alexander Harris, agreed to act temporarily until a permanent shohet could be found. The congregation turned once more to Philadelphia for help, with the result that Mark Solomons came from that community early in February and was unanimously elected to fill the position. He served the congregation from 1796 to the end of 1803, when he went to Charleston where he remained until 1814.

The only troubles which the congregation had had with Solomons had been minor. When complaints came in that the lead seals which he was attaching to the kasher meat were too small, his reply was that he had to make the seals small because of the small amount of money allowed him for lead. The congregation effectively met that situation by granting him a larger allowance for lead. But with his successor, Jacob Abrahams, who was elected at the end of 1803, major troubles developed which eventuated in the complete breakdown of the congregation's monopolistic control of the supply of kasher meat for the city.[13]

Before that happened there occurred an unusual incident with one of the non-Jewish butchers. One Caleb Vandenberg, seeing no obvious outward difference between kasher and non-kasher mutton and beef, was found to be putting a kasher lead seal on meats that were not kasher. When called to account he claimed that he did this as a joke. The congregation immediately submitted a memorial to the mayor, De Witt Clinton, and the corporation of the city asking for protection "in their religious rites, secured to them by the constitution of the United States, as well as of this State."

The Market Committee gave serious consideration to the memorial submitted by the congregation and decided that

> . . . as we do not see any good cause why this Board ought not to protect this religious people in their religious Rights when not inconsistent with the Public Rights, We therefore are of opinion that Caleb Vandenberg be suspended of his License as a Butcher.[14]

The city acted promptly on this finding and suspended Vandenberg. He at once expressed his contrition and asked Shearith Israel to help him regain his license. The response of the congregation was without hesitation to ask the city authorities that Caleb Vandenberg be restored as a butcher, as he had a large family to support and before his dereliction he had borne a very fair character.[15]

With the shohet Jacob Abrahams apparently all went well at first. A charge of irregularity was brought against him at the end of his first year's work, but he was completely exonerated. Three months thereafter, Gershom Mendes Seixas and Jacob Hart, Sr. examined him and recorded their approval of his work. Six years later, in March, 1811, new complaints were heard that he did not carry out his duties as required, all of which he denied as unfounded and unjust. Four months after that, two of the leading members of the congrega-

tion, Jacob Hart and Naphtali Phillips, brought charges that he did not lay tephillin, say prayers, or live kasher, nor, they charged, did he wash or say grace either before or after a meal. No less than fifty-eight congregants gathered to hear and pass judgment on these accusations, and by a large majority Abrahams was upheld. Two weeks later, on November 10, he was reelected as shohet by the triumphant vote of thirty-seven to one.[16]

Those who strongly disapproved of Jacob Abrahams must have stayed away from that meeting, for very rapidly there came into the open a sharp division of opinion which threatened to become a dangerous rift in Shearith Israel. On the one side were included the officers and trustees; on the side of Abrahams were leaders in the congregation such as Sampson Simson, Harmon Hendricks, Bernard Hart, and Seixas Nathan. A year later, Jacob Abrahams agreed to serve as shohet even if the number of days on which he would work would be increased without any increase of his salary. The electors accepted him on those terms by an approving vote of twenty-six. Eighteen votes cast in opposition to him were in favor of the election of the former shohet of the congregation, Mark Solomons, who was then in Charleston. The situation was becoming tense. Some days later Abrahams was in disagreement with congregational authorities, and on January 25, 1813, his contract was brought to an end. Confident that with his personal supporters behind him he could earn a living as shohet even if he were not the sole and the officially recognized shohet of the one congregation in the city, he promptly set himself up in independent practice as a ritual slaughterer.[17]

This was a fundamental challenge to the official authority of the congregation in New York City in its exclusive control of the supply of kasher meat. If Abrahams were permitted to function independently, others could do likewise, and perchance an irresponsible individual might set himself up publicly as a shohet without any Jewish ecclesiastical supervision. The congregation therefore submitted to the city authorities the following earnest memorial:

> To the Mayor, Alderman and Commonalty, of the city of New York.
> The Memorial of Benjamin S. Judah and Isaac Gomez Junior Respectfully Showeth.
> That by a resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel in the city of New York a certified copy of which is hereunto annexed. Your Memorialists have been appointed a committee of respectfully representing to your honors that by the Jewish Laws it is not lawfull for any Jew to eat of the flesh of any Beaves, Calves, or Sheep unless they were killed inspected and Sealed by certain persons called Shohets, duly authorized by the Mahamad, or Trustees of the Syna-

gogue, and by them pronounced to be sound. That it has ever been customary for all societies of Israelites to employ one or more Shohets for the purpose of killing, inspecting, and sealing meats before they are exposed for sale in the public Markets. That from the first establishment of the Synagogue in this city a Shohet has been employed by the Mahamad, or Trustees of the same, who have allowed him a compensation for his services which has been remunerated to the society by the Butchers who have been employed by the society in consideration of receiving their custom.

Your Memorialists would further represent to your honors, that in violation of the ancient custom and wholesome regulations of the said society, certain persons who are not employed by the Trustees of the Congregation aforesaid, have killed and sealed Meat, and that the same has been exposed for sale in the public Markets by Butchers without the authority of the society aforesaid for so doing.

Your Memorialists therefore beg leave to solicit the aid of your honors in the premises, and to request that you will pass an Ordinance prohibiting under such penalties as you may deem proper, the exposing for sale in the public Markets, of any Meats, sealed after the custom of their society, unless the same has been killed, and sealed by the Shohet employed by the said Trustees and exposed to sale by such Butchers as may be designated by the Trustees aforesaid.

And your Memorialists as in duty bound will ever pray.

New York 29th January, 1813

Signed BENJAMIN S. JUDAH
ISAAC GOMEZ JR.[18]

Unhesitatingly the city fathers responded to this earnest plea with

An Ordinance to prevent impositions in the sale of Jews Meat in the public Markets passed the 1st of February, 1813.

Be it Ordained by the Mayor, Alderman and Commonalty of the city of New York in Common Council convened. That no Butcher or other person shall hereafter expose for sale in the public Markets any Meats *sealed* as Jews Meat who shall not be engaged for that purpose by the Trustees of the congregation of Shearith Israel, and unless the Meat has been sealed by a person employed by the Trustees of said Congregation for that purpose called a SHOHETE, under the penalty of twenty five dollars for each offence.

A TRUE COPY

Signed I. MORTON
C. C. C.[19]

But that was not the last word on the issue. The congregational minutes sorrowfully and indignantly record that

Whereas at the last Session of the Common Council a law was passed prohibiting the sale of sealed Meat, since which a certain Member of this congregation being instigated by persons of the same disposition had the publication of said law suspended and intend praying for the repeal of the same, and are endeavoring to obtain the signatures of members of this congregation under the imposing Idea that it is an infringement on the rights of the people.

Therefore; Resolved by the Trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel that they deem such opposition as wicked and irreligious, and only tending to destroy the respectability of the Congregation, of which they preside over.

On Motion of Solomon Seixas and seconded by Haym M. Salomon, That Messieurs Benjamin S. Judah and Isaac Gomez, Junior, the committee appointed at the last meeting be directed to continue to use their endeavours to repel the opposers and to take such lawfull means to have the law confirmed by the Corporation as they and the Attorney of this Board shall deem proper.

The division in the congregation was becoming threateningly acute. On the one side there were those who resolutely felt that they were struggling to maintain a centralized, organized, authoritative, responsible, religious control of the supply of kasher meat for New York's Jewish community. On the other side were those who equally gravely felt that the city's ordinance was "an encroachment on our religious rites and a restriction of those general privileges to which we are entitled," and who therefore "asked it to be immediately abolished and expunged from the minutes." At a meeting of the Common Council of the city held on February 8, this appeal was brought up in a memorial signed by such leading congregants as Sampson Simson, Harmon Hendricks, Moses L. Moses, Jacob Levy, Jr., Bernard Hart, Aaron Levy, Gompert S. Gomperts, and Seixas Nathan, members of the Congregation Shearith Israel who disagreed with the official stand taken by the trustees of the congregation. Faced by this fundamental and irreconcilable difference of opinion among the Jews themselves, the members of the Common Council split with an even vote of nine against nine. The vote of the presiding officer decided the issue, and the Common Council repealed the ordinance it had passed at the preceding meeting.[20]

Because of the importance of the public principles underlying this whole controversy, there are here given the following excerpts from the lengthy record set down by the trustees of the congregation.

The Committee appointed to attend the Chamber of the Common Council in this city on Monday the 8th Instant made the following report.

Your committee according to instructions attended at the Chamber of the Corporation of the City of New York on Monday the 8th Instant; and much to the regret of all good Jews who have the welfare and prosperity of the finances and good management of our religious Society at heart. A petition . . . was signed by some of our Electors who are unfortunately misguided in advocating the cause of Jacob Abrahams late Shohet; the said Petition appeared to have been accompanied by Oral information of an unfortunate Schism in our society; and much

inflated with a considerable degree of misrepresentation as to our real view. . . . Said Petition and representation produced considerable debates and turned the question to one point, that the Corporation of the city would not interfere in our controversy and therefore the Ordinance was lost and a question of commitment by a division of votes equal in favor of your committee and against them, but decided by the casting vote of the Recorder who presided. . . . The city Corporation have been deceived as to the pure motives of the Trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel in requesting the passage of the Ordinance repealed; the more so as an expression in debate by a Member of the city Board, rather derogatory, tho' he apologized in his explanation but not altogether satisfactory to your Committee.

Newyork February 14th; 1813

(Signed) BENJAMIN S. JUDAH
ISAAC GOMEZ JUNR. } Committee

On Motion of Mr. Benjn S. Judah and seconded by Mr. Haym Salomon. That the following Remonstrance be adopted and presented to the Common Council of this city signed by our clerk in his official Capacity. To The Mayor, Alderman, and Commonalty of the City of Newyork in Common Council convened.

The Trustees of the Congregation of Sheerith Israel beg leave respectfully to represent to your honorable Body that they have learnt with much regret that it has been imputed to them at your honorable Board, that they had imposed upon your honors by making the representations which were contained in a Memorial which they caused to be presented praying for an Ordinance to regulate the sale of Jews meat.

This charge when made against a religious society is of so serious a nature that the Trustees conceive that they would be lost not only to all sense of what they owe to their own characters, but to the character of the Society which they represent were they not to repel it. . . . The Ordinance which they prayed for, was one which would add the sanction of your honorable Body to the immemorial usages of the Jews in this city; a usage necessary to protect them from impositions and one which at the same time enabled them to meet the expenses attending it.

The Trustees have been informed that . . . it was intended that this refutation infringed upon the rights of conscience of certain individuals. In answer to this the Trustees, state that by the regulations of the Jews there may be and usually are a number of Shohets, that it is the right of the members of the Congregation to employ which of them they may think proper, that the individuals who complain of their rights being infringed upon, have employed another Shohet his meat is exposed for sale with certain marks thereon. How then the rights of these gentlemen are infringed upon your Memorialist cannot imagine. The effect of the Ordinance simply is, that no person should make use of a Seal in the manner that the Shohet of the Trustees have usually done. It is therefore merely to protect the Seal and manner of Sealing of the Trustees, of the constitutional guardian of the society, those to whom the Congregation generally look up to for direction in their religious-customs. Far be from the Trustees to impose shackles upon any man's conscience, and with what propriety it can be alledged by those who presented the Remon-

strance that their rights of conscience is infringed, when it appears from their own practice that they have found a remedy for every possible inconvenience to them, which would flow from the Ordinance, the Trustees leave it to your honorable Body to decide. . . .

The Mass of the Congregation . . . look up to the Trustees for direction in all their religious concerns. They purchase meat sealed in a certain manner because it is so sealed by the Shohet of the Congregation, who is contracted with by the Trustees. They do not conceive it proper to purchase any other. And to them it is matter of serious importance. The Seal which has ever designated the Meat which is lawful for them to eat should be preserved from violation. If the persons opposed to the Shohet employed by the Trustees do not choose to eat of the Meat, let them employ a Shohet of their own. The Trustees cannot but consider it as a grievance that the Seal of the Society cannot be preserved from violation, and that they cannot be protected in the exercise of a right which certainly is interesting to their consciences and which they were elected to Superintend.

It is further alleged as the Trustees have been informed that there are parties in the Congregation upon this subject; to this they would reply, that the Board of Trustees unanimously concurred in the resolution for presenting the Memorial laid before your honors. That if there is any diversity of sentiment respecting the propriety of regulating the Shohet in the manner contemplated by the Ordinance that it is the first time that such a difference has existed since the establishment of the Congregation as the Trustees are informed by the most ancient Members of it.

The Trustees have further learnt with some surprise that the Character of the temporary Shohet employed by the Trustees became subject of discussion at your honorable Board. Upon the subject they would remark, that the suitableness of the personage to fill the office of Shohet is to be decided by a tribunal of Bethdin of Shohetim which in English is the house of Judgement of Shohets; that at the head of that Board is the Minister of the Congregation, and that it was decided by them the personage employed was qualified for that office. . . .

The Trustees assure your honors that a Certificate obtained from so highly respectable tribunal is sufficient to confute any disqualifying charge that may be brought against any individual obtaining it.

By Order of the Board of Trustees

M. GOMEZ
Clerk

New York 14th Feby 1813

With this there virtually comes to an end the story of Shearith Israel's control of the supply of kasher meat for the Jewish community of New York. It is true that in 1814 Mark Solomons returned from Charleston and resumed his position as the congregational shohet. At first he had grave financial difficulties because of the competing activity of Jacob Abrahams, but he held his position until 1828 when he resigned because of "very ill state of health." By that time the unique congregational control had become impractical also for another reason. In 1825 it was recognized that

the increased number of our Bretheren, and also the probability of many more coming to reside in this city, greatly increased the labour of the Shohet, and from the scattered situation of the butchers, render it very problematical whether one Shohet will be sufficient for this Kahal.[21]

When in 1828 Mark Solomons retired from active service, the congregation appointed Joseph Samuel to take his place. Samuel encountered difficulties because the members of the new congregation Bnai Jeshurun preferred dealing with Marcus Van Gelderen, whom they knew from his former service in Congregation Shearith Israel. Samuel served for four years until 1832, then he gave up his position after he was violently attacked in the dark city streets one night on his return from work. He went back to Europe and was succeeded by Gustavus Poznanski who served as Shearith Israel's shohet, shofar blower, and occasional hazzan, until he went to Charleston to become its religious leader and eventually the proponent of religious reform in its synagogue.

The constitutional paragraph making provision for the annual election of a shohet was never rescinded, so that to this day Congregation Shearith Israel annually elects a shohet. The provision of kasher food in the metropolis has now become a large scale commercial undertaking that is supervised in part by individual rabbis, and in part by organized religious bodies. In addition, the state law comes down heavily on any misrepresentation in selling as kasher any food which is not kasher. But for a century and three quarters, Shearith Israel was the sole and exclusive instrument for assuring the provision of kasher food in New York, a function which greatly enhanced its authority and cohesive influence.

The Levitical dietary laws, a Judaizing influence permeating the home, have been a religious discipline for Jews since Biblical days. An infraction of these laws even by an individual might at times be regarded as a serious communal situation, and one which called for action by the congregation. Some cases are reported in the eighteenth century in which an individual congregant was haled before the board of trustees on a charge that his or her house had offended against the Jewish dietary laws. In 1774 the complaint was made that "the widow Hetty Hays had bought out of the Markett a Quarter of Lamb, that was sealed, but not sherched." As she took boarders in her home, an earnest congregational hearing was held on the question of whether or not that piece of lamb was truly kasher. Samuel Kayser, a rabbi who was at the time in the city, and Isaac Marcus, who had been a shohet in Holland, were

called in as experts at the hearing. In the end it was agreed that there was not sufficient evidence to hold that the shohet had failed to examine the animal after the killing. But

> It was likewise agreed, with the aforesaid Rabby Samuel, and by his advice that Mrs. Hetty Hays be acquainted that, as the Quarter of Lamb in question was not Sherched, or at least there seems to be a doubt about the same, that according to our Holy Law, when there's any doubt it's to be looked on as Treffo, therefore that she do Cassarar, or properly Clense, all her Spoons, plates and all other her utensall, used in her House, otherwise to be look'd on a Treffo house.

When she complied with this order, her house was publicly declared to be kasher, and she could say as the woman of Shunem said to Elisha, "I dwell among my own people." [22]

Another hold which the synagogue had on Jews in the city and those scattered in a comparatively wide radius beyond the town was its control of the only ground consecrated for Jewish burial. We have seen how in 1757 Jews residing in country districts were threatened that if they continued "heinously" to violate Jewish religious law, they would not be deemed members of the congregation "and when Dead will not be buried according to the manner of our brethren." This was a specialized application of a general policy adopted five years earlier when the elders of the congregation went so far as to warn all those who consistently absented themselves from the synagogue that

> In order to discountenance all manner of discord & Division amongst the Members of this K.K. the Elders aforesd have unanimously agreed that on the demise of any person, that in his life time absented himself from the Sinagogue, or was no ways a benefactor to the Congregation, His Corps or the Corps of his wife or Children under thirteen years of age shall not be laid & Burried within the walls of our Burrying Ground without leave and Licence first had and obtain'd from the Elders for the time being, for wch purpose (whenever such case happens) the first Parnas, in his absence the Second Parnas, and in their absence the first Elder of this K. K. shall Imediatly summons such of the Elders as are in town who shall meet together & resolve by Majority of Voices, whether such Corps shall be Burried within or without the walls and upon what terms & conditions.[23]

In 1789 it was ruled that "if any Person shall withhold their proportion of the Expences for the Support of our Holy Religion & poor" for one year, that person would be excluded from the privileges of the congregation and no ground would "be broke in the burying place" until his assessments were paid.[24]

After 1825 other Jewish congregations began to organize themselves in the

city. Each of those congregations usually acquired its own burial ground. Non-congregational, communal, or commercial Jewish cemeteries did not come into being until considerably later. The desire to be gathered to one's fathers in the congregational graveyard is one reason why so few names of Jews are to be read on the tombstones in the older Christian graveyards of the city.

In early days it was the synagogue alone which had the ritual bath to which the Jewish woman could go. An occasional centripetal relation which the synagogue had with Jews far and wide around New York arose from the fact that it was usually called upon to provide the official qualified to carry out the religiously sanctified ritual of circumcision. Abraham I. Abrahams, who in the latter half of the eighteenth century served the congregation as its mohel, ribbi, and occasional hazzan, conducted this ritual not only in New York City, but also in such places as Jamaica and South Haven, Long Island; Spottswood, New Jersey; Bedford, New York; Norwalk, Connecticut; Newport and Tiverton, Rhode Island; and Bedford, Massachusetts; while Gershom Mendes Seixas traveled as far afield as Montreal, Three Rivers, and Berthieville in Canada for the same purpose.[25]

Mixed marriage was the condition which most penetratingly weakened the congregation in its earlier days. The records show that a Jewish girl marrying a Christian usually abandoned Judaism. In the reverse case, not a few modern Ruths came to join the Jewish community. In the hope of checking intermarriage, as a rule the congregation set up a rigid policy of refusing to cooperate in any way in a conversion to Judaism. For nearly two centuries there was no rabbinic authority or beth din (rabbinic court) available in the New York community to train and accept prospective converts. At the beginning of 1784, Hayman Levy as parnas of the congregation received the following petition from Benjamin I. Jacobs:

> Gentlemen, the petitioner hereof Benjamin Jacobs, Being upon the point of marriage, and the Lady, Whom he is about to espouse, Being desirous to live as a Jewess; Joins with him in this petition, and Begs that she may be married according to the manners and customs of the Jews, as it is her desire, to live in the strict observance of all our Laws and customs, which if granted, will greatly oblige, both her and the Bearer, who waits at Mr. cohens, to answer any questions, which the gentlemen, may think fit to ask him.

The congregational minutes record that

> At a Meeting of the Parnass & Assistants, a petition was presented by Mr. Benjn I. Jacobs, to admit his being married to a Woman not belonging to our society, with

intent to make her a Proselite, which Petition is refused in consequence of a Law to the contrary, dated the 6th day of Nisan 5523 [March 20, 1763].

Nevertheless, Benjamin Jacobs went ahead and married, but it seems that the couple did not live happily ever after. Two years later, Benjamin Jacobs advertised that his wife Elizabeth had eloped and had behaved in a very unseemly manner. Therefore he gave notice that he would not be responsible for any debts that she might contract. But the woman had the last word, for she replied with an advertisement of her own in which she scornfully stated that she had been compelled to leave him because of his cruel treatment of her, and anyone who knew Benjamin Jacobs would not trust him with a shilling.[26]

In 1788, a situation of a different character was presented to the trustees by a letter addressed to them by one James Foster. He had come to New York some two months before in order to be converted to Judaism. Dating his letter June 5, 5548, he gave recognition to both Jewish and secular calendars.

Genm.
I came into this City 19th of last March with a desire to take hold of Gods holy Covenant but as it is not thought expedient to grant me my desire at this place, I do earnestly request you in the Name of the God of Israel to assist me in my pious design by giveing me Such letters of Recomendation as Shall Serve to introduce me to an AQuaintence with the Jews in Amsterdam where I hope to get my deseire in part fulfiled, give me leve to make use of Ruths Reply to Naomi intreat me not to leve thee or to Return from following after thee for whither thou goest I will go—and where thou lodgest I will lodge thy People Shall be my People and thy God my God where thou diest will I die and there will I be buried the Lord do So to me if aught but deth part thee and me I am with all due Respect your Sincer frend and intended Br

JAMES FOSTER

The trustees, while adhering to their policy adopted in 1763 of not making any proselytes, could not refuse this deferential and devout request.

Mr. James Foster had applied for letters of recommendation to Amsterdam, & the Members having made use of every argument to Dissuade him from going & to return to his family without Effect, Resolved that the Parnassim & Gabay write Letters Recommending him as a Moral Man who has behaved Extremely well since he has resided among us.[27]

Such has been the consistent policy of the congregation. When in 1835 a Mrs. Maisa Valentine decided to become a convert to Judaism, the trustees informed her

of a law prohibiting the interference on the part of the trustees or officers, or their participating in any manner in the ceremonies necessary to be performed under the circumstances of the case.[28]

The same answer had been given a few months earlier to the request of Gertrude Simonson that she become a Jewess. In this case, however, the impelling motive seems to have been matrimony. So Gertrude Simonson went elsewhere where fewer difficulties were raised, and she was soon converted. Then the question arose as to her marriage. Because of precedents, the hazzan was permitted to officiate at the marriage between the congregant and the converted Gertrude Simonson. However, this was not the last word on the question of proselytization at that time. Three months later the trustees reaffirmed their position with the emphatic resolution

> that in future no salary officer of this congregation, shall perform the marriage ceremony for any person who may hereafter become a proselyte to our religion, nor shall any such officer be accessory in any manner form or shape whatsoever in the making of any proselyte, under the penalty of One hundred dollars.[29]

Another aspect of the same general problem was grappled with in that year by an amendment to the congregational by-laws stating that

> Any person marrying contrary to our religious laws or renouncing Judaism shall not be considered an elector or member of this congregation.

In 1843 the trustees reaffirmed that

> the ceremonies usually performed at funerals in our burying grounds shall not be performed at the funeral of persons married contrary to our religious laws.[30]

In 1847 this question was warmly debated for half a year. At the end of three months, after much discussion it was

> RESOLVED that no seat in Our Holy place of Worship shall hereafter be leased to any person married contrary to Our Religious laws; and no person married Contrary to Our Religious laws shall be interred in any of the burial grounds belonging to this Congregation.

After another three months of hot congregational debate pro and con, a compromise was accepted under which "several parties married contrary to our religious laws who are at present seatholders" were excepted from this ruling.[31]

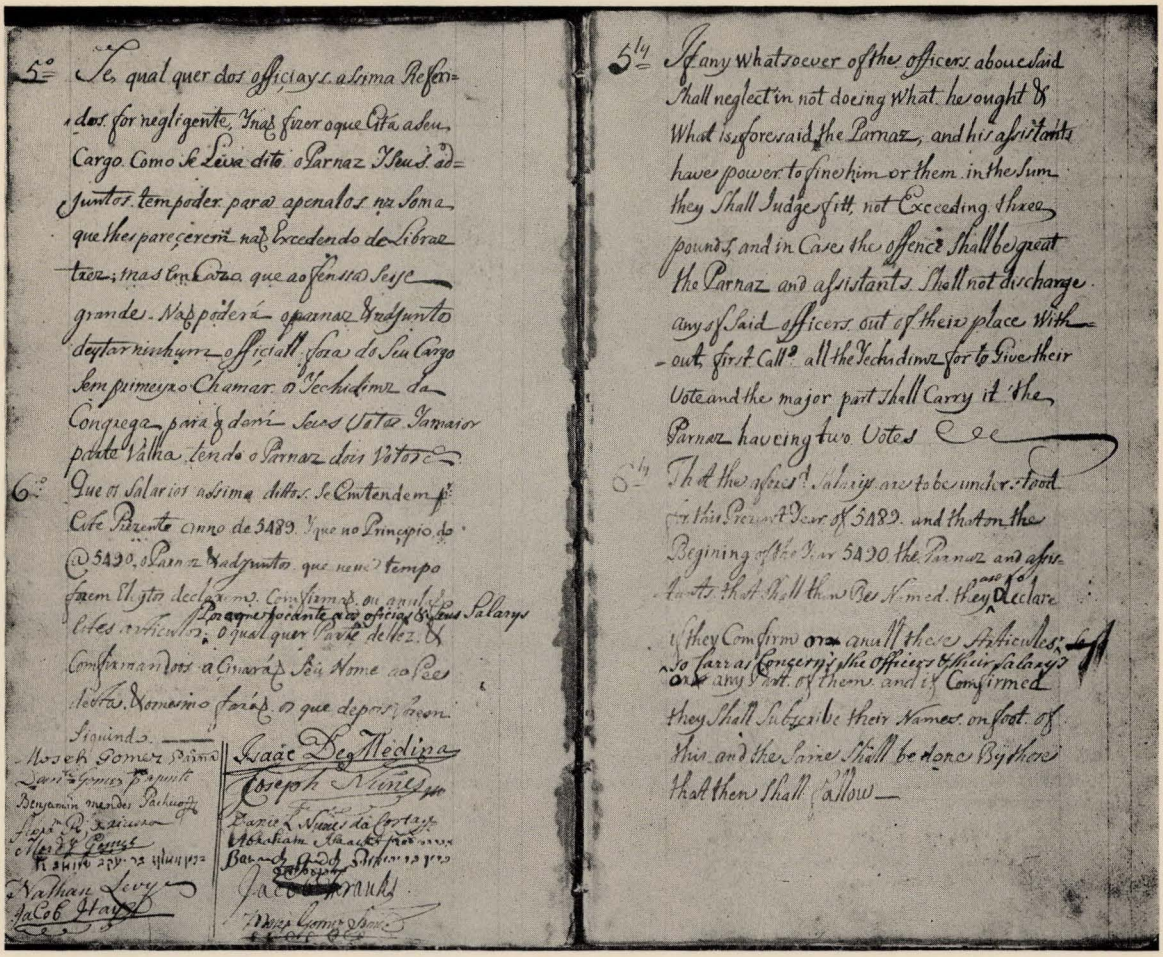
In the early days of the congregation, the city and state assumed very little indeed of the obligation of relief for the needy. No one could have foreseen that a day would come when the public authorities of government would give unemployment compensation, old age pensions, care in sickness, and other benefits of social security. In Nieuw Amsterdam and Colonial New York those in distress who had no family to support them and who did not wish to become beggars on the street would ordinarily have to turn for support to their

church or synagogue. This function of the synagogue was yet another of the cohering factors which helped hold Jews together, whether as givers or as receivers of charity.

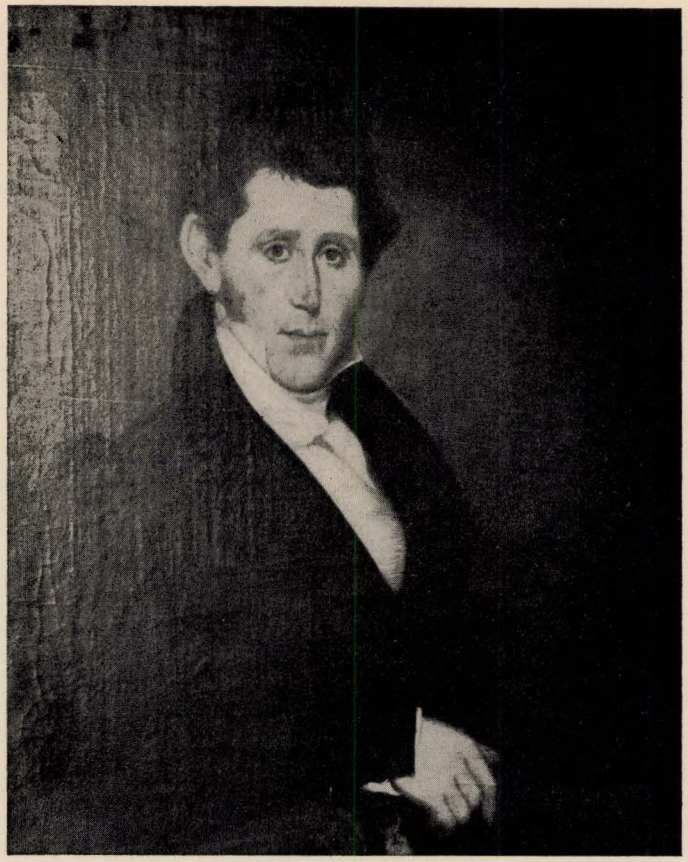
Still another and a potent force of cohesion was the fact that before the development of the public school system in the early part of the nineteenth century, the education of children was for the most part denominational. This compelled the synagogue to conduct its own school in the synagogue buildings, thus inuring the young from their most impressionable days to the idea of the centrality and essential need of the synagogue.

Intimate social contacts were a strong survival factor in the congregation counteracting the handicap of smallness of numbers in the early generations. Chaplain John Miller stated that in 1695 there were twenty Jewish families in New York. In 1728 the number in the community who made contributions towards the building of the synagogue was fifty-seven men and four women. In 1747 the number of electors assessed for a contribution towards the upkeep of the congregation was fifty-two.[32] In 1773 it was stated, "We have a congregation of Jews in the City of New York which consists of between thirty and forty families." [33] In 1794 Solomon Simson in his letter to the Jews of China stated that there were seventy-two Jewish families in the city. In 1806 the number was still only about three hundred. According to these figures, in the century between 1695 and 1794, the size of the community increased from twenty Jewish families to only seventy-two. In this small number of families who in their homes shared in a unifying distinctive Jewish way of life there was inevitably a nucleating tendency to hold together socially.

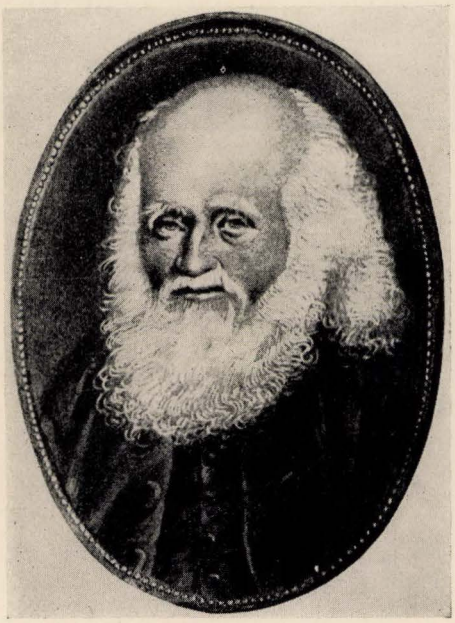
To the focal synagogue they would come for congregational meetings and occasions other than the statutory religious services. They would come together in happy social celebrations, such as those which expressed the gaiety and camaraderie of the Purim festival, or the congregational festivities on Simhath Torah associated with the Bridegroom of the Torah and the Bridegroom of the Beginning of the Torah. In the week of Succoth congregants would foregather socially in the congregational succah, and there would be much social visiting in the family harvest booths erected by congregants in the yard behind their homes. The unifying far-reaching ritual of the dietary laws which affected the home three times a day, and the thorough cleansing of the kitchen and of the whole house in the days before Passover, gave the Jews of the city an added sense of sharing in strongly characterizing interests. They would come to-



"Wholesome Rules and Restrictions" in Portuguese and English governing Shearith Israel were recommitted to writing in 1728, for future generations to honor, cherish, and obey



Shohet van Gelderen, 1798–1871,
Ulster County pioneer



Patriarchal Joseph Simson, 1686–1787

gether to express condolence at times of death, both at the funeral and at the prayers recited within the bereaved home in the following week. Indeed, in 1832, a list of all congregants was made out with their addresses in order that "the person employed to deliver Notices of Funerals may perform the duty so that no one may be neglected." [34] From the last decades of the eighteenth century, the meetings, balls, and other fund-raising functions of the various philanthropic and other societies organized in the congregation, all helped materially to foster a live sense of belonging to the Jewish community among individuals who otherwise might have become more or less passive or negative in their feeling of Jewish affiliation.

Two centuries ago these social relations were still largely inchoate and unorganized, but as time went on they gradually began to take form through societies organized within the congregation. During the nineteenth century these societies through which congregants came together socially usually had a philanthropic motivation and function. With the coming of the twentieth century, philanthropy became more and more communalized and professionalized. Furthermore, the stupendous physical growth of the city of New York set large distances between many of those who would have been neighbors in the small town of earlier days, and created innumerable clamorously competing interests. The earlier informality of social relations within the congregation gave way to organized forms.

In keeping with this modern trend, on November 30, 1919, the Shearith Israel League was born. This was in effect a reorganization of the earlier Junior League of the Sisterhood. The earlier group while primarily philanthropic in its aims had carried through an active and purposive program of social activities. The new organization stated as its purpose

> to arrange for literary and religious lectures and classes; to conduct social activities; to act as a clearing house of information among members of the Congregation Shearith Israel, and the societies connected with it; to establish and to maintain a central organization for the religious communal work of the lay members of the congregation; to aid in building up the membership of the Congregation; to have as an ultimate object the securing of a place for centralizing congregational activities.

So full a sheaf of congregational activities is all the more noteworthy when one recalls that the congregation had had no synagogue center building since 1833 when it bade farewell to its Mill Street Synagogue with its center building annex. With clear vision the League set as its ultimate object once more "the securing of a place for centralizing congregational activities," so that it,

the Sisterhood, and other congregational groups could the more effectively serve their religious, educational, philanthropic, and social purposes.

In following its program in the field of "literary and religious lectures and classes," the League at various times sponsored congregational study groups, evening lecture courses, classes in Hebrew and in Haftarah chanting, and a class in Spanish. Every year it gave a program of public lectures on Jewish themes, national and social problems, and other topics of general interest. The popular congregational Oneg Shabbat or Sabbath afternoon social gathering around the table in the happy Sabbath spirit with song, refreshment, and instruction is sponsored by the League.

The League showed a consistent interest in music by building up a small library of records of Jewish music, more especially making recordings of distinctive parts of the synagogue service. At one time it sponsored a choral group of congregants. It arranged plays and parties in the synagogue building and outings in the country. It gave an annual dance as the outstanding congregational social function of the season. At times it has conducted a popular and thoroughly enjoyable Sunday Supper Club in the synagogue building.

The League made its contribution to the religious life of the congregation not only through the Sabbath afternoon gatherings, which it has conducted for twenty-five years, but also through festival gatherings, gifts of prayer books to the synagogue, the presentation of Dr. Mendes' book on Bar Mitzvah to every Bar Mitzvah boy, and providing on festivals for the religious school's celebrations. It also cooperated in many ways in beautifying the synagogue building, and it shared in improving facilities in the L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium.

From May, 1904, in anticipation of the 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of the congregation there were issued six numbers of a congregational literary magazine called the *Shearith Israel Review*. The editor was Raphael Hai Melamed. It ceased publication in November, 1905. Some half a dozen years later, the Junior League published a congregational Bulletin for two years from February, 1912, to March, 1914. There was then a lapse until the fall of 1922. The League then undertook to issue the Bulletin regularly during the active season of congregational work. This it continued to do uninterruptedly for nineteen years until at the beginning of 1941 the congregation took over the publication of the Bulletin which the League had firmly established.

In such ways has the Shearith Israel League actively promoted the spiritual, the intellectual, and the social welfare of the members of the congregation for a third of a century.

The presidents of the League from its organization in 1919 have been Frank L. Swaab, Jacob B. Fidanque, Henriette S. Van Nierop, Edgar J. Nathan, Jr., Rose H. Harte, A. Piza Mendes, Stella Corcos Levy, Bert Saruya, Helen Brotman, Adrian Baumgart, Stella Benoliel, Lucien S. Simons, Anne Green, Alex Hyman, Ruth A. Fidanque, Mortimer E. Lowe, Birdie Stern, Milton Lewin, and Hannah Tarry.

At the suggestion of I. Moses Friedman a Men's Club of Congregation Shearith Israel was organized in February, 1935. Its primary purpose was "to enable the men of the congregation to come together at intervals so that they could get to know one another through social contact." But it also set out to provide "cultural opportunities of self-expression and opportunities for taking a more active interest in congregational life."

Composed of alert men of affairs, its activities were geared to the interests of modern men deeply aware that business and professional interests and technological success do not take the place of the spiritual in life. The Men's Club programs expressed that philosophy of faith. A frequent pattern of its monthly meetings includes their opening with a moving picture of Jewish interest, often of Israeli life and achievement, and the singing of Hebrew songs. Authoritative guest speakers then deal with some topic in a wide range of interest, such as American Jewish history, Zionism, synagogues in Spain, Jews and labor, anti-Semitism, crime, marriage, the economic outlook, Jewish music, Abraham Lincoln, and even so comprehensive a subject as mankind. At times a pleasantly relaxing and diverting program is presented, not excluding sleight-of-hand, or a variety All-Star program. In the spirit of human good will the club has held interfaith meetings. It has brought to the congregation many distinguished speakers, such as Dr. Shri Nehru, Justice of the Supreme Revenue Court of India, who spoke on Gandhi, or the Spanish ambassador Don Fernando de los Rios, who addressed a meeting in 1937 on the 500th anniversary of the birth of Don Isaac Abrabanel. Its annual public dinner is held in the spring. In 1954 the Israeli ambassador, Abba Eban, gave a searching analysis of American-Israeli relations in the light of the American Jewish tercentenary.

The Men's Club has contributed both directly and indirectly to the religious life of the congregation. It initiated the custom, which became general among

the synagogue societies, of designating as its own a special Sabbath which calls forth a larger attendance at the synagogue services on that day. It has cooperated in the preparations for the services for the High Holy Days, and supplied ushers for the synagogue services. Some of those living in the immediate vicinity of the synagogue have given the Men's Club a happy opportunity of enjoying a hospitable Sabbath morning home Kiddush and repast in the Sabbath spirit. After the Asser Levy Garrison became inactive, the Men's Club took over the organization of the Memorial Day exercises in the congregation's historic cemeteries. Many hundred prayer books used in the synagogue as well as a hundred prayer shawls have been presented by the Men's Club. It also has given either a Hebrew Bible or a copy of the Pentateuch edited by Dr. Hertz to every Bar Mitzvah boy. It presented each Bar Mitzvah boy with a copy of the prayer book until this responsibility was taken over by the Young Men's Club.

Presidents of the Men's Club have been John Hezekiah Levy, Nathan Levy, Harry Jacoby, Dr. Joseph Selzer, Samuel Friedman, Murray Gurfein, Simon Mateles, and Hyman B. Schulson.

A number of other congregational organizations came into being in the decades following the First World War, to serve special needs of the times. To coordinate the multifarious activities which crowded the calendar and to adjust complementary dates or plan for united or coordinated functions, there was formed a Congregational Committee. On this every organized body under the auspices of the synagogue is represented, from the trustees to youth groups.

The community of interest in common age groups gave rise to several organizations in Shearith Israel. "The Young Marrieds" came into being in 1951. Its meetings have usually been held in a member's home. The subjects presented and discussed have been in keeping with the needs and interests of young parents deeply imbued with the desire to build a home on sound Jewish religious foundations in consonance with the psychological apperceptions of modern pedagogy and with an understanding of modern living. Visits to centers of Jewish interest and general sociability have marked the pleasant program of the Young Marrieds. Dr. Louis C. Gerstein, active in its organization, has been its enthusiastic mentor.

Many of its members are alumni of the Young People's Group which, guided by Mr. Victor Tarry, met regularly from 1940 to 1952, held regular social and educational meetings, conducted a class in kasher cooking, prepared a Sephardi

cook book, and successfully undertook varied projects of fund raising for the synagogue.

A social group which is based primarily on age division naturally tends to dissolve with time, often to be reborn as an older new group. This has been especially so with the adolescent youth. As their leaders have grown into young manhood or womanhood, they have at times reorganized their group on a new age level. A teen-age generation creates its own image in a new youth group. While this may conduct similar programs, definite individuality rests on the character of the new group's activities. Yet all have their religious services, cultural forums, educational classes and meetings, and athletic gatherings, and have given various forms of service to the congregation.

The Semeichim, initiated in 1930 as a club of Bar Mitzvah boys, had a striking weekly Sabbath program. This began with the early morning service and ended with a study group under Dr. Pool after the blessings of farewell to the Sabbath had been said. Eventually, college campuses in many parts of the country claimed its members. The parallel group among the girls, which was called Habanoth, was associated with the youth work done by the Women's Branch of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and was led by Henriette van Nierop Stern. Later, groups of girls were organized as scout troops led by Edith Friedlaender Bondi.

Two vital youth groups emerged in 1946 with the Young Men's Club and the Bar Mitzvah Club. These groups conducted the Additional Service on Sabbath morning in the Little Synagogue, and at times the entire Sabbath morning service. The Young Men's Club also put into effect a sustained program of attending shahrith synagogue service on a Sunday, this followed by a breakfast, an educational talk, and classes. During each season, the Young Men's Club under the leadership of Dr. Gerstein organized a trip in the nature of a pilgrimage, usually over the Thanksgiving Day week end, to a place of special interest such as Washington, or Newport, Rhode Island. The Club's presidents have been Joel Schneierson, Robert Ginsberg, Natalio Sabal, Jack Cazes, Arnie Goldfarb, and Albert Alhadeff.

In such ways has Shearith Israel encouraged young and old, boys and girls, men and women, to express the spirit of religion in the daily life of the congregation through the exercise of leadership and service, the practice of cooperation, and the fellowship of faith.

VIII. *Firm Foundations*



Oh that my words were written!

Oh that they were inscribed in a book!

Oh that with an iron pen and lead

They were graven in the rock forever.

JOB 19:23, 24

THE EARLIEST of the surviving congregational records tells us that

On or about the Year 5466 [1705–6] certain wholesome Rules and Restrictions have been made by the then Elders of our Holy Congregation, to Preserve Peace, tranquility and good Government amongst you and those after them.[1]

The original text of those "wholesome Rules and Restrictions" has not come down to us. But there came a new upsurge of activity with the decision in 1728 to build a synagogue. It was then decided that since the regulations drawn up two decades earlier

have been neglected to be put in due force for some time past, we now meet with common consent and Resolve to Revive the same with some amendment and additions.[2]

These newly formulated rules and restrictions, which are given in full on page 499, provide for: (1) the annual election of a presiding officer, the parnas, with the "spouses of the Torah," the hatan torah as first assistant, and the hatan bereshith as second assistant. (2) These three dignitaries were granted authority to govern the congregation in the fear of God and in accord with their conscience. (3) Any person affronting or abusing another within the synagogue shrine was subject to a fine of twenty shillings. (4) A parnas elected and refusing to serve was fined three pounds, and a hatan two pounds for a similar refusal. (5) If it should happen that the parnas and his two assistants failed to reach an agreement in the discharge of their trust, they were to choose an "indifferent," i.e., a neutral, person to settle their difference. (6) No unmarried man might be parnas, nor could one be a parnas unless he had already served as hatan torah or hatan bereshith. (7) The parnas was given authority to grant aid up to eight shillings a week for not more than twelve weeks to any poor Jew happening to come to the city and needing assistance. At the same time the parnas was charged to use his utmost endeavors to dispatch such poor persons to some other place as soon as possible. The local poor of the congregation were to be assisted. (8) Since it was not "convenient" to obtain the congregational income by disposing of honors and functions at synagogue services in return for financial contributions, free-will offerings and the assessment on seats in the synagogue were to be the chief sources of congregational financing. (9) These articles were to govern the yehidim (electors), (10) and were to be read in the synagogue twice a year both in Portuguese and in English. Two days after the Day of Atonement, on September 15, 1728, these regulations were formally adopted.

They were followed by a detailed specification of the duties and salary of (1) the hazzan, (2) the pensioned inspector of meat, (3) the acting shohet and inspector of meat, and (4) the shammash. Finally, directions were set down as to action to be taken should any of these officials neglect his duties.

This clear and simple constitution formulated in 1728 from the rulings of 1706 was revised a third of a century later to meet the changed needs of the developing congregation. On January 26, 1761, a new formulation of "laws and regulations" was proposed. After a public reading, these were officially approved, accepted and signed by the electors two and a half months later. These regulations of 1761, now published for the first time, are given in full in an appendix. Again provision is made for the contingency of a nominee

for parnas or hatan refusing to serve. The parnas has to give a financial accounting. The yehidim are the ones empowered to elect the paid officials of the congregation and to buy or sell congregational real estate. The hatan torah and hatan bereshith are also to be elected, and not one parnas, but two to serve alternately six months in the year. The fines for refusal to accept office are for a parnas £10, and for a hatan £5. The parnas is empowered to allot vacant seats and to assign all mitzvoth or duties and honors pertaining to religious services. Congregants are to behave in an orderly manner, accept a mitzvah allotted them, and when called to the reading of the Torah they must offer at least threepence. In the case of a congregant's being guilty of disturbance, "he, she or they" must be admonished by the parnas. Should the disturbance nevertheless persist, the matter may be put in the hands of a city magistrate. Every yahid not conforming to these regulations may cease to be recognized as an elector. Those who heretofore have been yehidim will continue to be recognized as such. A "native" can become a yahid on reaching the age of twenty-one years, and an adult stranger after having resided in New York for at least one year. On becoming a yahid one has to pay one pound and sign the electors list.

This formulation of the congregational rules and regulations remained authoritative for only eight years. On November 1, 1769, a committee was appointed to "prepare a draft for a new Table of Laws near as shall be found convenient to the present." This committee consisted of five leading personalities in the congregation: Daniel Gomez, Joseph Simson, Benjamin Gomez, Myer Myers, and Hayman Levy.[3]

When after the Revolution the principal congregants returned to the city from what they called their exile, they found it necessary to organize the congregation anew. In keeping with an enabling act passed by the state legislature, a meeting was called for May 12, 1784, to elect trustees. Action was postponed for a week because of very rainy weather. On May 24, after another postponement, Myer Myers, Hayman Levy, Solomon Simson, Isaac Moses, Solomon Myers Cohen, and Benjamin Seixas were elected the six trustees of the reintegrated congregation. Solomon Simson and Alexander Zuntz described in not exactly juvenile terms as "Elders of the Congregation of Ancient Israelites known by the name of Shearith Israel" attested the election for its official recording by the clerk of the city and county of New York.[4]

In June of that year 1784, Congregation Shearith Israel was incorporated

under the act of the state legislature that provided for the incorporation of religious societies. Two months later, on Thursday, August 20, 1784, a meeting of the congregation was held which was attended by thirty-two members. These were Hayman Levy, Solomon Simson, Myer Myers, Joseph Pinto, Alexander Zuntz, Benjamin Jacobs, Abraham I. Abrahams, Baruch Judah, Isaac Abrahams, Jacob Phillips, Samson Lazarus, Moses Cardoza, Simon Nathan, Myers Regensburgh, Abraham Isaacs, Nathan Joseph, Saunders Israel, Moses Nunes, Samuel Israel, Moses Israel, Moses Abrahams, Levy Cohen, Joshua Isaacs, Lyon Jonas, Joseph Nathan, Benjamin Seixas, Solomon M. Cohen, Hyman Solomons, Uriah Hendricks, Isaac Moses, Lion Hart, and Jacob Mordecai. They heard the following address prepared by the parnas Hayman Levy and junto (governing board).

In Junta Sunday, Elul 9th, 5545.

WHEREAS, the Hon'ble the Legislature of New York have in their Wisdom passed an Act to Enable Religious Societies to Incorporate themselves, and this Congregation of Shearith Israel have in Consequence thereof Obtained a Charter.

AND, WHEREAS, some of the private Laws of this Congregation would be better if Alter'd, the Parnas and Adjuntoes this day met have agreed to repeal the whole of the said Laws, and to Call the Congregation together on Thursday next at 3 o'clock in the Afternoon at the Hebra to make such bye Laws as may be most Condusive to the Wellfare of this Congregation.

GENTLEMEN, You have been called together for the above purpose and the Parnas & Junto would wish you to propose such Laws as may appear to you necessary for the tranquility, good Order & proper support of this Congregation.

It has been Suggested that to Alter the present form of Chosing Parnassim, Hatanim, Junto's, making of Yehedim would be more beneficial to this Congregation. . . .

After this, the meeting proceeded with high efficiency to define who would be regarded as voters. It then decided that each year there should be two hatanim and one parnas, instead of two parnassim each serving for six months, these to be elected by the congregation at large. The fines of £10 and £15 to be paid by an elected parnas or hatan refusing to serve should be recoverable before any magistrate.

A committee consisting of Abraham I. Abrahams, Myer Myers, and Solomon Simson was appointed to frame some by-laws. This committee with only Friday during daylight and Saturday evening in which to work, yet was ready on Sunday morning, August 23, to set before a meeting of the congregants an elaborate procedure, which was adopted, "to Promote Decency in

Synagogue Where we meet to Worship the Almighty God, to Support, Respect & Decorum in a Place dedicated to His Service."

The new democratic spirit of the citizens of the free republic came to striking expression a year later, when on December 26, 1785, it was resolved that not only the nation but also the congregation should have a Bill of Rights. For

> The Parnas and Ajunta shall affix the Duties of the difft. Officers now elected & that they draw up the Bill of Rights & present the same for the Consideration of the Congregation who are to amend or confirm the same.[5]

The introduction of greater democracy in the conduct of affairs in the congregation was furthered at a meeting held a year later, on September 18, 1786, when twenty-nine congregants debated the question whether

> The old laws being abolished . . . we pick out of the old laws those that are repugnant to the Charter and the remaining ones to be in force until some new ones are agreed to by this Congregation. After a long debate it passed in the Negative.

Instead it was agreed that a committee of five prepare a code of laws for the government of the congregation, this committee to report within six weeks.[6]

Three and a half years later, on May 23, 1790, the electors decided

> that a Committee of three be appointed to draw up an Instrument to bind the Congregators one unto the other Jointly & severally to support our Holy Religion and to vest the Trustees with certain religious powers for the management of the Congregation such as the Committee may Judge Proper.

It was also resolved

> that the Committee appointed prepare a draft of a Constitution to be laid before the Congregation at a meeting held on Sunday next.

On the following Sunday, May 30, the newly drafted constitution was read several times and accepted. A week later, on Sunday, June 6, 1790, at a meeting held in the morning and continued in the afternoon a committee reported a new code of by-laws which were "duly enacted and unanimously agreed to."

Seven years later, on March 17, 1797, the congregation adopted a seal. This was designed by Gershom Mendes Seixas and Jacob Hart. It depicts the world resting on the three pillars of Justice, Righteousness and Truth. Above man's world thus established, run the challenging words, likewise in Hebrew, from the eighth chapter of Isaiah, "I will take unto Me faithful witnesses."

The recurrent rewriting of the congregational constitution virtually ceased a century after the first known recording of the laws and by-laws of 1706. On April 30, 1805, at a meeting attended by thirty-six congregants it was decided

"to draw up a code of laws for the good government of the congregation." In June the new constitution was adopted. While in some respects it has been amended during the century and a half since its acceptance, it is in essence unchanged as the statement of principles and regulations according to which Congregation Shearith Israel is administered to this day.

This constitution of eleven articles after (1) affirming the name of the Congregation as Shearith Israel in New York proceeds (2) to place responsibility for the temporalities of the congregation in the hands of six (later amended first to seven then to nine) trustees who shall elect a parnas from their number. There shall always be a hazzan, shohet, and shammash chosen by the congregation. Subordinate officers may be chosen by the trustees. (3) The fixed prayers, the Torah and Haphtaroth, "shall forever be read in the Hebrew language according to the minhag Sephardim, but the board of trustees may on a public thanksgiving or other special occasion direct the hazzan or any other suitable person to deliver an address, sermon, or moral lecture, in English." (4) Offenders against the constitution may be punished. (5) The synagogue and burying places shall be the joint property of the electors and shall never be sold, mortgaged, or shut up. However, real estate of the congregation may when necessary be sold on a vote of two-thirds of the electors attending the meeting. (6) The support of the congregation shall forever be from the sale or taxation of seats and from free-will offerings, and no poll or income tax shall ever be assessed on the members. (7) The trustees have to form and maintain a school in keeping with the legacy of Myer Polonies. (8) The Hebra Hased Va-Amet is given recognition as a congregational society. (9) To be an elector one must be qualified under the act of incorporation. (10) Moneys due the congregation must be collected within three months. (11) To make amendments in the constitution a complex procedure must be rigidly followed.

Then follow numerous by-laws. We learn from them that one refusing to serve if elected parnas is no longer subject to a fine if he has served as parnas within three years, but otherwise the fine is set at $25. The fine imposed on a hatan refusing to serve ranges from $20 to $40. Certain synagogue honors are reserved to the hatan torah and hatan bereshith, and should none of the trustees be present at a synagogue service, the "spouses of the Torah" in that year take precedence over other congregants in presiding. An elector also has certain preferential rights to recognition in the synagogue service.

Thirty paragraphs of by-laws were attached to the original constitution

adopted in 1805. At that time Shearith Israel was still the sole Jewish congregation in New York City, and it took seriously its responsibility for everyone "of the Jewish persuasion" in the city. Therefore it ruled that

> all and every person or persons who shall have been considered of the Jewish persuasion, resident within the limits of the Corporation of the City of New York, that do not commune with us under the Constitution and By-laws now established, shall be assessed and charged by the Board of Trustees ten dollars per annum.

Unfortunately for the finances of the congregation, this by-law is inoperative, though it still stands in the congregational regulations. The trustees are not burdened by the problem of how to use millions of dollars annually pouring into the congregational coffers.

This constitution with its by-laws was adopted on June 24, 1805. A few days later a new parnas, Naphtali Judah, was elected at the beginning of July. Hazzan Seixas was then notified that after making the customary blessing for the new parnas during the Sabbath morning service, he should read to the congregation the newly adopted constitution and by-laws. Later in the year 200 copies of it were printed.

From time to time in subsequent years some minor amendment or some new by-law has been adopted;[7] but on the whole Shearith Israel still conducts its affairs in accordance with the constitution of 1805 and in conformity with the act passed on April 5, 1813, by the legislature of the state of New York providing for the incorporation of religious societies.

Those administering the affairs of the congregation include and have been variously known as parnas presidente, gabbai, parnas residente, hatan torah, hatan bereshith, adjuntos, assistants, elders, junta, board of trustees, yehidim, electors, and members. At the head of the administrative structure was always the parnas, who occasionally was called the gabbai.[8]

In 1728, when the organizational framework of the synagogue was set up anew "for ye good government of our Holy Congregation," a parnas and two assistants were chosen. Thereafter for twenty years the parnas was annually chosen by the preceding parnas and his two assistants. In 1748, a new system was instituted. Elders, congregants who had served as parnas or assistants to the parnas, as a group selected the new parnas. From 1751 to 1771 two parnasim were chosen annually, each to serve for six months. Similarly in Amsterdam a century earlier, and in the congregation in Recife, Brazil, from which Shearith Israel stems, the presiding officers of the congregation were chosen every six months.[9] In New York, the first parnas, the parnas presidente,

served from the New Year to Passover, and the second, the parnas residente, served from Passover to the following Rosh Hashanah. In 1772 and 1773 the congregation reverted to the system of having only one parnas for the whole year, but thereafter it went back to the system of the six months term of office. After the Revolution, it changed back again at first to the system of having one parnas serve for a year, but it did not keep to it.[10] The final system was laid down in the constitution of 1805 under which the parnas is chosen not by the congregation as a whole nor by its electors, but by the board of trustees to serve for one year.

Under the ruling of 1728, an unmarried man could not serve as parnas. Nevertheless, being a parnas did not always assure that one lived on Parnassus. The task of directing the affairs of the congregation was often an exacting one. Either because of other obligations or because of difficult personal relations not a few were unwilling to accept election to that office. Between 1728 and 1747 anyone who was elected parnas and who refused to serve was fined £3, this penalty rising to £10 in 1748.[11] In 1756 eleven good men and true bearing the names of Hays, Seixas, Gomez, Franks, Simson, and Rivera, pledged that under certain regulations

> We the subscribers do of our own free will and accord, offer, agree and oblige ourselves in the strictest manner to accept of and officiate in said post of Parnas.[12]

But this was far from settling the problem. In 1771, it came up again.

> Att a full meeting of the Parnasim and Adjuntos It is unanimously agreed, that whereas, much difficulty has Arisen from the inconveniencey of Electing two Parnassim with Hatanim Torah and Bereshit annually, Occasioned by the small number of persons, who are proper, and willing to Accept of the said offices, it is Resolved for the tranquility of our Congregation, to returne to the first institution dated 5466 & 5489 of Electing one Parnas, for the whole year with the Hatan Torah, and Hatan Bereshit, to Serve for the same time, During which term they are to set in the Bench with the parnas, and be his Assistants, and in his absence to act in proper turn as Parnas, with this further addition, that after the Parnas has compleated the year, the Hatan Torah is then to become Parnas, Hatan Bereshit to become Hatan Torah, and only a new Hatan Bereshit to be nominated annually, by the Parnas and his Assistants, and in case of refusal another to be appointed, Subject to the same fine as in the Seventh Article of Regulations.[13]

We see that this regulation aroused some discontent, and less than two months later

> at a meeting of the Yaheedim it being put to Vote whether the Law made 29th of Ellul 5531 [September 8, 1771], Shou'd Continue in force or not it was Determin'd by a Majority of 10 to 2 that Said Law Shou'd Continue in force.

The struggle continued.

At a meeting of the Parnas Hatanim & Ajuntos, it was agreed by a Majority to Elect, Two Parnasim and Two Hatanim for the present year, many being disatisfied with the length of time they ware obliged to Continue in Office.

But by then no one was willing to take office, and the congregation was left without any executive head. Then Solomon Simson, who was hatan bereshith, called a meeting of the Yehidim at the Hebra to consult "on the situation of the Synagogue,"

finding things in disorder Occasion'd by Mr. Moses Gomez, refusing to act as Parnas, Hayman Levy's Refusing to Act as Parnas, he being Hatan Torah and Mr. Benjamin Gomez and Myer Myers Declining to Act as Assistants And being Apprehensive of greater disorders arising from the want of Rulers in our Synagogue and Congregation.[14]

The congregation weathered that crisis to face another on September 27, 1775, when at the last election held before the Revolution all those elected refused to serve.

Whereupon by the unanimous desire of the Yehidim, Mr. Hayman Levy is to act, in giving out the Mitzvot in Sinagogue, with power to call the Yehidim when he thinks necessary.

At this point the congregational minutes cease, to be resumed only after the return of the congregants at the end of the war. On December 8, 1783, Hayman Levy exercised the power given him eight years earlier and called a meeting of eight congregants to reintegrate the congregation. At that time

Mr. Alexander Zuntz, late parnass of this Congregation did on Saturday last resign his office publickly in the Synagogue which he had accepted till the Evaquation of this City took place.[15]

The principal constitutional responsibilities of the parnas are to preside at meetings of the board of trustees, to superintend the hazzan, the shohet, the shammash, and any other officials of the congregation, and to preside at services. He may also

at his discretion . . . cause to be given to any person professing Judaism, whom he may deem an object of charity, any sum not exceeding five dollars.[16]

Among those presidents whose ability and personal popularity ensured their reelection, besides those who served for three, four, or five terms, we recall Jacob Franks and Benjamin Nathan who both served for six years; Solomon I. Isaacs, seven years; J. Edgar Phillips, eight years; Judah S. Abecassis, nine

years; Naphtali Phillips, ten years; Moses L. Moses, eleven years; Henry S. Hendricks, sixteen years; and L. Napoleon Levy who gave no less than twenty-eight years of consecutive service as parnas and who died in office.

On the festival of Simhath Torah when the whole Pentateuch's reading is completed and on the following Sabbath when it is initiated anew, synagogues honor the hatan torah and hatan bereshith, who are respectively chosen for the concluding and opening readings. In most congregations those honors cease with the Sabbath following the festival. But, as has been recalled, Shearith Israel in 1728 designated the hatan torah as the first assistant to the president and the hatan bereshith as his second assistant. The three of them formed the congregation's governing board. It proved to be not always easy to find men who were willing to be hatan torah or hatan bereshith, an honor involving considerable responsibility, with the duty of sitting in synagogue on the presidential banco and in sequence becoming parnas. Therefore, in 1751, in partial alleviation of the difficulty, it was ruled that the hatanim would no longer be obliged to sit on the banco, though anyone refusing to accept the office of hatan when elected remained subject to a fine of £5. In the regulations of 1728 he had been subject to a penalty of forty shillings for such refusal to serve.[17]

From 1728 to 1750 the parnas and the two hatanim were the three men who constituted the governing board of the congregation. After the middle of that century it was the parnas presidente, the parnas residente, and the two hatanim, who made up the synagogue's governing board of four persons. Added to these were the elders (velhos), former assistants to the parnas, who rounded out the board. The constitution of 1761 laid down in Article 3 that five assistants to the parnas were required. These had to be men who had served as parnas. The hatanim, unless they had served as parnas, then largely dropped out of the administrative picture. Until 1775 there were elected each year five assistants to the parnassim, two of whom, Daniel Gomez and Joseph Simson, were annually carried over as life-long assistants, and three of whom were newly elected every year.

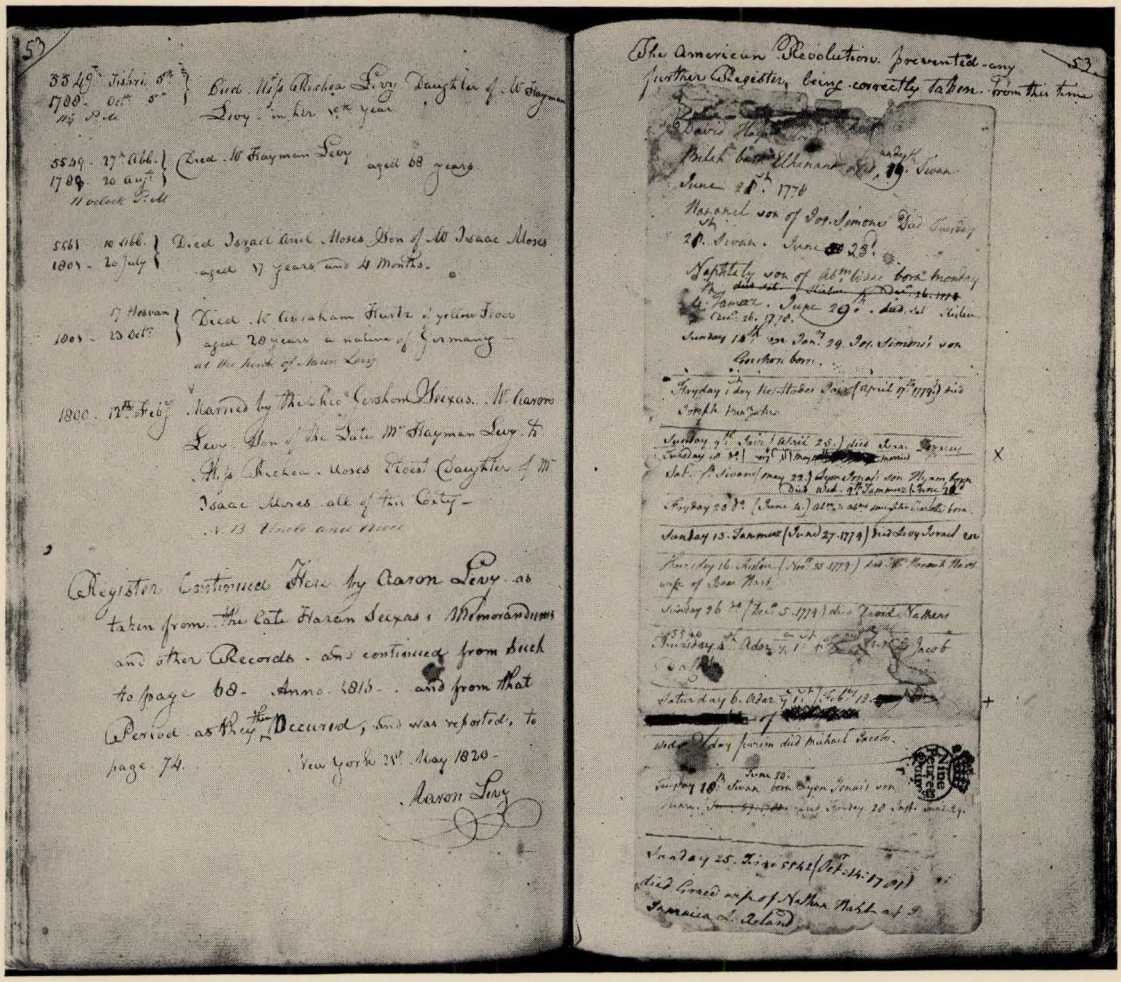
After the Revolution the administrative set-up changed radically. The hatan torah and hatan bereshith lost nearly all obligation of service. After 1784 the junta or governing board made up of the parnas—president, the vice-president, and five assistants, continued to be elected annually to care for the spiritualities of the congregation. But under the act of incorporation of 1784

there were also elected annually six trustees charged with responsibility for the temporalities of the congregation. This double system of administration, which was in considerable measure overlapping and potentially conflicting, continued for a number of years. In the closing years of the eighteenth century the minutes of the junta and the minutes of the board of trustees show both bodies dealing with such matters as election, the officials of the congregation, the problem of the cemetery wall, negotiations with Isaac Roosevelt, financial questions, and so on. Almost to the exclusion of other matters, in one lengthy item after another, the minutes of the junta between May 21 and August 1, 1786, are made up of the record of a difference of opinion with the board of trustees as to which of the two bodies had the power to grant or refuse the Hebra Gemiluth Hasadim the right to have offerings for its benefit made in the synagogue. The discussion of this hardly stupendous issue between the two boards was conducted with a punctilious politeness and suave courtesy. Finally legal counsel was sought. The decision was laid down that the right to grant or withhold the privilege for offerings to be made for the society was vested in the board of trustees, and with this peace descended on the riven administration.[18]

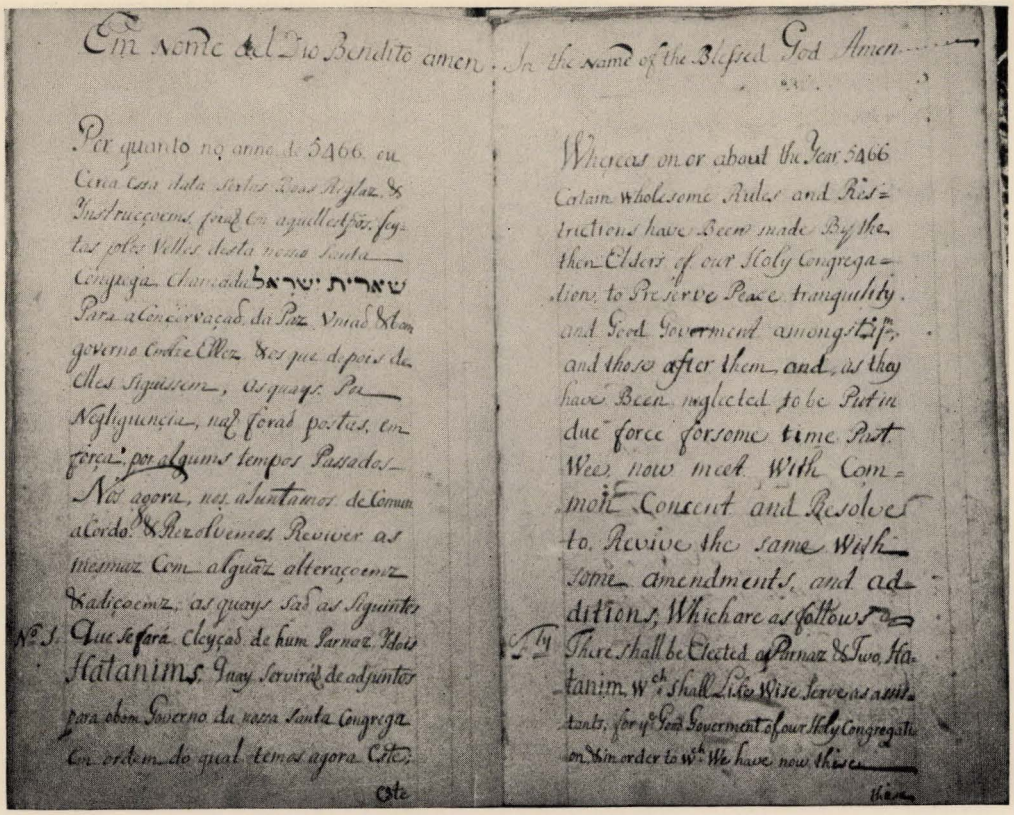
In that same summer of 1786, the two administrative bodies, the junta and the trustees, conferred on the troubling question of the satisfactory allotment of seats in the women's gallery. As time went on, the junta became little more than a name, and finally under the constitution adopted in 1805 the junta disappeared, the board of trustees taking over the whole unified administration of the congregation.

In pre-Revolutionary days the term "trustee" had been used in the special sense of a trustee of the real estate of the synagogue. The officer of the congregation now known as a trustee was then called adjunto, assistant, or elder.[19]

On July 21, 1805, a month after the new congregational constitution had been adopted, the trustees drew up an exacting code of nine articles governing their meetings, including a fine of $10 for leaving the meeting without permission. Only one trustee might speak at a time, and he had to stand up when addressing the chair. Two dollars and a half was the fine set for persistent interruption of a speaker. Some eight years later, on December 5, 1813, the board set a fine of $10 on any trustee who was not in his place within fifteen minutes of the time when the president took the chair. The delinquency of unpunctuality had become twenty times as costly as it had been two decades earlier when



1776: dramatic gap in the records. Most patriots left British-occupied New York.



Em Nome de Deo Benditto amen

Por quanto no anno de 5466. ou
Cerca Cea dada Certas Regras &
Instrucçoems, foraõ Em aquelle tẽpo feytas pelos Velhos desta nossa Santa
Congrega Chamada שארית ישראל
Para a Conservaçaõ da Paz Vnias & bom
governo Entre Elles & os que depois de
Elles Siguissem, as quays Por
Negligencia, naõ foraõ postas em
força por alguns tempos Passados
Nós agora, nas Juntanos de Comun
acordo & Rezolvemos Renover as
mesmas Com alguãs alteraçoems
& adiçoems as quays saõ as Siguintes

Nº 1. Que se fará Cleyçaõ de hum Parnas & dois
Hatanims. Q. auy servirá de adjuntos
para o bom Governo da nossa Santa Congrega
Em ordem do qual temos agora Eleito

Ste

In the name of the Blessed God Amen

Whereas on or about the Year 5466
Certain Wholesome Rules and Res-
trictions have Been made By the
then Elders of our Holy Congrega-
tion, to Preserve Peace tranquility,
and Good Goverment amongst Us,
and those after them and, as they
have Been neglected to be Put in
due force forsome time Past
Wee, now meet With Com-
moñ Consent and Resolve
to Revive the same With
some amendments and ad-
ditions, Which are as follows

1st There shall be Elected a Parnas & Two Ha-
tanim. Wch shall Like Wise Serve as assi-
stants, for ye Good Goverment of our Holy Congregatn
on Wch order to Wch We have now Elec-

Elec-

Opening page in Shearith Israel's record-book, 1728, in Portuguese and English

the penalty was set at half a dollar. This punitive urge to punctual attendance was considered important enough to be copied, framed, and hung up in the trustee room of the synagogue. In the fall of 1833 one member after another from the president down was fined for lateness. It was then realized that this comprehensive dereliction should be blamed not on the trustees but on the clock. The hour of six o'clock heretofore set for meetings was changed first to half past six, then to seven. The true culprit having been found, all the accumulated fines were remitted.[20] On July 15, 1815, a trustee who had failed to attend a meeting of the board during three months was constitutionally dropped from the board.

The fact that the number of trustees was set by the constitution at six caused recurrent difficulties through tie votes. In 1835 thirty ballots were taken before a president was chosen. On June 30, 1842, no less than thirty-nine ballots were taken in the attempt to determine a question of seniority. In 1845 it was agreed that a tie vote should be considered as lost. Two years later all business at a meeting became impossible because three members as a bloc negatived every matter that was brought up. In 1872 because of repeated deadlock ballots it required three meetings until finally a president was chosen. In 1883, a similar deadlock of three votes against three left the congregation without a president from July to the end of September. In 1845 a member of the congregation as its legal counsel had stated "that there exists no power in the electors to increase the number of their trustees." The electors, however, thought otherwise, and in 1883 they increased the number of trustees from six to seven. In 1947 this was brought up to the constitutional maximum of nine.[21]

The service given by a trustee has to be completely disinterested so far as personal material advantage might be involved. Therefore it has been the long established policy in Shearith Israel that no trustee may hold a salaried position in the congregation, such as that of clerk, or collector, or shohet. In 1862 this policy became a matter of embittered division of opinion when a member of the board of trustees was retained as the congregation's paid legal representative in connection with the sale of congregational property. A number of the electors tried to carry a vote of censure with a call for resignation of office by those trustees who with what they termed "arbitrary and factious exercise of power" had favored retaining a trustee in a paid capacity.[22]

The work of the board of trustees is done through various standing committees. These committees are ordinarily those on finance, the Polonies Talmud

Torah School, the burial grounds, the building and repairs, and membership. In 1897 a committee on ritual was set up as a standing committee, but it was abolished a year later and united with the committee on the choir. A standing committee on social welfare was established in 1918 with power given to its chairman to appoint an auxiliary committee of women. In general, the president of the congregation is authorized to increase the number serving on the standing committees of the board by appointing to them additional members of the congregation who are not trustees.[23]

In the nineteenth century, when a president or a member of the board of trustees died, the trustees would wear crepe on their left arm for thirty days.[24] Many trustees have been notable for the years of service which they gave to the board. On June 3, 1909, the board adopted happy resolutions on the fortieth anniversary of Gratz Nathan's becoming a trustee. He continued to serve in this capacity for four years thereafter until on May 26, 1913, he offered his resignation because of ill health. Similarly Albert J. Elias served as trustee for thirty-six years until his death in 1932.

From 1805 on, the trustees have been empowered by the constitution "to take charge of all temporalities, and of all matters relative to the interior government of the Congregation." The trustees have always been zealous to preserve this authority accorded them by the congregation's various constitutions. In Colonial days this was seldom questioned, except in trivial matters, which in retrospect are sometimes not unamusing. The most frequently recurring source of trouble was the allotment of seats. In its later years the Mill Street Synagogue seldom had enough seats for the growing congregation, and the harassed trustees could not possibly allot a seat in a preferred position to every congregant. A congregant's not always quiet discontent with the seat awarded him caused the trustees in 1770 to take the opinion of Mayor Whitehead Hicks about how they could deal with this problem. His answer was that since the congregation was not incorporated, its rules as to the allotment of seats were not binding. But anyone guilty of disorderly behavior in constantly taking a wrong seat and thereby disturbing public worship was punishable by indictment.[25]

The problem was particularly acute in the severely limited accommodations in the women's gallery. On June 24, 1760

> The Parnassim & Elders at a meeting ye 10 Tamuz 5520 heard the complaint made by Mr. Judah Hays against Mr. Judah Mears, in going into the womens Gallary in time of worship last Sabath, & turn'd Miss Josse Hays from the seat, claimed by Miss Mears, and having duly considred the fault comitted by Mr. Mears in so doing,

have concluded that said Mr. Mears be fined Forty Shillings, in order to prevent for the future any person assuming to themselves the authority of determining the property of seats in the Sinagogue, & to prevent the two young Ladys having any farther dispute about the seat, have allso resolved, that they both return to their former seats, and for the future when any place becomes vacant the Parnassim shall have the disposal of such vacant Seats.
Vesalom.

HAYMAN LEVY
BENJA GOMEZ

But this Vesalom (And peace!) was a pious hope that did not become a reality. For this action did not satisfy the intransigent Judah Hays, and one month later, on July 17, 1760,

At a meeting of the Parnassim and Elders, it was agreed, to procure some method to pacify Mr. Judah Hays, in respect to a Seat for his Daughter, Accordingly, some days after, Mr. Hayman Levy Parnas Prezidente, acquainted the Elders, that by lengthening the bench on which Mrs. Hays sets in Synagogue, there might be a seat found for Miss Hays, to which the Parnassim and Elders consented. The bench was prepared accordingly and Mr. Judah Hays acquainted therewith.

This attempt at pacification by grace of the carpenter also failed. The trustees felt that the matter was getting to be beyond their power of control, and three weeks later they called in first the elders and then the whole congregation to uphold their authority.

Menahem 24 5520 Mr. Judah Hays, not being satisfied with the Seat provided for his Daughter, The Parnassim Summoned the Elders to meet; Mr. Joseph Simson Mr. Jacob Franks and Mr. Naphtaly Hart Myers, being three of Said Elders, wrote a letter directed to the Parnassim, acquainting them, that they did not choose to meet, as their first resolve was not complied with; Thereupon the whole Congregation was summoned, and met accordingly who unanimously voted, that the Seats given by the Parnassim were well Given and should Continue.

Four days later the authority of the trustees was formally, emphatically and finally asserted:

Menahem 28th 5520 By request of the Parnassim, the Yahidim met to consult what should be done, as Mr. Judah Hays would not comply with their messuage, desiring him to place his Daughter in the seat appointed for her. They having duly considered the same. Resolved that for the Contempt, in not doing as he was directed by the Parnassim, and still insisting not to Comply with their Order. That he be fined forty Shillings, and untill he pays said fine and causes his Daughter to be seated as they directed That he may not be looked upon as a Member of our Society, but be Excluded from the Rights and Ceremonies of the Synagogue. And as they would not be thought to act with Rigour, Ten Days is allowed him to consider thereon, and if then not Complied with, that the above Resolve shall be in full force, Untill the Concessions be made.[26]

A little over a quarter of a century later, when the congregation was incorporated, a similar case of disputing the authority of the trustees led to court action. There had been considerable difficulty in the impartial allotment of seats in the women's gallery after the Revolution. At a meeting of the Parnassim and Adjuntos held on July 16, 1786, "The Parnass informed the Adjuntos that many complaints have been made by different members of this congregation respecting the women's Seats in Synagogue." In view of these complaints they conferred with the trustees so as to "adopt some decisive plan for the immediate regulation of said seats as we are apprehensive much confusion will arrise the ensuing Holy days, should this be neglected." [27] In the result it was decided that the front row seats in the gallery should preferably be given to married women. Two months later, on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Misses Mincke (Amelia), Sally, and Rebecca Judah took seats which had not been authorized for them, presumably in the front row. In the hope of smoothing out the incident, the trustees sent for the head of the family, the girls' brother Benjamin S. Judah, whom we know from other incidents as a somewhat opinionated and pugnacious man. Unable to arrive at an amicable understanding with him, they consulted with the congregational shohet, A. A. Van Ottingen, the man in the community who was best read in Jewish law. By quotations from the Jewish legal code Hoshen Mishpat he made it clear that it would not be contrary to Jewish tradition were the trustees to take the issue to the civil courts. Thereupon as a test case the trustees got a summons for Mincke Judah.

In the meanwhile Hazzan Seixas had been trying to make peace, but when he failed, he withdrew. Eventually, through the mediation of friends, a last minute peace was patched up in an emergency meeting held on Sunday afternoon at half past four on the eve of the Day of Atonement when in penitent mood the congregation was preparing for the most solemn service of the year. But in order once for all to decide whether or not the trustees had the authority which they claimed, the case came to court. Ten congregants testified at the court hearing on the one side or the other. The jury decided in favor of the trustees and fined Mincke Judah sixpence damages. The trustees were satisfied. Their authority had been upheld, and they took no action against the other two sisters.

This did not bring to an end the personal unpleasantness. The Judah family remained disaffected, and Benjamin S. Judah on behalf of his sister started a

suit against the judge, Alderman Gilbert. But shortly before Rosh Hashanah in 1789 the trustees wrote a very conciliatory letter to Jessy Judah, the mother of the girls, which was politely answered by her son Benjamin who agreed to let bygones be bygones and to drop his suit against Alderman Gilbert.[28]

Twenty years later the trustees forcefully reasserted their authority in this matter by adopting the minatory policy that

> If any person or persons take posession of a Vacant Seat or Seats belonging to the Board of Trustees, he or they shall be charged a sum not exceeding $250 for each Seat. And if he or they refuse to pay the Sum so charged a Suit will be Instituted against him or them for the Recovery thereof.[29]

One other incident may be cited to illustrate to what lengths the trustees would go to uphold their legal authority in this matter of seat allocation. In 1818 there was in the congregation a woman who for good reason was generally disliked. When she insisted on occupying a prominent front row seat in the gallery, a peace officer, as in those days the policeman was optimistically called, was brought in to the synagogue. He removed her to the seat which had been allotted to her. She then left the building in high dudgeon, but after a little while she returned crestfallen and took her place in the rear seat.[30]

At one time in 1795, the congregation was faced with the painful necessity of taking drastic action in an altogether different matter. In order to assure full conformity with all congregational religious and legal requirements, every interment in Shearith Israel's burial ground must be authorized by the trustees. When death took the child of Henry Phillips, a difficult and hotheaded man who was in debt to the congregation, he passionately took the law into his own hands. Without waiting for the trustees to authorize the burial, he carried the body to the cemetery, dug a grave by the fence and buried the child. This anguishing situation compelled the trustees to start legal proceedings. Only after an action of trespass was commenced against the offender did he make good and acknowledge the sole authority of the board of trustees. Then the legal action against him was immediately dropped.[31]

One other example from a later generation will illustrate how jealously and precisely the trustees have interpreted the powers given them by the constitution of the congregation. In December, 1828, the Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion desired to hold a meeting and give an oration in the synagogue on the second Sunday in January. The Society asked to be given the use and the charge of the building

for that day. The trustees formally replied that solely in their hands rested all responsibility for synagogue property, and they could not relinquish this in any measure. The Society hastened humbly and ingratiatingly to reply, assuring the trustees that they had not intended in any way to usurp the legal right of the trustees to the control of the building. Thereupon permission to use though not to have charge of the building on that day was granted them.[32]

It has been seen that full responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of the congregation is vested in the president, vice-president, and board of trustees. This authority is derived ultimately from a special class of male members of the congregation known as electors. In the eighteenth century an elector was known by the Hebrew term yahid (individual), in the plural yehidim. To become a yahid one had to be an attendant at the synagogue and a contributor to the congregation who had signed the regulations of the congregation. The yehidim did not ordinarily elect the president and the hatan torah and hatan bereshith, but in general they elected the hazzan, the shohet, the shammash, and the ribbi (teacher). Congregants who for one reason or another did not qualify as electors were known by the generic term of kahal (congregation), so that we find in the congregational records of 1728 the phrase "the Yechidemz and Kahal" as descriptive of the total membership of the congregation.[33]

At times it was felt necessary to stimulate the active interest of the yehidim. This was done on April 16, 1747, with forcefulness when

> At a junta of the Kaal held this day it was unanimos resolved By the Jehidim present that from this day forward any member of this Congregation that's above 18 years of age that refuse's to give his atendance att the ajunta of the Kaal when properly sumend thereto shall pay the Sum of Twenty Shillings Currency of New york for every time he omits coming. Except in case of sickness or sufficient cause be givn to the contrary to the satisfaction of the majority of the Jehidim then present.[34]

A similar action was taken five years later in the hope of stimulating a more active interest on the part of the elders. Then it was resolved that

> if any of the Elders (if in town when summon'd) shall refuse or fail to appear & no sufficient excuse is given to the satisfaction of all the rest present said Elder shall be subject to such a fine as the rest shall think proper to lay on him, wch fine he shall pay before he can again take his place as Elder of this Congregation.[35]

In those days, individual members of the congregation would at times express their views on congregational affairs with unseemly self-assertion. Therefore the officers and electors of the congregation in 1752 ruled

That at any future Meeting or consultation of this Congregation, any person or persons presuming to make a disturbance or speak otherwise than in their proper turn or place unless thereunto required by the Parnas, the said person or persons so offending shall forfeit and pay to the Parnas the sum of Twenty Shillings for the use of the Congregation.[36]

The constitution adopted in 1761 specified how one could become an elector. The officers, parnas, and hatanim could be chosen only from the electors, and an elector not conforming to the congregational rules could have his name erased.[37]

In 1784, after the Revolution, the state legislature adopted a law governing religious societies in keeping with the new Constitution. Under it Shearith Israel was incorporated. This legislation gave to every Jew resident in the city the right to become a member of the congregation if he had attended services in the synagogue for one year and had contributed financially to the upkeep of its activities. Beyond that the synagogue required that the members must be twenty-one years of age and have signed the constitution of the congregation. Shearith Israel went along smoothly under these rulings for forty years. Then "the increased number of our brethren, and also the probability of many more coming to reside in this city" began potentially to threaten the traditional character of the congregation. It created a situation in which if many newcomers not attuned to Sephardi minhag became electors they might by sheer numbers soon gain electoral control of the congregation. Then, to suit what might well be their preference, the numerical majority at any time might change the constitutional requirement that the ritual and services of the congregation shall forever be Sephardi. They might "destroy the well known and established rules and customs of our ancestors as have been practised in said congregation for upwards of one hundred years past."

In 1820 the trustees had ruled that any Jew of twenty years of age and upwards residing in New York for at least twelve months may become a member, and eventually an elector on applying, being approved, and signing the constitution and by-laws.[38] The new element in this was the need of the applicant's "being approved." In 1825 there was coming to a head the division through which Congregation Bnai Jeshurun was born. A number of those in disagreement with the board of trustees claimed that any contributing seatholder who had attended service in the synagogue for at least a year could under the act of incorporation automatically become an elector. The trustees turned to the lawyer William Slosson to know whether their ruling of 1820

was valid. He wrote a lengthy opinion in which he laid it down that the right of any contributing resident Jewish worshiper to become a member of the synagogue as defined in the law of 1784 applied to conditions in that year when the congregation was incorporated. The synagogue as a corporation was free subsequently to establish its own conditions governing the admission of members. The congregation therefore was entirely within its rights to set up the requirement that the admission of new electors was subject to control by the ballots of the electors. The congregation had the right of deciding who might be a member, and no one could make himself a member against the consent of the congregation.

Strengthened by this interpretation, the electors at their meeting held in September, 1825, by secret ballot accepted only two of the sixteen new applicants for electoral membership.[39]

This action clinched the decision

to erect a new synagogue in this city [by] . . . a large portion of our brethren who have been educated in the German and Polish minhag, who find it difficult to accustom themselves to what is familiarly called the Portuguese minhag, in consequence of their early impressions and habits.

Ten years later the question of the admission of new electors came up with another emphasis. Then in July, 1835, a committee on membership rights stated as they looked to the future:

Your committee need not say that situated as our Congregation at present is, and with prospects under the blessing of Providence of future wealth and a respectability and standing of which its members may well feel proud, it becomes its imperious duty to cherish and protect its resources, by the introduction of laws, rendering the admission of improper persons as members more difficult than it has heretofore been. . . .

The laws of the State demand as a prerequisite to membership that the applicant shall have been a stated hearer and a Contributor for one year previous to admission.

Your committee are of opinion that the same duties which are required previous to membership, must continue to be performed to insure a continuance of the privilege, otherwise a person once being admitted may never again come to the place of Worship, nor contribute to the support thereof, but may participate in the disposition of the property, and have a Voice in the selection of officers, when it may happen to enlist his personal predelictions.[40]

As a result of the elaborate report and suggestions then submitted by the committee, the by-laws of the congregation were amended on July 31 and September 4, 1836, so as to require that any Jew of twenty-one years and

upwards desirous of being an elector of the congregation must have resided in the city for at least twelve months, and during that time he must have contributed not less than ten dollars to the congregation. He then must make a written request to become an elector. However, "any person marrying contrary to our religious laws, or renouncing Judaism" can not be an elector or member of the congregation.[41]

Whether or not an application to become an elector is accepted is decided by a ballot of white or black balls. If at least two-thirds of the balls deposited in the box are white, he becomes an elector on his signing the constitution and by-laws of the congregation. This system of using balls in a ballot box was traditional in the congregation. It had been in use in the congregation in Recife from which Shearith Israel had sprung two centuries earlier. There it was ruled "that the said elections shall be performed by means of ballot-box and balls and decided by a majority of vote." [42]

After that action in 1836 no question about the admission of electors came up until the end of the century when the congregation was facing the necessity of leaving its synagogue on 19th Street and moving into another district. Then, as in 1825, there were those who feared that a large influx of new members who could rapidly become electors might result in their gaining control of the congregation and introducing changes into the synagogue ritual. While membership as electors remained as always open to all Jewish men, to make more remote the possibility of any compromising the traditions of Shearith Israel, the board of trustees unanimously decided on June 30, 1892, that a committee of three should be added to the regular standing committee of the board. To this committee all applications for membership were to be referred, this committee having to report on all applicants before their names were submitted to the congregation for election. Four months later the trustees unanimously recommended to the electors that they establish the practice that in the future applications to become an elector should be favorably reported on by the board of trustees before being voted on by the electors.[43]

After three years, on September 26, 1895, a new safeguard was introduced. To become an eligible applicant for the electorate of the congregation, as in the ruling of 1820 one's application had to be submitted to the board of trustees for their approval, but in addition, before it could be brought to the electors for their ballots, one had to have been a member of the congregation for at least two years instead of one year. This new safeguard was strengthened a year

later, on October 26, 1896, when a prior membership of three years was unanimously made a prerequisite for eligibility to become an elector.[44]

The status of women in relation to the electorate stands in suspended animation. In 1919, the board of trustees unanimously recommended to the electors that women possessing the necessary and proper qualifications should be made eligible to be electors.[45] This striking recommendation was made a few months after Mrs. Mortimer M. Menken, the president of the Shearith Israel Sisterhood, had suggested that the board of trustees appoint auxiliary committees of women on the committees of the board of trustees. This suggestion was unanimously agreed to. Four years later the board appointed a committee of ten women to encourage synagogue attendance and increase the standing committees of the board of trustees. This resulted in much effective and enthusiastic activity, but with regard to the constitutional change that would have extended the privileges and responsibilities of the electorate to women no report was made by the electors and no action followed the suggestion of 1919.[46]

In the earliest days of Shearith Israel there was no special officer of the congregation who served as treasurer. The president had the congregational finances in his personal keeping. Later on a treasurer was appointed. His duties were sometimes arduous. By 1824, Cary Judah had served faithfully for twelve years as treasurer without any compensation. He then announced to the board of trustees that the work of personally going round to collect the many rentals of but a trifle weekly from the tenants in the buildings owned by the congregation took more time and effort than he could give. Thereupon the board decided that it was only right that he should be given a commission of five percent. for this arduous part of the service that he was giving.[47] Later on the congregation often put the collection of overdue accounts and similar financial routine work into the hands of a special congregational collector who worked on a commission basis. This function was frequently given to the shammash.

The principal paid administrative position in the synagogue organization has been that of the clerk. This office has never been a sinecure. It has involved attendance at all meetings, the keeping of records, and much letter writing. After the Revolution, with the reorganization of the congregation in 1784 the congregation had considerable difficulty in filling the position of clerk. The literary Isaac Pinto, the first to whom the position was offered, did not accept it. The second choice, Benjamin S. Judah, also would not take on the work. Therefore, since in those difficult days, and for long thereafter, the congrega-

tion could not offer its clerk a "salary adequate to the trouble thereof," each member of the board of trustees undertook to serve as clerk in monthly rotation. In the spring of 1785, I. Abrahams was chosen to serve, but one month later he had proved to be unable to give "that attention the duties of his office required"; so the trustees returned for a time to their makeshift rota of personal service in the clerkship.[48]

Not infrequently a leading member of the congregation has served as clerk. In 1791 Benjamin Seixas announced that he would make an offering on Yom Kippur eve of the $80 allowed him as clerk to the board of trustees.[49] In 1834 Naphtali Phillips, who had served the congregation ten times as president, resigned from the position of trustee that he had held for upwards of twenty years in order to serve as clerk. This office he filled until his retirement in 1859 over a quarter of a century later. He was succeeded by his son Isaac Phillips, who in February, 1858, resigned as president to be assistant clerk to his father without compensation, and who in the following year resigned as trustee to take the position of clerk.[50] This office he was still holding when death came to him thirty years later on August 4, 1889. The one who then immediately stepped into his position as clerk to the board was his son Naphtali Taylor Phillips. In his turn he served as clerk for almost a third of a century until 1921. On his completing twenty-five years of service, the board of trustees made a presentation to him in special recognition of his devoted services. Father, son, and grandson, Naphtali Phillips, Isaac Phillips, and N. Taylor Phillips, thus gave nearly a century of service as clerk to the board of trustees.[51]

N. Taylor Phillips was helped by I. Phillips Cohen, his nephew, in carrying out all the duties of his office. But during the last generation, the administrative and secretarial work of the congregation grew to be so varied and exacting that the clerk needed the assistance of a full-time executive secretary. In this position the congregation has benefited especially from the services of Victor Tarry. He became assistant to the clerk in 1936, and in 1943 he was made executive secretary responsible for organizing and carrying out all the administrative detail of the congregational office. During his term of office, systematic classification of congregational archives has been introduced.

The story here told of Congregation Shearith Israel is distilled for the most part out of the records contained in its own archives. The story of the early days is of necessity incomplete and fragmentary. The extant consecutive records begin only with that spurt of congregational activity in 1728 which culmi-

nated in the building of the first synagogue on Mill Street. Only one document antedates the minutes of that period. This is the deed of August 7, 1701, confirming the earlier one of 1681–82 which recorded the purchase by Joseph Bueno de Mesquita of cemetery land from William Merret and Margery his wife.[52] The absence of congregational records from the seventeenth century is the more readily understood when one remembers that at that period a public Jewish congregation was not officially sanctioned, and the congregation had to meet for many years in private homes.

The first minute book of the congregation that has been preserved opens on September 15, 1728, two days after the Day of Atonement. From 1728 to 1736, the minutes were kept sometimes in English and sometimes in Portuguese, but the congregational accounts were kept in Portuguese until 1745. The "wholesome Rules and Restrictions" as drawn up in 1728 were required to be read in synagogue by the parnas twice a year both in Portuguese and in English, though this linguistic requirement must have been embarrassing to some of the parnassim, whether Sephardim or Ashkenazim. As late as 1749, the constitution and by-laws of the congregation were set down on parallel pages in English and in Portuguese. After the middle of the eighteenth century all the congregation's records were kept in English.[53]

Prior to the Revolution, the minutes and the accounts of the congregation were entered under their Hebrew dating. After the Revolution this practice was continued in large measure, but dating by the secular calendar became progressively more frequent, until in 1814 the trustees felt it necessary to take official action requiring that the trustee minutes, all proclamations read in synagogue, notices for meetings, and every other legal paper of the congregation, should bear the Hebrew date as well as that of the common era.[54]

In Colonial days, the congregational papers were left with the man who chanced at the time to be president, or treasurer, or secretary. Shortly before the Revolution there seemed to be a growing dissatisfaction with this haphazard care of the documents. In the summer of 1774 it was agreed

> that Mr. Solomon Simson keep all the Deeds, Bonds and Books, belonging to the Kaal until a proper person or persons be Appointed by the Yahidim, to Receive and take Care of the Same the Book of Ascamot, the Book of General Accounts & offerings and this Book of Minutes, excepted.

When a little later Mattathias Gomez was elected parnas, he twice demanded of Solomon Simson that "the Books, Bonds, Papers &ca" in his possession be

delivered over to him as parnas. This Simson did not do. Therefore at a meeting of the whole congregation together with the parnassim, the assistants, and the yehidim, after long debate a paralyzing penalty was set up for any irregularity in the care or transmission of the congregational papers. It was

Resolved, That for the Future every Parnas Presidente on Entering on his office, shall give a recept for all such Books, Bonds, Deeds, Papers &ca belonging to this Congregation, that shall be deliver'd: unto him, according to a list, made of the same to be recited in said Recept, binding himself, his Heirs, Executors, Administrators, & assigns, in the Sum of Five thousand pounds this Currency, payable to the Parnasim of the preceding year, in trust for the Congregation, for the use of the same, for the faithfull delivery of the same unto the next Succeding Parnas

Accordingly Mr. Solomon Simson immediately delivered all the Books, Bonds, Deeds, papers &ca that were in his possesion, according to the list recited, in his recept unto Mattathias Gomez, the Parnas Presidente before the Yehedim then assembled when Mr. Simson's obligation was cancelled and Mr. Isaac Moses the Parnas Residente signed a receipt or obligation according to the aforesaid Resolution in the Penalty of Five thousand pounds paybe to Messrs Manuel Myers & Solomon Myers Cohen, in trust for the Congregation, & for the use of the same the aforesaid Gentlemen were the Parnasim of the preceding year.[55]

Before the Revolution interrupted for seven years the keeping of the congregational accounts, the last records entered in September, 1776, contain an item of five shillings for "a box to put the sefarim in." This may well have been the box in which Gershom Mendes Seixas transported congregational scrolls of the Torah to Connecticut whither he went to live under patriot domain.

During the troubled days of the Revolution the congregational records apparently were not disturbed. On the reorganization of the congregation in 1784 a book of Shearith Israel's which Lyon Jonas had kept during the war, and other documents and accounts in the hands of Hayman Levy and others were formally transferred to the officers then in charge of the congregation.[56] A list of the archives at the time, which does not include such material as the minute book or the constitution and by-laws (ascamoth), is preserved in the following.

Inventory of K.K.S.I. Chest, receipted by Alex. Zuntz, Treasurer. A Small Chest Containing the following Articles, viz:

No. 1. William Merrit & Margary his Wife's deed to Joseph Bueno for 52 feet or thereabouts for the Beth Hiam [1701]

2. Richard Davis Atty to Noy Wiley, Deed to Lewis Gomez, Mordecay, Daniel & David Gomez for a Lot adjoyning the above [1729]

3. An Order of Council to appropriate the above Lots for the use of the Burying Ground [1728]

4. Cornelious Clopper & Catherine his Wife their Deed to Lewis Gomez, Jacob Franks Mordecay Gomez Rodrigo Pacheco for the Lot of ground whereon the School stands &c [1729]
5. Cornelious Clopper junr & Catherine his Wife Deed to Daniel Gomez, Joseph Simson, Jacob Franks & Myer Myers for the House & Lot adjoyning the Shool [1758]
6. Bond from Lewis Mordecay Daniel and David Gomez in the penal Sum of £1000. to secure the Burying Ground [1729]
7. Bond from Lewis Gomez Jacob Franks Mordecay Gomez and Rodrigo Pacheco in the Penal Sum of £2000 to secure the Lot Ground whereon the Shool is built [1729]
8. Draughts taken by different surveyors of the above Ground & Lotts
9. Lease and Release for the Beth Hyiam in Charles Town known by the Name of Beth Alohim
10. A Bundle Ketubas
11. Attorneys Opinions
12. Petitions
13. a Bundle Letters
14. Accounts & Receipts
15. Notes and Receipts
16. Agreements
17. Receipts
18. a Bundle of papers of no Consequence
19. A Marble Cover Books of Accts & Receipts
20. A Receipt Book for the use of the Treasurer

New York July 25th 1784 Received of Messrs Solomon Simson, Solomon Myers Cohen and Benjamin Seixas a Committee appointed for the purpose, a small Chest, Containing the foregoing Articles from No. 1. to 20.

Contents not Examened

[Signed] ALEXR ZUNTZ
Treasurer [57]

For a long time the records were kept in "a small chest." By 1830, the congregation recognized the desirability of putting the title deeds and other valuable papers "in a place of security from fire, and considered necessary to procure an iron safe therefor." [58] A little over a year later there occurred in Mill Street a destructive fire from which the synagogue building as a whole was barely saved. The congregational papers were not damaged. In 1833, the last year of the Mill Street Synagogue, a safety closet was built for the congregational silver and valuable papers. In October, 1844, it was suggested that an iron chest should be made for holding the books, valuable papers, and silver belonging to the congregation. In December, 1849, two iron chests were purchased for $60 and placed in the trustees' meeting room in the Crosby Street Syna-

gogue. There the papers could be readily available for reference. In 1852 a small trunk containing deeds and other valuable papers was deposited in the Union Savings Bank, but it was withdrawn a year later.[59]

It was not until the congregation moved into its building on Central Park West in 1897 that any serious thought was given to the problem of the care of the priceless congregational archives in some better containers than in tin trunks or metal safes that would incinerate the papers in case of fire. In the fall of 1900 it was decided to make the vault under the synagogue building dampproof, but this was found to be a prohibitively costly undertaking. In 1923 and 1929 the suggestion was again considered. The construction of the municipal subway under Central Park West finally sealed the natural spring which had been the source of the persistent dampness in the basement and subbasement of the synagogue building. In 1952 an elaborate installation for controlling the residual humidity in the vault gave to the congregational archives as safe a resting place as can be provided in the building. At one time during the Second World War in view of the possibility of destructive air attack on the city, it was decided to fill two boxes with certain old records of the congregation and store them in the vault of a local bank. But in the sequel a special safe was acquired which it was felt would give adequate protection for such papers, the scrolls of the Torah, and congregational silver that possessed special historic or sentimental value.[60]

One of the factors which contributed to the more systematic keeping of records by the congregation from the early nineteenth century was the city's requirement that the sexton of a congregation had to make a note of all interments, and the clergyman had to note all marriages conducted under the auspices of the congregation and report them to the city's recording officers. At various times the trustees required the hazzan to compile or recompile a list such as that of the names of those entitled to be recalled in perpetual memory on the anniversary of their death, at the beginning of every month, and on the Day of Atonement. In 1906 and again in 1933 circulars and blanks were sent to the head of each family in the congregation requesting genealogical data about births, marriages, deaths and other similar information for recording in the congregational archives. In 1915 a card index system was introduced.[61] Thus in the last half century orderly, comprehensive, and accessible records have been gradually built up in contrast with the often informal and haphazard notations of Colonial days.

In the twentieth century Shearith Israel became realistically mindful of the need of making its treasured archives and records more readily available both for its own purposes and for those doing research work in American Jewish history or genealogy.[62] In the middle of the nineteenth century both Isaac M. Wise, then rabbi in Albany, and Benjamin II (Israel Joseph Benjamin), who was writing the story of his travels, wished to obtain from Shearith Israel's records "extensive information" about the history of the Jews in New York City. Because the congregational archives were then unclassified and unindexed, neither could have his wish gratified. But in 1892, when the historic consciousness of the whole community was stirred by the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, permission was granted to the American Jewish Historical Society to inspect the records of the congregation.[63] In the first decade of the twentieth century and in recent years considerable work has been done on indexing the records. A quarter of a century ago much favorable consideration was given to the possibility of photostating some of the congregational records; [64] but it was not until 1949 that in response to a request from American Jewish Archives microfilms were made of the minute books up to the year 1900.[65] Through these progressive steps there has been opened up to scholars the unique primary historical source material treasured in the archives of Congregation Shearith Israel.

In earlier generations there was not always a clear recognition of ownership of the synagogue's archives. Congregational papers were often kept for years in the home of the president, or the treasurer, or the secretary, or the minister of the congregation. After his death, these papers and books sometimes were erroneously regarded as his personal possessions and thus eventually became lost to the congregation. It was in this way that invaluable parts of Shearith Israel's archives and records which were in the home of the Reverend J. J. Lyons at the time of his death were later transferred by his children to the keeping of the American Jewish Historical Society. Some of these have been printed in the Publications of the Society. George Washington's immortal letter addressed "to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island" remained in the possession of descendants of Moses Seixas, its warden at the time. For years the synagogue in Newport was closed and there was no congregation in it. Finally, a century and a half after the letter was written, that letter was disposed of not as an official document of the congregation to which it was addressed but as an heirloom of the family of Moses Seixas.

Other objects of historic interest which were in earlier synagogues cannot be traced. Some were destroyed by time, some were otherwise lost to the congregation; but Shearith Israel treasures from bygone days paintings of Bernard Hart (1764–1855), Joshua Isaacs (1744–1810), Major Mordecai M. Noah (1785–1851) and his wife, Rebecca Jackson Noah, and the shohet Marcus van Gelderen (1798–1871), and pictures and photographs of many others notably associated with the congregation.[66]

The care now given to the ordering and the safeguarding of the archives makes possible response to the summons of old, "Bring the book of records, the story of the days." [67] It is this which has made possible the writing of much of the story told in this book.

Besides the president, vice-president, trustees, electors, treasurer, clerk, collector, preacher and readers, there is one other official of the congregation who fills an indispensable position in the conduct of its affairs. That is the shammash—sacristan, sexton, beadle, superintendent. No one English word can begin to suggest the manifold nature of his heterogeneous duties. The shammash in Shearith Israel has always assumed far more than the duty of the care of the synagogue and its ceremonial articles. At one time or another he was called on for such varied functions as the making of candles, cleaning the synagogue lamps and silver and all the brass work, heating the water in the communal bath, disinterring remains from graves, caring for the congregational cemeteries, superintending the baking of matzoth, managing wedding ceremonies, collecting debts, reading services, awakening congregants for early morning services, and acting as shohet. Indeed, on one occasion early in the nineteenth century the board of trustees declared that

> the duties appertaining to the office [are] so multifarious that to reduce them to writing might be attended with some inconvenience, as many duties which of right would appertain to be done by the shammash might be omitted, and which would afford an excuse . . . [for] not performing duties belonging to the office.

Thirteen of the congregational shammashim have borne Ashkenazi names. Those with Sephardi names have been six, three from the Guedalia family, two bearing the name Campanal, a name notably associated with the Newport Jewish community in its earliest days from 1658, and one named David Henriques Valentine.

The first American shammash known to us by name is Valentine Campanal. When he was admitted as a freeman in New York in 1713 he was described

as a butcher, a term probably indicating that he was also the community's shohet. We do not know when he took office as shammash prior to 1728, but he served until 1738. The congregation's regulations drawn up in 1728 declare

> that Valentin Campanall Shamaz shall be oblidged to atend at the Sinagog and shall call the Yechidimz that they may assemble togeathere at the usuall hours and he likewise be oblidged to call to Selichot such persons as shall be given him by the Parnaz in List. that he shall keep the Synagog candlesticks & lamp clean and make the candles also shall keep the Sestern supplyed with watter for which he shall have Sixteen pound, two Cords of wood & masot Pr. annum.[68]

Some three years later, his salary, from which he had given no less than £1 toward the building of the Mill Street Synagogue, was raised to £18, but with this went the warning that if he failed to comply with his duties, he would be fined five shillings each time. History is glad to testify that at the end of the year this faultless shammash received his salary in full, with no deductions.[69]

He was followed for one year, 1738–39, by Joseph Simson, then a man fifty-two years of age, who was to live on to see his hundred and first year. He had come to America from Germany in 1718. Eight years after his term of service as shammash, he served the congregation as its president in 1747, an office he held again in 1754 and in 1761. His two sons, Sampson and Solomon, played not undistinguished parts in the life of New York in the second half of the eighteenth century.[70]

Asher Campanal, who succeeded Simson as shammash in 1739, laid down his office at the end of 1743, and Ribbi Kalonimus bar Samuel was then appointed in his stead. When after a year the ribbi died, Asher Campanal accepted the position of shammash once more until his death in 1753.[71]

Elias Solomon followed him in office and served for six years. His duties included besides those specified in 1728 those of seeing that the perpetual lamp was always alight, attending at circumcisions and funerals, keeping the burial ground clean, and obeying the parnas' orders in everything relating to the synagogue.[72] On one occasion his successor, Judah Levy Israel, who served for twenty years from 1759 to 1779, had a disagreement with the board about what were his duties. In 1760, £10 was added to his annual salary "in consideration of which he is to be particularly carefull in keeping the Bath in good order by cleaning it from time to time and to heat the water when required." For this last service with the ritual bath he was allowed an additional fifty shillings a year for wood.

Judah Levy Israel was a loyalist. On October 16, 1776, he affirmed to the admiral and the commanding general of the British forces occupying New York "true allegiance to our Rightful Sovereign George the Third." He remained in New York during the British occupation, and on his death on June 27, 1779, he was buried in the Chatham Square cemetery.[73] In the four years following, such occasional duties of the office as were called for in the depleted congregation were probably carried out by Michael S. Hays. It was he who was serving as shammash late in 1783 when the scattered members of the congregation returned to the city. However, his tenure of office came to an end in 1788 after four years of service. His was an aggressive character which led him into not infrequent difficulties and finally caused severance of his official relations with the congregation. He then moved out of the house behind the synagogue which the congregation had built for the shammash.[74]

Among the five candidates for the position which he vacated were two women, Abigail Hays and Rachel Myers. The candidate selected was Samuel Lazarus, who as shammash and collector served from 1788, until he resigned early in 1795.[75]

Abraham Isaacs was chosen to succeed Samuel Lazarus. On at least one occasion, in the absence of a congregational shohet he was called on also to fill that function. It was during his incumbency that the congregation had to come to final grips with the problem created by the subsidences of earth down the sharp slope of its Chatham Square cemetery. In 1792, Mr. Isaacs undertook to remove all the exposed bones, rebury them, and reset the tombstones in an upper part of the ground that was leveled off for that purpose. Five weeks of this gruesome work brought to his income an addition of £107. 5. 4. This was most welcome to him, for his principal difficulty was that he had "a very large and helpless family of children," and he declared that his salary of £50 "will scarcely find bread only." Later his salary was raised from $200 to $250 besides free residence in the house of the shammash. He was also allowed five percent on any collections that he made for the congregation. On his death in 1815, his name was put on the congregational perpetual memorial list "in consideration of his long services being a faithful officer of the congregation."[76]

To fill the vacancy, in May of that year his widow, Jennet Isaacs, was unanimously elected as "shammastress." Her many children were by then growing up, and to help her meet the practical difficulties her son Joseph Isaacs was authorized to attend to some of the more masculine congregational functions.[77]

This was an anomalous situation though in the sixteenth century synagogues in Rome had known a woman "parnesessa" whose function it was to take charge of charity grants for widows, orphan girls, sick women, and brides. Jennet Isaacs seems to have remained the "shammastress" for six years, from 1815 to 1821. Then, in March, 1821, David Henriques Valentine was elected to fill the place of the "shammastress" and her son. Valentine is said to have had on his wrists marks left by the chains by which he had been held in prison by the Inquisition. He served for fourteen years, resigning on May 1, 1835, two years before his death.[78]

His successor was David Phillips. He was of Dutch background, and a particularly observant Jew. He served as shammash for almost a quarter of a century, from 1835 to 1859. During his tenure of office not a few troubles beset him. In November, 1840, he lost an eight-year-old daughter from measles, and a month and a half later in the beginning of 1841, small pox hit his home carrying off a son twenty-two years of age. He and his family were then sent to live elsewhere until in the opinion of the president of the congregation it would be safe and proper for them to return. In the meanwhile, as a disinfecting measure his house was painted. On another occasion he got into a belligerent quarrel with a city inspector about his failure regularly to register the record of interments made under his supervision. In this, as in several instances in his relations with the congregants, he was plagued by an inability to keep his temper and his tongue under control. In September, 1859, when he was seventy-eight years of age, he sent in his resignation because his physical infirmities made him unable any longer to carry out the duties of his office.

Two years later he died, in August, 1861.[79] His widow was asked to act in his place, so far as practicable, until November of that year. In the two following years, Alexander Canter, who among other qualities was a skilled blower of the shofar, acted as shammash.

Thereafter, Jacob D. Phillips, a son of shammash David Phillips, was appointed to act from November 1, 1861. Because of a weakness for liquor, he proved to be in character quite unfitted for the position, and at the beginning of 1864 his term of service came to an abrupt end.[80]

He was succeeded by his cousin Levy Joel Isaacs. For thirty-eight years Isaacs carried out his duties, hiding his essential goodheartedness behind a gruff manner, an impressive long moustache, and a loud voice. After his first eight years of service the electors doubled his salary, increasing it again ten years

later, and again after another two years, until he was receiving higher compensation than was the assistant hazzan. On his completion of twenty-five years as shammash, the electors congratulated him—and themselves—on "his uniform fidelity and faithful and intelligent course of conduct." Eventually in 1902 he had to be retired because of physical infirmity, and a year or so later at the end of May, 1903, he passed away.[81]

There followed him in service in the Seventieth Street Synagogue his cousin Charles Steinberg, grandson of David Phillips who was the shammash from 1835 to 1859. Steinberg came to the duties of shammash with the most unlikely training for his office. He had been the owner of a restaurant, a Republican member of the New York State Assembly from a normally Democratic district, and a purchasing agent for the New York City Department of Correction. He carried out his duties conscientiously, although his bearing often lacked amenity. On May 6, 1919, after serving as shammash for seventeen years he was retired because of ill health. Five years later, in the spring of 1922, he died. In his will he left a legacy of $1,000 to the Polonies Talmud Torah School, the interest from which was to be used for a prize primarily for the pupil or pupils ranking highest in general Jewish scholarship. But the bequest also requires that the pupil's scholastic record should be matched by synagogue attendance and good deportment.[82]

The next to fill the office of Shammash was Hiram Guedalia. His father, Moses Guedalia, had been the chief organizer and the hazzan of the Sephardi Montefiore Congregation in Harlem in the last decade of the nineteenth century. When that congregation closed down, Moses Guedalia was always ready together with his sons to conduct the overflow services held by Shearith Israel on the High Holy Days. His son Hiram, a man of happy nature, was never happier than when he was leading the congregational singing or caring for the ceremonial and ritual objects of the synagogue. No physical labor within the synagogue did he feel to be beneath the dignity of his office as shammash. He served from 1919 until he passed away nine years later at the close of the second day of Succoth in September, 1928. His warmheartedness, sincerity, and devotion endeared him to all the congregation.

Hiram Guedalia was succeeded by his son Moses Guedalia. Like his father and other members of the Guedalia family, he had vocal power which enabled him to lead the congregational singing. For twelve years he gave himself conscientiously to the many duties of his office, winning general good will

and popularity. Then in the summer of 1940 he tendered his resignation in order to enter the field of business.[83]

Judah L. Guedalia, a first cousin of Moses Guedalia, was elected in September, 1940, to succeed him. Because of his qualifications, when he was appointed he was required to assume in addition to the traditional duties of shammash also those of bookkeeping and other clerical work, teaching Bar Mitzvah boys their portion in the Torah, and teaching the chanting of the haphtarah. Some three years later, in order to relieve Dr. Gerstein, there was added to all this the duty of reading the weekday morning services four times in the week. On other occasions also Judah Guedalia acts as assistant hazzan. Through his many qualifications he gave to the office of shammash a new status of dignity and usefulness.[84]

Throughout all this story of the congregational administration there have been glimpses of financial matters concerning salaries, fines for not accepting office, for lack of punctuality, or for violating sundry regulations, as well as questions of funds raised for charity, for building, and for a large variety of other special purposes. Varied have been the methods used to raise the funds needed for the financial maintenance of the synagogue in the history of early New York Jewry. Meeting the cost of building a new synagogue or the crisis of saving from physical obliteration a cemetery built on an unstable hillside were exceptional financial challenges which compelled the congregation to ask for help from Jewish groups far and wide. We have seen how the construction of the first synagogue building in the city demanded resources far beyond those which the small local community was able to command, and it was with the generous help of Jews in Curaçao, Dutch Guiana, Jamaica, Barbados, Boston, and London, that the first and second New York synagogues came into being. But the socially compelling pattern for giving was set from the beginning when a small group of families determined to maintain the multifarious religious, educational, philanthropic, and other Jewish communal activities that were then centered exclusively in the synagogue.

In the first year from which we have records, 1728–29, the congregational expenses were as follows:

5489 (1728–29) In the name of the Blessed God Amen	
The Holy Sedaka of Seherit Israel	Dr
For *obras Pias*	£30.11.3
For oil	4.18
" wax	5.6.4½

For Expenses on the new Beth Haim	4.16.6
" Wood and Massot for the officials	11.15.
" Expenses on the Synagogue	4.3.1
" Rent of ditto	8
For Salary of Hazan [de Fonseca]	50
" Reby Benja [Elias]	20
" Samll Meyr for Sochet & Bodeck	20
" Valentin Campanal, Samas	16
	£175.10.2½
Balance delivered to the new Parnas, cash	30. 9.2¾
	£205.19.5¼ [85]

The modest figures in this account make startlingly clear how far the synagogue was from enjoying the relative prosperity of its sister congregation in London. The total expenses of £175.10.2½ incurred in that year, or the little over £600 spent on building the New York synagogue in the following year 1729–30, contrast phenomenally with the annual expenses of the London community such as £2024.3.10 in 1697–98, £2289.19.1 in 1698–99, £2640.-7.10 in 1699–1700, and £2955.9.10 in 1700–01, the year in which the synagogue in Bevis Marks was completed.[86]

The earliest detailed accounts of the New York congregation, those for the year 5512 (1751–52), record expenses incurred in buying wood used for fuel, casting lead seals to certify the kasher meat, building and decorating the Cabanah (Succah), cleaning the yard, buying rice and sugar, making haroseth for Passover, baking matzoth, mending the lamps, keeping and dispatching charity cases, paying the Negro who lighted the candles and attended on the Day of Atonement, paying the doctor who attended to the sick poor, purchasing an empty trunk in which to keep the community's books, glazing and mending windows, paying the salaries of the hazzan, shammash, shohet, and teacher, buying spermaceti candles, buying paper and primers for poor children, altering the chimney in the Hebra building, building the ritual bath, caring for the pump, purchasing ribbons for the palm branch, cleaning the synagogue brass, buying lead for ferriage, repairing the teacher's kitchen, "dispatching the two Polanders," taking care of the expenses attending the burial of an old woman, buying harness for the hearse, printing tickets for men's and women's seats, and payments for other similar needs.

How did the congregation raise the funds needed for all its expenditures?

In that year a variety of methods was used including free-will offerings, collections at a funeral, charity boxes in the synagogue and at the cemetery,

fines for those who refused to accept the office to which they were elected, and a duty on the kasher beef that was exported. At different times the main source of income was sought for in different directions. From the earliest extant congregational records we learn that in 1728

The offerings shall be Gather'd every three months by the Parnaz; as Likewise it not being convenient the selling of Misvots. Its Resolved for the future that in Lieu thereof the Parnaz with his assistants shall tax the mens Seats in the Sinagog, as they are now seated, But not exceeding Fifteen Shillings each Seat pr annum, nor less than five Shillings, and the Misvots shall Be given out by the Parnaz as the whole year.[87]

One of the problems with which the New York congregation had to grapple in those days was how to hold as contributing members those Jews who lived "in the country," i.e., in Harlem, or Westchester, or across the East River. In 1736 an effort was made to include them in the communal budgeting since Manhattan Jewry could not "defray the charge of the congregation without the help and assistance of our brethren dwelling in the country." It was then ordered

that every family or private person, that carries on trade in the Country, & that is in circumstances shall pay yearly for the use of this K.K. . . . forty Shillings.[88]

The tax (finta) with which the congregation assessed each individual could be met by offerings. Therefore on April 16, 1747,

Att a junto of the Kaal held this day its agreed by the Mejorety of the Jehidim here present that for the better soporting this Congregation a certain sum be raised by a Tax for eighteen months from the first of Nisan last past for the servis of the said Congregation, to be paid by every person that congregates with us, Leving either in town or countery that is capeable of paying the same, which tax everyone shall be oblige to pay by quarterly payments to the Parnass for the time being and on his refuseing to pay the same for four successive quarters his name shall be Rased out of the Book of offerings and the person so refuseing shall not be call'd to Sepher, have any misvoth nor be Loock't upon as a Member of this Congregation.

Said tax when duly paid as aforesaid shall be in full for all offerings whatsoever, provided said offerings com too no more annually than what each person is Taxt with. But in case any person offers annualy more then his Tax, he shall then pay the overplus at the end of the year to the parnass for the time being and likewise he shall be oblige to pay what ever he offers for the officers and the Nedaboth [Freewill offerings].

Each person's Name to be Enter'd in a Book with the Sum he's Taxed with against his name, that the same may at all times appear clear.

Each person so paying his respective Tax shall be intiteled to a Siat in the Sinagog on his aplecation for it which the Parnass or his ajuntos for the time being shall be

oblige to provide for him, his name shall be enter'd in the book of Jehidim and he shall Injoy all the rights of a Jehid and be capeable of serving for Parnass or ajunto —while he behaves with decency quiatly and peasefuly and Duly pays what he's taxt with. But on his at any time Refuseing to pay his Tax for four quarters successively being call'd upon and admonished, so to do either by word or Letter from the Parnass for the time being shall then loose the benifet of being any more a Yahid as aforesaid and Salom all Israell.[89]

This taxation measure produced £151.9.4 from thirty-three Ashkenazi members and £116.7.4 from nineteen Sephardim. Those assessed with the largest tax of £14 were Jacob Franks and Mordecai Gomez. The smallest tax £2.6.8 was set on thirteen individuals. The families which produced the largest congregational income were six of the Gomez family (£40.16.8), five of the Hart family (£26.16.8), three Franks (£22.3.4), four of the family of Hays (£17.6.8), two of Louzada (£16.6.8), three of Rodrigues Rivera (£15.3.4), one Seixas (£9.6.8), and three of the Pinto family (£9.6.8).

At this period the principal source of congregational income was from such taxation of individuals, and from the uncertain source of offerings. In 1750 the attempt was made to establish a more stable budget through again setting a charge on the seats in the synagogue.

At a meeting of the whole Congregation, agreed. In order to raise the Money difficient in the last years acct. To appoint four proper Persons to rate the seats for the year & appoint each person a proper place for wch seat he shall now pay to the present parnas the sum annexd to his seat. The seats to be rated at no more than £3. and no less than 15 Shillgs, with Liberty to the said Four persons to make new seats & place & regulate them & others as they shall think proper wch cost the Parnas shall pay.[90]

Some sixteen years later the congregation again reverted to this system in the hope of raising a basic income of £300 annually from charges for seats "for the more certain support and upholding of our holy worship, these amounts to be deducted out of offerings." [91]

Nevertheless, income from offerings was also needed to help meet the budget. This, however, was not easy to estimate in advance, nor has it always been easy to control. Offerings were not always paid promptly. Therefore, two years later, in 1768, the records state that

Whereas, there are Some persons belonging to this *Kahal* who have not, nor do not discharge their offerings, due to the Synegouge, we do also Resolve, That any person or persons That are now Indebted to the Synegouge for their offrings of above Six months Standing, and also Those that do not from hence forward discharge Their Offrings to the Parnas for the Time being at the Expiration of Every Six

months, he or they So neglecting to pay & Discharge The Same at Such period, shall be no Longer deemed a member of This Congregation, neither shall he or they have any *Mitsvoth* Priviledges or other Honors of the Synegouge or the Liberty of making any *Mi sheberach,* and if a *Yahid* or *Yehidim* his or their name shall be Erased, and no longer be deemed a Member of this *Kahal;* And That the Parnas for the Time being, shall have it in his power to Give Such Farther Lenity to those Indebted to the Synegouge, as he in his Prudence Shall Judge Requisite, and it is also agreed That these Resolves, shall be read by the Ribbi publickly in the Synegouge on the next *Sabbath* Being *Shabbat hagadol. Peace upon Israel.*[92]

Responsibility for maintaining the dignity of the synagogue services is, as we have seen, vested in the parnas. In his turn, the presiding officer is accorded courteous recognition and honorific mention in the blessing following an offering made during the service. It has been known for a disaffected individual to affront the parnas by explicitly asking the hazzan not to include the mention of the parnas in this way. But more than two centuries ago such attempted defiance of courtesy was officially outlawed. It was laid down in 1731

for the peace and harmony of the Kahal and of the holy synagogue that any person who may be called to the Sepher Torah to be obliged to offer at least three blessing for the health of the Parnas Presidente and the Kahal Kados, and it shall be the duty of the Hazan to advise such person, and if he refuse, his offering shall not be accepted, and he shall be fined to the full extent, with Thirty Shillings for the Sedaka, and shall not be at liberty to make another offering;—and in case he wishes to make an offering for the Kaal Kados other than at the Sepher, it shall not be accepted without naming the Parnas first, and if he insists, he shall incur the above punishment; Peace be on Israel, Amen.[93]

Though this decision piously closes with the words "Peace be on Israel, Amen," peace could not always be assured by a resolution. Individual bearers of a grudge would still at times use their offering in synagogue as a means of giving expression to their dissatisfaction. Therefore in 1768 it was resolved with unmistakable forcefulness

. . . That when any person is Called to the *Sefer* he shall offer at Least Sixpence for the Acting Parnas, & *K.K.* and whatever person or persons Belonging to this Congregation Shall persist in behaving Indecent or making an Offering otherwise then the True Intent and meaning of this Resolve, he or they so offending Shall no longer be deemed a member of this *K.K.* and shall not have any *Mitsvoth* or other Priviledges or Honors of the Synegouge, neither shall he or they have the Liberty of making any *Mi sheberach* at all, and if a *Yahid* or *Yehidim* his or their name shall be immediately Erased, and be no longer deemed worthy of being number'd amongst us.[94]

Such drastic chastisement should, it would seem, have put an effective end to synagogal lese majesty. But more than a half a century after that clarion call to politeness, in 1822, a disaffected man who had quarreled with some members of the congregation asked Hazzan Peixotto to announce his offering in honor of only a section of the congregation. The hazzan with firm dignity refused. The board of trustees supported him in what was at the time a congregational *cause célèbre.*

The suggestion has rarely been made that free-will offerings should be disallowed. But the question of modifying the system of making and announcing these offerings during the synagogue services has come up in every generation. In 1809 there was submitted to the board of trustees a memorandum expressing an elaborate and forceful criticism of the offerings as currently made. This was signed by Israel Baer Kursheedt, Isaac Moses, Gompert S. Gomperts, Aaron Levy, Emanuel Nunes Carvalho, Alexander Ruden, Naphtali Phillips, Seixas Nathan, Joshua Moses, Isaac H. Levy, Isaac Abrahams, Joseph Andrews, Moses Lopez, Ephraim Hart, Joel Hart, Harmon Hendricks, and Sampson Simson. These leaders in the congregation urged that the number of offerings be reduced, that they be made more concise, and that they be appropriated to charity.[95] Four years later, in 1813, the minutes with delightful unconscious satire report that

> in future the Hazan will be considered responsible for any improper offering that shall be proclaimed by him unless sanctioned by the acting Parnas.[96]

The problem of regulation of the offerings was not an incidental detail in congregational life or in its finances. It was at times a source of friction, division, and even secession. The trustees loyally tried to hold the system under control. In 1815, they recognized that those who rarely attended synagogue were able to escape that part of the financial obligation which would be theirs in the form of offerings made during the service. Regular attendants who made an offering in recognition of carrying out a function in a service bore a disproportionately heavy financial responsibility. The trustees therefore permitted the making of a nominal offering of one shilling on the Sabbath and two shillings on a festival to mitigate, though it could not solve, the problems inherent in the system.[97] In 1820, we are told that

> The Trustees of the Congregation of Shearith Israel have learned with regret, that certain attempts have been made to introduce a mode of offering altogether un-

known to this congregation and which if persisted will tend to subvert the usages and customs of the Kahela as established by our Fathers. Every Congregator attending our place of Worship should know and remember that he stands in the presence of Almighty God to implore his forgiveness and His blessings and should any person so far forget what is due to this congregation and to himself as to commit any act that may in any way interupt the solemnity of our holy worship, it is hoped he is aware that he incurs the displeasure of the great Creator of the Universe.[98]

The making of offerings during the synagogue service was further complicated by the permission that was given by the trustees from time to time for them to be made for specific societies such as the Meshibat Nefesh, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, or "for the poor of the Holy Land." [99]

In 1824 one of the most frequently occurring causes of trouble was removed when the requirement that it be obligatory to make an offering in honor of the parnas in addition to any other offering was rescinded and made optional. The failure of one man to make the required minimum offering of two shillings when called to the reading of the Torah on the last day of Passover evoked a storm of dissension.[100] Coming as this did when the time was ripe for the organization of an Ashkenazi congregation, the issue was tied up with the initial steps taken toward the formation of this new group. For a while it threatened to cast the shadow of a schism on an otherwise normal development in the community.

In 1828 Naphtali Phillips brought up a plan by which subscriptions would take the place of offerings. The committee reporting on his suggestion listed the following ten reasons for the radical change. They pointed out that the offering system in use

does not enable the trustees to know in advance what income can be relied on, brings financial calculation into the religious services, bears principally on the regular attendants, distracts from worship and devotion, gives great additional labor to the hazan, unduly lengthens the service, frequently causes affront, unintentionaly or otherwise, causes many persons to absent themselves from synagogue, prevents many from contributing who otherwise would, and was not practised in ancient times.[101]

Therefore the committee recommended the adoption of Mr. Phillips' plan, urging that voluntary subscriptions should take the place of the offerings. They recommended further that it should be entirely optional whether one who was called to the reading of the Torah should or should not make offerings. If he did and he was not a stranger unfamiliar with the customs of the congregation,

his offerings should not exceed three in number, this limitation to apply also to offerings made before the Ark. However, should the system of subscriptions bring in to the congregation insufficient funds, the trustees should have the right to continue the system of offerings.[102]

In 1854 and again in 1856 the whole question became once more a major congregational issue. In 1856 Benjamin Nathan proposed to change the constitution by altogether abolishing offerings and substituting for them a more equitable system of taxing the seatholders. Thereupon fifty-one members of the congregation drew up a memorial opposing his suggestion as one which would work hardship on many members. The trustees took action accordingly, preserving the system of offerings that had become traditional.[103]

But Benjamin Nathan was not a man to be easily discouraged. He and all those who had desired to see a change in the system in vogue had not disapproved of truly free-will offerings. In December, 1867, he sent in to the congregation $100 as a free-will offering, requesting that in the next published annual accounts it be listed as "a donation from a member in lieu of offerings." The trustees accepted his gift without, however, formally binding themselves to the condition which he had made. Mr. Nathan wrote that he did not expect the wording he had used to be changed. The trustees replied that if he was dissatisfied they would return his contribution on his written request. In reply Mr. Nathan did not grant the right of the trustees to alter his request in any way. Thereupon the trustees returned his donation in keeping with their interpretation of Article VI of the constitution that the congregation shall forever be supported by the sale or taxation of seats in the synagogue and by free-will offerings. Nevertheless, in the year 1868 the electors asked the trustees to ascertain the sense of the congregation as regards the abolishment of all offerings in synagogue on Sabbaths and Holy Days, or their limitation to one single offering, and the application of the time thus gained to some means productive of spiritual welfare—thus broadly urging that there should be a preaching ministry in the pulpit. The trustees made an earnest attempt to minimize the inequitable incidence of scattered individual offerings made in the synagogue through substituting for them one annual voluntary offering in the form of a subscription, and by increasing the cost of seats. This, however, did not prove successful.[104]

The problem came up again in 1869, 1874, 1882, and sporadically thereafter.[105] But over the years the difficulties of the past have been effectively

overcome. Today an offering made in the synagogue is what from the beginning it was intended to be, a spontaneous and voluntary expression of a grateful heart, or a pious recalling of the memory of a loved one who has passed away, with a desire to uphold and strengthen the shrine of worship of God among men.

Reverting to the general financial problems of the congregation in other days, we must remember that the congregants who returned to New York after the Revolution found a ruined city as well as a congregation that needed rebuilding. Shearith Israel passed through years of acute economic trial. It took up a subscription at the end of 1788 because of its debts to its hazzan, shohet, shammash, and ribbi. A few months later the Shohet Van Ottingen "in great want of his wages due" gave notice that he would have to look for another source of livelihood unless his salary was paid. A few days after this, the trustees declared that

> Our distressed situation being indebted to the different officers upwards of two hundred pounds and our inability to pay them . . . under the disagreeable necessity of informing them that they are discharged in Tammuz next.

Two months later, in June, 1789, Hazzan Seixas was offered £100 and the Shohet Van Ottingen a proportionate sum in settlement of the debts due them, an offer which these two men felt that they could not accept in view of their own debts.[106]

This financial tension was not readily relieved. At the beginning of 1791 the trustees spoke of the need of "supporting this tottering congregation." But in the next decade the imbalance was largely corrected. The annual income from the rental of seats that in 1789 had brought in only from £40 to £120, rose in 1799 to between £300 and £400.[107]

The treasurer of the congregation has ordinarily been one who was not a trustee, and who had no vote at trustees' meetings, but who was given the courtesy of being present at meetings of the board so that he should be kept informed in detail about the financial affairs of the congregation.[108] In early days the congregation's funds were as a rule kept personally by the treasurer or the president. In November, 1801, it was decided to deposit and pay congregational funds through a bank. But at the next meeting of the board of trustees this was decided to be inexpedient,

> as the funds of this congregation are small, that the trouble of keeping an account with banks is considerable inasmuch as it tends to expose the situation of our affairs to those who are disinterested.[109]

A century and a half ago the main annual income was some $1,100 from the rental of seats. Those indebted to the congregation might be advised that they could be sued unless they paid their bills. The substantial sum of about $700 was received annually from ground rent paid for the congregation's holdings around its Chatham Square cemetery and from rent of its two properties on Beaver Street.[110]

With memories of the American uprising against imposed taxation in Revolutionary days, the constitution adopted in 1805 laid it down that

> This congregation shall forever be supported by the sale or taxation of seats in the Synagogue and by free-will offerings, but no poll or income tax shall ever be assessed on the members of the congregation.

This was an almost revolutionary statement of policy for a congregation in which the dominant tradition was that of the London Sephardi congregation in which the finta or assessed tax has always played the largest part in its financing.

At the end of the following year, 1806, a memorial petition was drawn up and presented to the legislature of the State requesting aid to enable the congregation to cancel its debts, reestablish a school, repair the synagogue, make provision for its poor, and "do such matters as may be found necessary." [111]

In 1800, the parnas had been authorized to purchase a ticket in New York State Road Lottery number 2; but this expedient did not prove successful in solving the financial problems of the congregation.[112] In 1813, a motion was made but not acted on that

> a respectable petition be presented to the honorable the legislature of this state at their next session for the purpose of granting a lottery to raise the sum of $[. . .] under such management and directions as the legislature may deem meet.

This proposal was made because

> it is the opinion of this board that something should be done in order to extricate the affairs of this congregation and for divers other necessary purposes, such as removing, or enlarging, our place of worship, erecting a poor house for the accommodation of our indigent brethren, their widows and orphans, with the sundry repairs as does now, or may appear requisite.[113]

Two years later the trustees characterized the finances of the congregation as being "in a very deranged state." In 1818 and again in 1825 Harmon Hendricks advanced large sums to the congregation free of all interest, which in those days was usually seven percent on such bonds.[114] The munificent bequest of $10,000 made by Abraham Touro in 1822, the sale of some of the

congregation's property adjoining the Chatham Square cemetery in 1823 and again in 1828, and the $5,000 legacy received from the estate of Washington Hendricks in 1841, extricated the congregation from financial embarrassment at other times. Grateful memorial tablets were set up in the synagogue by the trustees recalling the liberal bequests of Abraham Touro and Washington Hendricks.[115]

Another cause of financial stress in the congregation was the poor judgment shown in 1818 in rebuilding the synagogue on Mill Street. The congregants were moving northwards to the new residential districts that were springing up, and Mill Street was rapidly becoming part of a totally commercial district. It was in considerable measure this factor of distance from the synagogue which in the last days of the second Mill Street Synagogue compelled a committee of the board of trustees to aver that

> the present Situation of the Congregation (owing to the very relaxed attendance of the Members generally especially of those who are most able and opulent at our holy place of Worship, Whereby the Burthen necessarily falls on the few who do attend—who have the will—but unhappily not the ability to contribute the Needful) demands the most earnest and prompt attention of the Trustees to devise some efficient plan by which a competent income may be secured as will allways insure punctual payment to the Officers & for all other Necessary expenditures of the Congregation.[116]

Still another factor which disturbed the financial equilibrium in those days was that of the recurrent dangerous epidemics. Thus in September, 1832, $350 was borrowed on the note of the trustees to meet pressing demands, the congregational collector being unable to make collections because of the prevalent cholera.[117]

In general, the financial welfare of the congregation reflected the measure of prosperity current in the city. A crisis that was sometimes acute developed in days of financial depression, panic, bankruptcies, and the closing of banks, just as the budget was more readily met in times of prosperity. In the spring of 1876 the committee on the finances of the congregation in commenting on the falling off in the receipts mentioned "the prevailing financial depression . . . felt in almost every church in the city." [118]

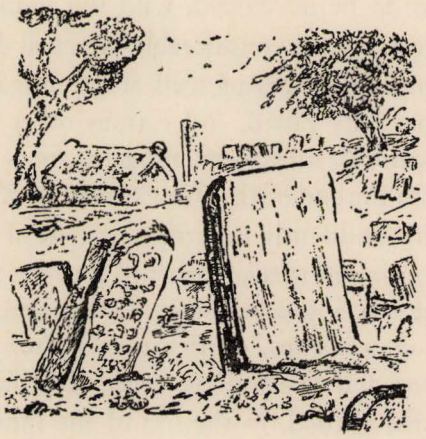
In 1897 the congregation closed its synagogue on 19th Street. The moving away of most of the congregants from that district had had results which were disastrous both to attendance at synagogue services and to the congregational financing. The move to the new district on Central Park West was forward

looking, and brought about an immediate improvement in the congregation's financial welfare. The income from seat rentals in 1897, the last year on 19th Street, had been $5,240. In the following year when the new synagogue was opened it rose to $9,572. But the new neighborhood was one which was still in considerable measure to be developed, with the result that the early days in that synagogue were a time of considerable financial difficulty for the congregation. Salaries were cut, prices of seats were raised, bonds were issued, special funds were repeatedly raised, and various other devices were used to help offset the congregation's substantial annual deficit.

From the beginning to the end of the three centuries of the story of Shearith Israel there have been intermittently recurring periods of financial stress which challenged the congregation to special effort to find the funds required for its upkeep. The care of the synagogue buildings, school, and cemetery, the salaries of officials and the choir, pensions, charity grants, dues and contributions to communal organizations and institutions, were all obligations which could not be and were not disregarded. In the life of the individual, breadwinning can be a springboard for creative living. So within the congregation the effort required to meet the synagogue budget was likely to be a rewarding community venture. It was one which ofttimes engendered greater devotion to the synagogue that made on its members increasing demands as it gave them increasing service.

Similarly, over the generations the many "wholesome Rules and Restrictions" became recognized less as stern regulations and more as firm foundations for a living spiritual structure. The pivotal place of the congregation in the organized community and of the synagogue in the life of its members from birth to death was the key to survival for the Jewish people through all the centuries.

IX. *Silent Witness*



"Son of man, can these bones live?"

"O Lord God, Thou knowest."

EZEKIEL 37:3

In historic Jewish custom, last rites have been characterized by great simplicity. This tradition has been punctiliously maintained by Shearith Israel. The practice of embalming is discouraged for rich and poor alike. Without distinction the body is uniformly robed in a simple white linen shroud and is set in a plain coffin. Metal handles or ornamentation other than a name plate on the coffin are disallowed. Elaborate floral displays are strongly discouraged.[1]

The Sephardi tradition of Shearith Israel protects women, even when they are the immediate mourners, from the ordeal of being present at the actual commitment to the earth. Women do not go with the funeral cortege to the burial ground. If on occasion the farewell service is conducted in the cemetery chapel, women who attend that service remain in the chapel and do not go to the graveside for the interment.[2]

While still unwilling to recognize freedom of worship, the City Fathers of Nieuw Amsterdam did not withhold the right of Jews to a consecrated burial ground of their own. Land for a Jewish cemetery was granted by the city authorities as early as 1656. Today no trace remains of that "little hook of land" allotted almost three centuries ago.[3]

Fortunately, the engulfing city did not completely efface Shearith Israel's second cemetery, the burial ground on St. James Place just below Chatham Square. For one and a half centuries it was in use, from 1682 to 1831. Its story, told at length in *Portraits Etched in Stone*, recalls complications attending its purchase, its progressive enlargement, the onward march of the city which enforced progressive reduction of the ground to its present residual limits, the problems of its care, the often helpful relations of its neighbors as well as the pranks of playful boys, the strategic use made in the Revolutionary War of its commanding position at the top of a hill, the desperate struggle which that position later caused through repeated slipping of the soil, and the story of those there interred whose graves can still be identified.

In that volume can also be read the story of the cemetery owned by the congregation on the south side of West 11th Street just east of the Avenue of the Americas. This was acquired in 1804 after the burial ground which had been bought on East Bank Street two years earlier had to be given up when cut through by the opening of 13th Street. A quarter of a century later the use of this ground also had to be surrendered when the opening up of 11th Street cut through this property and reduced it to a small triangle.[4]

Still a third graveyard is owned by the congregation in Manhattan. This was acquired in 1829 when it was clear that the 11th Street ground was to be made unavailable for further burials. The story of this ground on the south side of 21st Street just west of the Avenue of the Americas can also be read in *Portraits Etched in Stone*. It was used as the congregational burial ground from 1829 to 1851. One may see there the graves of notable members of the congregation such as Hazzan Peixotto, Hazzan I. B. Seixas, Harmon Hendricks, and Major Mordecai M. Noah, as well as thirty-two tombstones from the graves which were transferred to this ground in 1855 and 1856 when the burial ground below Chatham Square was cut through by the extension of the Bowery. Seventeen of these stones go back to the first half of the eighteenth century, the earliest of them dating from 1708.[5]

From the middle of the last century, the burial ground at Cypress Hills,

Long Island, has been the only one used by the congregation. It was acquired and dedicated in 1851, in keeping with the anticipation that

> from recent movements in the Legislature of this state and in the Common Council of this City there is reason to apprehend that the period is not distant when interments within the limits of this City may be prohibited by law.[6]

This anticipation in January was fulfilled on the first of May. The city's new restriction prohibited burial in Manhattan south of 86th Street. Knowing that Congregation Bnai Jeshurun was also looking for new cemetery land, Shearith Israel agreed to their jointly purchasing one tract on Long Island and then dividing it between the two congregations. In April the electors had recommended any well-located and well-drained ground for a new cemetery, while specifying that it should be other than at Cypress Hills. Nevertheless, the Committee on Burial Grounds purchased six and a half acres directly opposite Cypress Hills cemetery, at the price of $210 an acre. The property was described as being about five miles from Williamsburg, near the Brooklyn and Jamaica Plank Road, and with a plank road to it in progress. Congregation Bnai Jeshurun joined in the purchase, the two congregations agreeing to draw in turn for dividing between them the allotments within the ground.[7]

This drawing by lot for the division of the land between the two congregations did not work out altogether felicitously, and a difference of opinion early arose about a right-of-way which Congregation Bnai Jeshurun desired to have. In 1856 that congregation sold part of its land to Congregation Shaaray Tefila. A little later, with the purchase by Shearith Israel of additional land from the Williamsburg Plank Road, the congregation found it necessary to build a new wall. This was considered by Bnai Jeshurun to involve an encroachment on its share of the property, and the fence set up by Bnai Jeshurun was considered by Shearith Israel to be a trespass on its property. Bnai Jeshurun took its complaint so seriously that it started suit to recover land in the Long Island cemetery. The case came to trial in Queens County Supreme Court at Hempstead, Long Island, in October, 1859, but was lost by Bnai Jeshurun. Then that congregation introduced a bill in the state legislature at Albany which Shearith Israel regarded as being potentially prejudicial to its cemetery holdings or rights. It therefore brought in a remonstrance about the proposed measure, but the bill was passed. Nevertheless, this was followed by no uncooperative action, and after these initial disagreements the two congrega-

tions came together amicably late in 1860 with a verbal agreement involving an exchange of parts of their cemetery land.[8]

Other matters of negotiation involving a right-of-way and exchange of cemetery land later arose between the two congregations, but these were settled without difficulty.[9] In 1923, Bnai Jeshurun purchased from Shearith Israel some additional land in the Cypress Hills cemetery, and in 1926 it purchased sixty plots containing nearly 25,000 square feet of land.[10]

When Congregation Shearith Israel secured its Cypress Hills cemetery, it built there a mortuary chapel which was enlarged four years later. Thirty years thereafter this was replaced by a chapel built of brick. From time to time improvements were made in this building, most notably in 1921. A committee, of which Mrs. Julius R. Wolff was the chairman, then raised a fund for the renovation of the chapel. The old-fashioned stove was replaced by a furnace in the basement. A reader's desk was introduced, attractive benches were installed, and there were set up six large handsome stained-glass windows commemorating Albert J. Elias, Uriah and Fanny Hendricks, Isaac Phillips and Adolphus S. Solomons, Julius R. and Frances Nathan Wolff and their daughter Emily R. Cardozo, Benjamin and Emily Nathan, and Lena Unterman.[11]

In that burial ground rest the remains of many who won distinction in various fields of American life and Jewish service. Some among these are Dr. Simeon Abrahams, Rabbi Joseph Mayor Asher, Dr. Jesse G. M. Bullowa, Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo, Major David Mendes Cohen, Emanuel Dreyfous, Benjamin M. Edidin, Jacob de Haas, Bernard Hart, Emanuel B. Hart, Dr. Benjamin E. Hays, Dr. Max Huhner, Brevet Brigadier-General and Judge Philip J. Joachimsen, Naphtali Judah, Israel Baer Kursheedt, Emanuel Lasker, Emma and Josephine Lazarus, Captain Jonas P. Levy, Commodore Uriah P. Levy, the Reverend Ellis Lyons, the Reverend Jacques J. Lyons, Dr. Judah L. Magnes, the Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes, the Reverend Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, Mrs. Mortimer M. Menken, Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Moses, Dr. Israel Moses, Benjamin Nathan, Mrs. Frederick Nathan, David H. Nieto, Joseph B. Nones, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, Captain Daniel L. M. Peixotto, Moses L. M. Peixotto, Dr. David Dudley Phillips, Naphtali Phillips, Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, Adolphus S. Solomons, Bella and Israel Unterberg, and many others who have added knowledge, leadership,

and distinction to life in America. There also rest Captain Edmond Arbib and Captain Adrian Z. Leon, who gave their lives in the Second World War in the service of their country.

In May, 1951, a dramatic little ceremony was carried out in that burial ground at the grave of Commodore Uriah P. Levy. At that time a frigate and a corvette of the Israeli navy were paying an official visit to New York City. A group of some officers and twenty men of their crews laid a wreath at the foot of the statue of George Washington in Washington Square, and then proceeded to the congregation's cemetery at Cypress Hills where they laid a second wreath at the foot of the monument marking the grave of Commodore Uriah P. Levy. They also sprinkled over the soil of his grave some of the earth which a century or more earlier he had brought from the Holy Land on the United States naval vessel which he commanded.[12]

The care of the congregational cemeteries has never been a simple matter from the days of old when the Chatham Square burial ground was some distance outside the city to the time a century ago when the ground at Cypress Hills was newly acquired and the question was whether or not to provide the keeper of the ground with fire arms.[13] Grounds no longer in use have always presented a special problem. A disused graveyard may be a fitting subject for an elegy by the poet Gray, or for a wistfully reminiscent poem by Longfellow at Newport; but a congregation that continues to give service to the living must also keep faith with the dead. That Shearith Israel has ever done this is attested eloquently by its three disused burial grounds while so many other graveyards in Manhattan have been allowed to be swallowed up by the enveloping city without leaving a trace.

Responsibility for the upkeep of the congregational burial grounds, the form of service conducted in them, regulations as to who may be buried and where the interment should be, the character of the markers and monuments set on the graves, whether or not disinterment could be allowed—these and other related matters are vested by the synagogue constitution in the hands of the trustees. They usually delegated to the shammash the obligation of watching that the various grounds of the congregation were kept in good condition. This duty was never a sinecure. In the days when there were no sewers under the streets the grounds might be flooded by rain water. In winter there was, and there still is, the need of removing snow from the sidewalks. The whole year through one had to contend with the pranks of boys playing around the

tombstones in the disused graveyards, and with the throwing of paper and garbage over walls or out of windows of the buildings that hem in the old grounds in Manhattan. In the unused parts of the 11th Street burial ground there was recurrent trespassing to pick apples and even the pasturing of cattle.[14] In 1851, the shammash was required to report in writing once each month as to the state of the congregational graveyards; but in 1882, Isaac J. Isaacs, the one who acted as keeper of the three disused cemeteries in Manhattan, was required to visit them at least three times a week to insure their proper care.[15]

If life has its problems, burial after death also is not always a simple act simply determined. In 1752 a decision had to be made as to whether burial should be "within or without the walls and upon what terms and conditions" for the one who in his lifetime had "absented himself from the Sinagogue, or was no ways a benefactor to the Congregation." [16] Those who have taken their own life are given simple burial in a segregated corner of the cemetery.[17]

Mixed marriage posed a delicate and sensitive question which was much discussed in the early days of many an American Jewish community. In February of 1847, Dr. Max Lilienthal of the New York German Jewish Community, Rabbi Abraham Reiss (Rice) of Baltimore, and Rabbi Moses Noah, who was in New York at the time, were asked for a ruling as to whether or not Jewish interment could be given to certain children who had been born of a mixed marriage. A month later the trustees emphatically reaffirmed the traditional policy of the congregation that

> no seat in our Holy Place of Worship shall hereafter be leased to any person married contrary to our Religious laws: and no person married Contrary to Our Religious laws shall be interred in any of the burial grounds belonging to this Congregation.[18]

In some cases, an individual who after intermarriage did not abandon Judaism and who remained a faithful attendant at the synagogue services, has been given burial in the congregation's cemetery.[19]

Late in the nineteenth century the congregation had to decide whether or not after cremation it would bury the ashes. At first the policy was laid down that such ashes could not be buried in a family plot, but only in a segregated corner of the ground. It was then learned that in Jewish law interment of the ashes may not be refused; therefore permission was given to inter the ashes, but not to set them above the ground in an urn.[20]

The sense of equality of all in death has been expressed in the old cemeteries

of Congregation Shearith Israel, as in those of the London Sephardi congregation, in the rigidly enforced policy of burying one next to another in strict chronological sequence. Everyone, even one as beloved and as distinguished as Gershom Mendes Seixas, was buried between the one who preceded him and the one who was destined to follow him into the vale. Hazzan Seixas was laid to rest between Esther Solomons, wife of the congregational shohet, and the obscure Moses Abrahams. In the first century and a half of Shearith Israel's history we know of only one exception to this principle. In 1770, there was reserved, for what reason we do not know, for Deborah the widow of Isaac Gomez a grave next to that of her husband.[21] Other requests for exceptions began to be heard. In 1801, Isaac Moses, one of the more eminent members of the congregation, after the death of his son Israel Ariel made the request that a piece of ground should be reserved for the use of members of his family.

It is Inherent with our nature (if practicable) to have our Families together when ever it pleases the Allmighty God to take us from this Transitory Life

My wish is to purchase a Piece of Ground in our Burial place provided it is immediately attended to. The Situation I will point out to the President or any *Committee* you may appoint

His request was not granted, a number of reasons being adduced for the stand that was taken. In the first place, it was pointed out that the request was novel in so far as the congregation was concerned. Then the principle was affirmed that no distinction should be made in the place of burial except where individuals were at variance with or did not adhere to the profession of Judaism. Moreover, were the request to be granted, others would be equally entitled to the same privileges, and thereby the limited amount of ground available would be divided among a few families to the inevitable exclusion of others who had some relatives buried there. Finally, it would militate against several existing by-laws of the board of trustees.[22]

In 1829 the question came up again. Then ten members of the congregation asked permission to make an advance purchase of from one to five adjoining graves. They made it clear that they desired this solely as a matter of sentiment. Faced by this question, the trustees decided to sound out the opinion of the congregation as a whole.

Thirty-five members of the congregation joined in writing that

The many objections to such a plan are so obvious that it is a matter of surprise that the Trustees could give it a serious consideration and it appears to be quite unnecessary for the undersigned to recapitulate them, as no doubt the Trustees will

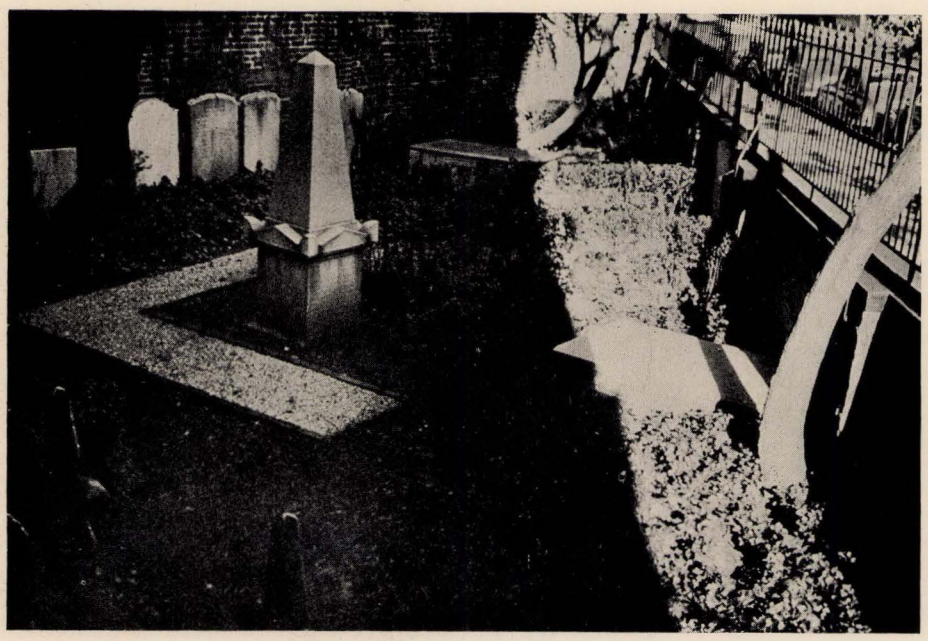


A. CATIEMUTS HILL
B. THE FRESH WATER
C. THE FRESH WATER BRIDGE
D. THE JEWS BURYING GROUND
E. RUTGERS FARMHOUSE
F. BOWERY ROAD
G. ROAD TO THE FERRY (PRESENT PEARL STREET)
H. ROAD TO THE CITY
I. ROAD TO ROLCK POND
J. CITY COMMONS
K. WALPHERTS MEADOW

Early picture shows the "Jews burying ground" at Chatham Street, second cemetery of Congregation Shearith Israel on Manhattan Island, succeeding "the little hook of land" granted by the Nieuw Amsterdam Council in 1656



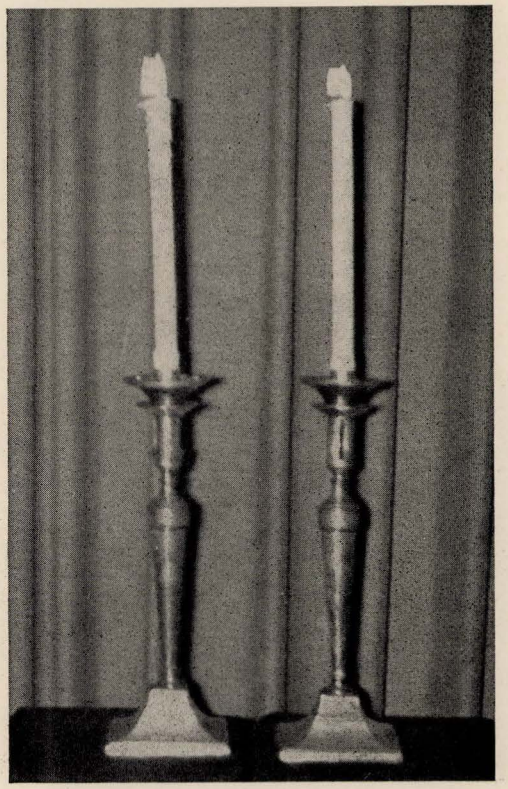
Tenements surround the cemetery of 1682. The historic site will be respected in New York City's plans for developing Lower Manhattan.



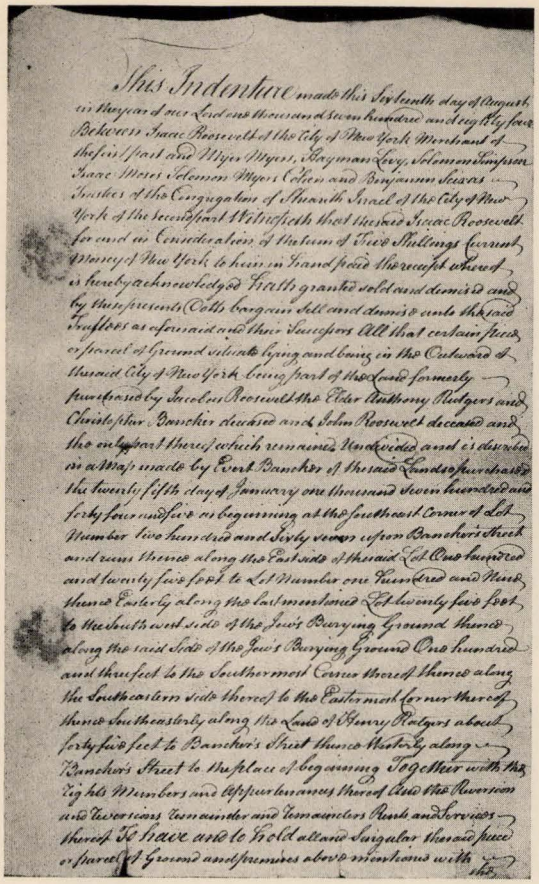
The encroaching city spared only a corner of third cemetery, consecrated in 1805 on old Milligan Street, now West 11th Street



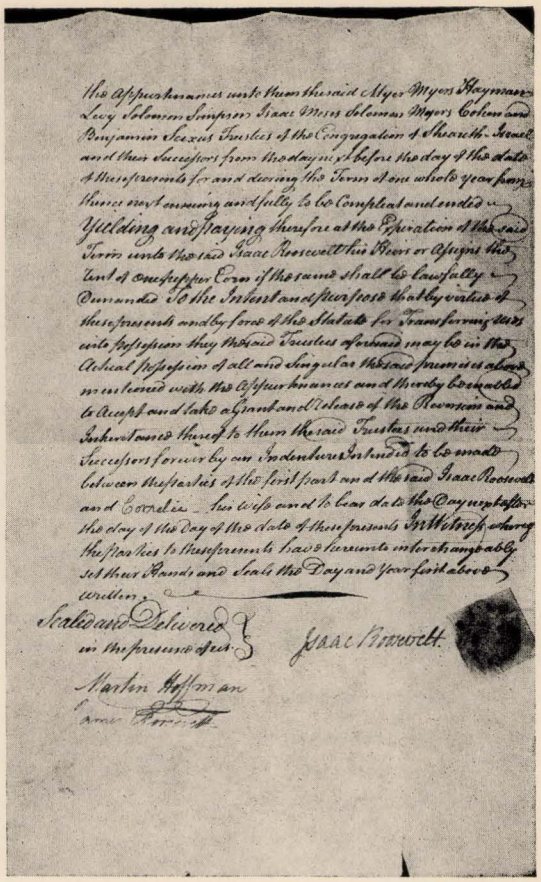
Fourth cemetery, last used in 1851, near Avenue of the Americas on West 21st Street



Candlesticks used at funerals in Shearith Israel since 1787



This Indenture made this Seventh day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety four Between Isaac Roosevelt of the City of New York Merchant of the first part and Myer Myers, Hayman Levy, Solomon Simpson Isaac Moses Solomon Myers Cohen and Benjamin Seixas Trustees of the Congregation of Shearith Israel of the City of New York of the second part Witnesseth that the said Isaac Roosevelt for and in Consideration of the Sum of Two Shillings Current Money of New York to him in hand paid the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged Hath granted sold and demised and by these presents Doth grant sell and demise unto the said Trustees as aforesaid and their Successors All that certain piece or parcel of Ground situate lying and being in the Outward of the said City of New York being part of the Land formerly purchased by Jacobus Roosevelt the Elder Anthony Rutgers and Christopher Bancker deceased and John Roosevelt deceased and the only part thereof which remains Undivided and is described in a Map made by Evert Bancker of the said Lands purchased the twenty fifth day of January one thousand seven hundred and forty four and five as beginning at the Southwest Corner of Lot Number five hundred and Sixty seven upon Bancker's Street and runs thence along the East side of the said Lot One hundred and twenty five feet to Lot Number one Hundred and Nine thence Easterly along the last mentioned Lot twenty five feet to the South west side of the Jew's Burying Ground thence along the said Side of the Jew's Burying Ground One hundred and three feet to the Southermost Corner thereof thence along the Southeastern side thereof to the Eastermost former thereof thence Southeasterly along the Land of Henry Rutgers about forty five feet to Bancker's Street thence Westerly along Bancker's Street to the place of beginning Together with the Rights Members and Appurtenances thereof And the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders Rents and Services thereof To have and to Hold all and Singular the said piece or parcel of Ground and premises above mentioned with the



the Appurtenances unto them the said Myer Myers Hayman Levy Solomon Simpson Isaac Moses Solomon Myers Cohen and Benjamin Seixas Trustees of the Congregation of Shearith Israel and their Successors from the day next before the day of the date of these presents for and during the Term of one whole year from thence next ensuing and fully to be Completed and ended Yielding and Paying therefor at the Expiration of the said Term unto the said Isaac Roosevelt his Heirs or Assigns the Rent of one pepper Corn if the same shall be lawfully Demanded To the Intent and purpose that by virtue of these presents and by force of the Statute for Transforming Uses into Possession they the said Trustees aforesaid may be in the Actual Possession of all and Singular the said premises above mentioned with the Appurtenances and thereby be enabled to accept and take a Grant and Release of the Reversion and Inheritance thereof to them the said Trustees and their Successors for one by one Indenture Intended to be made between the parties of the first part and the said Isaac Roosevelt and Executed these Presents bear date the Day next before the day of the Day of the date of these presents In Witness whereof the parties to these presents have hereunto interchangably set their Hands and Seals the Day and Year first above written

Sealed and Delivered in the presence of us

Isaac Roosevelt

Marten Hoffman



1787 indenture between neighbor-farmer Senator Isaac Roosevelt and Shearith Israel trustees for the purchase of adjoining land to protect the Chatham Square cemetery

At Cypress Hills, fifth burial ground, a chapel for prayer and services stands at the entrance

view the said proposition in all its bearings—Yet the Undersigned cannot refrain from *protesting* against any appropriation of any part of the Ground in future either with or without payment—But that each person should be Buried in the Row as it shall please God in his own good time to call unto Himself for whatever distinction exists in Life, there is none in Death; and to give to the opulent a preference over the pious and religious poor, might tend to cause to them feelings which in no manner could be compensated and which we should on all occasions avoid.

We pray the Board to take this into their serious Consideration and direct that each person shall be interred regularly in the Row, without any Space being left but next to the last Grave.

With this expression of opinion before them the trustees once more put it on record that "it is inexpedient to grant the reservation of ground for any grave or graves." [23]

Six years passed. Then twelve electors asked for the privilege of reserving or purchasing space for one or more graves next to that of a relative they may have lost,

not for any distinction, but for the earnest and ardent desire of being near to those in death, we loved most to be near in life. Such feeling is sanctioned by natural affection, by all moral, religious and civil institutions. All but our own congregation enjoy this right or privilege, also in Europe and the West Indies. Why should it be denied or withheld from us? Our forefathers made it one of their first and urgent objects to secure such right, there is no religious obstacle to the contrary, and there should be no other. No man's right is invaded, no ground lost, the best feelings of our nature demand it, the harmony and welfare of our congregation call for it.

Once more the board of trustees reaffirmed the traditional stand taken by the congregation.

The board of trustees of this congregation having for many years uniformly rejected all applications of a like import with the one requested in the memorial of Mr. Joseph and others, as improper, inexpedient and partial in their operation, and as conferring privileges that cannot be enjoyed equally by all members of the congregation: and the present board being of the same opinion, and having moreover recently decided that all interments should be made in rows it is therefore, RESOLVED that this board cannot comply with the request.[24]

The electors approved this decision of the trustees.

In 1851, further burials in the Manhattan graveyards were forbidden by law. As has been told, the congregation then acquired the large grounds in Cypress Hills for future burials. No longer could it refuse to grant reservations because of lack of available ground. In the first year of the use of the new

cemetery permission was granted for reserving a companion grave for a surviving spouse. Following this a portion of the spacious new grounds was assigned for family plots. But where no reservation has been made for husband or wife, or where there is no family plot, interment is made as in the past in "the regular row" (carreira).[25]

Strikingly characteristic of most Sephardi cemeteries is the virtual uniformity of the flat tablet stones set over the graves of rich and poor alike, again in testimony of the final equality of all. From the early days of the congregation it has readily been possible to obtain locally the required stones. These would be cut to shape either as a flat slab covering the grave, as was the predominant type of stone used by the Sephardim, or cut as an upright headstone or footstone as was customary among those with Ashkenazi background. But the difficulty arose when it came to incising an inscription containing Hebrew letters or words. There were no Jewish monumental masons in New York until the nineteenth century. The earliest stones in the congregational cemetery at Chatham Square had their inscriptions carved by Christian artisans. The inscription on the stone of Benjamin Bueno de Mesquita who died in 1683 consists of eight lines in Portuguese and contains no Hebrew whatsoever. On only one of the stones in that graveyard, the one marking the grave of Rachel Pinto who died in 1815, does the name of the mason appear. The inscription on that stone containing well nigh sixty words of Hebrew and fourteen lines of English is signed by the stonecutters W. and J. Frazer.

The choice of stone and the inscription desired by the family are subject to approval by the board of trustees of the synagogue. It was specifically stated in 1786

> That no Person, presume to Break Ground, or put up any Tomb Stone in the Beth A Haim, without Liberty first Obtained from the Trustees.[26]

It was but a reiteration of earlier practice when in establishing the policy of administration of the new ground at Cypress Hills the regulation was laid down in 1852 that those desiring to care for a grave

> may under such regulations and restrictions as the Trustees shall prescribe, enclose and ornament their plots, and place thereon such tombs and inscriptions, approved by the Trustees, as they may desire.[27]

Two decades earlier it had been ruled that a written permit had to be obtained before any stone or railing could be put on a grave. In 1861 it was

unanimously voted not to give permission to introduce differentiation in "the regular row" of burials by putting an iron railing around a grave.[28]

The final authority of the trustees over anything and everything to be placed on the grave was dramatically emphasized in 1863, when the executors of the estate of Commodore Uriah P. Levy asked permission to carry out the following clause in his will:

> I direct my Executors . . . to erect to my memory a monument at Cypress Hill Long Island New York, the monument to consist of a full length Statue, in Iron or Bronze of the size of life at least standing on a single Block of Granite sunk three feet in the ground, and in the full uniform of a Captain of the United States Navy and holding in its hand a Scroll on which shall be inscribed "Under this Monument" or "In Memory of" Uriah P. Levy, Captain in the United States Navy Father of the law for the abolition of the barbarous practice of corporal punishment in the Navy of the United States. The said Monument and its fixtures is to cost at least Six thousand dollars and I direct that my body be buried under it if possible.[29]

The trustees consulted with Hazzan Lyons as to the legitimacy in Jewish law of making such a statue. His answer cited the opinions expressed not long before by some of the highest authorities on Jewish law living at the time, such as Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt am Main, Nathan Marcus Adler, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, and Zechariah Frankel, head of the Theological Seminary in Breslau. The question had been put to them when it was proposed to erect in New Orleans a statue in memory of Judah Touro. The answer given by all of them was an absolute and unqualified prohibition. The trustees accordingly unanimously denied the request to have a statue of Uriah P. Levy erected over his grave.

In the years following the Revolution the very existence of much of the old cemetery below Chatham Square was threatened through gravitational pulling on the soil due to the incline of the ground. In the middle of the nineteenth century the city planned to extend the Bowery beyond Chatham Square by a road which would cut through part of that cemetery. The congregation received from the rabbinical court of the Sephardi congregation in London an authoritative ruling permitting exhumation and transfer of the remains in such circumstances. In Jewish law disinterment is permitted when the grave is threatened by destruction, or when the interment was made conditionally with reservation of the right to later reburial elsewhere, and always when it is desired by a family to transfer remains to the Holy Land.

In 1791 and 1792, disinterment and reburial had been carried out from graves threatened by soil subsidence in the Chatham Square graveyard. In 1830, when the city pushed 11th Street through the congregational graveyard, which lay across the path of the new street, disinterment and reinterment had necessarily been the answer. In 1855 and 1856, no less than 256 graves had been moved from the Chatham Square graveyard to the 21st Street cemetery when the southward extension of the Bowery cut off a large part of the early burial ground.[30] These had all been permitted in order to save graves from obliteration. But where that condition of *force majeure* did not exist, as when a request was made for an individual disinterment, the trustees uniformly disallowed it unless it was sanctioned by Jewish law.[31]

In February, 1890, Adela, wife of Daniel S. Cohen, died and was buried in the regular row in the congregational cemetery. In 1901 her husband died. Their children then requested that the remains of their mother should be reburied in another cemetery next to where their father had been laid to rest. Under Jewish law the trustees could not grant this request. The family took the case to court. The decision of the New York State Supreme Court was that the request had to be granted because of the presumption that Daniel Cohen had the intention though unexpressed at the time of her burial of subsequently removing his wife's body. The congregation appealed against this, but the appellate division upheld the decision against the congregation, affirming that the determination of such a question when presented to a court of equity cannot be based on considerations of Jewish religious law. The congregation necessarily yielded to court order and carried out the disinterment.[32]

This general question came up once more at the close of the first decade of the twentieth century. Then the resolution was adopted that

> WHEREAS, the surroundings of the burial ground of the Congregation on West 21st Street are such that it is practically impossible to keep the same free from constant trespassing in various forms, and its condition generally tends to desecrate rather than honor the memory of those whose remains are there interred,
>
> RESOLVED: that the Committee on Burial Grounds, in conjunction with the Minister of the Congregation, take such measures as may be necessary to obtain an opinion from competent religious authority concerning the right of the Trustees to remove said remains to a place which will impart honor and respect towards the memory of the dead.[33]

After much correspondence across the Atlantic Ocean, the opinion of Dr. Moses Gaster, the chief rabbi of the Sephardim of Great Britain, and that of Rabbi S. H. Margulies, the head of the Italian rabbinic seminary in Florence,

were received authorizing the disinterring of the bodies from the cemetery on 21st Street if it were impossible to save the graves there from profanation. But so strong was the congregation's expression of feeling that the sleep of those lying there should not be disturbed, that the electors rescinded their resolution calling for reinterment and placed themselves on record that it is the fixed and determined policy of the congregation not to remove the dead from any of its cemeteries.[34]

In 1913 Hugh O'Neill desired to acquire the land of the cemetery on 21st Street in order to enlarge thereon his Sixth Avenue department store which in the rear bordered on the burial ground. But in keeping with its traditional and consistently reaffirmed policy, the congregation without question refused his dazzlingly alluring offer of half a million dollars for the ground.

In a city where onrushing development has all too often swept away landmarks and shrines, Shearith Israel's cemeteries remain God's acres. They are a storehouse also of human memories. On November 13, 1932, the Manhattan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated in the Chatham Square cemetery memorial bronze tablets it had given to mark the graves of some of those who during the Revolution helped to make the country free, among them the patriot rabbi, the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas; Jacob Hart, an associator who advanced money to General Lafayette towards clothing and feeding his troops; Isaac Moses, a private in the Philadelphia militia and signer of bills of credit for the Continental Congress; Simon Nathan, a private in the Philadelphia militia, and provider of large sums of money for the Revolutionary cause; and Jonas Phillips, a private in the Philadelphia militia and a signer of the nonimportation resolutions of 1770.

Eight years later, the government provided tombstone markers for the graves of Solomon Myers Cohen, Private, Continental Army; Eleazar Levy, Senior Private, Continental Army; Hayman Levy, Home Defender, signer of the nonimportation agreement; Manuel Mordecai Noah, an officer of Washington's staff who gave of his fortune to further the cause in which he was enlisted; and Benjamin Mendes Seixas, Lieutenant, Continental Army, and signer of the nonimportation agreement. That graveyard has been scrupulously preserved by the congregation despite all the threats to its survival which have come from natural causes and from the irrepressible advance of urban development. The beth hayyim, abode of life, as a cemetery is called in Hebrew, stands a silent witness of the past, and beyond death binds the generations in a living faith.

X. *American Synagogue*



Seek ye the welfare of the land to which I have led you.

JEREMIAH 29:7

In 1674, Governor Edmund Andros in New York was ordered by Charles II to

> permit all persons of what religion so ever, quietly to inhabit within the precincts of yo'r jurisdiccion without giving them any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever for or by reason of their differing opinion in matter of religion.

In that very year 1674, we find in the records the name of Asser Levy, a signatory with François Rambouts and Jacob Kip, as schepen at New Orange.[1] In Nieuw Amsterdam Jews rapidly achieved free civic status and a recognized position in the community in which they felt themselves firmly rooted. No political difficulties were put in the way of the Jews resident in early Colonial New York, and civil rights were attained by them without undue difficulty long before the doors of civic emancipation were slowly and creakingly opened for Jews in other parts of the world. We know of fifty-two men in

New York's Jewish community who were given official recognition as freemen between 1687 and 1769.[2] By an act of November 15, 1727, Jews were permitted to omit the words "upon the true faith of a Christian" in taking the loyalty oath of abjuration, as they had long been permitted to do in giving testimony under oath in the courts.[3]

They well knew that rights connote duties. From the beginning of the eighteenth century members of New York's Jewish community as freemen were voting in elections, serving in the militia, and taking part in civic life, though at the time in the mother country of England this was not yet permissible under the law. The colony's law of May 16, 1699, authorized freemen and freeholders to vote for representatives at election, and in the next year 1700 two Jews, Isaac Fernandes Dias and Benjamin Israel, voted for aldermen.[4]

On only one occasion was this right to vote questioned, and then only in a political maneuver. In 1737, after the election of Adolph Philipse as Representative, William Smith, the defeated candidate, challenged the election results on the ground that Jews had voted. The House of Representatives when squarely faced by the question resolved unanimously that Jews ought not to be admitted to vote for Representatives in this colony since they did not have the right to vote for members of Parliament in Great Britain. However, this resolution remained nothing more than an expression of opinion as the policy which it expressed was not implemented. Members of Congregation Shearith Israel did not find themselves disfranchised, and they continued to vote in elections.[5]

Three years later, in 1740, the British Parliament passed a naturalization law enabling aliens after seven years of residence to become naturalized and to enjoy all the rights of natural born subjects of Great Britain. Immediately Mordecai and Daniel Gomez, Samuel Myers Cohen, Joseph Simson, David and Judah Hays, and Abraham Rodriguez Rivera, all of whom served at one time or another as president of the congregation, and numerous other members of the congregation took advantage of this law and became naturalized subjects.[6]

For a number of years prior to this, members of the New York Jewish community had been taking some part in the public life of the city. One Isaac Israel held office as a member of the High Council of the Incorporated Dutch West India Company's settlements on the South River in 1663, but we know only his name and from this alone we can not be certain that he was a Jew.

In 1718, Nathan Simson was sworn in as constable for the South Ward, and Samuel Levy, who in the following year died while serving as president of the congregation, was sworn in as constable for the North Ward.[7] They were permitted to appoint deputies to serve for them. In the following year, 1719, Moses Levy was elected constable for the South Ward, and in the next year, 1720, Jacob Franks was elected constable for the Dock Ward. Both these busy men, presidents of the congregation, felt themselves unable to serve as constable and instead they paid the heavy permissive fine of £15. In 1825 Abraham Isaacs was elected constable of the South Ward. The next year Jacob Hays, who had been sworn in as a freeman on June 27, 1726, was elected constable in September and served in that office.[8] A century later another Jacob Hays of the same family served the city as its highly picturesque high constable. In the year 1733, Rodrigo Pacheco was one of the five leading merchants chosen to voice New York State's protest against the Molasses Act, which set import duties on sugar brought into the northern colonies.[9] In that same year twenty-seven citizens petitioned the city authorities to pass some legislation which would end the "many great frauds and abuses . . . Practised and Committed in the City in Vending, selling and Buying for Exportation Flour not Merchantable." [10] Among the petitioners were Mordecai and David Gomez. In the home of Mordecai Gomez in suburban Greenwich Village the New York Assembly met on February 14, 1746, because of the epidemic prevailing in the city at the time.[11] Bernard Hart, Simon Nathan, Solomon Simson, Isaac Moses, and Solomon Moses were among those who, after a disastrous fire, petitioned the legislature of the state to enact a law forbidding the erection of wooden buildings. Among those who in 1768 founded the New York Chamber of Commerce was Isaac Moses, later a president of the congregation. One of the men who drafted the constitution of the Chamber of Commerce was the earlier Sampson Simson, Shearith Israel's president in 1758, 1764–65 and 1769–70. He served on such committees of the Chamber of Commerce as those of fisheries, arbitration, and the regulation of the coinage.[12] In 1792, a group of twenty-four men meeting under a buttonwood tree in front of 64 Wall Street organized the New York Stock Exchange, then called the New York Board of Stockholders. Among them were three members of Shearith Israel: Benjamin Mendes Seixas, and two who later served as president of the congregation, Ephraim Hart and Alexander Zuntz. Bernard Hart (1764–1855), grandfather of Francis Bret Harte and president of the congregation, was



Markers on graves of Revolutionary soldiers in Shearith Israel's cemetery at Chatham Square placed in the presence of descendants by the Daughters of the American Revolution



Jefferson's home at Monticello saved for the nation by Commodore Uriah P. Levy. He and Levy family spent thought and fortune on preserving the national shrine which was falling into ruin.

secretary of the Stock Exchange from 1831 to 1853, and in 1851 Benjamin Nathan was its vice-president.

In 1795, Solomon Simson and Alexander Hirsch in New York tried to put themselves in touch with the Jews in China. To a Captain Howell who was sailing for China they gave a Hebrew letter to be delivered to the Jews in Kai Feng Fu. In this they reported that the Jews in the United States lived in security, and also that Jews and Christians served equally on the jury in courts of law in both civil and criminal cases.[13]

Thus, in the early days of the republic, civil equality made itself felt, and in the early nineteenth century Benjamin J. Phillips (d. 1830) served as an assistant district attorney, and Eleazar S. Lazarus, a president of Shearith Israel, served as assessor of the Fourteenth Ward. Mordecai M. Noah, who for a time was a trustee of the congregation, was sheriff (1822), judge of the Court of Sessions (1841), and surveyor of the port of New York. He was one of the 168 New York citizens who were the original sponsors of the founding of New York University. He also served as Grand Sachem of Tammany. Naphtali Judah, a president of the congregation, Emanuel B. Hart, and Albert Cardozo also were Sachems of the Tammany Society. Solomon Simson, a president of Shearith Israel, was in 1797 one of the founders of the Democratic Society, and he became its president.[14]

Emanuel B. Hart (1809–1897), oldest son of Bernard Hart, president of Mt. Sinai Hospital for seven years (1870–1876) and president of the Hebrew Home for Aged and Infirm, served at various times as alderman, excise commissioner, disbursing agent at the New York custom house, commissioner of immigration (1870–1873), surveyor of the port of New York under Presidents Buchanan and Lincoln (1857–1861), besides being lieutenant colonel of the state militia, chairman of the general committee of Tammany in 1849, and serving in Congress from 1851 to 1853.[15]

When the Crosby Street Synagogue was opened in 1834, it counted among its members giving various forms of civic service two police officers, Joseph L. Hays and Benjamin E. Hays; two marshals, Hart Levy and Joseph S. Simson; an inspector of spirits, C. J. Pesoa; an inspector of customs, Montgomery Moses; a master in chancery, Abraham D. Russel, and a revenue officer, Naphtali Phillips, who had repeatedly been president of the congregation.

This Naphtali Phillips, son of Jonas Phillips, born in New York October 14, 1773, served for thirty years in the Customs House, first as an appraiser

then as an inspector, from 1822 to 1853. He died in 1870 at the age of ninety-eight. His son, Jonas N. Phillips (d. 1874), was a prominent member of the old volunteer fire department, a member of the board of education, and for some time superintendent of public buildings. In 1857 he was president of the city council and acting mayor of the city. A third member of the family, the dramatist Jonas B. Phillips, was assistant district attorney, and a fourth, Joshua Phillips (d. 1880), served for thirty-six years in the Department of Public Charities and Corrections. A fifth member of that family, another son of Naphtali Phillips, Isaac Phillips, who for five terms from 1849 to 1854 was Grand Master of the New York Masons, was appointed in 1853 by President Franklin Pierce as appraiser for the port of New York, a position which he filled for fifteen years. He served for ten years as a public school commissioner and was very active in the New York Chamber of Commerce. His son, Naphtali Moses Taylor Phillips, generally known as N. Taylor Phillips, served for a number of years as first deputy and acting controller of the city. Both Isaac Phillips and N. Taylor Phillips, like their father and grandfather, Naphtali Phillips, were presidents of Congregation Shearith Israel. Another member of the Phillips family, S. Howard Cohen, was for a number of years president of the city's board of elections. In the twentieth century another Isaac Phillips was for twenty-six years assistant corporation council. Michael H. Cardozo, Jr., Murray Gurfein, John Hezekiah Levy, and Edgar J. Nathan III served as assistant district attorneys.

A president of the congregation, Jonathan Nathan (1811–1863) was master in chancery from 1840 to 1846, and later commissioner of records, and Seixas Nathan was appointed inspector of customs in 1849. In the twentieth century Montague Hendricks gave public service in this same capacity, as had his great-grandfather, Naphtali Phillips, a century earlier. President of Shearith Israel, Joseph Blumenthal (1834–1901) was for several years commissioner in the city's department of taxes and assessment. He was one of the committee of seventy which helped overthrow the Tweed Ring. He was a member of the state assembly in 1873 and 1874 and from 1888 to 1891, and a staff officer of the third cavalry regiment in the National Guard, State of New York. He also served as president of the congregation, of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, and of the board of trustees of the Jewish Theological Seminary from its foundation to his death. Theodore W. Myers served as a City Park Commissioner, and later as comptroller of the city of New York.

Albert J. Cardozo was elected judge in New York's Court of Common Pleas in 1863, and in 1867 he was elected a justice in the State Supreme Court. He served there until his resignation in 1872.[16] Philip J. Joachimsen (1817–1890), who fought in the Civil War, was appointed assistant corporation attorney in 1840, and in 1855 assistant United States district attorney. At the instance of President Franklin Pierce he was officially thanked for the able way in which he filled this office. Some years after, in 1870, he was elected a judge of the New York Marine Court which was later called the New York City Court. Moses R. Ryttenberg (d. 1926) was an assistant district attorney who later served as magistrate. Edgar J. Nathan, Jr., another president of the congregation, during the First World War was the chief of the Division of Restricted Imports of the War Trade Board in Washington. He served for many years as chairman of the Committee on the Domestic Relations Court of the New York City Bar Association, and he was a delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention in 1938. He was president of the borough of Manhattan for four years beginning in 1942. During those years there were originated a number of slum clearance and better housing projects. In 1946 he was appointed to the Supreme Court of the State of New York, and elected to a full term in November of that year. Herman P. Mantell, principal of a public school, served as president of the Teachers' Council of New York City.

Of the women in Shearith Israel who have made a name for themselves in the service of their city, the earliest was Judith Salzedo Peixotto Hays, daughter of Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto and granddaughter of Hazzan Peixotto. As head of the Ward Girls School No. 10 on James Street, she was the first Jewish principal of a public school in the city. The New York *Sun* in its issue of April 15, 1850, called her "a thorough scholar and teacher" and spoke of "the great excellence of her classes." [17] Shirley Friedman is another woman in Shearith Israel who gave service as principal of one of the city's public schools.

Alice Davis Menken in her cooperation with the courts in the battle against delinquency served with unusual civic usefulness. Anna Moskowitz Kross has been commissioner of the city's Department of Correction. When serving as magistrate she did much to raise the standards of the social relations and human influence of New York's night court for women. She organized a wayward minors' court for young women, a social service bureau in the magistrates courts, and converted the forbidding domestic relations court into the friendly home term magistrates court.

On occasions of official historic celebration by the city, the congregation has frequently been given recognition in keeping with its long association with New York. When New York celebrated the 275th anniversary of its foundation, Dr. H. Pereira Mendes took official part in the celebration at City Hall. In 1903, on the 250th anniversary of the establishment of municipal government in Nieuw Amsterdam, Dr. Mendes was spokesman for the Jews, just as in October, 1914, in connection with the tercentenary of the founding of New York when a religious celebration was arranged by representatives of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious groups, the Jewish representative participating in the program at the Hippodrome was Dr. Mendes.[18] Similarly on subsequent civic commemorative historic occasions Dr. Pool has frequently been called on to represent the Jewish clergy of the city.

Beyond such relations with the city, the congregation as a whole has been notably associated with the life of the state. When in January, 1784, Shearith Israel reorganized itself after the Revolution, it presented the following address to Governor Clinton:

To His Excellency George Clinton Esquire Captain General and Commander in Chief of the Militia of the State of New York and Admiral of the Navy of the Same.

May it Please Your Excellency.

We the Members of the Antient Congregation of Israelites, lately returned from Exile, beg leave to Welcome Your Arrival in this City, with our Most Cordial Congratulations.

Though the Society, we Belong to, is but small, when Compared with other Religious Societies, Yet, we flatter ourselves, that none has Manifested a more Zealous Attachment to the Sacred Cause of America, in the late War with Great Britain. We derive therefore the Highest Satisfaction from reflecting, that it pleased the Almighty Arbiter of Events, to dispose us to take part with the Country we lived in; and we now look forward, with Pleasure to the happy days we expect to enjoy under a Constitution, Wisely framed to preserve the inestimable Blessings of Civil, and Religious Liberty.

Taught by our Divine Legislator to Obey our Rulers, and prompted thereto by the Dictates of our own Reason, it will be the anxious endeavor of the Members of our Congregation to render themselves Worthy of these Blessings, by Discharging the Duties of Good Citizens and as an Inviolable regard to Justice and the Constitution, has ever distinguished your Administration, they rest Confident of receiving an equal Share of your patronage.

May the Supreme Governor of the Universe take you under his Holy Protection, and may you long continue to Exercise the Dignified Office You now Possess, with Honor to Yourself, and advantage to your Constituents.

We have the Honor to Be, with the greatest Respect, In Behalf of the Antient Congregation of Israelites

Your Excellencys
Very Obedient Humble Servants
HAYMAN LEVY
MYER MYERS
ISAAC MOSES [19]

Solomon Simson, president of Shearith Israel from 1789 to 1791 and active in New York City politics, is said also at one time to have been a member of the State House of Delegates. No official record of this has come down to us. But it is a matter of record that Ephraim Hart, president of the congregation in 1794, was a state senator in 1810.[20] At the time of his death he was a partner of John Jacob Astor.

Mordecai Myers was born in Newport in 1776. He was brought to New York from Newport by his widowed mother when he was a child of four. At one time a trustee of the congregation, he was active in the Tammany Society, and a New York City representative in the State Assembly in 1828, and from 1830 to 1834. In 1853 and 1854 he was mayor of Schenectady where he died in 1871, in his ninety-fifth year.[21]

Joseph Blumenthal, who was president of the congregation in 1882–83, was, as we have seen, also a member of the state assembly. A congregant who served in the assembly was Charles Steinberg who later became the congregation's shammash. One who later was president of Shearith Israel and who from 1898 to 1901 was a member of the state legislature was N. Taylor Phillips. Michael Schaap was leader of the Bull Moose Progressive minority when a member of the state assembly in 1913 and 1914.

Samuel H. Hofstadter has been state assemblyman, state senator, and justice of the state supreme court, and Bernard L. Shientag was State Industrial Commissioner and later justice in the state supreme court. Rosalie (Mrs. N. Taylor) Phillips, a daughter of Adolphus S. Solomons, was a member of the Democratic State Committee, and another woman member of the congregation, Estelle Corcos Levy, a daughter of Hazzan Corcos, gave service for five years to the state Department of Labor as unemployment insurance referee. She later acted as assistant regional attorney for the War Manpower Commission. John Hezekiah Levy served on the New York State Labor Relations Board and the Panel of the State Board of Mediation. From these and numerous other state sources we pass on to the national scene.

From the years which led up to the Revolution we see congregants bestir themselves in national matters. Hayman Levy, Samuel Judah, Jacob Moses, Isaac Pinto, Jacob Myers, and Isaac Seixas were among the citizens who signed the declaration in favor of making the nonimportation agreement more stringent. These and other similar patriotic actions were taken by individual congregants. After the Revolution, the congregation as a unit began to look to nationwide action. The first instance of this occurred when Shearith Israel took the initiative in trying to secure united action of all Jewish congregations in the United States, Shearith Israel in New York, Jeshuat Israel in Newport, Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, Beth Elohim in Charleston, and Beth Shalome in Richmond, in sending a joint address to George Washington, the newly elected president of the country. Inexperience and delay made this effort only in part effective. The congregation in Savannah went ahead by itself, and on May 6, 1789, presented its own address. After considerable delay, on July 20, 1790, Shearith Israel directed the following letter to the other Jewish congregations of the country: [22]

Gentlemen

We are desirous of addressing the President of the United States in one general address, comprehending all the Congregations professing our Holy religion in America, as we are led to understand that mode will be less irksome to the president then troubling him to reply to every individual address.

We should have given a previous invitation had not our local situation, for this some time past prevented us. That obsticle being removed, We are therefore authorised in behalf of this Congregation & others who may unite with us for this purpose—to request you'll join, by giving us permission to Include you in the Address—

We will be thankful if you'l transmit us a draft in what manner you would be desirous of having the address worded, that thereby we may collect the different Ideas of the Congregations, in whose behalf we may address.

We do not by any means, conceive ourselves well treated by the Georgians, who have officiously come forward without any previous notice & any essential Service to themselves & hurtful to our feelings, as nothing of that nature could have been required of them, unless done on a general plan.

Your Answer as soon as possible will be acceptable.

We are in behalf of the Congregation—Gentlemen

Your most Obdt. Servts

ISAAC MOSES Pars Prest,
SOLOMON SIMSON [23]

The reply received from Moses Seixas in Newport expressed criticism of the delay but consented to cooperate, leaving it to New York to draft the address to the President,

because we firmly rely on your being critically attentive that your sentiments will be properly express'd & unequivocally relative to the Enfranchisement which is secured to us Jews by the Federal Constitution.

In the sequel, Newport Jewry made its own historic address to President Washington on his visit to the city on August 17, 1790. It was then that George Washington took up and gave immortality to words contained in the letter addressed to him by the warden of the Newport congregation, Moses Seixas, who paid tribute to fundamental principles in the government of the new American republic, "a government erected by the Majesty of People—a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance —but generously affords to All liberty of conscience, and immunities of citizenship." [24]

The Charleston congregation also replied to the suggestion of addressing the President that came from New York. But five months later, in November, 1790, having received no reply to the answer which they had sent to New York they wrote again saying, "we beg you will not include us in the same, as we think it has been too tardy in the delivery."

A month later, word was sent from Philadelphia by Manuel Josephson, a former member of Shearith Israel in New York, but at that time the president of the Philadelphia congregation, that President Washington was daily expected there. Josephson therefore wished to know whether Shearith Israel chose to be included in the address which would then be offered to the President. Thereupon it was

Resolved that the Parnas of K.K. Philadelphia be requested to include this congregation and those of South Carolina and Richmond, that the President of this Board correspond with the Parnas of Philadelphia on this subject mentioning that this congregation meant to address the President of the United States when in this city but was only prevented by wishing to obtain the sentiments of their Bretheren in the United States and the letters coming too late hindered us of that pleasure.

Resolved that Mr. Gomez the Clerk of this Board be requested to forward on to Mr. Josephson the letters from South Carolina and Richmond on the subject of addressing the President of the United States.[25]

The address which Manuel Josephson presented on December 13, 1790, in the name of the four congregations declared,

It is reserved for you to unite in affection for your character and Person, every political and religious denomination of men; and in this will the Hebrew Congregations aforesaid yield to no class of their fellow-citizens.

We have hitherto been prevented by various circumstances peculiar to our situa-

tion from adding our congratulations to those which the rest of America have offered on your elevation to the chair of the federal government.

Deign then, illustrious Sir, to accept this our homage.

The wonders which the Lord of Hosts hath worked in the days of our forefathers, have taught us to observe the greatness of his wisdom and his might throughout the events of the late glorious revolution; and while we humble ourselves at his footstool in thanksgiving and praise for the blessing of his deliverance; we acknowledge you the Leader of the American armies as his chosen and beloved servant; But not to your sword alone is our present happiness to be ascribed; That indeed opened the way to the reign of freedom, but never was it perfectly secure, till your hand gave birth to the federal constitution, and you renounced the joys of retirement to seal by your administration in peace, what you had achieved in war.

To the eternal God who is thy refuge, we commit in our prayer the care of thy precious life, and when full of years, thou shalt be gathered unto the People "thy righteousness shall go before thee" and we shall remember, amidst our regret, that the Lord hath set apart the Godly for himself; whilst thy name and thy virtues will remain an indelible memorial on our minds.

Washington's reply to this address presented to him in the name of the congregations in Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and Richmond is a classic document. It reads

Gentlemen:

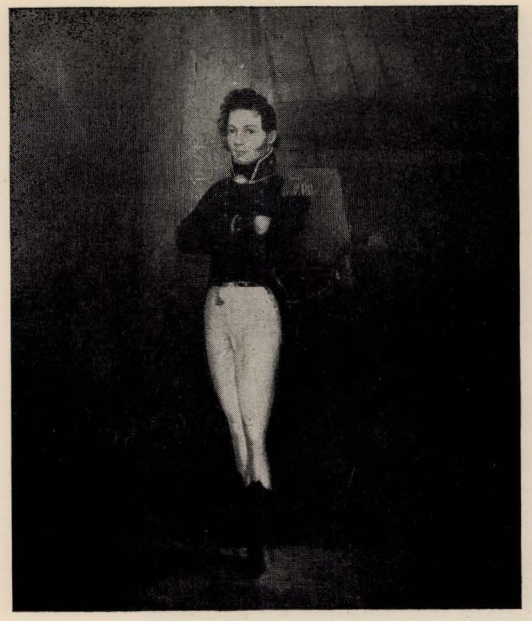
The liberal sentiment towards each other which marks every political and religious denomination of men in this country stands unrivalled in the history of nations —The affection of such a people is a treasure beyond the reach of calculation: and the repeated proofs which my fellow citizens have given of their attachment to me, and approbation of my doings form the purest source of my temporal felicity— The affectionate expressions of your address again excite my gratitude, and receive my warmest acknowledgements.

The power and goodness of the Almighty were strongly manifested in the events of our glorious revolution.—and his kind interposition in our behalf has been no less visible in the establishment of our present equal government— In war he directed the sword—and in peace he has ruled in our councils—my agency in both has been guided by the best intentions, and a sense of the duty which I owe my country: and as my exertions hitherto have been amply rewarded by the approbation of my fellow-citizens, I shall endeavor to deserve a continuance of it by my future conduct.

May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your congregations.

G. WASHINGTON

The last letter on record about this whole matter is the one sent to Solomon Simson, president of the congregation, by Manuel Josephson in Philadelphia written on December 14, 1790, the day after his presentation of the address to the President. In this letter Josephson tells that



Uriah P. Levy, a hero of the War of 1812, also led fight to abolish corporal punishment in the American navy



Lieutenant Colonel Israel Moses helped reduce army death rate in the Civil War



Daniel L. M. Peixotto, provost marshal, died at Guantanamo in Spanish-American War



Michael Allen, first to give Jewish chaplaincy service in American armed forces



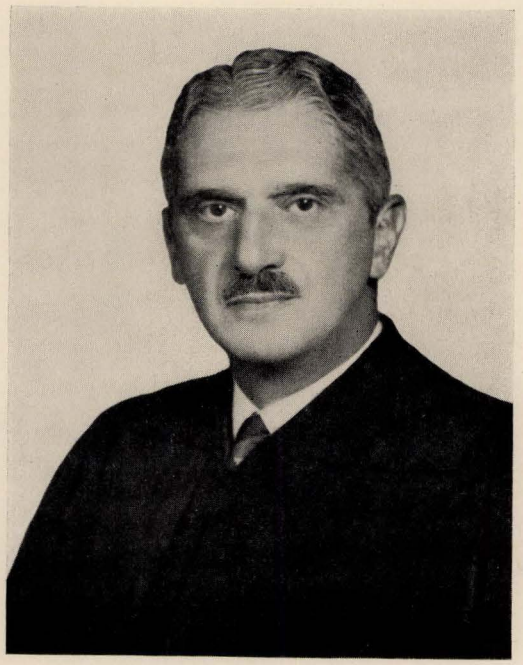
A report is given to General Eisenhower by Rabbi Pool on Jewish religious work in American armed forces in Second World War



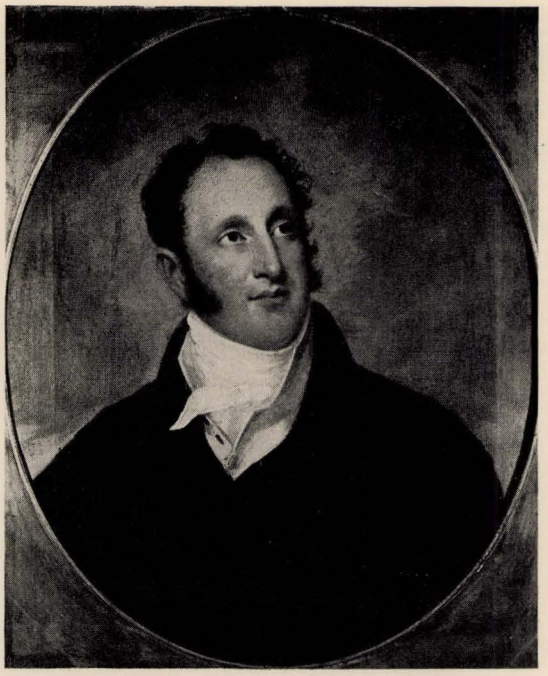
Israeli sailors on official American visit honor Commodore Levy

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo
Supreme Court Justice
served with judicial insight





Edgar J. Nathan, Jr.
borough president of Manhattan
New York State Supreme Court Justice.
Also president of Shearith Israel.



Mordecai M. Noah, flaming spirit, consul, dramatist, orator, judge, editor. Proto-Zionist, he foresaw restoration of Zion.



Anna M. Kross, magistrate, Commissioner of Correction in New York

In consequence of your Letter of 25th November covering proceedings of the Trustees on that day, impowering me to include your Congregation & those of Charleston & Richmond in our intended address to the President of the United States; I complied with your wish: And yesterday had the honour to present the same to him in person, and was favoured with his answer, as you will observe by the Newspaper herewith inclosed—I made it a point to inform the President verbally, the reasons of your Congregation's seeming remissness in not having paid their respects before; and he appeared perfectly satisfied.

I hope the whole will meet your approbation which will be highly pleasing to me— That Concord & Peace may preside in your Congregation, is the wish of

MANUEL JOSEPHSON [26]

On the inauguration of a President of the United States the congregation has sometimes offered special prayers for him. Thus at almost the exact hour when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was taking the oath of office on Saturday morning, January 20, 1945, a prayer was offered up for him in the synagogue during the Sabbath morning service. On the death in office of any President the congregation has adopted appropriate resolutions and held a memorial service.

In 1887, Shearith Israel called on the Jews of the United States to make preparations on a national scale for a worthy celebration of one and a fitting remembrance of the other of two concurrent 400th anniversaries which would fall in 1892—that of the discovery of America and that of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. These two events were in a deep sense more than coincidental in time. Columbus himself associated the two when he wrote to the Spanish monarchs "having expelled all the Jews from all your Kingdoms and dominions in the same month . . . your Highnesses commanded me that with a sufficient fleet I should go to the said parts." The Columbus caravel in the harbor of Palos was lying alongside the ships which carried into exile Jews from Spain. Fittingly Shearith Israel urged, though the proposal was not taken up, that in 1892 the Jews of America should present to the United States a monument of religious liberty in the form of some institution of public service.[27]

The first Jew to be elected to the Congress of the United States was Isaac Bloom of New York. He was elected in 1803, but he died before taking his seat. Mordecai M. Noah, tumultuous dramatic personality, served as consul in Tunis, 1813 to 1816,[28] and Dr. Joel Hart was consul in Leith, Scotland, 1817 to 1832. Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, grandson of Hazzan Peixotto, was born in New York in 1834 where he spent part of his boyhood. In 1870 he was ap-

pointed by President Grant to be United States consul to Rumania. In that position he was able to do much toward bringing the facts about Rumania's persecution of Jews to the attention of the United States. Later he served as consul at Lyons in France. He spent the last five years of his life in New York, the city of his birth, where he died in 1890, and was buried in the congregation's cemetery at Cypress Hills.

An active figure in public service, Emanuel B. Hart was elected to Congress in 1851. Jefferson Monroe Levy served as congressman from 1899 to 1901 and from 1911 to 1915. His family's veneration for Thomas Jefferson rescued from threatened destruction one of the nation's precious possessions, Monticello. This historic shrine was neglected and falling into ruin when Commodore Uriah P. Levy purchased it. He made it his home, and his mother's grave is still to be seen there. In his will he deeded Monticello to Congress for the nation or for its use as an agricultural school. Jefferson M. Levy, his nephew, who contested the will, preserved the site and spent upward of a million dollars in its restoration and acquiring adjoining lands. Finally, in 1923, its national importance was realized and a citizen's committee redeemed the monument which else might have been irretrievably lost.

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo was a jurist to whom the legal profession looked for inspiration and guidance. For him law was the foundation of organized society. In 1914 he became judge of the New York State Court of Appeals and served as its head from 1926 to 1932. In that year he was called to the United States Supreme Court, where, until his death in 1938, he continued to give to his legal opinions the illumination of his philosophic mind and passionate love of justice. At his death the court said of him that "no judge ever came to this court more fully equipped by learning, acumen, dialectical skill and disinterested purpose." He won a permanent place in the history of American law as he "walked steadily along the path of reason, seeking the goal of truth."

Benjamin B. Buttenwieser, who in the Second World War had been a lieutenant commander in the navy, in 1952 was assistant United States high commissioner to Germany under General John J. McCloy. Robert Weber served in Thailand on the government's Point Four Program. George Minzer and Frederic S. Nathan served as assistant United States attorneys.

The congregation has actively participated in international matters directly affecting Jews. The Damascus blood accusation, the Mortara case, persecution

of Jews by czarist Russia and Nazi Germany, aroused American Jewry and evoked active response in the congregation. When Queen Victoria of England died, a special resolution of mourning was passed. A prayer for the deceased queen was recited in the synagogue on the following Sabbath, and the American flag was hung over the synagogue vestry house at half mast until after the funeral.[29] Because of the relations of the congregation in its earliest days with Holland, it expressed its official congratulations in 1938 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina. When the queen arrived in the United States in 1942, the congregation addressed to her a letter of welcome, which was graciously acknowledged.[30] In like manner, when the Princess Juliana, the heir to the throne of the Netherlands, came to New York at the end of 1940, an address was presented to her calling attention to the Dutch origins of the congregation.[31] Similarly when she came to New York in 1952 as queen, Dr. Pool was among those present at the official luncheon of welcome given to her and her consort, Prince Bernhard. When Vincent Auriol, president of the French Republic, and at other times when representatives of foreign countries were guests of honor at official receptions held for them in New York, Dr. Pool was called on to offer a prayer alongside of a representative of the Protestant churches and of the Catholic diocese. President Auriol in his address referred to the rabbi's prayer, part of which was in the French language, which he said movingly recalled to him the suffering and the heroism of France's Jewish citizens in the dark days of the occupation of his country by the Nazis.

In multiform ways Congregation Shearith Israel through the generations has sought to identify itself with the higher interests of the city, state, and nation. Week by week Congregation Shearith Israel has prayed for the constituted authorities of the government. Its words of prayer have quickened the civic conscience of its congregants and have been translated into service for the city, for the state, and for the land which have given to all freedom of worship with equality of citizenship.

Generations before Jews in the Old World had the right of sharing in the responsibility of common defense, they served in war as in peace in the New World. In Brazil they had fought as citizens of New Holland. In Nieuw Amsterdam, though it was at first denied, their right to take their place in the citizens bands and mount guard was recognized a year after their arrival, through the insistence of Jacob bar Simson and Asser Levy. The story of the

participation of American Jews in defense of their country thus commenced with the very beginning of their settlement in the land. Picturesque details sometimes flit across history's pages from those early days. In 1691, during King William's War, the congregation's butcher, Joseph Isaacs, enlisted and was given a gun. That gun caused him trouble, for someone took it from his home, and the military authorities demanded either that he return the gun or that he pay them for it.[32]

In 1738, no less than eleven members of the very small congregation were enrolled in the militia of New York City. These were Samuel Myers Cohen, David Franks, Jacob Franks, Moses Franks, and Samuel Levy, all serving in the company under the command of Captain Henry Cuyler; Joseph Hays and Baruch Judah in the company under Charles Laroex; Jacob Abrahams and Isaac Rivera in Captain Richard's company; Joseph Simson in the Orange County Regiment of New York Volunteers, and Solomon Myers.[33]

In 1754, Isaac Myers called a town meeting at the Rising Sun and organized a company of men with himself as captain to serve in the French and Indian War. The Jewishly learned Jacob Franks, who seven times served as president of the congregation and of whom we caught sight as enrolled in the city militia in 1738, was the New York representative of George II charged with providing supplies for the British forces in the French and Indian War.[34]

THE REVOLUTION

In 1775, in the early rumblings of the Revolution, among those nominated as deemed qualified to serve as officers for New York regiments in the Provincial Army was Benjamin Mendes Seixas, sergeant in Major Reitzema's company. He was designated as "an excellent soldier." The congregation's shohet, Hart Jacobs, was in the service. It is stirring to note to what extent his religious scruples were respected. On January 22, 1776,

> Hart Jacobs, a Jew attending at the door, requests an exemption from doing military duty, on the City Watch, on Friday nights, which is part of his Sabbath. Thereupon a Certificate was given to him, the words following, to wit:
>
> "Hart Jacobs, of the Jewish religion, having signified to this Committee that it is inconsistent with his religious profession to perform military duty on Friday nights, being part of the Jewish Sabbath, it is
>
> "Ordered, that he be exempted from Military duty on that night of the week, to be subject, nevertheless, to the performance of his full tour of duty on other nights." [35]

When the Revolution finally broke out, members of Shearith Israel flocked to the patriot colors in New York, in Philadelphia, and wherever they may have gone to avoid living under British rule. Some members of course were convinced loyalists, but the spirit of the great majority of the congregants was well expressed in the story told by Jared Sparks about that elderly member of the Gomez family who in speaking to a member of the Continental Congress proposed to organize a company of soldiers. When he was told that at sixty-eight he was too old, he replied that he could stop a bullet as well as could a younger man.

Perhaps the most notable of these fighting adherents of the American cause was Isaac Franks. He was born in New York on May 27, 1759. He joined the American forces in 1776 as a youth of seventeen, and took part in the battle of Long Island under George Washington's command. He was on guard on the East River when the British took the city and was imprisoned by them. But three months later he escaped. Eventually he became aide-de-camp to George Washington and a lieutenant colonel in the American army. During the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, George Washington stayed in his house at Germantown.

Among the New York Jews who joined the American forces in Philadelphia were Myer Myers Cohen, Solomon Myers Cohen, Daniel son of Moses D. Gomez, Ephraim Hart, Benjamin Jacobs, Abraham Judah, Moses Judah, Samuel Judah, Eleazar Levy, Hayman Levy, Isaac Levy, Solomon Marache, Isaac Moses, Simon Nathan, Joseph Nathans, Manuel Noah, David Machado Phillips, and Jonas Phillips. Other New York Jews who served were Sergeant Major David Nunez Cardozo, Privates Isaac Nunez Cardozo, Mattathias Gomez, Abraham Hays, Lieutenant Baruch Hays, Benjamin Hays, Privates Joel Henry, Aaron Isaacs, Abraham Isaacs, Moses Isaacks, Hart Jacobs, Jacob Levy, John Levy, Michael Levy, Isaac Marks, Michael Marks, Joseph Marques, Jacob Moses, Myer Myers, and Solomon Simson. A number of these ardent patriots had been signers of the second nonimportation agreement in 1769. Others who served the American cause during the Revolution and whose graves in the New York congregation's burial grounds are decorated every year on Memorial Day were David Hays of Westchester, who had also served in the French and Indian War, Michael Hays, Joshua Isaacs of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Abraham Rodrigues Rivera of Newport, Rhode Island. There were a number who contributed service in auxiliary

activities. Solomon Simson supplied cannon to the New York militia and gave lead for making bullets. Jacob Hart advanced money to General Lafayette to clothe and feed his troops, and for this service he was thanked by Congress. Isaac Moses also took an active part in sponsoring and organizing some of the privateering that was of critical importance to the colonies.

The outstanding patriotic service given by Haym Salomon, for the most part associated with his later life in Philadelphia, began in New York. There he was identified with the Sons of Liberty. In September, 1776, he was arrested and imprisoned by the British forces and confined in the Provost Prison. After serving for a time as interpreter in the jail he was released. Early in 1778 he was arrested by the British as a spy, and after a court martial he was sentenced to death by hanging. He escaped from the British forces in New York and found his way to Philadelphia where he modestly became a private in Captain Joseph Greenway's 2d company in Lieutenant Colonel John Shee's 1st Battalion, Philadelphia Militia. Well known are his services as a broker in aiding Robert Morris, the head of the Department of Finance of the Continental Congress, in helping finance Armand's Legion, and in relieving the financial distress of many men in public life such as James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and Baron von Steuben.

The defense of New York against the oncoming British soldiers used the cemetery as an emplacement for a battery of guns commanding the East River. Major General Charles Lee wrote to George Washington:

> The command of the passage of the Sound must be ours . . . The East River, I am almost persuaded, may be secured in such a manner that their ships will scarcely venture into it, or at least, they cannot keep their stations when in. A battery for this purpose is planned, and in some forwardness, at the foot of the Jews' Burying Ground. To protect this battery from the near approach of ships, (which, when close, are always supposed to be an over match for batteries level with the water, and in a low station,) gins in barbet, placed on the heights of the Jews' burying Ground, when in correspondence with a battery I have ordered on an opposite commanding knoll in Long Island, will certainly be sufficient.

Eleazar, son of Hayman Levy, soldier in the Revolution, lost his lands to West Point Military Academy which made "great waste" of his holdings. Because the government did not reimburse him for the acreage taken from him, he was "reduced from a Comfortable Subsistence to a State of Poverty and Wretchedness." [86]

THE WAR OF 1812

In the War of 1812, Major Bernard Hart was a division quartermaster. Henry Hart served as ensign. Captain, later Lieutenant Colonel, Aaron Levy, an art dealer, was a son of Hayman Levy who had served in the Revolution. Captain Mordecai Myers, originally of Newport but who was educated in New York, had served in Captain John Swarthout's artillery company from 1801 to 1807. In the War of 1812 he received a commission as captain in the 13th United States Infantry. He served on the northern border and in the invasion of Canada. He was seriously wounded at Chrysler's Farm, and was mustered out on June 15, 1815.[37] Colonel Nathan Myers was commanding officer of a brigade. Haym M. Salomon, son of Haym Salomon, served as captain. Dr. Manuel Phillips served as assistant surgeon. There were four sons of Benjamin Mendes Seixas in the forces: Major Abraham B. Seixas, Captain Moses B. Seixas, Major Solomon Seixas, and Isaac B. Seixas who served in the war in the Richmond Light Infantry Blues, and who later became the hazzan of Shearith Israel. Others who gave service were the brilliant David G. Seixas, son of Hazzan Gershom M. Seixas, and Captain Sampson Simson, later the founder of Mt. Sinai Hospital.

Uriah Phillips Levy (1792–1862) was a grandson of Jonas Phillips. His father, Michael Levy, served as an officer in the Revolution. Buried in the congregational cemetery at Cypress Hills, he lies there under a tombstone which states that he was the father of the law for abolishing corporal punishment in the navy, a law which was put through Congress by New Hampshire's Senator, John P. Hale. When the War of 1812 broke out, Uriah Levy was a young man of twenty years of age. But he had his sea legs, having run away from home at the age of ten to become a cabin boy. He served in the war as master of the brig *Argus*. After destroying twenty-one English ships, he was captured and he spent sixteen months in England in Dartmoor prison. His career in the navy was a checkered one, but eventually he rose to the highest rank, that of Commodore.[38] A destroyer-escort built in the Second World War was named after him. Though he suffered the slings of prejudice he helped open the way for Jews in the navy. His rescue of Monticello from imminent ruin will remain a monument to his American patriotism.

Another picturesque figure was Joseph B. Nones, a son of Major Benjamin Nones of Philadelphia, who in the Revolution had served on the staffs

of Lafayette and Washington. As a baby, Joseph had been dandled on the knees of George Washington. At the age of fifteen he entered the navy in 1812 as a midshipman. He was private secretary to Henry Clay on the Ghent mission which made peace with England in 1814. He was badly wounded on the flagship *Guerrière* in the Algerian War of 1815, and in 1823 he was compelled to retire from naval service because of his wounds. Later on he was known as a notary public and commissioner of deeds in New York with a commission that was recognized in every state of the Union.[39] A cousin of Mordecai M. Noah, Samuel Noah, a graduate of West Point in 1807, lived in New York for some six years. In the War of 1812 he served as a private in the defense of Brooklyn.

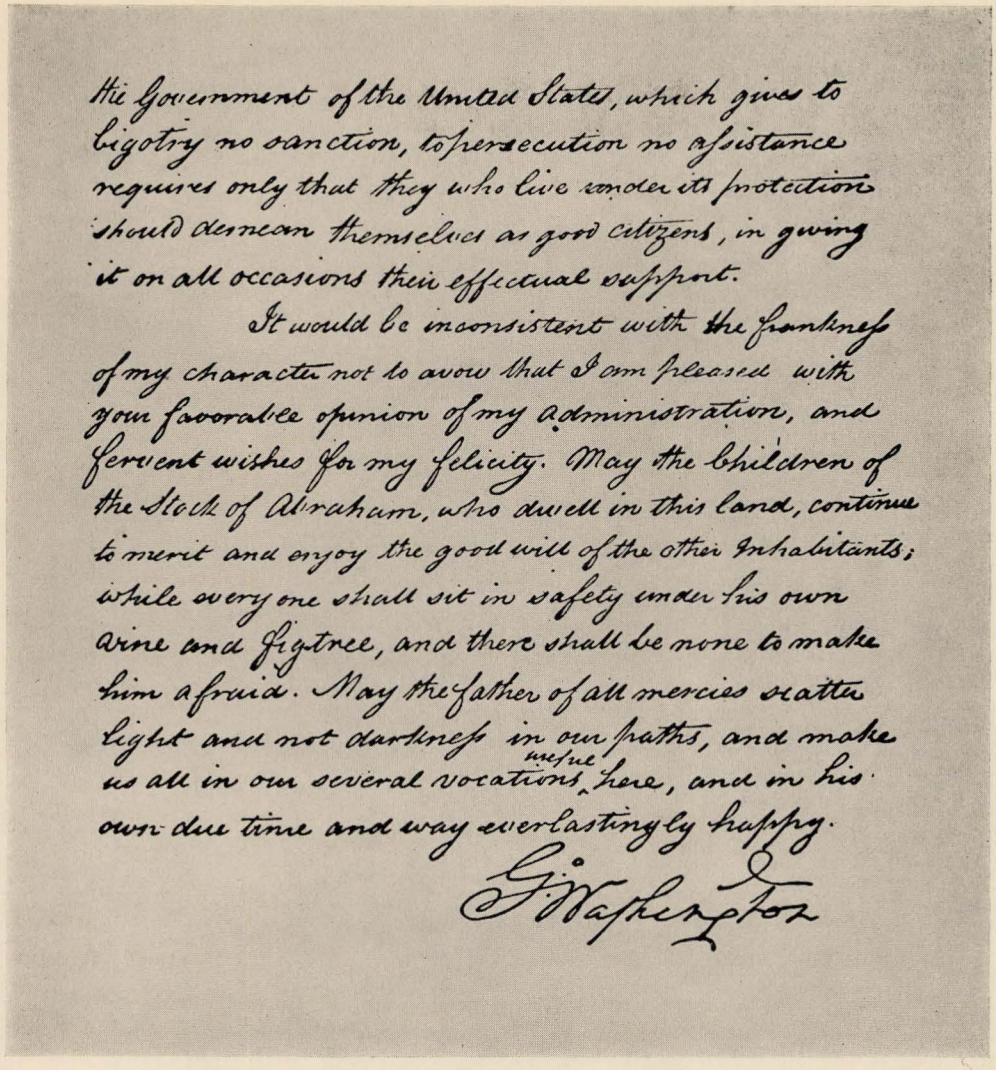
A New York Jewish civilian who was notably associated with the War of 1812 was Harmon Hendricks, a leading member of the congregation. In February, 1813, Congress authorized a loan of $16,000,000. The response of the public was very apathetic, less than $4,000,000 being subscribed. The government at that time could get money only at a discount of fifteen percent. Nevertheless, Harmon Hendricks patriotically subscribed for $40,000 worth of government bonds, this ranking him among the largest subscribers to that war-time issue.[40]

THE MEXICAN WAR

Captain Jonas P. Levy (1807–1883), brother of Commodore Uriah P. Levy and father of the beloved president of the congregation, L. Napoleon Levy, took part in the Mexican War. He was commander of the U.S.S. *America*. He served at Vera Cruz and was appointed captain of that post. Lieutenant Colonel Israel Moses, a son of Joshua Moses, served as surgeon in that war.

THE CIVIL WAR[41]

Israel Moses also served in the 72d New York Volunteers throughout the Civil War until July, 1865. He had been one of the founders of the Jews' Hospital, and the first to conduct an operation in that hospital. He was also one of the men who worked for the formation of the American Public Health Association. His grave may still be seen in the congregational cemetery at Cypress Hills.[42] His brother, Adjutant General Isaac Moses, also served in the Civil War. Assistant Adjutant General Myer Asch was wounded in the attack on Richmond. Colonel Max Friedman organized and then commanded

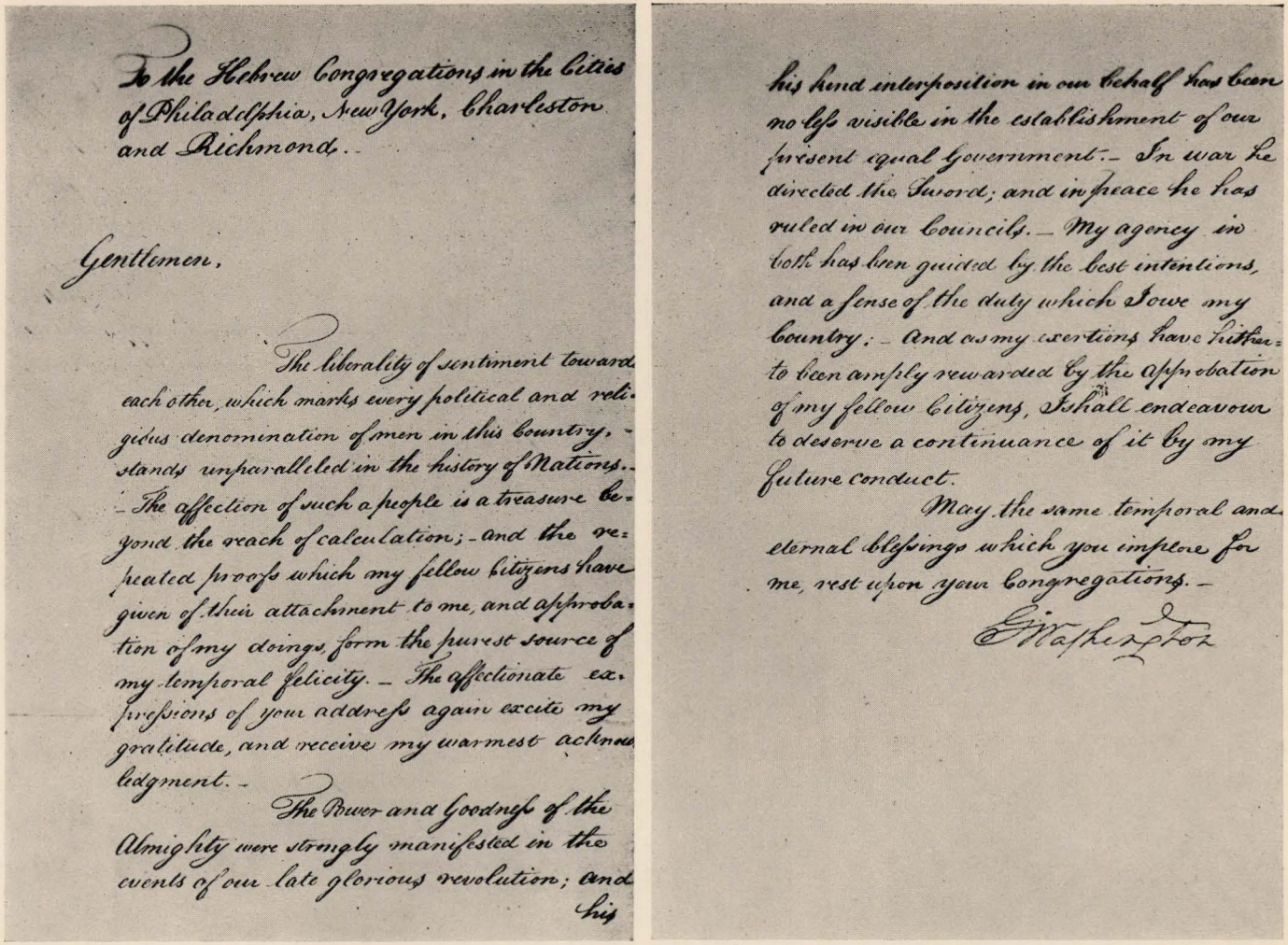


the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

From Washington's letter to Newport congregation, a classic statement on democracy



To the Hebrew Congregations in the Cities of Philadelphia, New York, Charleston and Richmond.

Gentlemen,

The liberality of sentiment toward each other, which marks every political and religious denomination of men in this country, stands unparalleled in the history of Nations. The affection of such a people is a treasure beyond the reach of calculation; and the repeated proofs which my fellow citizens have given of their attachment to me, and approbation of my doings, form the purest source of my temporal felicity. The affectionate expressions of your address again excite my gratitude, and receive my warmest acknowledgment.

The Power and Goodness of the Almighty were strongly manifested in the events of our late glorious revolution; and his hand interposition in our behalf has been no less visible in the establishment of our present equal Government. In war he directed the Sword, and in peace he has ruled in our Councils. My agency in both has been guided by the best intentions, and a sense of the duty which I owe my country; and as my exertions have hitherto been amply rewarded by the approbation of my fellow citizens, I shall endeavour to deserve a continuance of it by my future conduct.

May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your Congregations.

G. Washington

Washington's letter, heartwarming to the Jewish congregations in Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and Richmond

the 65th Pennsylvania 5th Cavalry Regiment, known as the Cameron Dragoons. He was severely wounded in February, 1862, in the battle of Vienna, Virginia.[43] Captain David D. Hart was severely wounded at the battle of Bull Run. Judge Philip J. Joachimsen helped organize the 59th New York Volunteers, and fought at New Orleans, eventually rising to the rank of brevet brigadier general. Two sons of the congregational leader Benjamin Nathan, Harmon and Frederick Nathan, were both in the Union forces. Frederick Nathan served in the Seventh Regiment New York State Militia, during the New York Draft Riots of 1863, and in the Union army when his regiment enrolled in it. Arthur Wellington Hart was also in the northern army, as was the New York druggist Moses L. M. Peixotto, who became captain of the 1st Ohio regiment. David Haim Nieto, who later became hazzan of the congregation, served as a volunteer in the Union army in the Civil War.

The first two Jews to serve as chaplains in the American forces were Michael Allen and Rabbi Arnold Fischel. Allen came to the congregation after leaving the army; Fischel went directly from the congregation's pulpit to his military service. Michael Allen has the distinction of being the first for whom a place was found to do the work of a Jewish chaplain in the armed forces of the United States. Born and raised in Philadelphia, he had been an active member in its Congregation Mikveh Israel. At the beginning of the Civil War he served in the Washington area as a Jewish chaplain to the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry, "Cameron's Dragoons," under the command of Colonel Max Friedman. But Allen was not a regularly ordained minister of a Christian denomination, as army regulations then demanded for a chaplain. Though Colonel Friedman struggled to retain him, Allen was compelled to withdraw from this service. On coming to Shearith Israel, he served as a teacher in the Polonies Talmud Torah School for some years, and on occasion he conducted services in the synagogue.[44] He was followed in the Civil War army chaplaincy by the Reverend Arnold Fischel. His story has been told in the record of Shearith Israel's ministry.

When the Civil War broke out, the synagogue was specially opened one afternoon or evening in the week so long as the hostilities prevailed. The women of the congregation organized themselves into the Ladies Army Relief, "for the purpose of relieving those of their fellow citizens who may suffer in defence of their country."[45] On Purim 1864, the congregation collected $2,500 for the Sanitary Commission. Mrs. Benjamin Nathan was a member of

the executive committee of New York's Sanitary Fair which raised over a million dollars. Characteristic of the spirit of the congregation is the fact that one day in 1861 Hendricks Brothers sold $12,000 worth of lead. They received a check for it, but when they learned that it was to be shipped to Georgia, they sent back the check and retained the lead. In so doing they reflected a tradition of national service which links the Hendricks copper mills with the work of Paul Revere and the development of metal parts in American warships, which was to play an important part in assuring United States victories in the War of 1812 noted by Mark Bortman.

THE OLD GUARD

In 1826, companies were formed of volunteers who drilled alongside military regiments in the armories of the city. The Light Guard, as they were first called, united in 1868 with the City Guard to form the Old Guard. Members of the congregation from the beginning were among these citizen soldiers of colorful uniform. Emanuel B. Hart, Edward Judah, and Benjamin Mendes Seixas were charter members. Hart, who was particularly active in the Light Guard, in 1856 succeeded John Jacob Astor as lieutenant colonel of the 12th Regiment in which it was finally absorbed. Jonas B. Phillips was a leading member of the Light Guard and secretary of his company. After twenty-seven years of service, he was made an honorary member. In 1839, Captain David D. Hart was elected head of the Light Guard. With his company in 1861 he was attached to the 71st New York State Militia. He was severely wounded in the first battle of Manassas in the Civil War. When Hart withdrew from his command, he was succeeded by John Jacob Astor, Jr. His portrait may be seen on the wall at the Old Guard Headquarters. When Hart's opponent, Thomas N. Cazneau, failed of election, he organized a new group which called itself the New York City Guard.

Among the incorporators of the Old Guard were Alexander Henriques and Emanuel Dreyfous, a great-grandson of Haym Salomon. N. Taylor Phillips served as judge-advocate and Jason Meth as senior captain and acting commandant. Captain Meth devoted years to a study of Jews in the Light Guard, the City Guard, and the Old Guard of the city of New York. He also compiled the names and record of some 230 Jews who served in the American Revolution, and of 40 who gave service in the War of 1812. In 1931, Captain Meth wrote the history of the Old Guard.[46]

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Among the members of the congregation who gave service in the Spanish-American War were Lafayette A. Goldstone, Edwin D. Graff and Captain Horace M. Graff, all of whom also gave service in the First World War. Horace M. Graff was chief of staff of Memorial Day parades on Riverside Drive for more than forty years. Captain Daniel L. M. Peixotto, great-grandson of Moses L. M. Peixotto, the congregation's religious leader in the early years of the nineteenth century, gave his life as a victim of yellow fever at Guantanamo, Cuba, where he was serving as provost marshal of the city. His remains were brought to New York where they were given burial in the Cypress Hills cemetery of the congregation.

When the Spanish-American War was declared, the congregation set up an American flag over the synagogue to hang there every day "until the arms of the United States shall prevail over Spain." The Sisterhood's offer to work for the relief of the soldiers and sailors was accepted, and it joined in collecting for the War Relief Fund which the congregation set up for helping the sick and the wounded.[47]

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Dr. Mendes, as president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, asked the military authorities to recognize the right of Jewish men to a furlough on their religious holy days. A satisfactory answer was received. Six years later, in response to a petition by Dr. Mendes, President Theodore Roosevelt instructed the War Department on September 8, 1904, that

> Commanding Officers be authorized to permit Jewish soldiers to be absent for attendance at service, on the Jewish Holidays.

Four days later, Dr. Mendes was notified by the War Department that

> Orders have this day been issued to the Commanding Generals of all military departments in the United States and of the Philippines Division to permit such enlisted men of the Army of the Jewish faith as may desire to avail themselves of the privilege to be absent from their duties for such length of time as may be deemed necessary to enable them to attend divine services in the forthcoming Jewish holidays.[48]

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

When the United States entered the First World War, the women of the congregation organized the Women's League of Congregation Shearith Israel

for War Relief. At its first meeting in April, 1917, over a thousand dollars was raised. In its program of activities it included making the assembly hall of the synagogue building available for recreation rooms and clubs for soldiers and sailors.[49]

That hall was also used for drilling by the Alexander Battalion Junior American Guard's James H. C. Smyth's company. This was in considerable measure composed of members of the congregation preparing for service in the war with Germany.[50] Sabbath eve services were for a period conducted in the small synagogue so as to help in the national conservation of coal.

Seventy-nine men of the congregation served in the army, the navy, and the air force in the First World War. Their names are recorded in the appendix. They gave sacrificial service and exemplified the words of General Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces,

> When the time came in 1917 to serve their country under arms, no class of people served with more patriotism or with higher motives than the young Jews who volunteered or were drafted and went overseas with our other young Americans.

Reverently remembered are Corporal James Henry Florance, Lieutenant Frank J. Felbel, Private Adolph R. Jungman, and Judge-Advocate Captain Julian M. Strassburger, who met their death in service in France. The four bronze lamps hanging on either side of the Ark, which were given to the synagogue by Joseph Blumenthal, Jefferson M. Levy, Mitchell A. C. Levy, and N. Taylor Phillips, were rededicated in 1921 in memory of these four sons of the congregation who gave their lives for their country.

THE ASSER LEVY GARRISON

In 1937 veterans in the congregation organized the Asser Levy Garrison, No. 350, of the Army and Navy Union. It was aptly named after Asser Levy, the first Jew to take his place in the armed defense of his land, the man whom Louis Marshall called "the protagonist of Jewish rights and liberties in America." In its membership the Garrison counted congregants who had served in the National Guard, in the Spanish-American War, and in the First and Second World Wars. Regular musters were held in the synagogue building. For many years the Garrison participated in the celebration of Armistice Day, and sponsored the Memorial Day exercises in the historic Chatham Square cemetery of the congregation.

During the Second World War, in 1941 the Garrison purchased an am-

bulance which it presented to the British American Ambulance Corps. Two years later it gave a player piano, a radio, a small library of books, and recreation articles to the Halloran Hospital for Veterans, and similar articles to the St. Albans Hospital. For some years a Women's Auxiliary actively furthered its work. The activities of the Garrison continued until 1950.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

When the catastrophe of a new world war broke on the nation, again the flag was displayed daily over the synagogue building.[51] Days nationally designated for prayer were marked by reverent service in the synagogue. At the outbreak of the war, the congregation organized itself for service by sending a questionnaire to the congregants asking how each could best help in the national emergency. Among the results on the home front over the years of the war were the organization of first aid courses; a course on consumers' problems; the sending of prayer books and other gifts to men in service; collections made by the Sisterhood for the United Service Organization and for British War Relief; the presentation by the League with the cooperation of the Sisterhood and the Men's Club of a day room for the use of men in the armed forces at Mitchell Field; the sale of war bonds; organization of blood donors; raising large funds for the support of the work done by the Jewish Welfare Board for Jewish men in the armed service of the country; urging of owners of plots in the congregation's cemetery to take down the iron railings around their plots and contribute the metal to the war effort; and innumerable other forms of organized patriotic service.

Dr. Pool was released from many of his congregational duties, as he had been in the First World War, so that he might serve as chairman of the National Jewish Welfare Board's Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities.[52] This was charged with organizing the program of serving the religious needs of the Jewish soldiers, sailors, and airmen in the armed forces. He was called on to represent with the official authorities the overall religious needs of the uniformed Jewish men. He traveled to all parts of the country and frequently conferred on chaplaincy and other religious matters at the Washington headquarters of the armed forces. In 1948, he went on a special mission to army headquarters in Paris and to the Jewish chaplains in occupied Germany. The Passover Haggadah which he and Tamar Pool prepared was distributed to the men in service throughout the world in more than a third

of a million copies. He served as a member of the National Board of Directors of the United Service Organizations (USO). After the war, he was awarded a citation by the Secretary of War, Robert E. Patterson, and the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal. He was also honored with the Certificate of Merit by President Truman "for outstanding fidelity and meritorious conduct in aid of the war effort," the highest award given to a civilian.

In Washington and war theaters many members of the congregation served, often with distinction, in the grim struggle against Nazi madmen and their allies. Seven physicians of the congregation organized the examination in the synagogue building of candidates for selective service, and Dr. Henry Green, who was chief of the medical work of the local draft board, received two selective service medals for his work in this field. In the early days of the war in Europe a year or two before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lawrence Langner with vision founded the National Inventors Council in Washington, D.C., and he remained its secretary. This gave far-reaching service in evaluating civilian inventions for the army, navy, and air force and in mobilizing technical talents in an hour of national need. Alexander Sachs played a catalytic role in initiating and furthering the daring undertaking which led to the atomic fission project.[53] In 1939 he prepared a memorandum for presentation to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He served as representative of the President on a Uranium Committee established to explore the possibilities of implementation of the atomic project. Jehiel L. Elyachar, who served in the army as colonel, contributed important original direction to intelligence strategy overseas. After the American invasion of France in the last days of the war he acted as organizing adviser of the railroads.

An ample volume detailing the service, quiet sacrifice, and often heroism, would be needed to pay fitting tribute to the 166 uniformed men and women of the congregation whose names figure on the honor roll of the Second World War. Their story spans the map of that far-flung struggle for survival. Their deeds often went beyond the call of duty. Some were able to bring striking creative gifts towards solving the many faceted problems of an unparalleled conflict. That their names are but a page in an appendix is a challenge to future historians of the congregation. In rank from private to colonel, those whose names are there listed in alphabetical order must know that they have the proud and enduring gratitude of their congregation, and of all who would live in a world of human brotherhood.

Many of them received high honors from the country such as the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Purple Heart, and commendations of many kinds. Shearith Israel lost three of its sons in the service—Israel Rand, Adrian Z. Leon, and Edmond Joseph Arbib. Corporal Israel Rand was killed in a train wreck while in service in the United States. Captain Adrian Z. Leon was serving in the medical corps with the paratroopers in the front line as the army triumphantly pushed through Germany in the last days of the war in Europe. He met his death on May 3, 1945. In addition to awards in his lifetime, the Silver Star posthumously cited him for gallantry in action: "disregarding enemy artillery, small arms and sniper fire, he continued administering aid. . . . He was mortally wounded by a mine explosion."

Captain Edmond Joseph Arbib, whose ancestors Jonas Phillips and Benjamin Mendes Seixas served in the armed forces in the War of the Revolution, enlisted before Pearl Harbor brought general conscription to the country. He made eighty-eight round trips, piloting his plane over the especially dangerous Himalayan "hump" in the China-Burma-India theater of the war. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with three bronze stars, the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf clusters, and a Presidential Wing Citation. He was killed while testing an experimental fighting airplane that crashed at Love Field, Texas, on July 12, 1945.

The end of the Second World War did not bring to an end those grim days that called the able-bodied young men of the congregation to the colors. Service continued in the armed forces in training, in active fighting in Korea, and with the occupation forces in Europe and the Far East. Marine Major Jonathan D. Mendes, who saw action as a pilot in the Pacific area in the Second World War, was awarded a Gold Star "for meritorious action while participating in aerial flight against the Communists" in Korea. He became instructor of jet piloting, and as pilot with the Pantherjets Squadron of the First Marine Aircraft Wing he completed no less than thirty combat missions where enemy fire was expected and received.

The story of Shearith Israel's identification with the national defense extends over the three centuries from Asser Levy on guard at the wall in Nieuw Amsterdam to the young men in the foxholes in Korea. It is an uninterrupted story of service given in the militia and the guard in time of peace, and on the field of battle in times of war. It is a record in which suffering, hunger,

fever, wounds, and gangrene are offset by the stories of strength, chivalry, and heroism. All those who hearkened to the high call of country prayed and knew that courage, sacrifice, and idealism will yet find the way to peace among men beyond the measure of the cruelties of war. The independence, freedom, democracy, and survival so dearly bought will be the foundations of that peace.

We have traversed a span of time almost twice the age of the Republic. The number of years is not material. What is basic to the past and the future alike is the steadfast integration of the group in the *res publica* in Colonial days, in the struggle for independence, and in the growth of the nation. At no point has service of country demanded or meant compromise of faith. Unswerving religious traditionalism went hand in hand with complete service to country. This is not without significance in the definition of Americanism. Religion has been operative in the lives of its adherents. As citizens and as human beings, they have followed the path of duty laid out by the tenets of their faith.

XI. Religion in Action



"I will take unto Me faithful witnesses."

ISAIAH 8:2

THERE WAS NO NEED for the Dutch West India Company to enjoin on the temporarily impoverished Jewish settlers who came to Manhattan in 1654 what assuredly seemed to them the satirical ruling that they must look after their own poor. For three thousand years Jews had hearkened to the command, "if thy brother be waxen poor, and his means fail with thee, then thou shalt uphold him; as an immigrant and a settler shall he live with thee." [1] Care of the needy had been the religious teaching and the practice of Jewish life everywhere throughout the generations. The Jewish community in Recife, Brazil, from which the despoiled first settlers had come, had had a well organized congregational system of caring for the poor through regular weekly grants. Special funds provided dowries for poor orphan brides, or paid the costly passage for some back to the old homeland of Holland.[2]

Similarly within the New York community, the widow, the orphan, the helpless aged, the sick, the transient and the immigrant were aided. The

seventh paragraph of the congregational constitution adopted in 1706 and expanded and renewed in 1728 declared that "those poor of this congregation that shall apply for Sedaca shall be assisted with as much as the Parnas and his assistants shall think fitt." [3]

The relative burden of the charitable disbursements on the congregational budget may be measured from the accounts of a typical year such as 5007 (1746–47). They tell of cash paid out for "giveing to the poor and Sundry charges for their use £50.0.9," besides £32 for wood to the synagogue officials and the resident poor, as well as £10.2.4½ for "Mr. Pavia's passage and provisions." [4] These sums spent for relief amounted to no less than one-third of the total budget of the congregation for that year.

We come to know such individuals as the poor shoemaker or the sick man for whom board and lodging with Mrs. Solomon, the widow of the shohet, is paid by the community, or an elderly woman who is given a grant and "allowed a doctor." Another woman, a widow, declines further aid, with thanks for what she has already received. A member of the congregation falls on evil days and asks for assistance. All the money that he has contributed in offerings to the congregation and given to the synagogue is returned to him. Another man, a hapless shopkeeper, asks for relief from the debtors' prison. Other needy congregants, aged congregational officials or their widows, are given pensions. Rachel Campanal, widow of the congregational shammash, in 1753 was granted £20 a year in consideration of her age and infirmities. Thirteen years later, in 1768, this was increased for the very aged lady to £25 a year. After two years her pension was virtually doubled to twenty shillings a week, and two pair of sheets were made for her, while in the following year the last chapter was written when £5 was paid to Dr. Anderson for attending her in her last illness.

American Travelers Aid Societies of our day may not know how their function was assumed by Congregation Shearith Israel in pre-Revolutionary days. A trying problem, usually unforeseeable, was presented by itinerants who arrived in New York without means, expecting to be supported there for a time and then shipped on to their destination elsewhere. The seventh paragraph of the synagogue constitution of over two centuries ago deals with this situation as a contingency that must not be evaded.

If any poor person should happen to come to this place and should want the assistance of the Sinagog the Parnaz is hereby impowered to allow every poor person for his

maintainance the sum of Eight Shillings pr Week and no more Not Exceeding the term of twelve weeks. And the Parnaz is also to use his utmost endeavors to dispatch them to sum othere place as soon as Possible assisting them with necessarys, for their Voyage, that is for a single person fourty Shillings, but if it be a family then the Parnaz shall call his assistance and consult with them both for their maintainance whilst ashore and also for their necessarys when they depart.[5]

Forwarding transients was costly, for they had to be given sufficient kasher food for the journey as well as the fare. Their destination was usually to distant parts such as Barbados, St. Eustatius, St. Croix, Curaçao, Surinam, or London, and less frequently to such comparatively near-by communities as those of Charleston, Newport, and Philadelphia. To give some examples: in 1733–34 the community paid £29.11.4¾ "for several passages to London and to the Islands and other sundry expenses for *obras pias* for the poor." In 1748–49 the widow Serra and her family were sent to Barbados at a cost of £13.15.5, and David Abrahams and family and Rachel Colly were sent to Curaçao at a cost of £16.8.0. In 1755 it was resolved that

the widow Abrams and her family be shipt off & her passage paid and provisions found for the voyage, and also to be supported here till Capt Miller carries her away so that the whole expence must not exceed Fifty pound.

On another occasion the decision was that the poor man "shall be dispatcht as soon as possible . . . and three corse shirts be made and sent to him as he is almost naked." [6]

In May, 1768, the directors of the congregation learned that "one Jacob Musqueto, an object of Charity had arrived from St. Eustatius and Thrown himself on the Mercy of the Sedaka, Imploring Some Assistance and dispatching him to the Island of Barbados." The heads of the congregation realized that the most direct route for the four hundred miles journey from St. Eustatius to the neighboring island of Barbados in the Caribbean was hardly by way of New York.

It was therefore Resolved that the Parnasim should pay for Board &c, of said Musqueto, while in this place, and also That he should dispatch said Musqueto to Philadelphia in his way to Barbados, and at same time to write a letter to Mr. Michael Gratz at Philadelphia, Requesting he would Collect Sufficient among the Yahudim at Phila as would defray the Expence of the Same.[7]

New York Jewry also agreed if necessary to add three or four pounds to the collection made by Philadelphia Jews, perhaps to help assure his departure.

At times the recipient of traveler's aid was a visiting rabbi presumably

voyaging on a fund-raising mission of mercy. These more costly visitors were variously dealt with. In 1765 it was decided that "Rabbi Joseph Israel after he has preached his sermon be dispatcht by first opportunity to Newport in order to take passage for Surinam and if he will not go is to remain at his own Expence." [8] In 1774 the Haham Haim Isaac Carigal from the Holy Land after a stay of some months in New York had his expenses paid by the congregation as well as his passage to Newport. Only a few months earlier Rabbi Tobiah from London

> having been maintained Two weeks at the Kahal expences and haveing applied for assistance he intending for Philadelphia it is agreed to give him Eight Dollars and pay Mrs. Hay's account accordingly

In the following year, 1774, Rabbi Ezekiel was sent on to St. Eustatius, and Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac Keyser, who stayed in New York about a month, applied for passage for himself and his son either to London or Jamaica. They were "dispatched for Jamaica as there was a Vessell ready to sail on Sunday next and his expences paid." [9] In the following year, with the financial cooperation of the Newport community, the Haham Samuel Cohen was sent on to London at the heavy cost of £31.8.6, and Haham Abraham Lebeth arrived from London to make an appeal for the Jewish community of Smyrna that was suffering from a disastrous fire. The New York congregation did not respond to this last appeal, but Rabbi Lebeth was assuredly helped to reach his next destination.[10]

As a rule the community stood to gain something in spirit from these rabbinical emissaries who underwent much hardship for very uncertain returns. Occasionally, however, a man with more imagination than sense of responsibility dropped in on New York. In the summer of 1788 one Jacob Abbo appeared on the scene, and for a time was given free lodging and board. But his visitation lost its glamor when his statements began to be more imaginative than authentic. He displayed a map which he said showed the country where two of the tribes of Israel were living. This "and other falsities," brought his allowance to an end. Eight dollars was given to him and £2.10.0 to his associate "in order to get rid of him and his companion" and the burden of their presence "before the winter set in." [11]

The years immediately following the Revolution were desperately difficult financially. At times the community could not meet its very modest salary obligations to its hazzan, shammash, and shohet. Yet in those years we find

it still shipping immigrant poor to such distant places as Charleston, St. Thomas, or Surinam. There must have been also more than the usual quota of resident poor. But we know of only one case presenting the unusual phenomenon of a man whom the congregation was aiding also petitioning the mayor and corporation of the city for aid. On January 17, 1786, this man claimed that he was "an old inhabitant of this City and now through age and disease and other casualties rendered incapable of getting a livelihood," and "being a Jew cannot on account of his religious principles eat the Victuals served out at the Poor House."

As a result of the French Revolution, the congregation sometimes faced a problem of political refugees. In November, 1793, there was in New York "a distressed French Woman who is arrived here and has nothing to support herself and child." The community decided that in the face of this emergency it was justified in applying to the general "committee appointed to distribute the contributions raised by the Citizens for the Support of such French People as may arrive here." In addition, the congregation raised for her its own special subscription which made it possible to accord her a weekly allowance so long as she needed it.[12]

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a great change in the dispensing of aid to the needy. The center of responsibility shifted in a measure from Shearith Israel as such to specialized agencies which the congregation itself had created. Later in the century Jewish communal organizations began to develop in ever increasing numbers, but nevertheless Shearith Israel did not in any way abate its traditional service of direct tsedakah (charity) and gemiluth hasadim (bestowal of kindness). It continued all the types of aid that it had dispensed in the eighteenth century, for the most part drawing on the general congregational funds to meet these burdens. Only rarely was it able to benefit from such philanthropic offerings as those made by Abraham Touro at the beginning of 1819:

> $500 as a Loan for the time of 10 years, on condition that the interest on the above five hundred Dollars Shall be accumulated yearly on the Same Space of 10 years unto a Permanent fund—and the Interest arising from the Same fund Shall then be apropriated to the interment of poor and Necessitated of Israel—
>
> $250 on the Same Condition as above, the Interest arising from the accumulated fund Shall be applied to the Succor of Poor Sick Israelites—
>
> $250 on the Same Condition that the Interest on the Accumulated fund to be applied to the Education of poor children of Israel in the Holy Land.[13]

At a time when the paying of pensions was by no means a general practice, Shearith Israel cared for its shohet, teacher, and shammash who had grown old and gave them pensions in the form of monthly allowances, matzoth, wood for fuel, money for rent, and medical care, and as its final benefaction it provided funeral expenses and free burial. It gave similar care to members of the congregation who had fallen on evil days. That careful student of the history of New York Jewry, Hyman B. Grinstein, in commenting on this states that "one of the methods of caring for the poor which was practiced at Shearith Israel in the early period reveals a breadth of social view hardly paralleled until the rise of state social security laws in more recent times." [14] Pensioners live long. One woman, a native of Bordeaux but long a resident of New York, was destitute and aided by the congregation until her death at the age of one hundred and two years, seven months. Alexander Zuntz came to the city with the Hessians at the time of the Revolution. His widow and her crippled son were cared for in large measure by the congregation. When eventually his frail daughter Ellen found herself alone in the world, she offered the trustees all her savings, amounting to $400, if they would pay her $10 a month for the rest of her life. The trustees, who in any case had been helping the family for many years, accepted her offer. The frail little woman who weighed only some ninety pounds drew her pension to her death at the age of eighty-five years, five months, and twenty-six days.

The high incidence of blindness in former days also created problems of prolonged support, while frequently occurring epidemics added catastrophically to the congregation's financial burden. A theme which recurs like a refrain is the emergency aid which had to be granted on all sides because of the "calamitous situation of the city during the prevalence of the present Yellow fever." Asiatic cholera struck New York in the summer of 1832. Then six persons were specially employed by the congregation to serve the stricken, money was appropriated, and a subscription was taken up for aid and relief, and for employing persons to inter the dead. At that moment, William Warner, a former trustee of the congregation, offered "at all times to attend the sick, dying or dead without remuneration." [15]

Under the law of the time, a man could be sent to prison for debt. The congregation's emergency aid rescued from being committed to "the Common Jail" a former teacher in its school who was deeply in debt.[16] A man who had been a member of the congregation for eighteen years finding himself

jailed appealed for aid for himself and his wife. The congregation helped free them and pay their passage to London.[17]

The poor house, though it did not have the moral blot of the prison, still was a public institution of humiliating associations. Ordinarily, however needy a member might be, the congregation would not allow him to find refuge in the poor house. In 1800 £40 a year was granted to a crippled member of an old congregational family, because

> to alleviate the distresses of the unfortunate as far as we can is our first duty as Men. To prevent a Yehudah from going to live among goyim at the poorhouse (which must inevitably be the case if the recommendation of your committee is not adopted) should be the first duty of the Trustees of this congregation.[18]

Another member of the same family some six years later asks for relief, "my furniture being seized for rent." She is granted help up to $50. Three months later, one of the chronic paupers in the congregation was given the very substantial sum of $150, but a month thereafter he was given another $50 when he wrote asking for additional help because of a complication of disorders, a numerous young family, "arrears for rent, out of wood, no money not even sufficient to pay for medicine prescribed by my physician. The bed I now lay on is pledged for money taken up since my confinement."

For emergency aid the parnas was and still is empowered under the constitution "at his discretion to cause to be given to any person professing Judaism, whom he may deem an object of charity, any sum not exceeding five dollars." Though a century and a half ago the value of this was greater than it is today, far more than such immediate relief was needed when members of the congregation fell on hard times. A characteristic story is that of Lyon Jonas. He was an English Jew who in 1779 had advertised

> LYON JONAS, FURRIER FROM LONDON
>
> Living in Broad Street, opposite the Post Office, has for sale
>
> A general & complete assortment of muffs & tippets in the newest taste, ermine cloak linings, etc., etc. Also a parcel of ground squirrel muffs & tippets; and the very best black martin and martin throat do. for exportation.
>
> He likewise manufactures & sells gentlemen's caps & gloves lined with fur, very useful for travelling. He also trims ladies robes and riding dresses, & lappels gentlemen's coats & vests.
>
> He buys and sells all sorts of furs, wholesale & retail.
>
> N.B.—The highest price is given by him for grey & ground squirrel skins.[19]

He was a loyalist who acted as head of the residual congregation in the city for some time during the Revolution. His name appears in the first New

York Directory, published in 1786. His was to say the least a very unpredictable character. In 1786 when the congregation tried to hold him to account because he "had for a considerable time past trespassed on our holy Sabbath," he behaved "in a very unbecoming manner in the synagogue yard and at other times and places and thereby insulting the whole congregation." [20] This lack of balance and self-control eventually reduced him to poverty. In January, 1809, he claimed that he was "languishing with hunger and want of fuel . . . feeble both with hunger and age and hardly able to crawl, has neither bed or covering at this severe season." He was granted help by the congregation, but some months later when he was "wandering and lying on the streets, markets, etc.," as a radical solution to his problem he was sent to the almshouse and congregational money was promised for his board. Because of its religiously forbidden non-Jewish food he would not stay there, and his relief grants were continued. Some three years later the congregation decided to send him to his son in Philadelphia, but after three months he reappeared in the congregational records as being granted a weekly allowance "provided he conducts himself with decency." A year later he was given $30 for going to Baltimore on his promise not to return to New York. But a year and a half thereafter he was back again, and was given substantial aid for the Passover, and other relief grants. The last service he received was the assumption by the congregation of his funeral expenses when this unhappy derelict died in February, 1817.

Traveling expenses were in general a costly item in the congregation's relief accounts. In 1811 a member of the congregation and his family of four were reported in dire straits. They were granted $60 towards moving to Richmond. They went, but shortly thereafter they returned to New York where they could rely on the congregation's continued aid. A family arrived from Charleston. They were lent $30 to redeem their clothing from the captain of the boat. A woman arrived from Richmond. She was helped while she remained on the sloop until she could be transferred to a vessel going to Charleston.

With the second decade of the nineteenth century the penniless immigrant began to present a problem of ever growing proportions. A family arriving from Holland was sent on to Charleston, but usually the new arrivals felt that they had had all and more than they wanted of the hardships and dangers of travel, and they stayed in New York. Their task of adjustment was a dif-

ficult one. Not unnaturally the congregation cared for immigrant Sephardim, such as "a poor man from Morocco" or "three Greek Yehudim." [21] But a large number of Ashkenazim from Northern and Eastern Europe also were aided. One immigrant from Bavaria, "a short time in this country," not having the courage to face his problems, took his own life. He was given free burial by the congregation.

The stories of troubles told by some of the displaced persons stirred the congregation to repeated acts of generosity. In 1807 Sarah and Abigail Pardo Valenchi asked to be sent to friends in Charleston. Their petition was granted because they have suffered from

a series of misfortunes almost unparalleled, have been reduced from affluent circumstances to penury, driven from their home by the dreadful circumstances that have recently taken place in Santo Domingo.

In the following year, 1808, the trustees made a grant to Isaac Levy, whose condition recalled dramatically the lot of the original twenty-three Jewish arrivals a century and a half earlier. Levy laid his plight before the trustees:

That your Petitioner having sailed from Kingston Jamaica was taking Prisoner on his passage to Port O Prince by a french Privateer called the Liberty from Cuba carried into Cartagena Spanish Main and detained in Jail four Months made his escape from thence to Cuba retaking (by information) and imprisoned six weeks longer.

Though the nationalities in the story were changed since 1654, the highways of the sea were still perilous. Levy, continuing his petition, reports how "the Governor of said place pitying my situation granted me a passport to the Havanah as a Spaniard."

That precedent found repetition in our day in 1925 when the Spanish government adopted the policy of recognizing Sephardim as "individuals of Spanish origin . . . in foreign countries." Beginning with 1932, by granting a Spanish passport to Sephardi Jews in danger of liquidation by the Nazis, Spain saved many lives in the darkest hours of modern times.

Mr. Levy continues his tale of woe, not unprecedented nor destined to remain unique:

From thence obtained a Passport to New York which said City I entered without a Dollar to help myself had it not been for the goodness of Mr. Isaac Moses must have starved—being in Debt to the Captain with whom I came from Havanah and in arrears with Mr. Cohen for Board have an Intention of going with Mr. Gabay to Jamaica but have not the means. May it therefore please you Gentlemen in consid-

eration of your Petitioners great distress to grant him some relief. And your Petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.[22]

In 1818, a woman with her daughter arrived from Kingston, Jamaica. Her husband had been drowned on the voyage. They were given board by the congregation, and black clothes were bought for them. It is interesting to note that this sign of mourning not traditionally enjoined by Jewish mores was considered imperative. Help was given in 1825 to a man whose family was lost at sea. A victim of shipwreck figured again in the following year.

Sometimes the unhappy situation of a transient family stirred the congregation to more elaborate action, expressive of a far-reaching sympathy. An illustration of this is presented by the case of the Morpurgo family which arrived in New York in April, 1822.

The Parnass Stated to the Board that on Friday the 26th day of April A. W. Moses Haim Marpugo arrived here from Surrinam with his Wife and five Children in the Brig Richard Meade, that he immediately on his arrival presented himself to the Parnass as a person requiring relief his family was on board the Brig and had no place to go to and he without the means of obtaining it. That it appeared from documents which he produced that had arrived from Amsterdam to Surinam about two years ago and brought good recommendations from the Hacham of the Portuguese Congregation as to his character as also his qualifications as a Hazan.

The sentence which follows indicates the tendency for Jewish settlers voluntarily to live in a common neighborhood, as it also indicates the relatively impressive size of the Surinam Jewish community of the time.

That there was no vacancy for him at Surinam and that during his stay there, he was one of the victims of a Calamitious fire which brought ruin on 300 families principally of our Nation, by which he lost his Furniture, Books, Cloathing with that of his Wife and five Children, The distressed Situation of the Jews of Surinam compelled him to seek an Asylum elsewhere.

Communal responsibility for this unhappy kind of tourism was a widespread and honored tradition. Casually the Parnas reports that

the Congregation there paid his family passage to this place.

Naphtali Philips, president of the congregation in 1822, acquitted himself of his duty to dispense emergency relief to Israelites in distress. The exigent need of the seven members of the Morpurgo family

being a case of pressing necessity, the Parnass obtained the consent of M. Aaron Joseph to receive them into his house for a few days until they could be provided

for and altho he was put to great trouble in consequence of it, he received them on the Score of humanity and where they remained Six days, at the expiration of which time, the Parnass hired the upper part of a House for them for which he is to pay $10 but on consulting with some of the Board it was thought best to place them in the room back of the Micva with the two upper Rooms during the pleasure of the Trustees and in order to disconnect them with the other part of the building had a pair of Stairs carried up through the lower room and which rooms they now occupy. A subscription paper has also been handed round to which the sum of $163.5\%_{00}$ has been subscribed and that the Parnass had made sundry expenditures for him.[23]

Repeated though unforeseeable were the congregation's philanthropic outlays reflecting the hazards of the ocean crossing. In 1813 the last rites were given for one Abraham Garcia who is reported to have died from the bad treatment which he suffered on his voyage from France. This involved the following heavy costs:

Breaking ground	£5. 0.0
Expenses for sitters with corpse	14.0
Digging Grave	16.0
Carriage, hearse, conveying corpse from vestry room and attendance on same	4. 8.0
Shrouds, etc.	2.16.0
	£13.14.0 [24]

Slavery had more than one form in the early days of the country's development. Immigrants would sometimes purchase their transport to America at the high price of a term of virtual bondage. Redemptioners was the technical name of these immigrants who had obtained their passage by the advance sale of their services. Occasionally they presented their sad plight to the congregation. Such appeals involved comparatively large sums and could not always be met, despite their moving quality.

The Petition of *L. E. Miller and Polly* his wife

Humbly Sheweth

That your Petitioners came to New York as Redemptioners, they being sold for their passages to Mr. I. Jackson, where the said Miller has to serve Four Years, and his wife Polly five years for the Amount they were sold for, being One hundred and fifty Dollars.

Your Petitioners being in a very deplorable situation amongst Goyim, they humbly wish, if there could be any means obtained for them for their relief, they would be very happy to serve with any Yehuda for any length of time till they are free'd from Bondage as they wish to keep up to their profession.[25]

Such were the typical calls for aid made on the congregation. Debtors, stricken individuals, would-be pensioners, transients, and immigrants, they all came to the synagogue for help. Appeals were not infrequently received for the rescue of individual "cautivos," victims of the Barbary Coast pirates or of other marauders on the sea. In 1815 a subscription was taken up to help Joseph ben Jeshua Netef Salit who arrived from Holland to raise funds "for relief of his father and other respectable men banished to Marseilles by the Tunisian government." [26] The Reverend Aaron Judah Corcos came to New York in 1823 to gather funds to redeem his wife and six children from the Greeks who had captured them on their journey from Constantinople to Smyrna. He was maintained in the city at the expense of the congregation, and Mordecai M. Noah was authorized "to deliver a charitable discourse for his benefit" on the first of the middle days of Tabernacles. This resulted in his receiving a contribution of $175 before he was sent on to Charleston.[27]

So the story went on of direct relief given by the congregation. But toward the end of the eighteenth century, the congregation, while continuing to give relief to all needy Jews in the city through the synagogue itself, began also to develop autonomous functional philanthropic organizations. One may possibly have been in existence already in the middle of the eighteenth century, for in 1758 there existed within the congregation a Hebra.[28] The Hebrew word *hebra* means "society." But this Hebra, governed by the congregation's parnas and his assistants, was probably the building erected in 1731, adjoining the synagogue. This building was called the "Hebra" and was used for congregational meetings and the school. Yet the Hebra mentioned in 1758 had permission to receive offerings made in synagogue, and it was authorized to borrow synagogue funds up to £10. It is therefore not altogether ruled out that the Hebra mentioned in 1758 may have been, as its name suggests, a society affiliated with the congregation.

THE HEBRA GEMILUTH HASADIM 1785–1790

In 1785, there was organized the Hebra Gemiluth Hasadim (Society for Dispensing Acts of Kindness).[29] This existed for five years. Its purposes were to give general relief in the form of money, fuel, or medical assistance, and more especially to visit and sit up with the sick, superintend funerals, and attend and if necessary aid the bereaved in the shivah, the first seven days of mourning. The synagogue administration entrusted to the care of the Hebra

the appurtenances used in preparing the dead for their funeral and burial. The two brass candlesticks still used to this day at congregational funerals were presented to the society in 1787 by Isaac Moses. The record of the gift is incribed on them by the well-known silversmith Myer Myers. In recognition of the personal service given by members of the Hebra, the congregation readily gave the society permission to set up its own charity box both in the synagogue building and at the cemetery in order to supplement its income received from initiation fees, membership dues, taxes, and fines.

In July, 1789, when the Chatham Square cemetery seemed to be facing destruction through subsidences of its soil, the Hebra advanced £50 to the congregation to help it grapple with the gruesome threat. Toward the end of 1790, for reasons that are no longer known, this useful organization wound up its activities. It handed over its affairs to the board of trustees of the congregation until such time as another Hebra might be established.[30]

KALFE SEDAKA MATTAN BASETHER 1798–1816

A new Hebra with similar purposes was organized some seven years later, in 1802. But in the intervening years another philanthropic organization was born in the congregation—the Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether (Charity Depositary "Gift in Secret"). In the eight grades of charity as classified by Maimonides, next to the highest rank is when the giver and the receiver remain unknown to one another. This principle was reiterated by Gershom Mendes Seixas in the congregational succah on the first day of Succoth in 1798. It was a time when a "direfull epidemic" of yellow fever was raging, and whoever could had left the city and taken refuge in the suburbs. Hazzan Seixas suggested establishing a fund "to assist such poor or such persons as might be in want during the time our trustees should be absent from the city." £41.12.10 was at once offered in synagogue for this fund by the few members of the congregation remaining in the city.[31]

Throughout its existence the society seems to have derived most of its income from special contributions given in response to a more or less annual sermonic appeal made by Gershom Seixas "in compliance with a request from the trustees." In keeping with the name of the society, contributions were made to it as a rule "secretly." Following the appeal which Hazzan Seixas made in December, 1805, after another epidemic, $198.25 was given, and in 1806 this amount and upwards of $150 were spent on relief of the poor. Two

days after Hazzan Seixas had made his appeal, a committee was appointed consisting of Jaques Ruden, Aaron Levy, and M. Myers to revise the laws of the society. In its printed report, the committee presented an enlarged plan of work, foreseeing that New York with its Jewish population of about 300 would become the largest Jewish community in the New World.

> In an increasing Congregation like ours, considering the local situation, it is time that the foundation of a permanent charitable institution should be laid, as well for the benefit of posterity as ourselves.

Writing half a century before the covered wagon and the Louisiana purchase, they yet could see something of the future and the shape of things to come.

> We are inhabitants of a populous city, nearly in the centre of the United States; its commerce extended to all parts of the globe; the principles of our government, the equal rights we enjoy, the friendly disposition of the people of this State, the commercial advantages of our city over most others, the enterprising and commercial spirit of our nation; are all powerful reasons that this City in the course of time will contain the largest Congregation in the New World. If this reasoning be correct, if you admit the probability of such an increase of numbers, will you hesitate to admit also that it is time the foundation of a great and charitable institution should be laid, which will naturally progress with the increase of the Congregation, and be an honor to every member of it?

Reality outstripped even that prognosis. Half a century before the first Jewish hospital in New York City was founded, they modestly and hesitatingly wondered

> If it be made to appear that you could lay the foundation of a Poor House and Hospital, forward the same, and become incorporated without any great exertion, where then can any possible objection arise to such a plan? [32]

It all came to pass in good time, prophecy and goal alike, but not through the Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether Society. This continued its work of simple relief until 1816, the year when both Hazzan Seixas and the society of which he was the spiritual father passed away.[33]

THE HEBRA HASED VA-AMET 1802–

The Hebra Hased Va-Amet (Kindness and Truth Society) has the distinction of being the oldest existing Jewish philanthropic organization in the city of New York. It was brought into being in July, 1802, to take the place of the short-lived Hebra Gemiluth Hasadim which had served the New York Jewish community from 1785 to 1790.

The primary purpose of the Hebra from the beginning has been to give reverent loving service for the dead and to those bowed in mourning. Tradition tells that the immediate stimulus for its organization came early in 1802 when Ephraim Hart and Naphtali Phillips saw a funeral procession going towards the potter's field. On learning that the one to be buried there was a Jewish stranger who had died, they had the proceedings stopped, and immediately arranged for him to be given Jewish burial in the congregation's cemetery at Chatham Square.[34] Thereafter the Hebra Hased Va-Amet was organized with the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas as its first president. In November of the year 1802, the trustees of the congregation took formal and approving notice of the new society which had been established "for certain benevolent and religious purposes." [35]

From its earliest days one of the active interests of the Hebra was the care of the congregational cemeteries on Chatham Square and on 11th Street. In the first year of the Hebra's existence it urged that there be built in the Chatham Square burial ground a metaher house (mortuary chapel) that should be more convenient than the one then standing.[36] A year and a half later it called the attention of the trustees to the need of repairs in that metaher house. A few years later the society was given a key to the walled-in cemetery to help its members keep the ground clean and in proper order.[37] The congregation's hearse and black cloth cover was put into the keeping of the Hebra, and it was given official recognition in the congregational constitution adopted in 1805. In that constitution the eighth article states, "Whereas there is established in this congregation a Hebra Hased Va-Amet, the same is hereby recognized under its present constitution and laws."

A committee of the Hebra, consisting of the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas, Israel Baer Kursheedt, Moses L. Moses, Aaron Levy, and Naphtali Phillips, revised the constitution of the Hebra in 1811. This was given a further revision forty years later in 1851 by a committee made up of the Reverend Jacques J. Lyons, Tobias I. Tobias, Isaac Phillips, Benjamin Nathan, and Jacob Benrimo. In 1857 the society was incorporated. A third revision of the constitution was made in 1864 by a committee consisting of Henry S. Allen, A. R. Brandon Moses, and Isaac Hendricks, and in 1891 a final revision was made by a committee made up of Lewis Hyman, David de Meza, and Solomon M. Seixas—in each generation leaders in the congregation forming these committees. In the wording adopted in 1896,

The object of this Society shall be attendance upon the sick and burial of the dead as to those who are or may hereafter become members, and to render such temporary relief in case of sickness as the Board of Managers may determine, and also for the performance of the same offices for indigent persons of the Congregation Shearith Israel.

Of old, "performing the last offices to their brethren" meant that the members gave personal service for the dying, for the dead, and for the mourners. The simple pious purposes of the Hebra had great appeal and not infrequently received recognition through testamentary bequests. As early as 1815 Rachel Pinto, "the aged and virtuous virgin in Israel" as she is called on her tombstone, remembered the society among the "memorials of benevolence that will perpetuate her name even unto the coming of the Messiah of Israel." The bequest of $10,000 which Amelia Barned Tobias Lazarus left the society in 1906 is commemorated on a tablet which may be seen in the L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium.[38] This recalls that she was "a faithful daughter in Israel, her beneficence knew no creed, and her memory will be cherished in the Congregation Shearith Israel." The Ladies Hebra, organized in 1841, was for many years active alongside the Hebra Hased Va-Amet as its women's auxiliary, but after thirty years was merged into it.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, members of the Hebra themselves fulfilled the primary purpose of the society to "attend our brethren in their last moments, and . . . perform the rites and ceremonies respecting the dead." But with the development of Jewish undertakers and funeral parlors, the members of the Hebra now rarely give these services which have become professionalized. The by-laws of the society permit the Board of Managers of the Hebra to serve beyond its own membership also "such persons professing Judaism as they may deem worthy thereof." In accord with this, the society has used its funds for such purposes as aiding the Hebrew Free Burial Society, the Hebrew Relief Society, and needy individuals attached to the congregation. The Hebra has also furthered notable communal purposes, and has extended assistance to sufferers from yellow fever in New Orleans and famine stricken victims in Iran.

The Hebra has issued a number of publications. As long ago as 1827 it published the "Compendium of the Order of the Burial Service." This contained the general rules for preparing the dead for burial, laws and customs for mourning, as well as the service used at interments. In 1910 the society issued a new volume containing the funeral service as used at the cemetery. In 1913

it printed a small book containing the ritual and rules governing the preparation of the body for burial. In 1915 the Hebra published *Mekor Haim, the Mourner's Handbook.* In 135 pages this book gives the prayers for the dying, the mourner's grace, the afternoon and evening services in the house of mourning, selected Psalms and Bible readings, a chapter on immortality in Jewish tradition, and the regulations, customs, and observances incumbent on mourners.

In 1852, the Hebra marked its jubilee year by holding a special commemorative religious service on Sunday afternoon, November 7. This consisted of the reading of the daily afternoon service, followed by a long Hebrew poem and a discourse by the Reverend Mr. Lyons. After a second Hebrew poem, the memorial prayer was recited for Gershom Mendes Seixas, the first president of the society, and for other deceased members. The service was then closed with a third Hebrew poem and the chanting of Alei'nu and Yigdal.[39] A dinner in less solemn mood also marked the occasion. Another half century passed and in 1902 the society marked its centennial anniversary. This took place on March 23 which coincided with Purim. An ambitious concert was then given in the synagogue's basement auditorium. A loving cup was presented to David de Meza in recognition of his twenty-five years of service as president of the society. Later in the year, a tablet was set up in the synagogue in honor of the Hebra's first president, Gershom Mendes Seixas. On that occasion the acting mayor of the city and other notable citizens were present at the celebration.[40]

In 1921, in memory of the two hazzanim who gave to the Hebra the greatest service, Gershom Mendes Seixas and Jacques J. Lyons, the Hebra set up the beautiful round stained glass window over the entrance to the chapel in the congregation's Cypress Hills cemetery. Since 1952, much has been done in the old congregational cemeteries especially in the one on 21st Street in renewal of one of the purposes that the society has consistently carried out, "to keep the ground clean and in proper order." Tombstones have been cleaned, ivy and hedges planted, fences and other metal work painted, walks cleared, and arrangements installed for watering the ground. A gardener has been engaged to care for the graveyard. Under the presidency of Adrian Baumgart and the chairmanship of Harry L. Bernstein, this program has assumed the character of a restoration of the sanctified grounds. The Hebra Hased Va-Amet still keeps its faith with the living and with the dead.

THE HEBREW BENEVOLENT SOCIETY 1822–

Chronologically, the next general philanthropic organization born in Shearith Israel was the Hebrew Benevolent Society, better known by its Hebrew name of Meshibath Nefesh (Restoring the Soul). This was brought into being by congregants in the early summer of 1822, with Daniel Jackson as its first president. Following its organization no meetings were held until the middle of November because an epidemic of yellow fever scattered the community. During that period the Mill Street Synagogue was closed and services were held in a rented room "uptown" on Oliver Street at the corner of Henry Street. When the synagogue was reopened, the Society was granted the use of the meeting room. From 1842 to 1851 its president was Mordecai M. Noah.[41]

After Congregation Bnai Jeshurun came into being in 1825, the Society moved over to the new congregation and became affiliated with it, meeting as a rule in the basement of its synagogue. In 1859 it merged with the German Hebrew Benevolent Society and formed the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society. The following year it established on West 29th Street the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, the first Jewish orphanage in New York City. From time to time Congregation Shearith Israel made generous contributions to the Meshibath Nefesh Society.

THE HEBREW RELIEF SOCIETY 1828–

In 1828, members of Shearith Israel brought into being the descriptively but ponderously named Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion in the City of New York (Hebra Hinuch Nearim Veezrat Ebyonim). In December of that year the congregation granted the use of the synagogue for an "oration" appealing for the support of the Society on the occasion of its first anniversary. Then a collection of nearly $400 was made.[42] All the meetings of the Society were held in the rooms of the synagogue of Shearith Israel, and the shammash was given general instructions to prepare the usual meeting room and make up a fire in it whenever required for its meetings.[43]

In the following year, 1829, at its second anniversary meeting held in the synagogue, Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto made the address which was subsequently printed in a pamphlet of no less than forty-seven pages.[44] In October of that year the congregation's best known orator, Major Mordecai M. Noah,

was given permission to use the synagogue and to have offerings made in it for the benefit of the Society.[45] This was the same Major Noah who had stated that "there are no poor Jews in New York." Indeed, the young organization at first had difficulty in finding a field of service. At the end of its first year it was interested in two orphan children whom it sent for their education to a free Christian school. The publicist Solomon H. Jackson declared that the Jewish poor in the city were "so few that a child could count them." In a printed pamphlet he attacked the program of the Society as unrealistic and pauperizing. Because the Society did not have enough calls on it "for the education of poor children and relief of the indigent poor of the Jewish persuasion," from time to time it advanced funds to the congregation. At other times the congregation made grants to it.

Early in the 1840s it was felt that the educational function of the Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Poor of the Jewish Persuasion could well be filled by the public school system which had then come into existence, with the Polonies Talmud Torah School caring for the Jewish training of the children. As to its charitable program, in 1843, in the heart of winter a committee of the Society consisting of Benjamin Nathan, Henry Hendricks, and Solomon I. Joseph drew up a report in which they revived a proposal for establishing a home for the poor. This plan had been before the congregation more than a quarter of a century earlier. In December, 1813, a committee of the board of trustees in reporting on the financial problems of the congregation included among the needs that of "erecting a poor house for the accommodation of our indigent brethren, their widows and orphans." When Rachel Pinto died in 1816, it was found that among her other benefactions she had bequeathed a house on Mill Street "to be used and occupied by such poor family or families of the congregation as your body may designate from time to time." But since the house was not a freehold property, the executors sold it and the home for the poor did not come into existence.[46] Now the committee of the Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Poor of the Jewish Persuasion suggested the erection of a three-story building. Some rooms in this were to be rented, and others made available without cost to poor Jews who were paying outrageous rents for congested quarters in bare unfurnished rooms, without fuel. It was suggested that many of the congregation's pensioners might live in this new "asylum." The plan did not come to realization, partly because at the time

there was general apathy in the Society's membership. Indeed, a decade later, in 1854, the Society had only eighteen paying members. Nevertheless, in that year it supported four pensioners, assisted ninety persons with sums ranging from $3 to $100, and gave coal to thirty-seven families, with a total outlay of $1,141.

On April 11, 1831, the Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion in the City of New York was incorporated. But on November 4, 1860, its expressive but unwieldy name was changed by act of the legislature to the more comprehensive and tactfully considerate name, "The Hebrew Relief Society in the City of New York." The new constitution then adopted declared that "the funds of this Society shall be applied to aid Jews in distress." Highly selective qualifications were set up for membership in the Hebrew Relief Society:

> Any person having reached the age of 18 years, desirous of becoming a member of this Society, being an Israelite, and not having married out of the Jewish faith, may be proposed at any meeting of the Society, and if a majority of the members present vote in the affirmative, shall be considered a member on signing the By-Laws.

On May 2, 1870, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society of the Congregation Shearith Israel of the City of New York was consolidated with the Hebrew Relief Society by act of the state legislature.

When the United Hebrew Charities was formed in New York in 1874, the Hebrew Relief Society was one of its five original constituent organizations, and for many years it contributed $500 annually towards the budget of the new centralized organization.

Early in 1881 the Hebrew Relief Society offered to take over the burden of all the charity given by the congregation. In reply it was asked to assume the amounts paid to some of the poor pensioners of the congregation.[47] Since that time, for the last half century the Society, while making contributions to general appeals for relief, has for the most part made grants in all privacy in the form of pensions to men and women associated with the congregation who because of age, sickness, or misfortune have fallen on evil days. The Society has no expenses for rent, salaries, telephones and other administrative needs, and individual officers have usually assumed the cost of its printing, postage, and accounting. The Hebrew Relief Society is therefore in the fortunate position of being able to use every penny it receives from membership dues,

gifts, and income from legacies, for carrying out its benevolent work of life-giving relief.

THE NEW YORK HEBREW ASSISTANCE SOCIETY 1840–

A dozen years after the organization in 1828 of the society which later was called the Hebrew Relief Society, members of Congregation Shearith Israel formed still another organization "for the relief of indigent Israelites," the New York Hebrew Assistance Society.[48] This met in the synagogue rooms. Its president for many years was Benjamin Nathan. Later, Judge Noah served as president. The Society made grants of relief up to $20. In its first year, 1840, it distributed $660.05 among eighty applicants. In the following year, 1841, the figure rose to $801.47, and the next year, 1842, saw the Society disburse $1,389.61. It then had sixty members paying $3 annual dues; but the main income required for its work was obtained through an annual dinner.

This organization originally followed the principle that so long as there was a need for relief it would spend every penny it received, without putting anything aside to build up a capital fund. Yet when in 1843 considerations of safety necessitated urgent repairs in the synagogue building, the Hebrew Assistance Society was able to lend to the congregation $1,250 for three years at six percent interest. Perhaps this had become possible because in 1841 the Society was the beneficiary of a bequest of $1,500 under the will of Washington Hendricks.[49]

In 1851, the Society pledged $6,000 towards the establishment of a Jewish asylum and hospital proposed by Mordecai M. Noah. History does not seem to tell when the New York Hebrew Assistance Society went out of existence.[50]

THE FEMALE HEBREW BENEVOLENT SOCIETY 1820–1870

Women took their part in an organized way in the many faceted work of charity done in the congregation since at least 1820. The picture of the ideal wife so lovingly limned in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs tells that "she opens her hand to the poor, and extends her hands to the needy." The earliest records of Congregation Shearith Israel bear testimony to this among the Jewish women of Colonial New York. But this personal charity as depicted in the Scriptures took on a modern touch when individual women allied themselves with others to help try to cure social ills through strength born of cooperative service.

In the early nineteenth century, social work, and indeed almost every public activity, was still very rarely undertaken by women, for woman's place was in the home. In 1840 the New York Hebrew Assistance Society organized by men of the congregation none the less provided that cases applying for relief should be investigated by a committee of women of the congregation.[51]

As early as 1820, we find the women of Shearith Israel organizing themselves in the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society "for relief of indigent females and their families." The first directress of the Society, Mrs. Richa Levy, wrote a letter to the president and trustees of the congregation in which with formal but engaging politeness she said:

I am deputed by the Board of Managers to solicit your approbation & support for the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, established by the Ladies of our congregation for the relief of indigent females *particularly* and if our funds will permit to occasionally give assistance to families whose situation may render them objects of charity—and should it not impinge on your rules & regulations, to permit offerings to be made for the benefit of the Society: from the knowledge we have of the philanthropy of your dispositions and readiness to alleviate the situation of the unfortunate as far as lies in your power prompts us to make the request—

I am Gentlemen
with great respect

RICHA LEVY
first vice press.

Wednesday afternoon
March 15 1820 [52]

The trustees immediately gave permission for individuals to make offerings at synagogue services for the benefit of the Society. But the organization could not rely for its income solely on this occasional expression of sympathy, and at times it would add substantially to its resources by arranging a dinner followed by a ball. As a matter of course this was conducted for the demure and coy ladies by the gallant gentlemen of the congregation. On December 2, 1847, at six o'clock the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society held a dinner at Constitution Hall, 650 Broadway, through which some $1,350 was added to its treasury. After the meal some of the men present, but none of the women, made speeches. These were followed by "waltzes, quadrilles, polkas and every other species of dance, including David's dance before the ark." [53]

On March 16, 1854, a third of a century after its creation, the Society was incorporated under the name of "The Hebrew Female Benevolent Society of the Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York." Its purposes were

defined as "to afford the aged and indigent female members of said congregation a comfortable residence, support, employment, medical and other necessary care." [54] A copy of its constitution and of the articles of incorporation were put into the cornerstone of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue.[55] The Society ceased to function as an independent organization when in May, 1870, it was consolidated with the Hebrew Relief Society of which it had been a female counterpart.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN OF THE JEWISH FAITH 1838–1846

The next organization of women that was born in the congregation was the explicitly but cumbrously named Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith.[56] This was modeled after the Hebrew Sunday School Society which had just been founded in Philadelphia by that far-visioned promoter of religious, educational, and philanthropic institutions, Rebecca Gratz. In the "recital" which introduced the constitution of the New York organization it stated that

> The Ladies of the Congregation Shearith Israel observing the success & usefulness of an Institution formed in Philadelphia for the purpose of affording moral and religious instruction to the children of their own faith resolved to establish an Association similar in its plan & object to the one now flourishing in that city. Donations that may be given with those already received will produce a fund sufficient to carry this project into execution. A meeting was held on Sunday, Oct. 14th/38 when the plan of the Society in Phila. was approved of. The Association was organized and a Superintendent was elected. At a subsequent meeting a Treasurer & Secretary were elected.

The organizers of the society were Mrs. Regina Moses, Miss Sophia Tobias, and Miss Hannah Hendricks. Miss Hendricks was chosen as superintendent of its work. The number of teachers was limited to twenty, though "should an increase be required the services of any lady of the Congregation Shearith Israel will be accepted on application to the Superintendent." Twenty demoiselles of the congregation came forward to act as teachers of "hymns, the Ten Commandments, the Bible, the Jewish faith, and portions of the prayers." On its organization the Association turned to the trustees asking to be given the use of a room in the synagogue in which to hold their meetings and "for the general objects of the institution." In reply, the trustees with graciousness and enthusiasm resolved

that the Presdt inform the lady's association, that the Congregation Meeting Room may be used for the purpose required; and with an assurance On the part of this board, that it Views the efforts now making by the association as a most praiseworthy Undertaking, and that they have the best wishes of this for their success.[57]

Thereupon the organization began its work of gathering poor Jewish children to the synagogue for Sunday School classes. The enthusiastic young ladies also immediately organized "a dorcas for clothing for the poor children of the Jewish persuasion." The whole undertaking was financed by subscriptions of five or ten dollars. From time to time a special appeal would be made. On Sunday, March 17, 1839, the Association was granted the use of the synagogue, and Mr. Montgomery Moses "delivered an oration in aid of their funds." In the following year, the address was given on Purim by Major Noah. The collection taken up was used for paying for shoes given to pupils as a Purim gift.

The eager young women who were doing the work of the Association were glad to invite men to give occasional lectures. Mr. Joseph L. Joseph gave two lectures on Mariamne, the beautiful wife of Herod. But the young ladies reserved entirely to themselves the teaching of the children. Therefore when Benjamin I. Seixas offered to teach Hebrew to a class, the Association decided that "as it is contrary to their rules to have young gentlemen as teachers must decline his kind services." Yet they must have relented, for only a little later we find Joseph L. Joseph, Esq. explaining the scriptures to the children.

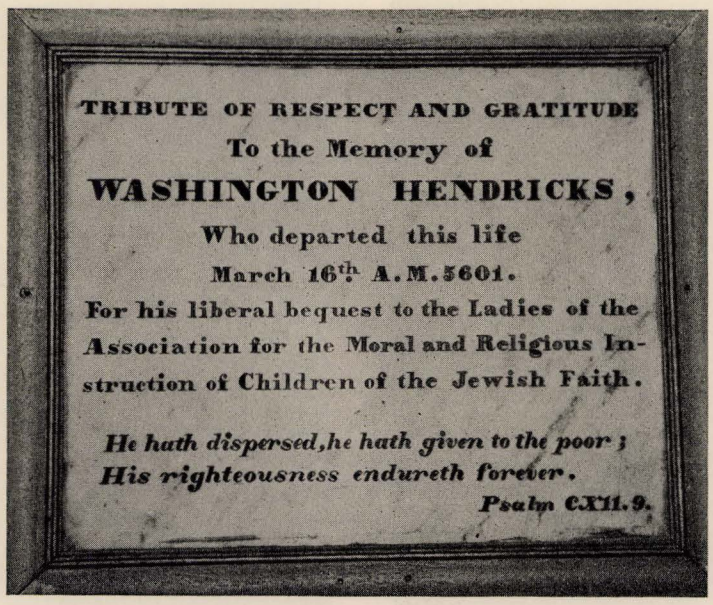
As a matter of course, the ministers of the congregation and some others were drawn into the work of the Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith. Hazzan Isaac B. Seixas, who had been greatly interested in it, died very shortly after it was launched. His successor, Hazzan Lyons, was invited to give to the children occasional lectures explaining the fundamentals of the Jewish creed. The Reverend Moses N. Nathan of Jamaica was a visitor to the city in 1840. He was invited to give an address to the children. His lecture found such favor that he was requested to submit its text so that it might be printed. The Reverend J. J. Lyons, Moses N. Nathan, and also the Reverend Isaac Leeser and Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia, were made honorary members of the Association, as were also Joseph L. Joseph, Samuel N. Judah, Mordecai M. Noah, and Montgomery Moses. When the annual examination of the pupils came around, Hazzan Lyons and the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun would be invited to act as ex-



M. Rosina Samuel expressed in the succah thanksgiving through beauty



Henry S. Hendricks, president of Shearith Israel, leader in Jewish communal service



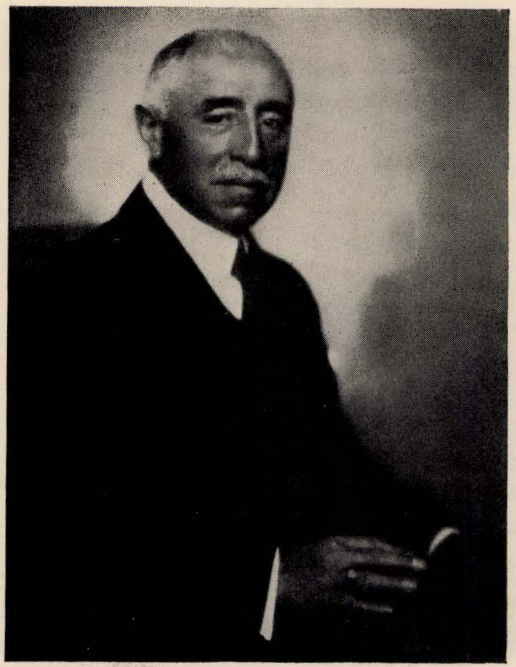
Plaques in synagogue building commemorate benefactors



Bella Unterberg, founder and president of Young Women's Hebrew Association



Alice Davis Menken, long the president of Sisterhood and pioneer social worker



Israel Unterberg, tireless leader in Jewish charity and religious education



Samuel S. Schneierson, creative worker in many Jewish community organizations

aminers. "The pupils," we are told, "acquited themselves with great credit."

Four months after the Association was formed, the young leaders of the society decided to pioneer by organizing a library. Some textbooks and other books were received as gifts; others were purchased, such as a dozen catechisms by Miss S. Peixotto of Philadelphia, and copies of Moses N. Nathan's catechism. The clothing for the children provided by the sewing group of the Association amounted in the first year to 269 pieces, 191 for girls and 78 for boys. Sixty-six of these were purchased; the rest were sewn by the young ladies. In the second year 106 garments were made, besides 30 which were bought for girls and 30 for boys.

In the enthusiasm of the initial year the young ladies and their friends raised $625.31. Less than half of this was spent for teaching the 149 pupils. All other services such as sewing and administrative work were freely given by the young volunteers. With undiminished enthusiasm they met every week all through the heat of July and August. At the second annual meeting, Hannah Hendricks, the superintendent, was able to report that

> Two years have elapsed since the formation of the Association, which progresses with the flight of time. The same ardor which incited the ladies to its foundation still exists, and inspires them to persevere in a work, which promising for its result the improvement of youth, must be beneficial; and the same liberality which prompted the gentlemen to assist in it, has suffered no diminution. May we hope the successive years will add to its prosperity and usefulness.

They did not reckon with one of the great common enemies of the times. Some six weeks later, an epidemic of smallpox led to the school's closing from December 13, 1840, to January 24 of the following year. From then on the school had a checkered history. In October, 1841, the number of pupils in attendance had dropped to one hundred. A year later there were only forty-eight pupils, though these were served by no less than thirteen faithful teachers. It was sadly admitted that the Association was not flourishing. After almost a year of inactivity, on December 22, 1845, the young women invited Hazzan Lyons to attend a meeting to consider how to resuscitate the Association. It was then decided that the shammash, Joel Isaacs, be engaged to find pupils, and the school should be reopened when the number enrolled would reach twenty. Furthermore, notices were to be placed in the vestibule of the various synagogues of the city announcing the intention of the Association to reopen the Sunday School. It would meet for two hours from half-past eleven to half-past one, or as later decided at the less inconvenient hours of ten to twelve. The

school was reopened in the spring of 1846, but because of the small number of pupils it went out of existence in the fall of that year. Yet the seven years of service given by the Association, which has been for so long completely forgotten, spells a noteworthy if brief chapter in the story of organized Jewish education in the community. The only existing public record of it is preserved on a tablet in the synagogue. This was placed by the Association in the Crosby Street Synagogue in gratitude for a bequest of $500 from the estate of Washington Hendricks. It may be seen in the L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium of the present synagogue.

TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE

To the Memory of

WASHINGTON HENDRICKS,

Who departed this life
March 16th A.M. 5601

For his liberal bequest to the Ladies of the
Association for the Moral and Religious
Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith.
He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor,
His righteousness endureth forever.
PSALM CXII. 9

THE LADIES HEBRA 1841–1871

In 1840, the Hebra Hased Va-Amet issued a circular calling on the women in the congregation to organize a Women's Hebra to minister to sick and dying women and to attend and give last rites to the dead.[58] In response the Ladies Hebra was organized in 1841. Membership dues were set at the modest figure of fifty cents. The society provided shrouds and whatever might be required for the interment of its members on application by the family of the deceased. The ladies also sewed shrouds for men. It was not easy to find among the members women ready to undertake the actual work of preparing the body for burial, and as early as 1853 the president was authorized to employ a suitable number of competent women to perform the last rites without the assistance of the members of the society. As late as 1946 a Women's Last Rites Committee was reorganized, and members of the congregation themselves give this reverent service of the living for the dead.

Thirty years after its organization, the Ladies Hebra became absorbed into

the Hebra Hased Va-Amet. Many years later, a savings bank passbook of the Ladies Hebra was found. The Hebra Hased Va-Amet had no difficulty in satisfying the legal authorities that it was continuing the work of the Ladies Hebra, and it received the available balance of $3,557.12.[59]

THE LADIES SEWING ASSOCIATION 1847–

In 1838 Miss Sophia Tobias had been one of the three organizers of the Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith. Nine years later, in 1847, it was her initiative which created the Ladies Sewing Association in the congregation. The purpose of this organization was to make up and distribute clothing among the poor. The congregation readily granted its request that it be permitted to meet in one of the basement rooms of the Crosby Street Synagogue.[60] Thereafter it met on Wednesdays from eleven in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon. In the second year the women made and distributed 878 pieces of clothing, and two years later the figure of 907 was reached. The one man who was active in this organization of women was its treasurer, Benjamin Nathan.[61]

THE LADIES ARMY RELIEF 1861–

On the outbreak of the Civil War, the women of the congregation established the Ladies Army Relief for sewing and giving help to those whom the war had brought to need. The congregation gave them the use of the room on the vestibule floor near the front of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. There they met and sewed large numbers of pieces of clothing, sheets and pillow cases, and prepared bandages.[62]

THE LADIES AID SOCIETY 1878–1896

The third sewing society in Shearith Israel was founded in 1878. Enlarged into the Ladies Aid Society, this organization had also more ambitious programs of social usefulness. Its purposes were "to provide, make and supply clothing for necessitous Israelites," and also "to administer relief in provisions or other necessities to the poor and indigent," as well as "to secure to the industrious poor the means and opportunity of earning their livelihood." Just as the Sewing Circle of the Sisterhood does today, the members met every Tuesday afternoon in the synagogue vestry room for their sewing, while others who could not easily leave home in the days of numerous children and arduous house-

keeping did their share for the Society at home. In some years there were produced well over a thousand garments. In addition, blankets, sheets, and other articles were contributed. The successive chairmen of this sewing activity were Miss E. P. Wolf (1878), Miss Sarah Nathan (1881), Miss Alice Hendricks (1885), Mrs. Albert Bach (1886), and Mrs. Abraham Pereira Mendes (1886–1895).

The relief work of the Ladies Aid Society was done in cooperation with the United Hebrew Charities which did the preliminary investigation and established the need. As a rule relief was given in the form of groceries. In 1891 the Society opened a nursery-kindergarten on the Lower East Side. The annual dues for the Sewing and Relief branch were $3 for women and $2 for men, and for its Kindergarten branch again $3 for women but $5 for men.

In 1896 this Ladies Aid Society with its triple program of sewing, relief, and the maintenance of a nursery-kindergarten, was absorbed into the congregation's newly organized Sisterhood.

THE ENVELOPE SOCIETY 1889–1896

In 1889, inspired by Dr. Mendes, the women of the congregation organized the Envelope Society. This derived its name and the method of financing its work from an application to women of the Biblical verses, "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord . . . on the festival of the unleavened bread, and on the festival of the weeks, and on the festival of the booths, and none shall appear before the Lord empty." Before the three festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, Dr. Mendes would send an envelope with a card reminding that Envelope Day was coming. The recipients were expected to return the envelope with their contribution in amounts up to $50.

The funds so raised helped maintain the Jewish religious schools which the Envelope Society opened and conducted on the congested Lower East Side. This was an effort to offset the numerous proselytizing schools established there which sought to win over Jewish children of poor immigrant homes. A little more than one year after the Society was organized, its Sunday School counted 350 pupils taught by two young men and five young women of the congregation acting as volunteer teachers. In addition 115 children attended a special Friday afternoon sewing class.

In 1896, after seven years of fruitful activity the Envelope Society was also

incorporated into the Sisterhood of the congregation, and for a time the Sisterhood continued to conduct its Tremont Sunday School and Downtown Mission School.

THE SISTERHOOD 1896–

The Shearith Israel Sisterhood, or as it has been named since its incorporation in 1910 the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in the City of New York, came into being on May 11, 1896, through a merging of five organizations.[63] These were the three congregational organizations of women, the Ladies Aid Society, the Kindergarten Society, and the Envelope Society, together with the Downtown Mission School, and the Tremont Sunday School organized by Dr. Mendes. The immediate result of the merger was a wide expansion of the relief work heretofore done by the Ladies Aid Society. The United Hebrew Charities of the city allotted to the Sisterhood, with Mrs. Mortimer M. Menken in charge of its relief activities, responsibility for Jewish social relief work in the district from 7th to 9th streets from Second Avenue to Avenue A, later in the district from 10th Street to 14th Street, and following that from 10th to 23rd Street. Persons from these districts who turned to the United Hebrew Charities for relief were referred to the Sisterhood which investigated their application, and when it was approved the Sisterhood gave relief from its headquarters. The relief given might take the form of money, clothing, coal, medical care, or summer outings for mothers and children. The Sisterhood paid part of the cost from its own funds, the United Hebrew Charities making up the difference. This work was carried on by the Sisterhood for a third of a century, until 1931. Then, further to assist the United Hebrew Charities, the Sisterhood voluntarily renounced the substantial subvention it had been receiving from the larger communal organization, "as an economic measure in the cause of communal welfare."

In addition to this program of elemental relief, the Sisterhood from the beginning expanded the work of social help that had been done by the Ladies Aid Society and by the Envelope Society. The expansion culminated in successive settlement houses on the Lower East Side. The district was teeming with tens of thousands of immigrants, mostly from the Pale of Settlement in oppressive Czarist Russia. Many of these new Americans sorely needed a friendly hand in their initial problems of economic, social, and cultural adjustment to their new homeland. The Sisterhood's settlement houses were

located progressively at 58 St. Marks Place until 1908, 53 East 5th Street until 1911, 316 East 5th Street until 1913, 86 Orchard Street until 1918, and 133 Eldridge Street until 1928. By that time the need for neighborhood work had diminished with the drastic reduction in immigration. Those who had been helped were helping others. The Sisterhood finally integrated this work into the program of the East Side Jewish Center at 128 Stanton Street.

The activities in the Sisterhood's own neighborhood houses included in addition to intensive religious educational work and religious services, a daily kindergarten and day nursery; clubs for boys, girls, and youths; supervised play; a penny provident fund; classes, lectures, and a circulating library; parents' meetings, mothers' clubs and classes in housekeeping, food values, cooking, sewing, and hygiene; training for Americanization and citizenship; an advice and information bureau; finding employment; recreation rooms, a summer roof-garden, and summer vacation outings for mothers, children, and working girls, and every kind of personal service.

The Sisterhood's settlement houses inevitably directed much attention to the Americanization of the immigrant. This was never done in the secular spirit which so often led to an emotional conflict with the religious traditions of the home. The program of the Sisterhood always laid great stress on the loyal conservation and transmission of Jewish religious values as consonant with and indeed best expressive of the democratic freedom of America. Its settlement house was at one time unique in the country in that it housed its own Talmud Torah and a completely equipped synagogue in which daily services were held.

The Sisterhood was aided for a number of years in some aspects of its neighborhood work by the personal service rendered by members of its Junior League. This society was organized on December 29, 1897, by Miss Sarah Lyons and Mrs. Julius R. Wolff to promote sociability and to train the younger generation in charitable and philanthropic work. Its first president was Mrs. Wolff's daughter, Emily. The Junior League would give annual entertainments to raise funds for its charitable work and encourage sociability among its members. In the Sisterhood's downtown house, it conducted sewing classes, maintained a boys' club, a girls' club, and a Sunday School, provided leaders for many of the clubs, and proved to be a training ground for young congregants who later became active in congregational and communal work.

Beginning with 1908, political upheaval in the Turkish empire gave an

impetus to a new Sephardi immigration to the United States. The lower East Side of New York unexpectedly heard on its streets accents of Arabic, Greek, or Ladino, the medieval Spanish which the Jews had carried with them when in 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella had exiled them from Spain. With sensitive understanding the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue concentrated its downtown neighborhood work on welcoming these newcomers. Its house on Stanton Street became a community center for the Sephardim of the neighborhood. In it there was a Sephardi synagogue, and a Talmud Torah in which in 1923 there were 250 pupils, the maximum number that the house could accommodate. Auxiliary services were given those waiting to be enrolled. The Sisterhood continued to specialize in this field of work for some three decades until immigration slackened and the Sephardim had largely moved out of the district with the improvement in their economic status.

Simultaneously with its work of religious education and Americanization, the Sisterhood turned its attention to a very different field of service. Under the tireless dynamic and creative leadership of Mrs. Mortimer M. Menken, it devoted itself to the service of maladjusted girls who had run athwart of the law. Members of the Sisterhood could be found at all hours at the Night Court for Women taking personal responsibility for girls put on probation under their care. Departing from the attitude of vengeful punishment, the Sisterhood work, begun in 1908 and continued until 1919, established outstanding standards of personal service. Its befriending and seeking the rehabilitation of these girls was social pioneering, the fruits of which can be seen in aspects of modern remedial court work, and more especially in the techniques of successor groups such as the Jewish Board of Guardians that was organized to meet the challenge of maladjustment and anti-social behavior among the young.

Parallel to its work in the general community the twentieth-century Sisterhood of the congregation has also served directly in numerous forms of personal service. It has worked in association with the board of trustees in such matters as the care of the synagogue building, providing hostesses and ushers for the women's gallery, stimulating synagogue attendance among women, giving the service rendered by a last rites committee, and sponsoring and carrying through the fund-raising required of the congregation for Jewish communal causes, such as that of the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Institutions or the United Jewish Appeal, and for general causes such as the American Red Cross. It has extended its interest to broad community issues by

active cooperation with such organizations as the Women's Branch of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations.

One of the most exacting annually recurrent congregational activities of the Sisterhood has been that of decorating the harvest booth (succah) and organizing the service of the congregation's ceaseless hospitality there given throughout the eight days of the Succoth festival. One who was chairman of this work for more than fifty years, and who set the highest standards of beauty and devotion for the succah, was Miss M. Rosina Samuel. She was a woman of deep faith, and a punctilious perfectionist whose rulings for the succah were carried out without question by adults and children alike. She seemed to live from year to year for the succah, the beauty of which gave her deep inward happiness. She died during Succoth in 1929. Those who have followed her as head of the succah committee, Mrs. Henry Kendall, Henriette Stern, and Rose Harte, have followed Rosina Samuel's example of complete devotion.

The Sisterhood also sponsors educational lectures for its members, both in the form of single lectures on aspects of Jewish communal life and of lecture courses in some branch of Jewish knowledge. In recent years, series of these lectures have been given by Dr. Pool, Dr. Gerstein, Mr. Isaac Allen, and Dr. Hyman B. Grinstein on Jewish themes of special interest to women.

In continuation of the program of the Ladies Aid Society which had been absorbed into the Sisterhood, the successor organization from the beginning included sewing as part of its program. In some years the Sisterhood's Sewing Circle, which has met weekly in the synagogue basement auditorium, has made as many as two thousand garments. These have been distributed through its settlement houses and through philanthropic organizations in this country, through the Women's Branch of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, through the UNRRA, in DP camps, among war victims in European countries, and in Israel among children of the Youth Aliyah and in hospitals and different institutions through Hadassah and other agencies working in the Holy Land.

Under the chairmanship of Constance Davis Mordecai, the Sewing Circle developed into a strongly cohesive group. In her memory her husband established a fund the income from which is used to provide equipment and material for the work. Mrs. Cecil Marks, Mrs. Harry Greenfield, and Mrs. Ida Jarmel have headed the program in recent years.

At the time of the Second World War, the newly formed Dutch group in the congregation organized a sewing circle of Dutch-speaking women. The fruit of the labor of their hands was used for the relief of Dutch war sufferers overseas. When after some years that need diminished, this group was integrated into the Sisterhood's Sewing Circle, and Mrs. David Vas Nunes became co-chairman with Mrs. Jarmel of the combined group. In the tercentenary year, the oldest member of the sewing circle, faithful in attendance and skilled in performance, was Mrs. Louise Pressel, aged ninety-two.

Through the Holy Vestment Committee, the Sewing Circle of the Sisterhood has also provided, made, and kept in repair vestments of the scrolls of the Torah, the silk cover of the reading desk, and other synagogal property requiring expert work with the needle. This form of service has always been given by women in Shearith Israel. Two and a quarter centuries ago, in 1729, when the first Mill Street Synagogue was being built, the women of the congregation were busily sewing for it. Their financial aid also was not lacking such as £1.4.0 given by the aged widow Rebecca Asher, £2.0.0 given by Bilhah Levy, £8.0.0 by Rachel Levy, £2.16.0 by the widow Rachel Luiza, and ten shillings by the widow Rachel Naftaly. Two centuries later, we find Mrs. Julius R. Wolff the chairman of the Holy Vestment Committee until well past her ninetieth year. Mrs. Henry Kendall, Mrs. L. Napoleon Levy, Mrs. Ida Jarmel, and Mrs. Rose H. Harte, acting as chairmen, and their devoted fellow workers, have made Torah mantles for Shearith Israel and also for Israel, for Youth Aliyah settlements, and for services in Madrid, Spain. They have helped other American congregations wishing to adopt the exquisite workmanship and beautiful lines of Shearith Israel's holy vestments. The service given to the Sisterhood by Mrs. Julius R. Wolff was unique. She was associated with it from its beginnings, and she served on its board of directors until her death in 1949 at the age of ninety-four. The type of devotion she gave to her club work done in the neighborhood houses of the Sisterhood, was of such rare quality that she remained an influence on the life of its members long after the settlement houses had been closed down. To the end of her life, her "girls," the middle-aged members of what had been one of the young girls' clubs in which she had been especially interested, would gather for reunions in her home. They brought their grandchildren to her, whom, in her later years, the whole congregation came to know as "Granny." She took the lead in beautifying the chapel in the congregation's burial ground at Cypress Hills. Daughter

of the outstanding communal and congregational leader Benjamin Nathan, she was strong of character, self-effacing in her modesty and deeply religious. Her personal influence was such that in spontaneous affection the congregation voted to enshrine her name in its Synagogue House.

The last great wave of Jewish immigration to the United States was consequent on the rise of Nazism in Europe. Tens of thousands of refugees from the lands of central Europe were to find a refuge in this country—all too small a remnant of proud and gifted and historic peoples. The Sisterhood cooperated with the local and national organizations of service to these new Americans. For many years under the leadership of Mrs. Henry H. Elias and Mrs. Max Dreifuss a synagogue salon has been held for them. Open house and a warm welcome with cheering hospitality, games, music, and entertainment, lessons in English speech, made Thursday evenings in Shearith Israel well known among the displaced persons in the city. A large committee of women took responsibility in carrying out the program.

Even as the congregational Ladies Army Relief of 1861 which gave service during the Civil War, the Sisterhood has stimulated and organized many kinds of service for soldiers and sailors in the Spanish-American War, and in both world wars. In addition to giving numerous forms of personal patriotic service, the Sisterhood was cited by the Treasury Department, and again by the Surgeon General of the United States Army for its sale of war bonds issued to sponsor a 2–3,000-bed hospital for convalescents. In 1945 it sent overseas to displaced persons some 3,500 pounds of clothing, packages of food, sixteen dozen prayer books, and ninety-six prayer shawls.

For the tercentenary the Sisterhood issued seven commemorative plates designed by Esther Oppenheim. Five depict the synagogues from Mill Street to Central Park West, and one the Newport Synagogue. A larger Sabbath bread plate with the congregational seal completes the set. At formal presentation ceremonies these were brought by delegations of the Sisterhood to Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, to Dr. R. W. G. Vail at the New-York Historical Society, and to Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. One set was sent to the President of the State of Israel and Mrs. Isaac Ben Zvi.

The first president of the Sisterhood, Mrs. L. Napoleon Levy, wife of the devoted president of the congregation, served from 1897 to 1900. From her childhood on, Lillian Hendricks Wolff Levy was always in her place in syna-

gogue at Sabbath morning services except for ill health or absence from the city. She created the L. Napoleon Levy Auditorium, and in many capacities served both the synagogue and the Sisterhood. She was succeeded in 1900 by Mrs. Mortimer M. Menken, who served until 1929.

Alice Davis Menken was a great-granddaughter of Hazzan Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto. When a young woman, she organized clubs and religious classes for youth on the lower East Side, and directed the relief work done in one district by the United Hebrew Charities. She took a tireless personal interest in every detail of the work done by the Sisterhood in its successive settlement houses. When that need became less urgent, she pioneered constructively and creatively in the rehabilitation of delinquent women and girls. After a full day's work she would go late at night to the Night Court for Women, sit with the poor victims dragged in by the police, sustain them in their difficulties at court, and thereafter follow through with their problems and those of their family. She made a national survey of the problem of the courts and the delinquent women brought before them. The New York *Times* declared that "her name looms large in the evolution of penology from an attitude of sentimentality and punishment to the broader conception of mercy and rehabilitation." She passed away on March 23, 1936.

The task of succeeding Mrs. Menken as president of the Sisterhood was a difficult one. It was assumed by Mrs. Rene S. Arbib. After some months she went to live in Europe. Then Mrs. L. Napoleon Levy, the first president of the Sisterhood, resumed the office she had held a third of a century earlier. This time she served from November, 1929, to January, 1931. Then Mrs. Arbib on returning to America once more accepted the presidency, holding office until the end of 1932. She was followed successively by two sisters, Mrs. Albert J. Elias (1933, 1934), who with her husband created the Elias Social Room, expressive of the ardent devotion to the synagogue that she shared with her husband, and Mrs. Harry Lyon Asher (1935–1937), the widow of that outstanding exponent of orthodox Judaism, Rabbi Joseph Mayor Asher. Thereafter for thirteen years, from 1938 to 1950, Mrs. Rose H. Harte guided the activities of the Sisterhood during a time when the Second World War and far reaching reorientation in Jewish communal philanthropy and social service made the changing program of work one of considerable difficulty. Those succeeding Mrs. Harte have been Mrs. Harold M. Marks who had served the

Sisterhood in many capacities, and Mrs. Joseph Adlman who had been a dynamic worker in fund raising for the Sisterhood and for communal Jewish causes.

The work of social service done by both men and women of the congregation before the second half of the nineteenth century was a prelude to the phenomenal growth of communal Jewish philanthropic societies and institutions taking the place of the earlier congregational ones. The rapid increase in the number of New York's synagogues, and of newly arrived and often penniless immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century necessitated a centralized control lest a goodhearted filling of every extended palm might encourage wasteful duplication and possible imposition. The simple, spontaneous help given to the needy in the small community of old had to give way to cooperative communal organization if the sensitive poor were not to be overlooked. The phenomenal increase in numbers of New York's Jewry forced on the synagogue the virtual abandonment of its traditional direct largesse to needy individuals outside of its own membership. In December, 1855, Rabbi Morris J. Raphall of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun and Hazzan Lyons of Congregation Shearith Israel issued a printed circular noting a constant and alarming increase of pauperism among Jews of the city. A group of communal leaders met in Mr. Lyons' house on Crosby Street next to the synagogue and decided to invite the presidents of various congregations and charitable societies to another meeting in Mr. Lyons' home to consider what could be done in an organized way to find constructive ways of meeting the problem through more employment for those on the relief rolls. In the following spring with ten congregations participating, a Union of Jewish Congregations was organized to form a benevolent institution serving all Jews, and especially to serve the needy for the forthcoming Passover days. The chairman of the organization meeting was Solomon I. Joseph, a member of Shearith Israel, and the chairman of the committee appointed to distribute aid to the poor was the minister of Shearith Israel. Thereafter, additional to its own charities, it used communal committees and organizations as its channel for serving Jews in need.[64] Annual grants were made to such organizations as the United Hebrew Charities, the Hebrew Free Burial Society, and the Passover Relief Association. The chaplaincy work done in prisons by the New York Board of Jewish Ministers received continued support from the congregation. Rows of graves were

freely given to the Home for Aged Hebrews and the Montefiore Home for Chronic Invalids.[65]

In 1887, Edward Hesdra left a bequest to the trustees for the benefit of needy societies. The $7,500 received from his estate enabled the congregation to make special grants for such varied beneficiaries as the Jewish Theological Seminary, a synagogue in Woodbine, N.J., and a kindergarten for poor Jewish children.[66]

Collections were made by the congregation also for causes farther afield than New York City, such as for the sufferers from yellow fever in the South in 1878 or for those ruined by the Galveston flood in 1900. Relief funds were sent beyond American shores to such places as Kingston, Jamaica, after the earthquake of 1884, to Rome and Rumania in 1871, and to the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Special emergencies would evoke a special response. When in 1859 the war between Morocco and Spain brought a large number of Jewish refugees from Tangiers to Gibraltar, the congregation made a relief grant, and Hazzan Lyons was authorized in addition to issue a circular asking the congregants for contributions. As a result of the circular, nearly a thousand dollars was sent to Sir Moses Montefiore toward relief of these refugees from Morocco.[67] Large funds were collected and sent to Russia in 1905, to help Jews who had escaped massacre in the pogroms.

During the two world wars special overseas relief collections were repeatedly made by the congregation, and an outstanding service of prolonged personal help was given refugees from Nazi-cursed Europe. In addition, aid was extended to special groups such as the grant sent to the Hamburg Sephardi community to help it reestablish itself after the First World War. In general, pleas from Sephardi groups, whether in Smyrna, or Aleppo, or Turin, or wherever they might be, have made a strong appeal to Shearith Israel. In this spirit, it gave repeated aid to the work of Jewish reeducation among the Marranos in Portugal.

The congregation has never limited its activity in charity only to Jews. Collections have been regularly made for such broadly human appeals as those of the United Hospital Fund and the American Red Cross, and emergency appeals such as for the San Francisco Earthquake Fund have always found a response in Shearith Israel.

The religious motivation of the philanthropic activities of the congregation

over the many years was well expressed a century and a half ago in a sermon given by the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas:

> Just as from the creation of the world provision was made by God for the use of man by the preparation of everything necessary for life, so in organized human society provision must always be made for charitable and benevolent purposes, where the poor would be sure to have a maintenance, the aged and decrepit an asylum, the widow and the orphan a competent support and protection, and even the wearied traveler a place to rest. So "he that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord."

The program of service outlined by the Reverend Mr. Seixas was knit into the fabric of the synagogue. The first steps were taken to answer the call of the needy. Within the confines of a pioneering congregation the way was prepared for the expanding horizons of the American Jewish community and the epic story of Jewish philanthropy of the last century. Charity beginning at home, and the great outpouring of manpower and means for relief and rescue overseas, ofttimes reached high level marks in the social history of the country. They were indeed expressions of religion in action, the full story of which is yet to be written. From its beginning the mother synagogue adumbrated in its intimate day by day concern with tsedakah the cardinal place of that virtue in Jewish life.

XII. *Expanding Horizons*



I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,

father to the poor, and the cause of him I did

not know, I sought out.

JOB 29:15, 16

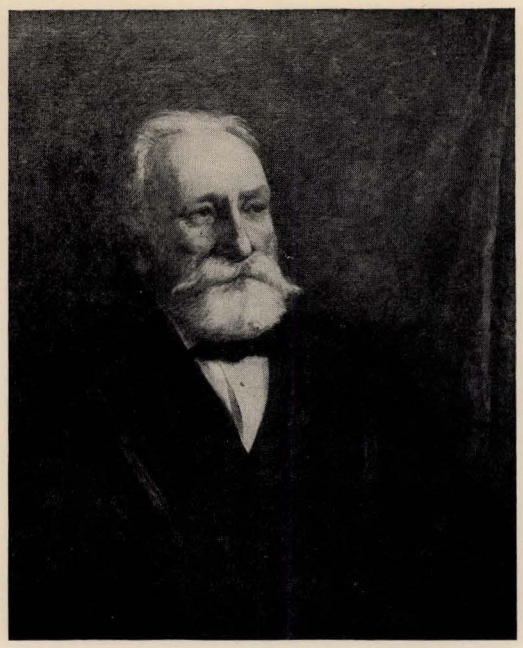
THE YEAR 1840 in some ways marks the awakening of the congregation to new fields of community responsibility beyond the charitable activities which until that time it had made its own. It was in that year that world Jewry was rocked by the shocking calumny against the Jews of Damascus, who were charged with the ritual murder of a Franciscan monk, Father Thomas. One of the members of the New York congregation, Solomon I. Joseph, gathered together a committee of New York Jews to consider what action they, though four thousand miles away from the scene of the outrage, might be able to take on behalf of justice and truth. They decided to hold a meeting of public protest, to be followed by an approach to the national government in Washing-

ton urging it to use its influence to get freedom for the Jews imprisoned in Damascus. As chairman of the committee of arrangements, Solomon I. Joseph made formal application for the meeting to be held in the synagogue. This was indeed an innovation, and the board of trustees hesitated to have the congregation as such take a stand on a matter involving formal political action on an international political problem.[1] However, the matter brooked no delay, and leading members of the congregation together with other Jews arranged a mass meeting of protest which was held on August 17 in the synagogue of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun. Jonathan Nathan and Judge Noah made the principal addresses, while Israel Baer Kursheedt was chairman and Theodore J. Seixas, secretary. All of them, leaders in Shearith Israel, and another congregant, E. Henriques, were members of the committee which drafted the appeal to President Van Buren urging him to exert the influence of the United States to help save the threatened Jews of Damascus. Benjamin Nathan was another member of the congregation who was stirred to vigorous action.[2]

Three years later, the trustees had so far overcome their first hesitancy about "interfering in matters of state" that they urged action which they believed would be of benefit to the Jews in Damascus, and to the cause of liberty itself. On April 26, 1843,

> On motion of Mr. Phillips it was RESOLVED that the Presd. of this board be authorized to attach the congregational seal to the following recommendation, to be transmitted to the President of the United States, signed by each of the trustees.
>
> The President and trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel of the City of New York having learned that a vacancy exists at Constantinople of Chargé d'Affaires of the United States beg leave most respectfully to recommend to the President of the United States their friend and fellow citizen Mordecai M. Noah for that station, qualified as he is by character, experience and attainments.
>
> As a religious body the undersigned feel that they have no warrant for interfering in matters of state, but the appointment of a citizen of the Hebrew faith at Constantinople would be a great comfort and protection to their brethren in Syria and all parts of the Turkish dominions, and would be esteemed throughout the world an act of liberality honorable to the free institutions of our country, and productive as they believe of the best results; and therefore earnestly recommend the said appointment.

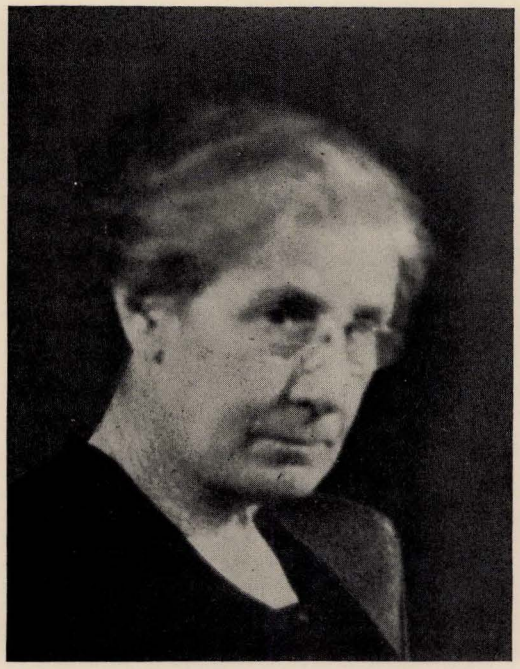
The example of Sir Moses Montefiore may well have been influential in contributing toward the congregation's entering into the larger field of public affairs. That restless knight errant in the quest of justice and freedom for Jews everywhere with his distinguished name was popularly recognized as the



Adolphus S. Solomons served all creeds



Benjamin Nathan, philanthropist, parnas



Anita Piza served the blind near and far



Frances Nathan Wolff served by example

[CIRCULAR.]

"Jews' Hospital in New-York,"

INCORPORATED 5612—1852.

We send herewith the Constitution of the Society, bearing the above title, "*for the purpose of affording Surgical and Medical aid, comfort and protection in sickness to worthy and needy Israelites.*" It is believed that the necessity for such an Institution, the humane object to be accomplished by well regulated and judicious management, and its importance to the Jewish community, will at once engage the attention and attachment of the whole House of Israel, and at the same time be favorably considered and responded to by the benevolent of all denominations.

For the first time in the history of this country—although frequently attempted by some of our philanthropic and benevolent co-religionists in this city—a refuge for the needy Israelite requiring surgical and medical aid, care and protection in sickness, is about to be provided; and the founders of the Institution are not without hope that, with the blessing of Providence, they are commencing a work destined hereafter to prove of incalculable benefit to the Israelites in the United States, and to relieve a vast amount of human misery and suffering.

To accomplish successfully the great and important work, will depend on the benevolence and liberality of those who favorably regard the undertaking, and have hearts "to feel another's woes,"—to such the Directors earnestly appeal for aid to further the good cause. From the mere dues of members, but an insufficient sum can be obtained; it is therefore incumbent on the Directors at once to call on those who have the ability, to enable them to carry out the objects of the Society.

It is the intention of the Directors, as early as practicable, to avail themselves of the XXXth Article of the Constitution, and to fit up a TEMPORARY HOSPITAL to accommodate as many patients as their now scanty means will afford, to be increased and enlarged as fast as the benevolence and liberality of those to whom they appeal will permit.

SAMPSON SIMSON *President*, 41 WARREN-ST.,
JOHN I. HART, *Vice President*, 65 MACDOUGAL-ST.,
BENJAMIN NATHAN, *Secretary*, 39 WILLIAM-ST.,
HENRY HENDRICKS, *Treasurer*, 77 BROAD-ST.

Directors:
REV. SAMUEL M. ISAACS, 669 HOUSTON-ST.,
ISAAC PHILLIPS, 602 HOUSTON-ST.,
JOHN M. DAVIES, 232 WILLIAM-ST.,
JOHN D. PHILLIPS, 174 WATER-ST.,
THEODORE J. SEIXAS, 215 WATER-ST.

☞ Donations, which will be gratefully acknowleged, may be addressed to any of the Officers or Directors.

Jews' Hospital, later named Mt. Sinai, New York's first Jewish hospital and school of nursing were founded by leaders in the congregation

representative not only of the Sephardi congregation in London, but of Jewry everywhere. In 1846, three years after Shearith Israel had urged that Judge Noah be appointed as chargé d'affaires at Constantinople, it passed the following resolution in recognition of Sir Moses Montefiore's efforts to obtain an amelioration in the unhappy lot of the Jews of Russia.

WHEREAS Sir Moses Montefiore by his eminent services to the Jewish people merits their universal respect and esteem, therefore the President and Trustees of the Sephardim Congregation Shearith Israel of the City of New York in token thereof, have unanimously adopted the following resolutions.

RESOLVED that the President and trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel of the city of New York are deeply impressed with the high consideration which prompted the humane mission of Sir Moses Montefiore to the court of Russia, and they unite in prayer with their brethren that it will result in moving the heart of that great sovereign to a better appreciation of the principles of humanity and justice.

RESOLVED that they have viewed with no ordinary emotions of pride his many and various efforts constantly made to ameliorate the hard condition of his co-religionists in Europe and Asia, and his readiness and alacrity to risk his life and sacrifice his ease and repose, and preserving in every stage of his philanthropic career a heart eminently Jewish withal catholic in its sentiments and sympathies, and a fame which is now historically the property of the whole Jewish people.

RESOLVED that the unwavering steadiness with which the British Jews have progressed towards the assertion of their rights and privileges as British subjects excites our admiration, and will exercise a powerful influence on all nations in all future time, and diffuse widely the principles of civil and religious liberty.

RESOLVED that the President have the foregoing preamble and resolutions suitably engrossed, sign the same in behalf of the trustees, attested by the clerk and transmit the same to Sir Moses Montefiore in London.[3]

Some months earlier, a letter was received from Dr. Max Lilienthal. After his difficult experiences in Russia, he had come to New York in 1844. His letter about the "deplorable condition of our brethren" in Russia aroused the congregants to action. The president of Shearith Israel officially attended a community meeting on this matter, and he was authorized as president to sign a memorial about the Jews in Russia, adding the seal of the congregation.[4]

In 1850 a situation began to develop between the United States and Switzerland because of a proposed trade treaty between the two countries. This would have recognized the invidious limitation which the Swiss Confederation set up in guaranteeing the right of establishment only to a Swiss belonging to one of the Christian confessions. Among those who were most vocal and active in urging that the treaty containing the objectionable clause should not be ratified

were Captain Jonas P. Levy, and more especially Alexander Kursheedt, who was the chairman of a committee formed to circulate a petition to the Senate urging that no religious discrimination be approved. Of the thirteen members of this committee, four were active members of Shearith Israel—Alexander Kursheedt, Jonas P. Levy, Philip J. Joachimsen, and Barrow Benrimo, who was later president of the congregation.[5]

Toward the end of 1858, the congregation received a letter from Sir Moses Montefiore inviting its cooperation in bringing influence to bear towards rescuing little Edgar Mortara of Bologna. After this Jewish child had been secretly baptized by his nurse, in order to be held within the Church he had been stolen away from his home at the instance of the Archbishop of Bologna on orders from the Pope. Shearith Israel appointed delegates to join with representatives of other congregations of the city, and a mass protest meeting was held on December 4 at Mozart Hall, presided over by Jonas N. Phillips. This meeting called on President Buchanan to protest to the Pope in an effort to secure the release of the child. Though the conscience of the world was shocked into much articulate protest, that release was never granted.[6]

Since those days in the middle of the nineteenth century when the social conscience of the congregation was stirred to political action, Shearith Israel has many times taken an outspoken stand on public issues. This has been on such varied matters as the proposal furthered by the New York Kehillah to abrogate the 1832 treaty of the United States with Russia, the Johnson immigration law of 1924, the British White Paper of 1929 restricting Jewish immigration to the Holy Land, the proposal to reform the calendar through the addition of a blank day, Senator Tydings' resolution in 1934 concerning the treatment of minorities in Germany, and appeals to President Franklin D. Roosevelt to aid in saving those threatened with doom by the Nazis.[7]

It was the Damascus blood accusation of 1840 which aroused American Jewry to a recognition of the value of having one united representative organization expressive of all groups in the American Jewish community. In the field of religion, the dynamic and broad-visioned Isaac Leeser had long tried to effect such a union of congregations to supervise and have advisory functions in relation to rabbinic questions, religious schools, and the training of religious functionaries. But Shearith Israel took its stand against entering such a congregational union which, it feared, might be influenced by the Reform tendencies of some of its constituent congregations.[8] It was ready, however, to join

with all other congregations for effective action on public matters, such as the Damascus blood accusation or the Mortara case. Stimulated by the challenge of the burning issue of the Mortara child, Congregation Shaaray Tefila, following their effective minister, the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs, invited Shearith Israel to appoint a committee to meet with them to confer on the best manner of establishing "a Board of Representatives of the Israelites of the United States." [9] The invitation was unanimously accepted. Solomon I. Joseph and Asher Kursheedt were appointed as the congregation's representatives, and Kursheedt became the president of the committee. It was at a meeting held in his house that he proposed the foundation of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites.

This committee issued a printed plan for organizing the proposed Board of Representatives of the Jewish congregations. That report estimated that there were then 170 synagogues in the United States serving a Jewish population of above 200,000. Of these, 40,000 dwelt in New York, these alone outnumbering the entire Jewish population in the British Isles. Three quarters of these numbers were derived from immigration of the preceding twenty years. It was foreseen that within the lifetime of that generation the Jewish community of the country would exceed in numbers every other on the face of the globe. Therefore, the report prophetically said, "a destiny awaits us in this land such as has not fallen to the lot of any portion of our race since the dispersion from the land of our forefathers."

Shearith Israel had been ready to join with congregations and other groups in the formation of a broadly representative communal organization. But when the electors saw that the plan proposed the creation of a board of representatives of congregations, by a vote of twenty-three to five they declared it inexpedient to join in the undertaking, just as they had refused to join Isaac Leeser's earlier attempt to create an organization of congregations.[10] The movement, however, went ahead and resulted in the creation of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites. Shearith Israel later joined that Board and was represented on it until 1879. Then when the Board was dissolved and was succeeded by the Union of American Congregations, Shearith Israel, fearing possible compromise of its own orthodox religious tradition, unanimously decided not to join the new organization.[11]

Three decades later, the congregation entered wholeheartedly into the New York Kehillah. This comprehensive organization of the New York Jewish

community was brought into being in 1909 under the inspiring leadership of Judah L. Magnes. The congregation's president, L. Napoleon Levy, its clerk, N. Taylor Phillips, and Dr. Pool, were its delegates at successive conventions of the Kehillah. But during the First World War, Dr. Magnes took a position of pacifism in conflict with national policy. This was difficult to dissociate from the Kehillah of which he was the founder and leader. Then many organizations, the congregation among them, withdrew from that body.

The Kehillah proved that the time had come when Shearith Israel would join hands with other groups notwithstanding differences in Jewish religious practice in order to cooperate unitedly on common problems. In this spirit it actively sponsored the Synagogue Council of America, which includes rabbinic and lay representatives of orthodox, conservative, and reform Judaism. For several years it held its regular meetings in Shearith Israel's building, and it has conducted several noteworthy historic services in Shearith Israel's synagogue.

Similarly the congregation has cooperated with the New York Board of Rabbis which includes in its membership representatives of reform and conservative Judaism as well as of the orthodox rabbinate. Dr. Mendes was one of the original founders of the Board of Rabbis, or the New York Board of Jewish Ministers as it was called for some four decades. Both he and Dr. Pool served as its president. Over the years Shearith Israel has given generous support to its chaplaincy work in prisons and other public institutions. For many years the Board held its monthly meetings in the synagogue building. It has held special services in the synagogue, such as that prompted by the British White Paper on Palestine, or the Board's sixtieth anniversary service. In 1951, the New York Board of Rabbis, then an organization with some 500 members, awarded a citation to the congregation "for its distinguished and historic record in promoting the growth of Jewish religious culture and philanthropy in this land." [12]

Shearith Israel specialized in one field of communal organization that was unfamiliar to and in part overlooked by the general Jewish community. On November 11, 1907, the electors referred to the trustees a resolution that

> in view of the great influx of Jews to this country the congregation exert its influence to spread the Sephardic element throughout the continent, therefore it is absolutely essential we should endeavor to ascertain and locate the Sephardic element which may exist among the new arrivals with the object of assisting them in any way feasible to establish suitable places of worship.

On the local scene in New York the congregation actively cooperated in the various attempts of the immigrant Sephardim to organize first a *Kolel* and then a Sephardic Community of New York. Besides the sustained and devoted service by the Sisterhood to the newly arrived Sephardim, Shearith Israel gave generous financial support and even more valuable personal leadership, among others that of John Hezekiah Levy, Henry S. Hendricks, and David de Sola Pool, in efforts to create a comprehensive cohering organization of Sephardi synagogues and communal groups.[13]

On the national scene, from the beginning the congregation sponsored the creation of the Union of Sephardic Congregations. This was organized in the trustee room of the congregation in 1929. It has always been given quarters freely in the synagogue building.[14] In the international field of Sephardi interests Shearith Israel has worked with the Union Universelle des Communautés Sephardites organized by Rabbi Nissim Ovadia, and it has been represented at its international conferences in Amsterdam, Paris, and Jerusalem by D. A. Jessurun Cardozo, Dr. Pool, and Simon S. Nessim.[15] This Union is now known as the World Sephardi Federation.

In the service of orthodox Judaism in the United States the congregation has shown a specially active interest. In 1879, delegates of twenty-six orthodox communities met in New York to organize a Board of Delegates of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations and to bring over from Königsberg Rabbi M. L. Malbim to head the religious interests of the movement. At that time Dr. Mendes assured the group of the financial support of Congregation Shearith Israel, but the movement faded away with the death of Rabbi Malbim. In 1898, Dr. Mendes and others issued a call for a convention of orthodox congregations "to strengthen the interests of historic Judaism." This convention met in June in the synagogue assembly hall and resulted in the organization of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Dr. Mendes was elected its president, an office which he filled for fifteen years. In the early days of the Union, much of its business was done from Dr. Mendes' office in the synagogue, and its annual conventions were frequently held in the rooms of the synagogue. Shearith Israel's Sisterhood has been a member of the Women's Branch of the Union, which like the Collegiate Branch of the Union held many meetings and gave lecture courses in the synagogue rooms.

The congregation has always readily given its facilities to the furtherance

of orthodox Jewish interests of an educational character. The Hebrew Literary and Religious Library Association, a congregational organization beginning in 1840, met in the rooms of the Crosby Street Synagogue and there held Hebrew classes and lectures on Judaism.[16] In 1843, Major Noah had the vision of bringing into existence a Hebrew College where all Jewish religious forms would be observed and the Hebrew tongue would be taught alongside of Greek, Latin, and other collegiate subjects.[17] Hazzan Lyons was one of those who worked with Isaac Leeser in 1845 to form the first American Jewish Publication Society. That organization issued some fourteen publications until its stock was wiped out by fire in 1851. In the following year, 1852, Sampson Simson and eight others, of whom four, Henry Hendricks, Benjamin Nathan, Theodore J. Seixas, and Isaac Phillips, were like himself members of Shearith Israel, incorporated the Jewish Theological and Scientific Institution. After the death of Simson in 1857, Isaac Phillips and J. J. Lyons continued as the heads of the movement to establish the Institution, which, however, never became a reality. The lots at Yonkers which it owned were eventually conveyed to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.[18]

Forty years after the death of Simson, conditions were more favorable for a Jewish Theological and Scientific Institution to come into being. On January 7, 1886, the board of trustees approved the suggestion of H. Pereira Mendes that Sabato Morais, Abraham Pereira Mendes, Meldola de Sola, and some others should be invited to come together to discuss the organization of a Jewish seminary in New York.[19] On January 31, twelve men met in the synagogue under the leadership of Sabato Morais and organized the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The congregation voted it a grant of $1,000, and State Senator Joseph Blumenthal (1834–1901) as well as two other members of Shearith Israel, David M. Piza and Tucker David, were chosen as trustees. They were the first of a long line of members of Shearith Israel who gave of themselves to the new institution then organized to train American leaders of traditional Judaism. Dr. Mendes was for a number of years president of the Seminary's original Advisory Board, and he gave service on the faculty of the Seminary as professor of Jewish history. When Sabato Morais died in 1897, Dr. Mendes served as acting president of the Seminary until 1902 when Professor Solomon Schechter was called from Cambridge University to head the institution. Among the first students enrolled were Joseph H. Hertz, who later became Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, and his brother Emanuel

Hertz, later a member of Shearith Israel, who wrote exhaustively about relations of Abraham Lincoln with Jews. When the Seminary opened at the beginning of 1887, its first classes met in the rooms of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. When they outgrew these accommodations they moved to Cooper Union. In 1904, members of the congregation guaranteed an annual scholarship of $1,000 to the Seminary for five years.[20]

The Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, which later became Yeshiva University, held its graduation exercises in the synagogue in 1919 and 1921. At that period Dr. Mendes was the lecturer in homiletics at the Yeshivah. A number of its Sephardi rabbinical students who are now rabbis of congregations were given scholarships by members of the congregation.

At the turn of this century the Sisterhood conducted a girls' club downtown under the chairmanship of Mrs. H. Pereira Mendes, who was also the sponsor of a girls' club which met on Henry Street. These clubs were so successful that at a meeting of the joint Sisterhoods of the city Mrs. Mendes pleaded that they pool their resources and build a central building for girls and young women, a YWHA to correspond with the YMHA. The suggestion was not taken up at the time as those present felt that it would be putting too much money into bricks and mortar. A little while later, Mrs. Mendes took Mrs. Israel Unterberg, one of the most active members of the congregation, to see the work of the Sisterhood's clubs downtown. She told Mrs. Unterberg of her idea that there should be a YWHA. With characteristic dynamism and energy, Mrs. Unterberg undertook to bring to realization the idea which at once won the heart. Before long the YWHA was called into being. Mrs. Israel Unterberg became its president, Mrs. H. Pereira Mendes its vice-president and religious guide, and another member of the congregation, Mrs. Simon Liebovitz, its treasurer.

The opportunity then presented itself of obtaining the building at 1584 Lexington Avenue for the work of the YWHA. A little later, in 1905, Dr. Mendes went with Mrs. Unterberg to ask Jacob H. Schiff for his support in obtaining also the two adjoining houses. Mr. Schiff promised that he would give half the cost of those two houses if Mrs. Unterberg and her organization would raise the other half. This was done, and the YWHA met in those buildings on Lexington Avenue until forty years ago it erected the beautiful building at 31 West 110th Street which it used for many years.

Shearith Israel has always maintained a close bond with the American Jewish

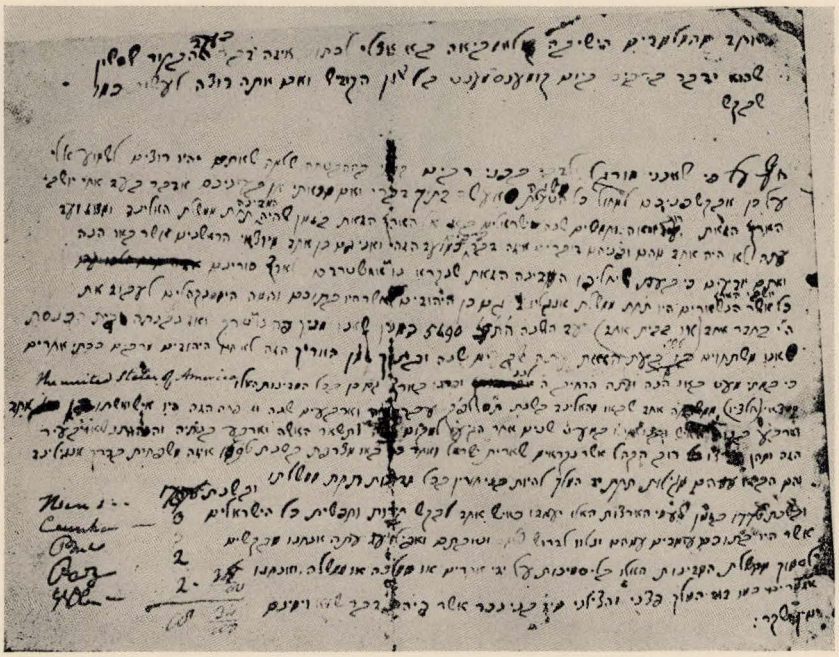
Historical Society.[21] A paper on the Chatham Square cemetery was presented by N. Taylor Phillips at the first meeting of the Society held in 1892, and it was printed in the first volume of its Publications. N. Taylor Phillips was a member of the board of directors since 1893 and for many years treasurer and then a vice-president of the Society. He was elected honorary member of its board, as was Henry S. Hendricks, long its treasurer. Leon Huhner was its curator for over fifty years, and he contributed very numerous historical studies to its proceedings. It is rare that one of the forty-three volumes of its Publications appeared without its containing some contribution by a member of Shearith Israel, or an article or note concerning some aspect of the history of the congregation. Many, too, have been the gifts which the Society has received from members of Shearith Israel, such as the portraits of some eighteenth-century New York Jews given by N. Taylor Phillips, or the deposition in its archives by Henry S. Hendricks of ledgers and business papers of the Hendricks copper mill at Belleville, New Jersey, of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, that are of interest in the history of American industry.

The rooms of the congregation have always been generously available for meetings of cultural as well as religious and philanthropic organizations, and many have been the distinguished persons who have figured as speakers in the synagogue building. At a meeting held in the synagogue by the Jewish Academy of Arts and Sciences on March 22, 1936, Albert Einstein was one of the speakers. It has similarly cooperated with relief organizations of the Jewish community from the time many of these were founded. In 1833, permission was granted for Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto to deliver in the schoolroom of the synagogue the annual discourse for the Society for the Benefit and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion. Almost a century later there was the climax of all such meetings. On October 28, 1917, a national conference of war relief workers was called together in the main auditorium of the synagogue by the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers. In that critical hour of the agony of the First World War when the foundations were being laid for one of the most glorious chapters of American Jewish history the Joint Distribution Committee wrote to the synagogue that

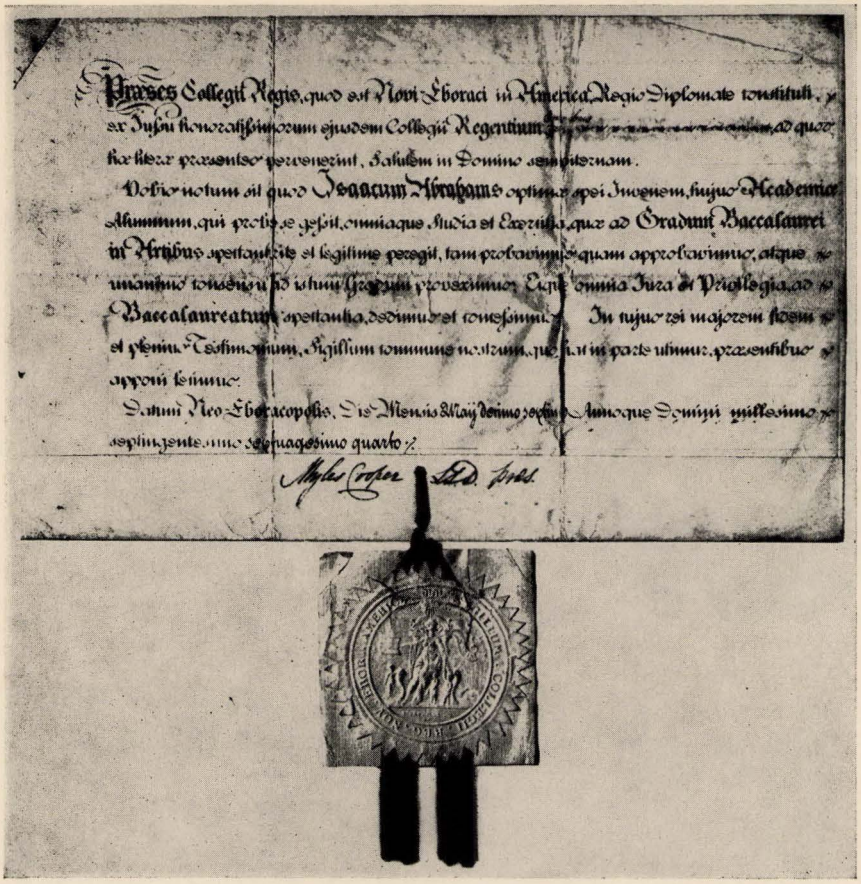
> in no other building would it have been possible to have brought together, without any adverse comment, and with so much sympathy and unity of purpose, so large



Sampson Simson, the founder of Mt. Sinai Hospital and of Holy Land Relief Society



Hebrew oration by Sampson Simson on "150 years of Jewish History in America" given at his graduation from Columbia College, 1800



Diploma awarded in 1774 to Isaac Abrahams, first Jewish graduate of King's (Columbia) College of which the Reverend Seixas was an incorporator

a number of Jews representing every section and every class of American Jewry. The event has been described by everyone as marking a new epoch in American Jewry.[22]

Throughout its history Shearith Israel has welcomed countless individuals from lands of turmoil and persecution, whether they were escaping political and social upheavals such as the French Revolution, or Czarist Russia's anti-Semitism, or hopeless economic wretchedness. The rise of the ruthless ensanguined Nazis brought Jewish refugees to New York in large numbers. As has been told, congregational overflow services on New Year and the Day of Atonement made a special point of welcoming them.[23] Congregational homes were opened to them for the service on the first two nights of Passover. Classes in English, in which the attendance at times reached nearly 300, were established in the synagogue for these new Americans. These classes continued to be held even during the summer months from half-past nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. Originally taught by teachers supplied by the Works Progress Administration, they have continued to meet in the synagogue to this day as a project of the New York City Board of Education.[24] Furthermore, the Sisterhood of the congregation organized many phases of cooperation with refugees.[25]

When Italian and Dutch Jews began to arrive in the city seeking refuge from a homeland at first threatened and then occupied by Nazi forces, they were welcomed and made to feel at home in Shearith Israel. The synagogue and all its services were opened freely to them, and a special office was set up in the synagogue building where the newcomers could find a hearing for their problems. The Italian Jewish Club was formed in the synagogue building, and it met regularly and conducted all its activities there. In the same way the Netherlands Jewish Society came to birth in the synagogue. This Society used the synagogue as its headquarters and met there regularly. On one occasion a joint meeting of the Italian and the Dutch groups was addressed in the synagogue by Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The Dutch sewing group still meets in the synagogue every week together with the Sisterhood's Sewing Circle.[26] For a time a *Cercle français* composed of recent Jewish arrivals from France and Belgium was organized under the auspices of Shearith Israel. It helped bring closer to American life its members who had come to America in a deeply grievous hour.

Shearith Israel's participation in the creation of Jewish community institu-

tions forms a large and sometimes dramatic part in the opening chapter of many of them. Two outstanding Jewish hospitals in New York, Mt. Sinai Hospital and Montefiore Hospital, were born out of the very heart of the congregation.

As early as 1806, Jaques Ruden, Aaron Levy, and M. Myers, as a committee of the Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether, had urged the congregation to "lay the foundation of a Poor House and Hospital, forward the same, and become incorporated." Nothing came of this at the time. But forty-five years later, in 1851, under the leadership of Mordecai M. Noah the Hebrew Benevolent Society called a conference of five Jewish organizations and drew up a plan for establishing in the city a Jewish asylum and hospital which would also bear the Hebrew name Neveh Shaanan (Dwelling of Ease). One of the five participating organizations was the New York Hebrew Assistance and Educational Society of the congregation, and its delegates at the conference, Henry Hendricks, Jacob Abrahams, Lewis J. Cohen, and Theodore J. Seixas, pledged $6,000 from their Society towards calling into being the projected "hospital for sick and aged Hebrews." [27]

In the meanwhile, another member of the Congregation Shearith Israel, Sampson Simson, with creative vision was maturing his own plan of founding a Jewish hospital to be supported basically by $5 individual memberships rather than by organizations. In furtherance of this, on January 15, 1852, nine men met under his leadership in the Crosby Street Synagogue and decided on the organization of the Jews Hospital. Of its nine incorporators, five, Sampson Simson, Benjamin Nathan, Henry Hendricks, Theodore J. Seixas, and Isaac Phillips, were members of Shearith Israel. The first president of the hospital was Sampson Simson, the treasurer, Henry Hendricks, and the secretary, Benjamin Nathan. On the death of Sampson Simson, Benjamin Nathan became president in 1856, and Theodore J. Seixas secretary. When Benjamin Nathan died fourteen years later, Emanuel B. Hart, another member of the congregation, who had been vice-president of the hospital, became its president.[28]

The first money raised for the planned hospital was $1,034.16. This was the proceeds of a ball given at Niblo's Garden on Broadway between Prince and Houston streets by the Young Men's Committee of which Shearith Israel's Barrow Benrimo was the chairman. In 1854 Shearith Israel's members Asher Kursheedt, Emanuel Knight, George Henriques, Emanuel B. Hart, and Adolphus S. Solomons were elected honorary members of the hospital and their

names were inscribed on a tablet in recognition of their help in its establishment.

Sampson Simson gave to the new organization two lots on 28th Street. The appeal for funds for the building to be erected there received the two largest responses of $1,000 each from Mrs. Frances Hendricks and Miss Selina Hendricks, the mother and the sister of the treasurer, Henry Hendricks. On the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1853, the cornerstone was laid by Sampson Simson. Prior to the hospital ceremonies, the participants gathered in the Crosby Street Synagogue where the afternoon service was read, and then the whole group in procession went in horsedrawn "railroad cars" from the synagogue to the lots on West 28th Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues where the cornerstone was laid.[29]

When completed the building bore over its doorway the name Jews Hospital, and in Hebrew characters the words Beth Holim (Home of the Sick). At its dedication at noon on Thursday, May 17, 1855, Hazzan Lyons read the afternoon service and the prayer for the government, and led seven circuits. That hospital truly was planned to be in every sense of the word Jewish.

When the hospital was opened, Mark Blumenthal was unanimously elected its resident physician, for which he was paid $250 during his first year of service. Dr. Israel Moses was appointed one of the attending surgeons. Both of them were active members of the Congregation Shearith Israel.

In those days the board of the hospital held its regular and its annual meetings in the rooms of the Shearith Israel Synagogue. The congregation, in rotation with other congregations, gave free interment in its cemetery to poor patients dying in the hospital. Special appeals were made in the congregation for its support, and the personnel of Shearith Israel was mobilized, both women and men, for making a success of the recurrent fairs and other fund-raising functions organized by the institution, which in 1866 had been renamed Mt. Sinai Hospital.[30]

When the hospital came to need a new building, it received from the city in 1870 twelve lots on the east side of Lexington Avenue between 66th and 67th streets. At the ceremonies when Mayor A. Oakey Hall laid the cornerstone on that site, the Reverend J. J. Lyons delivered a Hebrew prayer, and Judge Albert Cardozo was "the orator of the day." The new building was very materially helped to come into being by a gift of $25,000 from the president of the hospital, Benjamin Nathan.

This intense interest in Mt. Sinai Hospital from its foundation continued

among members of Congregation Shearith Israel. Mrs. Alma de Leon Hendricks planned to organize a Training School for Nurses as part of the hospital. But she died in 1879 before her dream was realized. Three women of the congregation, Mrs. Florian H. Florance, Mrs. Charles Hendricks, and Mrs. Albert Hendricks, organized a group of women in November, 1881, with the result that in March, 1882, with Mrs. Florian H. Florance as president and Mrs. Charles Hendricks as honorary secretary, the Mt. Sinai Training School for Nurses was formally opened.[31]

The founding of Montefiore Hospital also is a chapter in the history of Shearith Israel. Sir Moses Montefiore was born in Leghorn in 1785. At the beginning of the year 1884, at the suggestion of Dr. Mendes, the trustees of the congregation invited representatives of other congregations and of Jewish communal institutions, as well as other prominent leaders in the Jewish community, to meet in the synagogue to plan the observance of the hundredth birthday of the beloved and venerable philanthropist and world Jewish leader. A committee was formed which held its meetings in the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. Feeling that greater community service would be the noblest recognition of that altruistic figure, the committee decided to follow the proposal made by Adolphus S. Solomons to meet an urgent communal need in his honor by establishing the Montefiore Home for Chronic Invalids. When this institution was brought into being, its president, Henry S. Allen, and second vice-president, Adolphus S. Solomons, were both members of Shearith Israel. For some time Julius J. Lyons, a son of Hazzan Lyons, was its secretary.[32] The Montefiore Home for Chronic Invalids in the course of time developed into the Montefiore Hospital. A special division of Montefiore Hospital, the Sanatorium at Bedford Hills for care of the tuberculous, owes to Israel Unterberg years of devoted service. He was its chairman for many years. His son David carried on his father's tradition of service there.

As a direct outcome of this interest in the sanatorium for the tuberculous, the Altro Workshops came into being through the initiation of Israel Unterberg and Fred M. Stein. This institution pioneered in offering to those stricken with tuberculosis sheltered and remunerative work under physically and psychologically healing conditions. Two related congregational families, those of Unterberg and Liebowitz, over many years influenced the development of the Altro Workshops.

As might be expected, Shearith Israel took the initiative in arranging for

the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the official recognition of the Jewish settlement in the United States. The congregation, which had its birth with that settlement, formed a committee in February, 1905, consisting of the trustees, Dr. Mendes, the clerk of the congregation and thirty electors, to consider the propriety of marking the occasion, and if found desirable to arrange for an appropriate celebration. This committee appointed a subcommittee to invite action by the whole community. Thereupon, on April 9 a representative meeting was held in the vestry room of the synagogue. This was presided over by Louis Marshall, with N. Taylor Phillips acting as secretary. A committee was appointed to organize a national celebration. Shearith Israel's members on the national committee of seventeen were Dr. Mendes, N. Taylor Phillips, and William Salomon. It was Dr. Mendes who was chairman of the committee which prepared the celebration's order of service that was set for the Sabbath before Thanksgiving Day in that year 1905. At the same time Shearith Israel created a congregational committee of the trustees and electors to arrange its own appropriate celebration of both the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the congregation and the centennial of the adoption of the congregation's constitution.[33]

In like manner, less than a half century later, Dr. Pool approached the trustees of the congregation with the suggestion that plans for the tercentenary observance be prepared. Later, in 1950, he initiated in the American Jewish Historical Society plans for the appropriate celebration on a national scope. Under the general chairmanship of Edgar J. Nathan, III, the congregational tercentenary committee made the years 1954 and 1955 memorable in the history of Shearith Israel. Special commemorative services, historic exhibits, community school contests in American Jewish history, interfaith activities, and social functions crowded the program. A souvenir journal recorded the recognition generously given to Shearith Israel as the American mother synagogue by a wide community of brotherhood in faith.

In conclusion, we may recall the names of some congregants who were leaders in the creation of various forms of community service. Benjamin Nathan, one of the presidents of the congregation, was widely recognized for his philanthropy. In 1870 when he was murdered, the stock exchange offered a reward of $10,000 for finding the murderer, and on the day of his funeral it closed down as a mark of respect. Throughout the nineteenth century, founders and presidents of many of the early Jewish philanthropic institutions of the city

were drawn from the membership of the congregation. Judge Philip J. Joachimsen played a dominant role in the creation and the leadership of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society. He was also the first president of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. Henry S. Henry, who died in 1890, was one of the most faithful creative spirits among those who developed the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in its care of the refugees pouring into the city from Russia after 1882. He was also one of those who most actively sponsored the bringing into being of the Jewish agricultural settlement in Vineland, New Jersey.

Adolphus S. Solomons (1826–1910) lived a life that has been described as "replete with moral beauty." In the words of Louis Marshall, "Though possessed of the grandeur of soul which pertains to a saint, his was the simplicity of a child." In his youth he served for seven years in the United States militia. As has been told, he was one of those who helped make possible Mt. Sinai Hospital, and a generation later it was he who suggested the organization of the Montefiore Home which developed into the Montefiore Hospital, even as it was he who suggested the organization of the Garfield Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C. He organized the first free night lodginghouse for men in New York, and in 1876 he organized and was president of the Washington Night Lodging Association. He organized Washington's first training school for nurses. He was a founder of the New York Jewish Protectory and Aid Society (1881) and also of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. He was acting president of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association when it was reorganized into the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and it was due to his initiative that the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary was formed. At a meeting held in his home in Washington in April 1881, the Associated Charities of Washington was projected on his initiative, and a month later at another meeting held in his home the decision was reached to organize the American Association of the Red Cross of which he became a vice-president.[34]

In our own day, Joseph L. Buttenwieser, a president of the Hebrew Technical Institute, and his son Benjamin B. Buttenwieser were both presidents of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. Israel Unterberg, among his many public activities, was a founder and the first president of the Jewish Education Association. Other presidents of New York's Jewish Education Association, later known as the Jewish Education Committee, have been

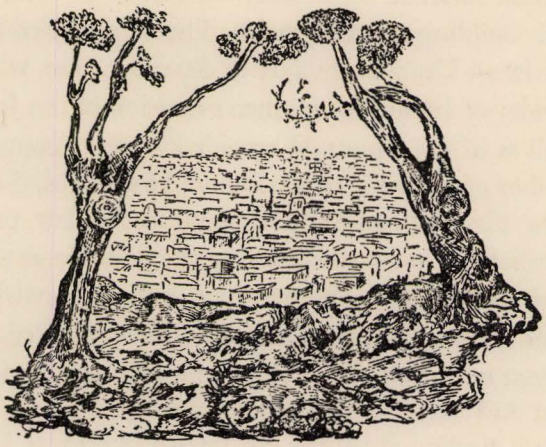
Harry Liebowitz, for many years treasurer of Shearith Israel, and Samuel S. Schneierson, a trustee, who have taken a leading part in many Jewish communal organizations. One of the notable benefactors of the Jewish Education Committee has been Nathan Sheinman of Shearith Israel. The Hebrew Teachers Institute building of the Jewish Theological Seminary came into existence through Israel Unterberg's gift of $200,000. His wife, Bella Unterberg, was the founder of Ivriah, the women's division of the Jewish Education Committee, as well as of the Young Women's Hebrew Association.

A devoted member of Shearith Israel, Isidore Hershfield, did social pioneering when after the First World War he gave up his law practice to go to Poland to do the relief and reconstruction work of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the desperately war-ravaged Jewish community of that country. Later he settled in Washington where he acted as liaison officer with the government on behalf of immigrants served by the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society.

One who did path-finding work for the Jewish blind was Mrs. Joshua Piza. Dr. Mendes had circularized the public schools of the city in order to learn the number of physically handicapped Jewish children. This revealed a pathetically large number of the blind. When he drew these facts to the attention of the New York Section of the Council of Jewish Women, Mrs. Piza organized the Council's work for Jewish blind children. From those beginnings grew the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind and various state commissions and other agencies for sight conservation.

Were this summary account of expanding horizons of responsibility to be brought up to date, this brief chapter would necessarily be much lengthened. Defending Jewish rights, building representative community organizations, strengthening religious education, furthering traditional Judaism, founding and developing Jewish cultural institutions, integrating immigrant groups into American life, and creating Jewish hospitals and other institutions of loving service were tasks that were added with growing vision to the immediate primary function of the synagogue but which yet were an essential part of its program. From near and far the calls that came rightly found answer within the consciousness of the synagogue Jew.

XIII. *For the Sake of Zion*



For the sake of the house of the Lord, our God,

I will seek your good, O Jerusalem.

PSALM 122:9

EVERY DAY IN THE SYNAGOGUE the Psalmist's words are repeated, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." From the beginnings of Congregation Shearith Israel, as in the parent synagogues in Brazil and Amsterdam, and before that during long centuries, wheresoever Jews worshiped, these words and the repeated prayers for the return of the Jewish people to Zion were uttered with devotion and a comforting faith that some day in God's good time "a redeemer will come to Zion." [1]

In the constitution adopted in 1648 by the congregation in Recife, Brazil, whence Shearith Israel sprang, the twenty-fourth regulation called on the gentlemen of the Mahamad to "be very careful to remit the money of Erets Israel." [2] Sixteen years later, in 1664, we find the congregation in London giving official recognition to the Society Terra Santa, established to collect money to help the four holy cities in the Land of Israel: Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias,

and Safed.[3] We may confidently believe that the early New York community, which continued the customs of the Sephardim brought by its founders from Brazil, and which later paralleled the similar pattern set by the Sephardim of London, followed these precedents for charitable work in the Holy Land.

The first extant record of Shearith Israel's activity on behalf of the Land of Israel dates from the middle of the eighteenth century. From then on we learn of the arrival of successive Palestinian emissaries, each with his own localized plea. The appeal for funds was almost always answered. These emissaries often stayed in New York for months (at the community's expense) before moving on to Newport or some other place in their journeyings. The congregation had cause for gratitude to these itinerant and learned messengers of Zion, for in return for the gifts which they took away with them they brought to New York's remote Jewish community both authoritative Jewish knowledge and a picturesque accretion of Jewish interest.[4]

The first of these men of whom we know was Moses Malki of Safed. He arrived in New York in 1759. The cost of his board for the four months of his stay in the city and his passage to Newport in December was almost as much as the salary of the shammash or of the shohet for a whole year. Two years later, in 1761, Haim Mudahy, a dayan of Constantinople, came to appeal for relief of the surviving sufferers from the earthquake which on October 30, 1759, had killed 160 persons in Safed.[5] Two years later, in 1763, Hayman Levy was appointed New York's gabbay (treasurer) to collect funds for the Jews in Hebron. In this office he was succeeded by Daniel Gomez.[6] In 1772, Rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal (b. 1733) of Hebron reached New York after eighteen years of nearly uninterrupted traveling. This had taken him to and fro to Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria, Germany, Holland, England, France, Curaçao, Jamaica, back to Hebron; then again France, England, Jamaica, Philadelphia, and New York. He stayed in New York for nearly half a year before being sent on to Newport, where he arrived on March 3, 1773.[7] His visit to Newport assumed more than local importance because there he met Ezra Stiles, later president of Yale College. A keen intellectual interest matured into a stimulating friendship.

In 1775, on the eve of the Revolution, Rabbi Samuel Cohen was collecting funds in Newport to help the Jews of Hebron meet a crushing mulct which the Turkish authorities had arbitrarily imposed on them. The New York community joined with the Newport community in united action, paying half

of £31.8.6, the cost of his board and his return passage direct from Newport to London.[8]

But the rumblings of the war were already heard. The long drawn-out Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars interrupted the flow of emissaries to the New World. In the early decades of the nineteenth century the time honored system of collecting funds was resumed. From then on began the visitations of these travelers seeking to obtain in New York financial aid for the Holy Land.

Some attempts were made by the community to establish standards of collection and to regulate and control the costly journeyings for fund raising. In 1824 Rabbi Isaacki arrived from Tiberias, accompanied by a personal attendant, to raise funds for his community on which, he reported, a confiscatory tax of 8,750 guineas had been set "for expenses of the war." To meet this requisition the Tiberias community had taken a loan, giving the synagogues and other communal buildings as security. Many of the Jews of Tiberias were being held in prison until the whole sum would be paid. Rabbi Isaacki collected $179.55 from individuals. The congregation undertook to add $150 on condition that this contribution would be sent directly to London and not paid through the emissaries. They paid $60.50 for board and lodgings for Rabbi Isaacki and his attendant and $45 for shipping them on to Charleston.[9]

In that same year, 1825, it was resolved that

> the congregation be informed that all donations or offerings for the Tribute money for the relief of our brethren in the Holy Land will when the sum is sufficient amount be remitted to London for its pious purpose, and offerings for the same are authorized until the last day of Pesah.[10]

Seven years later, in 1832, Rabbi Enoch Zundel arrived to collect funds for the poor of Jerusalem. The expenses of maintaining him in the city were very heavy. It was summer, and no organized appeal could be made because of a prevailing epidemic of cholera and the resultant scattering of the community. Zundel's debts were met by the congregation. But it drew up a long letter, which was also translated into Hebrew and French. This it sent to the rabbis of the congregations of Sephardim in London, Paris, Amsterdam and Bordeaux, and other European communities. In this letter the trustees wrote that they

> have been applied to at various times by Messengers from the Holy Land and elsewhere for pecuniary assistance which applications being submitted to their Brethren in Israel relief has been afforded—owing to their inadequate means the

situation of our own poor requiring all the surplus funds that the Congregation & its members are able to distribute. The principal Cities of America are annually visited by Emigrants from Europe—most of them needy and generally at the outset of their landing claiming relief— Our own Brethren form a part of the Emigration and we are consequently taxed in a proportionate degree with our fellow Citizens of other denominations, the Trustees deem it a duty they owe to themselves and to those of our Brethren that inhabit other Countries to lay the above statement of facts before them & to request their Co-operation in endeavouring to prevent them from visiting America . . .

The congregation therefore warned that

a Voyage across the Atlantic would be attended with considerable expence and loss of time and inevitably result in disappointment, and that the pittance they might perhaps gather would merely be sufficient for their personal support.[11]

In that same year, 1832, another organized effort was made to put a stop to the costly sending of emissaries from the Holy Land, and also to get assurance that moneys collected would there be distributed equitably in accordance with the desire of the contributors. Following a suggestion made by the English Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschel, Shearith Israel's members Aaron Levy and Solomon Seixas called a meeting on November 11, 1832, at the Mill Street Synagogue. As a result there was formed the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh (the Society for Offerings for the Sanctuary). The constitution of this Society explicitly stated that

The money raised by this Society shall be remitted, at stated times to some responsible Agent in Europe or Asia, to be distributed by him, fairly and equitably, amongst the different Congregations in the Holy Land; but in no instance whatever to be paid to any Messenger or Agent of any of the Congregations there who may be sent here to collect the same.

On February 28, 1833, Aaron Levy, president of the new society, wrote to Solomon I. Isaacs, president of the congregation, that

At a Meeting of the Managers of Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh Society, for the relief of our distressed Bretheren in the Holy land the following resolutions were passed.

1st. Resolved that the President be directed to apply to the several presiding officers of the different Jewish Congregations in this City for permission to put up boxes for the reception of Charities for the benefit of their Society in the different Synagogues.

2nd. Resolved that the President request the Trustees of the different Congregations of the City to hand over to the Treasurer of their Society the Machset Hashakel that may be collected on the ensuing Purim.

3rd. Resolved that the President be directed to apply to the Parnassim of the different Congregations in this City for the Monies, collected at Funerals and at Houses of Mourning.

The trustees of Shearith Israel gladly complied with these requests. When in the following year the new synagogue was opened on Crosby Street, explicit permission was given for the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh to place two collection boxes in the vestibule of the synagogue.[12]

The most active workers in the Society were leaders in Shearith Israel: Israel Baer Kursheedt, Solomon I. Joseph, Naphtali Phillips, and Dr. Simeon Abrahams. The Society's meetings were held as a rule in the Crosby Street Synagogue. On occasion the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh stirred itself to special action, such as when there was reported to be a "dreadful famine in the Holy Land." The funds which it collected were sent for distribution as a rule either to the devoted Hirsch Lehren in Amsterdam or to Sir Moses Montefiore in London. After about a third of a century the Society ceased to function. While it had not succeeded in putting an end to the system of dispatching special collectors to the United States, it had established a very creditable record both in Shearith Israel and in other congregations of raising funds for distribution in the Holy Land "amongst all the poor, without discrimination as to particular congregations or communities." [13]

Rabbi Enoch Zundel, whose arrival touched off this constructive countermeasure to the costly system of shelihut, or sending emissaries from the Holy Land, remained in New York for some time. During 1832 and 1833 he not infrequently needed "immediate relief." This was granted him. In return he gave to the congregation through Hazzan I. B. Seixas two pounds of "terra santa," sacred soil from the Holy Land, to be sprinkled on the dead prior to burial as a symbolic identification with the sanctified dust of the Promised Land. Some twenty years later Uriah P. Levy replenished the precious supply when the naval vessel he commanded went to the eastern Mediterranean. He brought back a wagon load of the soil of the Holy Land, which terra santa is still drawn on for use at every funeral conducted by the congregation.

Rabbi Zundel, be it said, was helpful in other ways also. In 1832 the congregation called on him to certify as to the learning and skill of Gustavus Poznanski, the successful candidate for the vacant office of communal shohet. During the year of his residence in New York, Zundel was sought out by William L. Roy, who showed him part of the Hebrew dictionary which he was

compiling. When some years later, in 1837, this *Complete Hebrew and English Dictionary* was published in New York, it contained a warmly appreciative endorsement by Zundel in which he said that "William L. Roy is one of the most critical scholars I have met with since I left the Holy Land, Gesenius not excepted."

From that time on, during most of the nineteenth century the congregation as a rule made its own collections for relief in the Holy Land, and then, as the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh had done, sent them for allocation and distribution to the Sephardi community or Sir Moses Montefiore in London, or to Hirsch Lehren in Amsterdam.

Occasionally an individual emissary on a special mission would be given exceptional consideration. In 1848, Rabbi Jechiel Ha-Cohen arrived in New York. He had been sent by Congregation Beth El in Jerusalem to apply to the Jewish people in the United States for assistance in enlarging the existing synagogue in the Holy City. Permission to do this had been obtained from the Turkish authorities. The trustees feeling that this cause was one of historic importance, resolved

> That public worship be held in the Synagogue in Crosby Street on Thursday afternoon at half past three o'clock of the 23rd of the present month, November, and that a discourse be delivered on that occasion by the Hon. M. M. Noah, in aid of the object, and that the Parnassim, Trustees, and members of all the Hebrew congregations in the city be invited to attend and cooperate on the occasion.

It was Thanksgiving Day. A circular invitation to the service was printed and distributed in which the clerk, Naphtali Phillips, feelingly reported:

> For the first time since our dispersion, the Jews of Jerusalem have obtained permission to erect in the Holy City, a synagogue, which will do credit and honor to our nation, and accommodate the increasing number of our people, who are migrating to Zion for pious objects. Enjoying, as we do, in this free and happy country every protection, we owe a debt of religious obligation to our brethren of the Holy City, who, under so much suffering and privation, have steadily remained true to their faith, and have not abandoned our ancient heritage: we, therefore, confidently rely on your presence and cordial cooperation in carrying out the benevolent object in view.

The parnassim and members of the other synagogues were invited to attend. A number of Christians were present. Major Noah's address was printed verbatim on the editorial page of the New-York *Daily Tribune*. He recalled the visit of Rabbi Jechiel HaCohen two years earlier.

The reception which he met with here, from members of the oldest Congregation in America, endorsed his mission to other cities, and the Pilgrim returned to the Holy City, bearing with him some remembrance from the land where the Jew and the Gentile are equally free. In a letter which I received from the American Consul in Jerusalem, he said that he had met the Rabbi, who stated that he had brought with him from this country $18,000 for the poor families of Hebron.[14]

In the following year, 1849, the trustees of the congregation following the counsel of Judge Noah took the initiative in trying to guarantee that at least a minimum of relief moneys should every year reach the Jews of the Holy Land from the Jews of New York. The minutes of the meeting of the board of trustees held on July 1, 1849, tell that

Various communications having been received from time to time for relief of our distressed brethren in the Holy Land and the same being now under consideration. The following preamble & Resolution was Offered by Mr. Noah and Unanimously adopted.

Whereas the poor of the Holy Land among our brethren have always been the objects of solicitude and attachment among the pious of our faith throughout the world and their support is a duty which devolves on Jews and which never should be neglected.

And whereas the custom of sending Messengers from the Holy Land to collect charity is attended with great expense and sometimes with great difficulty in relation to the distribution of the funds collected, Wherefore

RESOLVED that this Congregation entertaining such views do hereby appropriate an annual sum of not less than twenty-five dollars commencing the 1st of July 1850 towards the support of all poor Jews in the Holy Land, and by this mode avoid hereafter the recognition of any Messenger: and to inform the Jewish authorities of the course we have adopted.

RESOLVED that a copy of the foregoing be transmitted to the Parnass and Board of all congregations in this city for their consideration and action in advancement of a measure of so much interest to our people generally.

A long resolution for a small sum. The modest figure named as the minimum in the attempt to secure city-wide cooperation did not meet with success.

A year later, in 1850, another attempt was made to set up an effective control of the collection of relief funds and their distribution in the Holy Land, in which the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh had not succeeded. The Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs of Congregation Shaaray Tefila called a conference of New York congregations to consider the question anew. Mordecai M. Noah and Simeon Abrahams represented Shearith Israel. There were present also two representatives from Bnai Jeshurun, one each from Rodeph Sholom, Shaare

Zedek, and Shaar Hashamoyim, besides Dr. Lilienthal of Congregation Anshe Chesed, and Rabbi Isaac Leeser and Abraham Hart of Philadelphia. An agreement was reached that the New York synagogues would distribute their collections for the Holy Land in the proportions of thirty-eight percent for Sephardim, forty-eight percent for Polish-Russian Jews, and fourteen percent for German and Dutch Jews.[15]

In 1853, there was formed the North American Relief Society for the Indigent Jews of Jerusalem, Palestine. This was organized by Sampson Simson. Among those associated with him were the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs and some members of Shearith Israel, including Dr. Simeon Abrahams, who as an ardent lover of the Holy Land had made the difficult pilgrimage to it. This society, which still exists, was given stability after its first year by a legacy of $10,000 under the will of Judah Touro. Twelve years later, it received an additional bequest of $1,000 under the will of Rosanna Osterman of Galveston. When its founder Sampson Simson died, his will farseeingly directed that $50,000 of his estate should be given after the death of one nephew to any local society organized for teaching the Jews of Palestine arts, sciences, and mechanical and agricultural vocations. The North American Relief Society claimed the bequest, but members of Simson's family contended that that society was organized for direct relief and not to further the technical training Simson had specified. In the Court of Appeals they gained their point, and the legacy.[16]

Hazzan Lyons undertook from time to time to make collections for special causes in Palestine. These funds were usually sent on through Sir Moses Montefiore in London. In July, 1854, the Reverend Mr. Lyons sent him a £100 bill of exchange as the contribution from the membership of the Portuguese K. K. Shearith Israel in this city for their brethren in Palestine. In acknowledging this, Sir Moses wrote,

> I am delighted to see that the members of our Ancient Synagogue in America have the advantage of possessing so zealous a Minister whose pleasure it seems to be to inculcate love for the Land of our Ancestry. May the God of Israel prosper your ministry.[17]

This blessing from the Grand Old Man of Sephardi Jewry for inculcating "love for the Land of our Ancestry" was earned also by lay members of the congregation. Two of them have received from history the accolade of being named the American "Proto-Zionists." They were Mordecai M. Noah and Emma Lazarus. As Jews they followed a long and unbroken tradition born out

of the very heart of the Scriptures and nurtured by the traditional prayers and outpourings of the poets and seers of the centuries. As Americans, they were pioneers. Long before the days of Theodor Herzl, they sensed the significance of what beyond their times was to be called the Zionist movement.

In 1818, in his address delivered at the consecration of the second Mill Street Synagogue at a time when Syria and Palestine were one geographic unit, Mordecai M. Noah declared that the Jews

> will march in triumphant numbers and possess themselves once more of Syria and take their rank among the governments of the earth.

This hope remained with him even when after a time he succumbed to the political realities of his day. He ruefully admitted that the return of the Jews to the old "Palestine, the cradle of your forefathers," was not in his day an immediate reality because the regime then in Palestine "excludes all political and social freedom." He therefore turned his thoughts in an altogether different and unexpected direction. In 1825 he sought to establish at Ararat outside of Buffalo a Jewish homeland to prepare Jews for later self-government in Palestine. In that half-way station to the ultimate goal

> under the influence of perfect freedom, they may study laws—cultivate their mind . . . and qualify themselves to direct energies of a just and honorable government in the land of the Patriarchs.[18]

This proved to be a still-born project. But Major Noah never abandoned his repeatedly expressed vision of the coming Jewish restoration in the Holy Land. In many of his public addresses, he foresaw the Sultan of Turkey agreeing to the purchase of Palestine by the Jews. His *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews* delivered and printed in 1844 is virtually the earliest expression of the thinking and feeling which half a century later was Zionism. In the published form of his *Discourse* he wrote

> I confidently believe in the restoration of the Jews, and in the coming of the Messiah; and believing that political events are daily assuming a shape which may finally lead to the great event, I consider it a duty to call upon the free people of this country to aid us in any efforts which, in our present position, it may be deemed prudent to adopt . . . to procure for them a permission to purchase and hold land in security and peace; their titles and possessions confirmed; their field and flocks undisturbed.

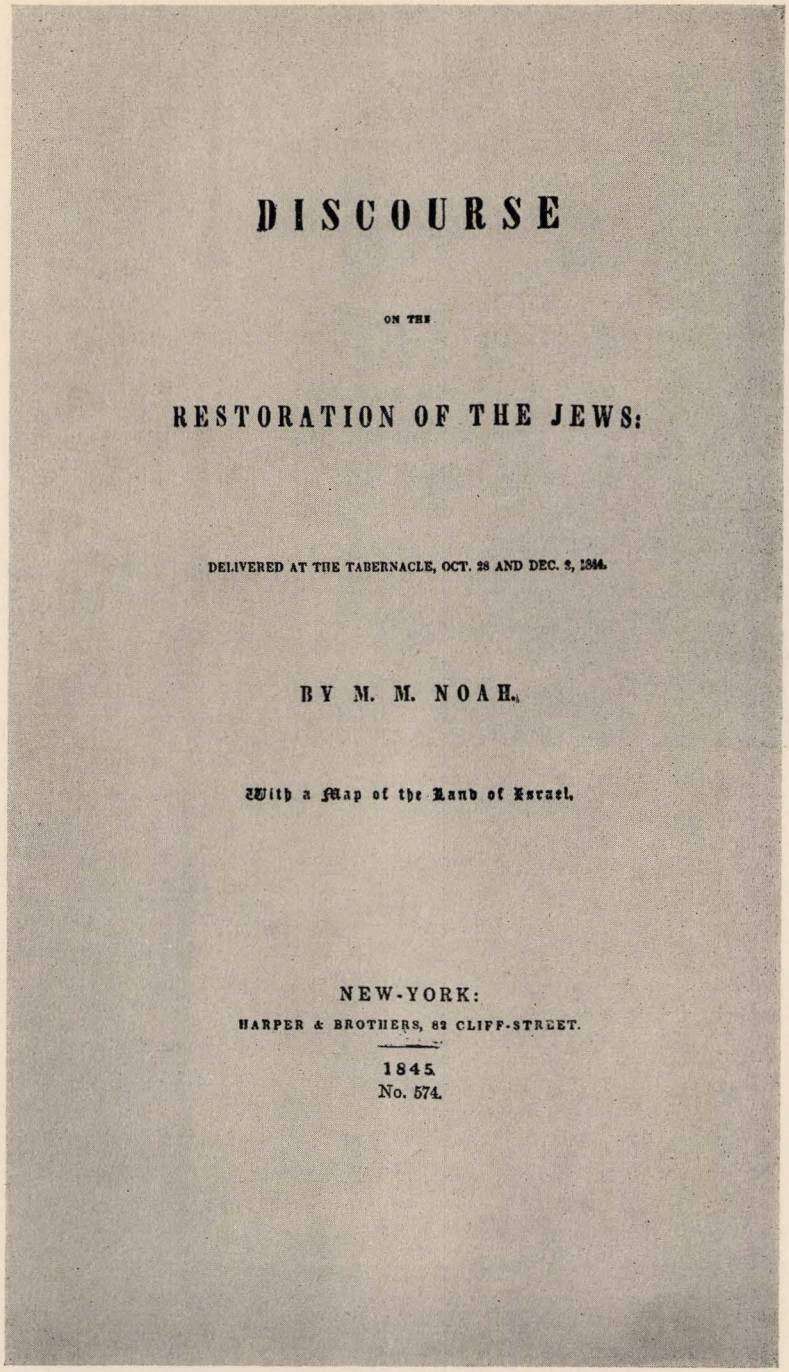
In the first half of the nineteenth century it was Major Noah, with Dr. Simeon Abrahams, who worked constantly to make a practical reality in Shearith Israel of the spiritual love of Zion. In a later generation, Emma Laz-



Rabbi Isaac Carigal, a welcome emissary from the Holy Land, friend of Ezra Stiles



Shearith Israel's offering box is in Hadassah cornerstone in Jerusalem



DISCOURSE

ON THE

RESTORATION OF THE JEWS:

DELIVERED AT THE TABERNACLE, OCT. 28 AND DEC. 2, 1844.

BY M. M. NOAH.

With a Map of the Land of Israel.

NEW-YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1845.
No. 574.

Historic orations by Mordecai M. Noah in 1844 anticipated modern Zionism

arus (1849–1887) awoke to the vision of the coming Messianic restoration of the Promised Land of Israel. Profoundly aroused by the brutal outburst of persecution of Jews in Czarist Russia, she penned words glowing with poetic ire and fire. She made her own the faith of the prophet of old, "I ope your graves, my people, saith the Lord, And I shall place you in your promised land." [19]

In the year 1897, the prayer and vision of eighteen centuries on behalf of the reestablishment of the Biblical Land of Promise as the homeland of the Jewish people became a challenge for action. The Jewish people was aroused. Congregation Shearith Israel, led by Dr. Mendes, sent out the following historic letter:

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SYNAGOGUE, K.K.S.I.

Central Park West and 70th Street
New York, 5th May, 1897.

THE MUNICH CONFERENCE

Dear Sir:

You are earnestly invited to attend a meeting to be held May 20th, 8 p.m., in the meeting room of the new Synagogue, Spanish and Portuguese, 70th Street and Central Park West, to take action upon the Zionist conference, to be held at Munich 25, 26, 27 of August next.

"Representatives of all countries in which Jews reside" are expected to attend.

Upon the agenda are

(a) The position of the Jews in all countries in which they reside.
(b) Reports on colonization movements.
(c) The Haluka.
(d) The Emigration Question. (This affects us specially.)
(e) Agitation, Funds, etc.
(f) The Jewish Question and the next Diplomatic Congress of the great powers.
(g) An exhibit of all the products of the Jewish colonies at the Paris Exhibition of 1900.

Dr. Herzl will act as Referent on (f); Dr. Max Nordau on (a); W. Bambus on (b); Dr. Hirsch Hildesheimer on philanthropic efforts in Palestine, and D. Bodenheimer of Cologne.

As representatives from all countries in which Jews reside are to attend the conference, it is thought that American Jews should take concerted action.

The memorable year 1897 marked the birth of the Zionist Organization of America. Dr. Mendes, one of its founders, was throughout his life a staunch Zionist, always emphasizing the spiritual and religious aspects of the movement. He spent a year in the Land of Israel. On his eightieth birthday there was

planted there in his honor an H. Pereira Mendes Grove in the George Washington Forest.

From the beginning, Zionist societies found the synagogue meeting rooms hospitably available to them. In 1898, New York's West Side Zionist Society was organized. Its meetings were regularly held at Shearith Israel. The School of the Jewish Woman, organized by the wife of the rabbi of the congregation and sponsored by Hadassah, was freely given all the classroom space in the synagogue. Major Jewish women's organizations, including the congregation's Sisterhood, joined in this undertaking which made Shearith Israel a center of a pioneer educational endeavor for the entire metropolitan area. The synagogue was frequently the setting for national and local Zionist conferences. In the Elias Room a memorial meeting, preceding a service in the Little Synagogue, was held after the death of Alice Seligsberg, leader in social service in Israel and in America, just as the Palestine Lighthouse when it laid the cornerstone of its new Home for the Blind in Jerusalem marked the occasion by holding a special religious service in Shearith Israel.

Hadassah, which developed into the Women's Zionist Organization of America, has strongly appealed to women in Shearith Israel. It held the first meeting of its National Board in the home of Mrs. N. Taylor Phillips. From its earliest days, its leadership included members of Shearith Israel. Julliet Benjamin served as editor of the Hadassah Newsletter. Both she and Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, a leader in Youth Aliyah, served as its treasurer and as vice-president. Mrs. Israel B. Brodie was a founder, and Mrs. Bernard Rosenblatt, another founding member, served both in America and Israel. Mrs. Pool was editor of the Hadassah Newsletter for a decade, and she founded the Hug Ivri, a Hebrew-speaking club. She was chairman of the Hebrew University–Hadassah Medical School Building Fund campaign, and she served as national president of Hadassah from 1939 to 1943. On behalf of children's migration she went on missions to Jewish communities of Tunisia, and the Youth Aliyah training centers in France and England. She initiated the construction of the youth immigration center Ramat Hadassah-Szold in Israel, and she was among the first to visit the detainee camps in Cyprus and help organize training centers and educational work there for those awaiting entrance into Palestine.

Shearith Israel's regard for Hadassah's humanitarian and constructive services in Israel was dramatically expressed when by action of the board of trustees the offering box which had been in use in the vestibule of the synagogue was

presented to Hadassah to be the receptacle for the microfilm containing the names of the thousands of contributors to the new Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Israel. In June, 1953, on the hillside of Ain Karem on the outskirts of Jerusalem, in the presence of the American ambassador to Israel, dignitaries of the State of Israel, and representatives of medical science from many parts of the world, this box was ceremoniously set in the foundation stone of the Center. In symbol of appreciation, Hadassah made in its Brandeis Vocational Center in Jerusalem a replica of the offering box which it presented to the congregation at the following Hanukkah celebration.

From 1919 to 1921, Dr. Pool gave three years of service to the Land of Israel when he went to Jerusalem as a representative of American Zionism on the commission charged with initiating under the British mandate the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. He assumed charge of post-war relief and reconstruction for the World Zionist Organization and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The work, centered in Palestine, included also Syria and Lebanon. It ranged broadly from primitive post-war relief to far-reaching rehabilitation and reconstruction. A pattern of service substituting work for relief, loans for gifts, and training and apprenticeship for unskilled employment, made this undertaking a lasting instrument for the upbuilding of the Land of Israel.

This fundamental philosophy of growth through labor, of education for service, and of help for self-support, has marked a number of contributions made by members of Shearith Israel to the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home and the State of Israel. To mention but a few: Bernard A. Rosenblatt was organizer and director of the American Zion Commonwealth. Through this organization the colonies of Balfouria, Afule, and Herzliah were established, and the Haifa Bay area was acquired for Jewish development. Two presidents of the Technion Society, which supports the technical college of Israel, have been Colonel Jehiel Elyachar, who was made an Honorary Fellow of the Technion, and Dr. William Fondiller. Another member of Shearith Israel, Israel Benjamin Brodie, helped found and develop the American Economic Committee for Palestine and rendered major service in the development of the important potash industry and the exploitation of the other chemicals of the Dead Sea. Others have shared in developing a variety of industries. Under the will of Isaac Feuerring, Beth Yitzhak was established as an agricultural settlement where many families saved from the holocaust of

Nazism were restored to constructive living. The American pattern of mechanized agriculture made this settlement self-supporting, and put it into a position of helping other neighboring settlements.

The interests of Nathan Straus in the Holy Land were many and varied. He acquired by purchase the available land adjacent to the Tomb of Rachel near Bethlehem. He initiated the acquisition of part of the slum areas near the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. These purchases were made with the view of transferring to public holding sites sacred to religion.

Nathan and Lena Straus came to Shearith Israel in their later years through their interest in the Holy Land. Their dedication to public health and child welfare, and the model centers they established in milk pasteurization and its distribution, not only in the United States, but also in the Land of Israel and other parts of the world, left a deep imprint. From 1919 to 1921, Dr. Pool while in Jerusalem administered the Straus philanthropies there. These included a public soup kitchen designed both to help bring an end to the begging which debased the enclosure of the Wailing Wall, and to assure subsistence to the aged and helpless. In 1926, responding to an urgent request by Nathan Straus and Judge Irving Lehman, the board of trustees of the synagogue gave Dr. Pool leave of absence to go to Jerusalem to secure a site for a model Hadassah Health Center that Mr. Straus wished to establish. The success of that effort made a similar center possible for Tel Aviv. In Jerusalem, the Clara Wachtel Dental Clinic became the center of Hadassah's school dental services with an added program for training oral hygienists. Dr. Henry Wachtel's collection of books on dentistry enriched the library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

At the Hebrew University, George S. Wise, the president of the American Friends of the Hebrew University and, since 1953, the chairman of the Board of Governors, was an early supporter of the department of the social sciences. The Captain Adrian Z. Leon memorial scholarship at the Hebrew University–Hadassah Medical School provides tuition and living allowances for students who else might well be compelled to discontinue their studies.

Two synagogues were established in the Holy Land as memorials to Isaac and Anna Schneierson, and synagogue furnishings and a Torah were given in memory of Dr. Samuel H. Jessurun. Among the educational projects which have been furthered may be mentioned the gift in memory of Vita Aboudi of recreational equipment. Welcome was the gift to Israel of more than 5,000

Soria recordings of classic music for the use of students and children in Youth Aliyah centers and Hadassah institutions. The electrical services in the Shaarei Zedek Hospital were modernized, libraries were established in a number of children's villages, and projection machines were sent by congregants for use in the refugee camps of Cyprus and in Israeli settlements. Although there have been at times some opposed to political Zionism, it has been rare indeed, when those so minded did not support aspects of cultural or philanthropic work in Israel.

In personal identification with the upbuilding of the Land of Israel some young congregants have made their homes there: Ruth Bergman, Lillian Gold, Frederick and Vida Corcos Simons, and Ernest Rapp.

In the decisive days before the State of Israel was established, Dr. Pool was called on to prepare for committees of the United Nations a report on the tradition of the Sephardim with respect to Zionism. His memorandum effectively answered the claim made by some Arabs that only Ashkenazim were Zionists, and it showed the intense dedication and the unbroken continuity of aspiration and action of the Sephardim over the centuries for the rebuilding of Zion.

Two thousand years of the synagogue's unfailing prayers have echoed the passionate cry of the Psalmist and the fiery words of the prophets. Tragic centuries have given realistic cogency to this religious yearning. The guiding hand of Providence and the vision and courage of the modern Jew have made the ancient dream come true. Shearith Israel has consistently recognized the bond, historic and spiritual, between Judaism and the land of its birth. Symbolic of this tie there were set within the cornerstones of its last two synagogues vials of earth from the Holy Land. In memory and prayer and in action, Shearith Israel has lifted its heart to the call of Zion.

XIV. *Fellowship and Friendship*



Have we not all one Father?

Hath not one God created us?

MALACHI 2:10

DISTANCE, and the slowness, discomfort, and dangers of ocean travel, made early eighteenth-century New York an outpost which was remote indeed from Europe, even from such port towns as London. The journey to the comparatively neighboring Caribbean communities, too, was long and beset with perils. Yet from the beginning Shearith Israel never felt itself isolated. In religious tradition and in family kinship it felt itself spiritually close to its related Sephardi congregations in London, Amsterdam, Curaçao, and Surinam, and in the West Indian Islands, Barbados, Jamaica, and St. Eustatius. The feeling was there always that "everyone helps his neighbor and says to his brother, 'Be of good courage.' "

In 1729, the small New York Jewish congregation which with so much gusto had entered into relatively ambitious plans of construction, found itself

faced by crushing expenditures needed for both the new synagogue and the preservation of the cemetery. Then it turned to its sister congregations in Central and South America and in Europe with a frank appeal for financial aid. This was expressed in the following letter, the original of which was written in Spanish.

Illustrious Gentlemen The Parnassim, Adjuntos and other gentlemen of the Mahamad of the Holy K.K. of this Island of Jamaica, which may the Almighty increase and prosper for many years, Amen.

Most Benevolent Gentlemen:

We the undersigned appointed Parnassim and Adjuntos of this holy K.K. of Shearith Jacob [sic] for the present year 5489, place before you this petition in the name of all the holy Kahal.

We earnestly request you all as well as your Haham to communicate it to the members of your holy Kahal, so they may contribute all they can to the building of a holy synagogue which we have decided to erect, with the help of God. We have already purchased an appropriate site for the edifice and another for a cemetery, but for want of sufficient means, the Yehudim here being but few, we have not been able to carry out our intention, and until our hopes are realized, we must continue for the present to congregate in a Synagogue rented from a Goy.

May the Almighty grant our wish, and may He move your hearts that you may to the best of your ability assist us in the matter, and also help us to build a fence around the cemetery. And we will ever pray that you may prosper and increase in holy service. Amen

From your servants and the assistants above-mentioned

LOUIS GOMEZ, Parnas
DANIEL GOMEZ

N.Y. 16 Sebat 5489 [January 16, 1729] [1]

SURINAM

Various and gratifying were the replies received. Members of the remote community in the Joden Savanne in the jungle of Surinam sent three hundred florins "para ajuda da fabrica desta Santa Esnoga" (for aid in the erection of this holy Synagogue). In 1789 the New York congregation turned again to the community in Surinam with a request for emergency aid in preserving its cemetery. The pendulum of history had not yet swung northward.

CURAÇAO

Congregation Mikveh Israel in Curaçao had been founded in large measure by a group of refugees from Brazil at the same time as the foundations of Congregation Shearith Israel had been laid in New York under the impact of the

same historic circumstances. The community of Curaçao felt itself closely bound to New York by tradition and by family ties, as well as by the bonds of commerce. When in 1729 New York Jewry appealed to Curaçao for help in building its synagogue, the response to the appeal was organized by the rabbi himself, Haham Raphael Jeshurun. Curaçao's three synagogues came forward nobly to help New York build its first synagogue. Four items in the accounts kept by the New York community's treasurer, Jacob Franks, tell of the munificent sum of 400 pieces of eight (£136.12.1¾) raised through the Haham's efforts.

Oct. 13, 1729. By 264 pieces of 8/8 recd by the hands of Moses Gomez and Benja Pacheco sent by the Chacham of Curacoa wch was gethrd by him of sundry Jews of Curacoa in a larger sum hereafter Cr. given the sd 264 pieces of 8/8 weighing 229 ounces & 3/8h sold to Thomas Day at 8/9 p. oz

£100 . 7 . 0¼

Feb. 23, 1730. By 43 oz. & 1/8 of markt Silver recd by the hands of Mos. Gomez & Benja Pacheco sent by the Chacham of Curacoa Getherd by him of the Congregation at Curacoa at 8/7½ p. oz

18 . 11 . 11¼

7 Apr. 1730. By Cash recd in advance on 43¼ oz Silver wch I Cr: this Sina the 23d Feby last at 1d½ p. oz

5 . 4½

16 June 1730. By 24 heavy ps 8/8 weighing 20–3/4 oz. and 19 oz. in small Money recd by Capt Mathlin fro Curacoa Consignd to myself from the Chacham Israel [Rephael] Jeshurun wch was gethered by y Sd Chacham of the Kahal of Curacoa & sent for the use & building of the Sinagogue at 8/9 p. oz.

17 . 7 . 9¾

£136 . 12 . 1¾ [2]

There are preserved to this day duplicate receipts in both Spanish and English recording the receipt in New York of the first generous collection made in Curaçao.

I acknowledge to have Receivd on ye 7th of October last past by the hand of Messrs Moses Gomez & Rodrigo Pacheco two hundred twenty Nine Ounces, and three Eaightes of Silver as Also Likewise Receivd of said Gentelmen on the 24th feby forty three Ounces, and one Eight of Silver which two sums together are applyd for and toward the building of a Sinagoga in this place of which Signed tow recepts of this date.

New York the 9 of Nisan 5490 [March 27, 1730]

JACOB FRANKS

We under writen Jehidim of this K.K. of Seeritt Israel doe declaire that Jacob frankes as treasurer, has Credetd, in the acct of the Cost and expence of the buielding



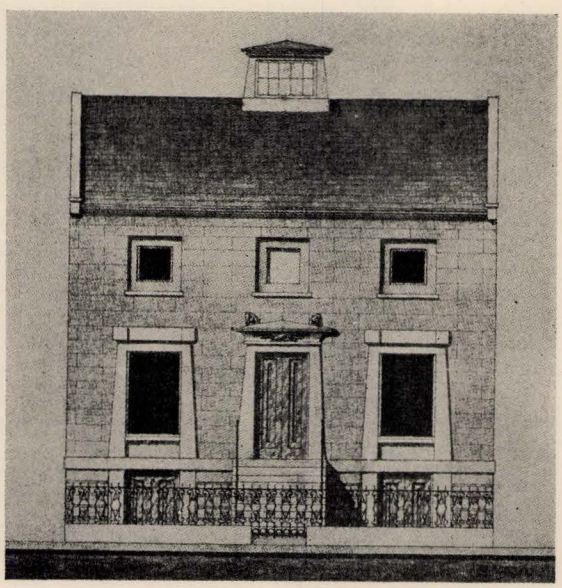
Amsterdam Synagogue: the mother of earliest synagogues in America



Shaar Hashamaim, London: Shearith Israel turned to it for counsel



Newport Synagogue, 1763, was designated a national monument in 1946



Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia: kin to New York congregation. Synagogue, Cherry Street, 1825

of a Sinagoga the sums above said and that Mess. Moses Gomez & Rodrigo Pacheco did deliver ltt, in ye name and as Voluntary Contribution of the gentelmen Jehedim of the K.K. of Curaca as pr Letters and directions of ye H. Raphael Jesurun.

New York the 9 of Nisan 5490 [March 27, 1730]

DANLL GOMEZ
RODRIGO PACHECO

A letter of thanks was written in New York by Rodrigo Pacheco and Daniel Gomez. Before this had reached the zealous Haham Raphael Jeshurun, he had already dispatched the later proceeds of his collection, and he wrote with unabated enthusiasm a letter, the original of which must have been in either Portuguese or Spanish.

Curacao

Messrs Rodrigues Pacheco & Daniel Gomez

Gentlemen
I find my Selfe favour'd with your most Esteemed of the 23th 8bre and I give God thanks for having Condused the 2 60 ps 8/8 In Safety which I remited for the Building of the Holy House You have in hand, the Same I hope may happen with the 5 marks I remited last Which amounts to £48 .6—and as it is for Such a great presept, God will prosper, that you may Injoy it for many years with peace, Unitty and all manner of felesity.

Relations with these Central American communities have been maintained with some continuity through the personal ties of those who have come from there to Shearith Israel as congregants or as visitors. Beyond this, year after year both Surinam and Curaçao are remembered in Shearith Israel in the evening service solemnly ushering in the Day of Atonement and on the seventh day of Passover. Blessings are invoked on Congregations Mikveh Israel of Curaçao and Beraha Ve-Shalom of Surinam for the munificent help which they gave the New York congregation in those early days of struggle.

Relations with Curaçao remained particularly active. As has already been told, Hazzan Moses Lopez de Fonseca left his position in New York in 1736 to take up the then more attractive one in Curaçao.[3] It should also be recalled how on the opposite side of the account some thirty years later, in 1766, when the position of hazzan was vacant in New York, Moses Calo of Curaçao offered himself as a candidate.[4] Over a century later, in 1881, when the Curaçao community was looking for an assistant hazzan, it turned to Shearith Israel in New York with the request to help it find a satisfactory candidate.[5]

During much of the eighteenth century, the New York congregation ex-

ported kasher beef to Curaçao. At times, such as in 1753, and again in 1758, a question was raised as to whether there had been negligence or abuses in the preparation of these shipments; but the New York congregation gave every assurance to "the Parnassim, Gabay, Adjuntos and the Rev'd Haham of K.K. Mikve Israel at Curaçao" that the manner of putting up and shipping the beef was carried out with their utmost care and zeal.[6] As late as 1833 the Curaçao congregation turned to its sister congregation in New York in the following matter:

> We are in great want of 100 very thin lead to have the Beef re mark'd with as also two pairs of pressing irons to have the lead pressed with. On the two Irons, the letter of *Kasher* must be engraved so as to avoid falsification and we particularly request you that the lead should be of good quality, and the irons well made.[7]

The generosity which the Curaçao community showed to New York was not limited to the years 1729 and 1730. Nearly a century later it became necessary to rebuild the Mill Street Synagogue to the original cost of which Curaçao had extended so open a hand. Then, in 1818, the Jews of Curaçao sent six hundred pieces of eight toward the cost of the new house of prayer in New York; in expression of their lavish and full-hearted good will they wrote regretting that they could not send more at that time.

> We beg to assure you that this is by far not what our Congregation desirous to cooperate with efficiency in your praise-worthy undertaking would have wished to contribute. But considering the dulness of times and the total stagnation of commerce, the only Spring of prosperity of this Colony, We hope that this small gift will prove to you, our good will and friendly disposition towards you. At any future period wherein you may find proper to command our Services, we will be happy to come forward to the utmost of our power.

Since specie was "at a great advance" in Curaçao at the time, the six hundred pieces of eight were consigned to Hazzan Peixotto in New York in the form of old copper, realizing $400.[8]

Over the years, a brisk interchange of individuals needing relief went on with Surinam, Curaçao, Barbados, Jamaica, and the tiny island of St. Eustatius in the Leeward Islands. Transshipment was in both directions. For example, in April, 1773, two strangers arrived in New York from Curaçao. They were cared for until after the Passover. In exchange in the following year 1774 New York shipped Aaron Bosqualo to Curaçao. In that same year New York sent on Abraham Solomons Blogg to Surinam, Rabbi Samuel Keyser of London to Jamaica, and Rabbi Ezekiel to St. Eustatius.[9]

During the Second World War, a number of Jewish refugees were living in Curaçao. There were also not a few American Jewish soldiers stationed then on the island. When Shearith Israel learned of this, it immediately sent a supply of prayer books for their use.

ST. EUSTATIUS

There were other relations with St. Eustatius besides the interchange of migrant needy persons. In 1772 a hurricane razed the synagogue of Congregation Honen Dallim (Gracious to the Lowly). An appeal towards rebuilding the synagogue was addressed to Shearith Israel. Free-will offerings were made in synagogue on Passover, and a contribution of £38.10.6 was sent to the island.[10]

BARBADOS

The Jewish community in the island of Barbados was founded in 1655, approximately at the same time as New York Jewry first came into being. Like Shearith Israel, the Barbados Congregation Nidhe Israel (The Dispersed of Israel) depended on the London Sephardi congregation for its religious leaders and its general guidance.

In 1729, Rebecca Sylvia, David Lopez, and two other Jews of Barbados sent no less than £22.13.0 towards the construction of New York's first synagogue building.[11] This notable generosity did not end there. Eight years later, Lunah Burgos of Barbados, the widow of Mordecai Burgos who had died and had been buried in New York, sent to the New York congregation a generous contribution of £40 toward the construction of the needed wall around the Chatham Square cemetery.[12]

In 1819 Abraham R. Brandon of Barbados presented to the rebuilt Mill Street Synagogue a brass chandelier which had been made in London.[13] Some twelve years earlier, in 1807, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, the religious leader of the Barbados community, had moved to New York. There he served for a time in the Polonies Talmud Torah School, and on occasion he acted as hazzan in the synagogue.

JAMAICA

There have been similar contacts with the Jewish community in Kingston, Jamaica. In response to New York's appeal in 1728 for funds for building its

synagogue, Jacob and Isaac Gonsalez in Jamaica sent £7.10.0.[14] There was the usual shipping of penurious individuals to and fro between the two congregations. In 1758 the year in which the Curaçao community had been reassured as to the kashruth of the beef shipped from New York, the Haham in Jamaica was also reassured that the beef sent to that island was "killed Caser, purgado and casserado [made kasher] as it ought," and that the shipments were carefully prepared and supervised.[15] Haham Haim Isaac Carigal came to New York in 1772 from Jamaica where he had arrived in 1771. When Hazzan Isaac Touro, who came from Jamaica to Newport, left New York in 1780, he went on to Jamaica where he died shortly thereafter. In 1789 the New York congregation was desperately struggling to save its cemetery from destruction. It then turned to the three congregations in Jamaica with an appeal for financial help. The Gomez family, which played so large a role in the congregation's history in the eighteenth century, came to New York from Jamaica.[16] Henry S. Jacobs, who was for a time preacher in Shearith Israel, constituted another contact with Jamaica, for he had been born and brought up in Kingston. Others who have officiated as hazzan in Shearith Israel and who earlier had served in Jamaica have been Abraham H. Nieto, Isaac A. Hadad, and Joseph M. Corcos.

In 1883, when the synagogue in Kingston was destroyed by fire, the New York congregation sent $250 towards its rebuilding, just as after the disastrous earthquake of January 14, 1907, $400 was sent by members of the congregation for relief of sufferers from that catastrophe. In like manner, members of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York with forebears in St. Thomas have rallied to the aid of its Congregation Beracha Veshalom U-Gemiluth Hasadim when that island has been struck by hurricane.

AMSTERDAM

In the ten years between the arrival of the Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam and the city's becoming New York, contacts with the historic mother congregation in Amsterdam were of far-reaching significance. From the Jewish community in Amsterdam came the forthright concerted action that helped so happily to resolve the difficulties between the Dutch West India Company and Peter Stuyvesant. For more than a century, the New York congregation had to turn to Amsterdam for its prayer books. In 1902, the Reverend Isaac de la Penha of Amsterdam stepped into the position of hazzan of the New York congrega-

tion and read the services virtually as they were chanted in the Nieuw Amsterdam congregation in 1654. The Reverend D. A. Jessurun Cardozo and the Reverend Abraham Lopez Cardozo also brought to Shearith Israel the Jewish tradition of the historic congregation of their birthplace, Amsterdam.

In the Second World War when Holland was overrun by the Nazis and thousands of Dutch Jews were hounded by the Germans into concentration camps and gas chambers, those who could escape sought refuge in flight. Many Dutch Jewish families were able to reach the safety of the harbor of Manhattan after a journey no less fraught with danger than that of their Dutch predecessors of 1654. These new Americans in New York organized in Shearith Israel's synagogue the Dutch Jewish Club.

At the close of the Second World War in 1945, the New York congregation sponsored an appeal which resulted in the giving of substantial emergency aid of many thousands of dollars to war-ruined survivors of the Amsterdam Sephardi community.[17] Similarly in 1920, after the First World War, 10,000 marks were sent to aid the devastated Sephardi congregation in Hamburg.[18] In 1950, Mr. Robert Salomon brought one scroll of the Torah which had belonged to the Sephardi congregation in The Hague, and in 1952, Mr. Alexander de la Fuente brought two more. In 1954, the Chief Rabbi of the Amsterdam Sephardi community, S. Rodrigues Pereira, presented to Shearith Israel an illuminated tercentenary greeting, and a pointer that had long been in use in the synagogue in The Hague.[19]

LONDON

The overseas congregation with which New York's Shearith Israel has had the most sustained relations is the London Sephardi Congregation Shaar Hashamaim. These ties reflected the bonds of the colony with the mother country. To it New York turned for counsel, for aid, and for religious leadership, and it never failed to respond. In 1728, when Shearith Israel sent out its appeal for help in building its own first synagogue structure, it received in reply from London at first £15.6.0, this sum being made up of £3.8.0 each from Aaron Israel Pereyra and Jacob Mendes da Costa, and £8.10.0 from Benjamin Mendes da Costa.[20] A most encouraging offer came from Abraham Mocatta of London. His willingness singlehandedly to contribute £150 promised to eclipse even the brilliance of the £136.12.1¾ sent from the sister community in Curaçao.

On January 28, 1729, Abraham Mocatta wrote:

Considering now of the Just and Devoted Fabrick which you Design I doo say:

I Perceive by yours of your having purchased Two pieses of Land one for a Sinagoga & the other for a Bethahaim [cemetery] which have cost £150 your Currency and considering the few Days a man hath to live and that every man hath an obligation to assist an other and more particular in such good works shall farther say, that if you Gentn will Transfer Those two ps of Land to me and in my name, I will send you £150 which is the cost of the said land and the day after the finishing of the Fabrick and your Publick Enterence be made I will Give Both Kodes [consecrated] to God and for this Purpose I write this day to Mr. Benja Mendez Pacheco that if you Gentn will Transfer said Lands which is Bought for a Sinagago & a Beth a haim then shall Remain in said Mr. Pacheco's Hand those papers, and he shall Be Bound that as soon as an answer of His Letters shall arrive I will send for the payment £150 your money and at the same time shall send an order to said Mr. Pacheco that when the Building be finished and you Gentn with a Bundance of health may Injoy the same and make your publick Enterence on that day shall said Mr. Pacheco by my order make the same Kodes to God as much one as the other.

This munificent offer, made probably with less orthographic license in Mr. Mocatta's original letter, was unfortunately one which could not be accepted. For the trustees in whose names the burial ground and the synagogue lot had been purchased were legally precluded from transferring those lands to Mr. Mocatta's name. Mr. Mocatta was later given the opportunity of purchasing the honor of laying the first of the four cornerstones of the new building, an honor which he did not accept.[21] Abraham, Isaac and Aaron Franks, and Asher Levy, Ashkenazi Jews in London, each sent £8.10.0, and Isaac Polack sent £3.8.0 towards the construction of the New York synagogue, making in all the substantial sum of £37.8.0.[22]

Jacob Mendes da Costa had sent £3.8.0 for the building fund of the new synagogue. A little later there was received from him a gift which made possible the erection of a "synagogue center" adjoining the Mill Street Synagogue. The original Portuguese entry in the minutes tells in translation that

On the 21st of Nisan, the 7th day of Pesach [1731] the day of completing the first year of the opening of the synagogue, there was made codes [consecrated for community use] the Yeshibah called Minhat Areb [Gift of the West], in the name of the following gentlemen, Mosseh son of Sarah and Jahacob, of Abraham of Mosseh Mendez da Costa, for the use of this Congregation Sheerit Israel and as a Beth Hamidras for the pupils, in conformity with the direction to that effect given by Jahacob Mendez da Costa Signior residing in London, to Messrs Mordechay and David Gomez of New York. And may God bestow His Blessing upon us, Amen.[23]

From time to time other contributions were received from London Sephardim such as the £2.8.0 sent by Isaac de Fonseca in 1732.

As time went on, the London congregation also sent spiritual and rabbinic help which proved to be invaluable. When there arose a difficult question of Jewish law on which Shearith Israel needed a decision from unquestionable authority, it would turn for a ruling to the rabbinic court of the Sephardi congregation in London.[24] The help which over a century earlier had been received from London towards building the Mill Street Synagogue and its Beth Hamidrash was recalled over a century later in the words

> and that a Mesheberach has been made in relation to the same every Kippur Evening since that period; Also that an Escoba is made every Kippur for some of your eminent deceased members.[25]

The religious guidance which London sent to New York has not altogether been limited to written words. In the middle of the eighteenth century the learned Hazzan Joseph Jessurun Pinto was sent over from London. A century and a quarter later H. Pereira Mendes, and thirty years after that David de Sola Pool, came from England to enter the ministry of the New York congregation.

Repeatedly in the third quarter of the eighteenth century religious emissaries sent to raise money for the Holy Land arrived in New York with the endorsement of the London Sephardi authorities. From 1734 the archives of the congregation tell of expensive outlays for paying for the transportation back to London of such emissaries or of poor individuals or families.[26] From the early nineteenth century, appeals from the Land of Israel which were sponsored by the Sephardim of London more and more took the form of written communications. In response to these appeals, money was often sent to London to Sir Moses Montefiore for him to distribute.

The New York congregation expressed its condolence when London's Haham Artom and Hazzan Piperno passed on.[27] At the festive celebration of the 200th anniversary of the London synagogue in Bevis Marks in 1901, Shearith Israel of New York was officially represented by Dr. Mendes who, bearing a scroll of the Torah, took a prominent part in the reverent circuit of the historic synagogue. In the Second World War, Jews in England experienced difficulty in obtaining the palm branches and citrons needed in the religious services of the harvest festival of Tabernacles. Then Shearith Israel in New York sent these by clipper across the ocean to Shaar Hashamaim in London.[28] In a similar spirit, in 1947 prayer books and prayer shawls were sent to France for distribution among Sephardi congregations in need of them.[29]

Two years later, books were sent by the congregation to Turin for use in the advanced classes of the Talmud Torah in that Italian city.

Poignant in historical and human interest was Shearith Israel's first contact with Marranos of Portugal at the time of their dramatic reunion with the Jewish people of today. In 1929, Dr. Pool and his family, the first Americans to visit the newly established community of returned Marranos in Oporto, brought to them a scroll of the Torah which had long been in the Hendricks family, and which it was believed in the family tradition had been brought to America by a Marrano ancestor in his own perilous escape to religious freedom. Another scroll of the Torah was the gift of Mrs. Israel Unterberg in memory of Edgar J. Nathan. Both of these were consecrated in the improvised synagogue in Oporto at the dedication of the shrine itself close upon the hour of midnight on the very day of Dr. Pool's arrival. For the zealous leader of the Marrano congregation, Captain Arturo Carlos de Barros Basto would not wait overnight for the formal consecration once a rabbi had come to them. The scrolls of the Torah, a parchment scroll of the Book of Esther, and prayer books then presented to the congregation were the prelude to the continuous interest of Shearith Israel in that community for all the years of its existence.

NEWPORT

Within the borders of North America it is Newport in Roger Williams' Rhode Island with which Congregation Shearith Israel in New York has had the longest and the most organic relations.[30] These have existed for well nigh three centuries. In the later decades of the seventeenth century, individuals who had constituted the initial Jewish settlement in Newport came to settle in New York. The first known hazzan in New York, Saul Pardo, came to the city from Newport. The first known shammash of the New York congregation was Valentine Campanal who probably belonged to the Campanal family which figured in the earliest days of the Jewish settlement in Newport.

From the time when the Newport Jewish settlement began in the middle of the eighteenth century to be reorganized in Congregation Yeshuat Israel (the Salvation of Israel) relations with New York's Congregation Shearith Israel appear constantly in the records. Not a little of the money which went into the construction of the beautiful Newport synagogue came from New York. On the seventh day of Passover in 1759 offerings made in Congregation Shearith Israel towards building the synagogue in Newport amounted to the substantial

sum of £149.0.6. Further appeals for this cause were made in New York in 1761 and 1762. Members of the New York congregation also sent gifts for the Newport synagogue. Samuel Judah presented the perpetual lamp. Samuel Hart gave candlesticks for the Ark and the reading desk. Hayim Myers sent 100 pounds of wax.[31] Each year on the eve of Yom Kippur a memorial prayer is recited in Newport giving recognition to the helpful services rendered by Shearith Israel. Originally the prayer recorded the gifts in both Hebrew and Portuguese, just as in that part of the service both languages were used in other prayers. Special mention is made of Daniel Gomez for his "having always interested himself for the advantage of the congregation."

Illustrative of the relations between Shearith Israel in New York and Yeshuat Israel in Newport in those days is the story of how the Newport congregation obtained scrolls of the Torah to set in its Ark. In 1760, in response to a request received from Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, the president of the Newport community, Shearith Israel placed at the disposal of that community the Sefer Torah "belonging to the Kahal formerly of Georgia." The Savannah community after its early days had not been able to maintain itself and its synagogue. It then sent the Sefer Torah to New York for safe keeping until the Savannah congregation would be reestablished. This scroll was shipped in 1760 to New England by sloop. The condition was made with the Newport congregation that it would have to be returned whenever demanded.[32] Later, New York loaned two other scrolls of the Torah to the Newport congregation. In 1818, the New York congregation realized that

> for a great number of years past there has not been service in the synagogue in Newport and the Seapharim have been deposited in the house of the late Mr. Moses Seixas of that place for more than twenty years and now under the charge of his Widow and son Mr. Benjamin Seixas.

Thereupon Shearith Israel decided to request Benjamin Seixas who was then living in New York to return the two scrolls of the Torah,

> and if hereafter a Minyan shall be in Newport, R.I. and a request be made for a further loan of said Seapharim that the Trustees of the Congregation, will again loan the same for the purpose of being used in the Synagogue. And understanding that there are other Seapharim in the possession of Mrs. Seixas and Son, it is resolved that in case they will forward them to this City the Trustees will deposit them in the Eachal in the New Shool for Safe-keeping and return them when they shall be duly required so to do. And that this board will in their Corporate capacity indemnify Mrs. Seixas and Son for sending the Seapharim to this City to the care of the Parnass and will pay the expence of transportation.[33]

Fifteen years were to pass before the day in 1833 when the four scrolls of the Torah which had belonged to the Newport synagogue in its pre-Revolutionary heyday were "placed for safekeeping in our place of worship until they should be required for the use of the Newport shool." [34] Half a century later services began to be held once more in the Newport synagogue. Then its own scrolls were restored to it, at first when the Newport synagogue was opened for the summer season, and later for permanent use.[35]

In the generation before the Revolution there was an active exchange of religious emissaries and poor persons pending their departure from either of these ports to Caribbean settlements or to Europe. The most notable among these itinerant visitors was Rabbi Haim I. Carigal who moving on from New York found in Newport a pleasant stopping place. There the Reverend Ezra Stiles conversed with him repeatedly and at length about the Holy Land and aspects of Judaism.

Newport at the time was a harbor town which rivaled New York in traffic and in commercial opportunities. Its Jewish community received not a few settlers from New York, such as members of the Seixas and Hays families. Congregational reciprocity prevailed. When problems arose in Newport, it turned to New York as its nearest Jewish neighbor and most closely related community, just as New York turned to it in the same spirit. In 1775, when New York was looking for a shohet, it asked the Newport congregation if a suitable candidate for that office was available there.[36]

With the Revolution and the occupation of Newport by British forces, the largely patriot Newport community was scattered and left without spiritual leadership. Though a number of Newport's Jews returned to the town after the Revolution, eventually many found their way to New York where members of their family were often to be found. Finally the last representatives of Congregation Yeshuat Israel in Newport formally handed over to the active Congregation Shearith Israel in New York the title to their closed synagogue, burial ground and other communal property. In this way the four scrolls of the Torah from the Newport synagogue came into the keeping of Congregation Shearith Israel in 1833. In the early decades of the nineteenth century the New York congregation would be called on to act on matters relating to the Newport synagogue building or the funds bequeathed to the Newport Jewish community by Abraham and Judah Touro.

In December, 1833, New York's Hazzan I. B. Seixas was authorized to go to

Newport to accompany the remains of Mrs. Joshua Lopez, a sister of Abraham and Judah Touro. He went by steamboat and conducted the burial services for her in the historic Jewish cemetery of that town.[37] In 1854 Judah Touro died in distant New Orleans. In keeping with his desire, his remains were buried in Newport. They were brought to New York on the way, and there Hazzan Lyons, and Benjamin Nathan and Samuel Lazarus, president and vice-president of Shearith Israel, were designated to receive the coffin.[38] They, along with the Reverend J. K. Gutheim of New Orleans, the Reverend Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs of New York, and many others reverently accompanied it on the steamer *Empire City* to Newport. There "the streets were crowded with people, the stores all closed, and the bells tolled." The funeral service was held in the synagogue, "and there were thousands on the street who could not obtain admission." [39]

One man in Newport who took a particularly active and abiding interest in the closed Jewish sanctuary and virtually disused cemetery was the Christian citizen, Nathan H. Gould. On the return to New York of the delegation from Congregation Shearith Israel, the official thanks of the congregation were sent to Mr. Gould for "the kind, gentlemanly and courteous manner exhibited by him to the New York committee" which had come there for the funeral of Judah Touro, and also for the care and attention steadily given by him to the synagogue and Jewish burial ground there.

In the summer of 1881 a question arose the answer to which had to be made completely clear. What were the rights and interests of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel in the management or supervision of the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery at Newport? In August of that year the able lawyer and member of Shearith Israel's board of trustees, Gratz Nathan, was authorized to take such measures as might be expedient to assert whatever rights the congregation had. At the same time, Dr. Mendes visited Newport and appeared before its city council and aldermen. In the result, this municipal body ordered the petition of those Jews recently settled in Newport who desired the use of the synagogue to be transmitted to Congregation Shearith Israel. Thereupon the Jewish residents of Newport asked the New York congregation for permission to have a permanent rabbi, and the use of the income from the Touro Fund to meet the necessary expenses. The reply of Shearith Israel's trustees was that they would make arrangements for supplying a hazzan to conduct Sephardi services on the ensuing Holy Days, but the use of the income from the Touro

Fund could not be made available until there would be in Newport sufficient permanent residents to maintain services throughout the year in accordance with the principles and forms of orthodox Judaism as contemplated by the terms of the will of Judah Touro. Scrolls of the Torah that had been in use in the Newport synagogue a century earlier were sent from New York for use in the services on those Holy Days, after which, when the synagogue was closed again, they were taken back to New York by New York's shammash, Levy J. Isaacs.[40]

As the number of Jewish settlers in the town increased, Shearith Israel's title to and authority over the Newport synagogue and its other inherited Jewish communal property did not remain unchallenged. By 1893 two Jewish groups had developed in Newport, each one desirous of taking over the synagogue and its property. More than once committees or individual representatives from Congregation Shearith Israel had to present to the Newport City Council or to the Rhode Island House of Representatives in Providence memoranda and statements setting forth Shearith Israel's rights in the Newport synagogue and its burial ground, and in the control of the character of the synagogue's ritual and ministry. The congregation also felt responsible for seeing that expenditures made by the Newport City Council from the income of funds established by Abraham and Judah Touro were made only for the specified purposes of those funds, and not for general purposes of the Newport Jewish congregation. Eventually in 1894 the Rhode Island legislature granted a charter recognizing a new congregational group in Newport under the name of Jeshuat Israel. Except in its spelling, this name was identical with that of Newport's pre-Revolutionary Congregation Yeshuat Israel, the property and rights of which had passed to New York's Congregation Shearith Israel. This new congregation held its services in the old synagogue. In its constitution provision was made for representation of four of Shearith Israel's trustees on its board.[41]

Some dramatic situations developed there in the summer of 1899. These were due both to the zeal of some individuals in Newport who desired to assume independent control of the synagogue and its administration, and to some actions of Newport's city council in acting as if their being trustees of the Touro Funds gave them rights to the Newport synagogue property. As a result of court action, the city council authorized the complete restoration of all rights in the synagogue to Congregation Shearith Israel through its president and representative, L. Napoleon Levy.[42] The New York congregation assumed

the court action's costs that ordinarily should have been paid by the losing side, in order to encourage them to attend the services in the synagogue and to cooperate with the synagogue authorities. Dr. Mendes conducted the religious services in the synagogue during that summer and won the affection of all. The resultant harmony and cooperation were subjected to some strain in the three following years 1900, 1901 and 1902, when questions arose about Congregation Jeshuat Israel's dollar-a-year lease from Congregation Shearith Israel for the use of the synagogue. At times also the Newport city council would go beyond its powers in giving directions about the use of the synagogue. But by 1903 all these questions had been settled. The rights of Shearith Israel "as the proper successor of the ancient Hebrew congregation at Newport, R.I." had been given recognition beyond question, together with a perpetual guardianship of the synagogue and the land on which it stands

> to use and apply the same, or cause the same to be used, occupied and employed, for the maintenance therein of the usual and stated religious services according to the ritual, rites, and customs of the orthodox Spanish and Portuguese Jews as at the time practised and observed in the synagogue of the Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York.[43]

How and when had these services been revived? In the summer of 1850 the Newport synagogue was first opened for Sabbath services after more than half a century during which the building had been closed.[44] These summer services were conducted by members of Congregation Shearith Israel who were spending their vacation in Newport. Judge Philip J. Joachimsen, and Laurence Blumenthal and his son, Dr. Mark Blumenthal of the New York congregation, would also not infrequently open the synagogue in the summer for private worship during the next two decades. But it was not until the early 1880s when a new settlement of Jews in Newport began that Shearith Israel could take active steps to help in reestablishing a Jewish congregation in that town.

The most effective action which it took was to extend a call in December 1882 to the Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes to assume the ministry of the Newport synagogue. The Reverend Mr. Mendes, father of Shearith Israel's spiritual leader, H. Pereira Mendes, responded and came over from England to be "the minister of said synagogue and the religious instructor of the Jewish community at Newport." With his arrival on May 4, 1883, the Touro synagogue in Newport was reopened for a congregation that was to meet in it not only in the summer months but also through the whole year. The synagogue

was reconsecrated in the presence of the mayor of Newport and of members of the New York congregation. The Reverend Mr. Mendes gave the Newport Jewish community his spiritual leadership until his death ten years later on April 4, 1893.[45]

The preservation of the Newport synagogue in its original beauty has always been a matter of profound concern to the trustees of the New York congregation. Virtually the only changes made in Peter Harrison's fine Colonial structure during the last hundred years have been the setting up in it of memorial tributes to Isaac Touro and his sons Judah and Abraham Touro, and to the Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes. Any suggestion of changing or enlarging the building has been emphatically disallowed. Under the devoted and watchful care of Shearith Israel's trustees, and Mr. Nathan David, for many years president of Jeshuat Israel, and others who have followed him, the building has been preciously cared for. To help make the congregational facilities more adequate, in 1926 Shearith Israel with the active cooperation of its League contributed $5,000 toward the creation of the attractive community center opposite the synagogue on Touro Street.[46] The Levi P. Gale house of 1834, a landmark among the fine old houses of Newport, was about to be demolished. Instead, it was purchased, cut in two, moved through Newport's narrow streets from the head of the Mall and joined together again to become the educational and social annex of the synagogue.

The intrinsic beauty of the Newport Synagogue, its distinction in being the oldest surviving Jewish house of worship in the country, and its associations with pioneer Jewish settlers led Dr. Pool to recommend that it be officially designated by the government as a national historic site. This was done on March 5, 1946. On August 31, in the following year, impressive services were held in the synagogue to mark this sponsoring of the building by the government of the United States. Taking part in the ceremonies were the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Joseph Martin; Rhode Island's Governor, John O. Pastore; United States Senator Theodore Francis Greene; the historian Carl Van Doren; Newport's Mayor, Edward G. Gladding; the Right Reverend Granville Gaylord Bennet, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island; Henry S. Hendricks, president of Congregation Shearith Israel; Rabbi David de Sola Pool; Dr. Francis S. Ronalds, Regional Director of the National Park Service; Dr. Samuel Adelson; Rabbi Jules Lipschutz; and Dr. Bernard C. Friedman, president of the Newport congregation. A significant

group of New York congregants came to Newport to bring Shearith Israel's greetings. A message of congratulation was received from President Truman. It characterized the occasion in the words:

> The setting apart of this historic shrine as a national monument is symbolic of our tradition of freedom, which has inspired men and women of every creed, race and ancestry to contribute their highest gifts to the development of our national culture.

SAVANNAH

Prior to 1760, perhaps in 1740, a Sefer Torah of the Jewish congregation in Savannah, Georgia, which was then about to close up, was deposited with the New York congregation until such time as the congregation would be reconstituted in Savannah and the scroll would be needed again in that community. It is not certain whether this was the scroll brought from London in 1733 or the one brought over in 1737.

The scattering of Savannah's Jews within seven years after the foundation of the colony brought some of them to New York. Business and personal contacts between the two communities increased as Jews once more settled in Georgia and the Mickve Israel congregation in Savannah was revived. Zipporah Nunez, daughter of the Dr. Nunez who had come to Savannah in 1733, became the wife of New York's Hazzan Machado, and thereby the ancestress of a number of Shearith Israel's most notable members in the Phillips, Levy, Noah, and other families. One of Savannah's patriot soldiers during the Revolution was Lieutenant Abraham Seixas, a brother of New York's patriot hazzan, Gershom Mendes Seixas.

Later, contacts were made with Savannah from time to time, such as after the Civil War in 1865 when $100 was sent for the purchase of matzoth for the Jewish poor of that town.

PHILADELPHIA

Far closer to New York in accessibility than were Newport, Savannah, Charleston, Montreal, and other historic Jewish communities in North America, was Philadelphia. From 1756 the two towns were connected by a stage route. It was relatively easy for Shearith Israel to maintain close and continuing contacts with Philadelphia's Congregation Mikveh Israel during the two centuries of its existence. To help meet the High Holy Day needs of the little

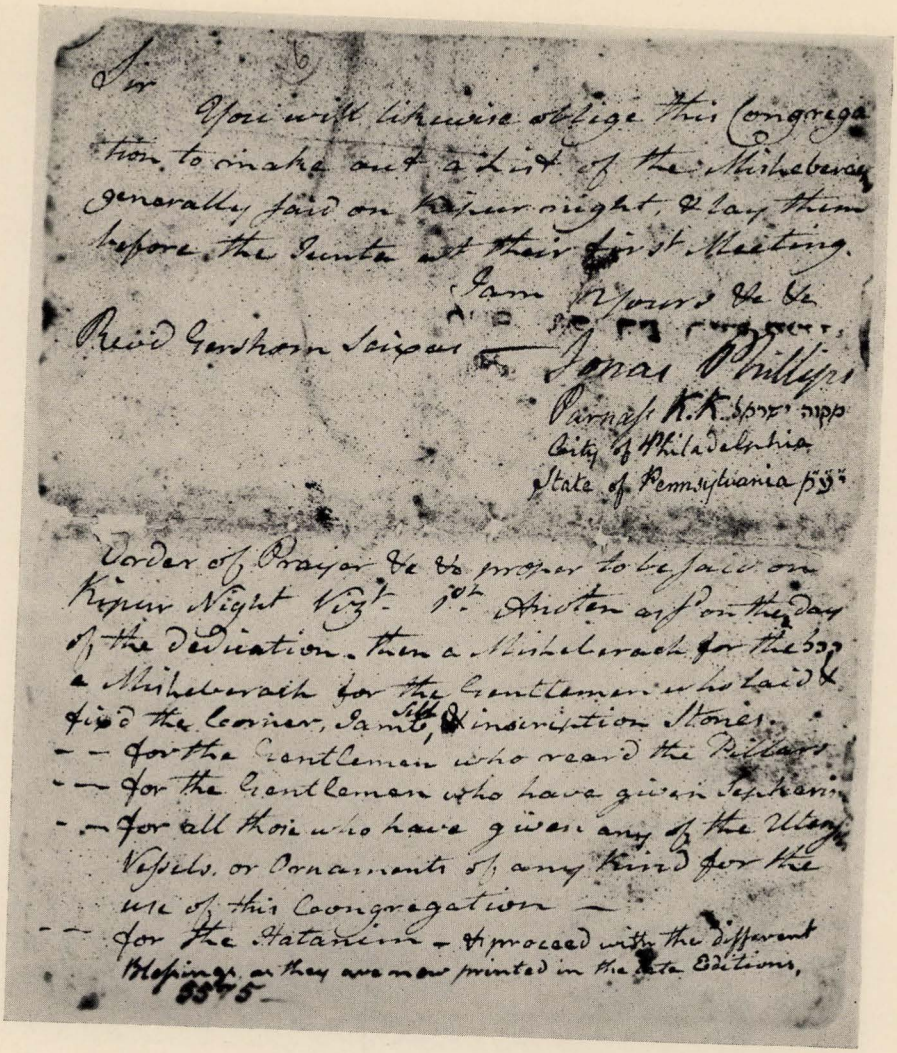
group of Jews in Philadelphia in 1760, Congregation Shearith Israel lent them a Sefer Torah.[47]

That early period was marked by an active interchange between the two towns of impecunious individuals and itinerant rabbis. The troublesome Jacob Musqueto, whom we have met at New York on his scarcely direct way across a small area of the Caribbean from St. Eustatius to Barbados, was sent on to Philadelphia on the first lap of his leisurely return journey with the request to Michael Gratz to dispatch him further, Shearith Israel being ready to pay £3 or £4 more if necessary towards the expenses. In 1773 Rabbi Tobiyah from London, desiring to move on to Philadelphia, was sent on his way, but in return in 1774 Rabbi Samuel Keyser from London came to New York from Philadelphia. In that same year 1774 a mute arriving from that city was dispatched back, and one Benjamin Nathans was offered not more than three dollars to help him to go to Philadelphia.[48]

In 1775, Shearith Israel inquired in Philadelphia, as it did in Newport, to learn if there was a man qualified to serve as shohet in New York.[49] Another year passed and the Revolution came. This brought to Philadelphia a large contingent of the most energetic and ardently patriot elements of New York Jewry. A stirring chapter in the common history of the two congregations is that of the rebirth of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia from 1776 to 1784 under the efficient leadership of men from Shearith Israel in New York, such as Isaac Moses, Hayman Levy, Simon Nathan, Benjamin Mendes Seixas, Jonas Phillips, Daniel Gomez, Benjamin S. Judah, Jacob Hart, Solomon Myers Cohen, and Haym Salomon, and the religious leadership of Gershom Mendes Seixas.

A delegation of Jewish citizens of Philadelphia waited on the Council of Censors in 1783 to ask for the amending of the Pennsylvania state constitution in the matter of liberty of conscience. This delegation consisted of one Pennsylvanian, Barnard Gratz, and four New Yorkers brought to Philadelphia by the Revolution: Gershom Mendes Seixas, Simon Nathan, Asher Myers, and Haym Salomon. Similarly, the Jewish memorial to the Governor of Pennsylvania in 1782 had been signed by Michael Gratz of Philadelphia, and four Jews from New York, Jonas Phillips, Solomon Marache, Simon Nathan, and Solomon Myers Cohen.

In 1783, most of the New York leaders returned to their home city. Early in 1784, Shearith Israel welcomed back from Philadelphia its own religious



Sir

You will likewise oblige this Congregation to make out a List of the Misheberachs generally said on Kipur night, & lay them before the Junta at their first Meeting.

I am Yours &c &c

Jonas Phillips

Parnass K.K. שערי תפלה

City of Philadelphia

State of Pennsylvania

Reid Gershom Seixas

Order of Prayer &c &c proper to be said on Kipur Night viz.t 9th. Ahrtein after on the day of the dedication. then a Misheberach for the boy a Misheberach for the Gentlemen who laid & dig'd the Corner, Same, Silk & inscription Stones.

— — for the Gentlemen who rear'd the Pillars

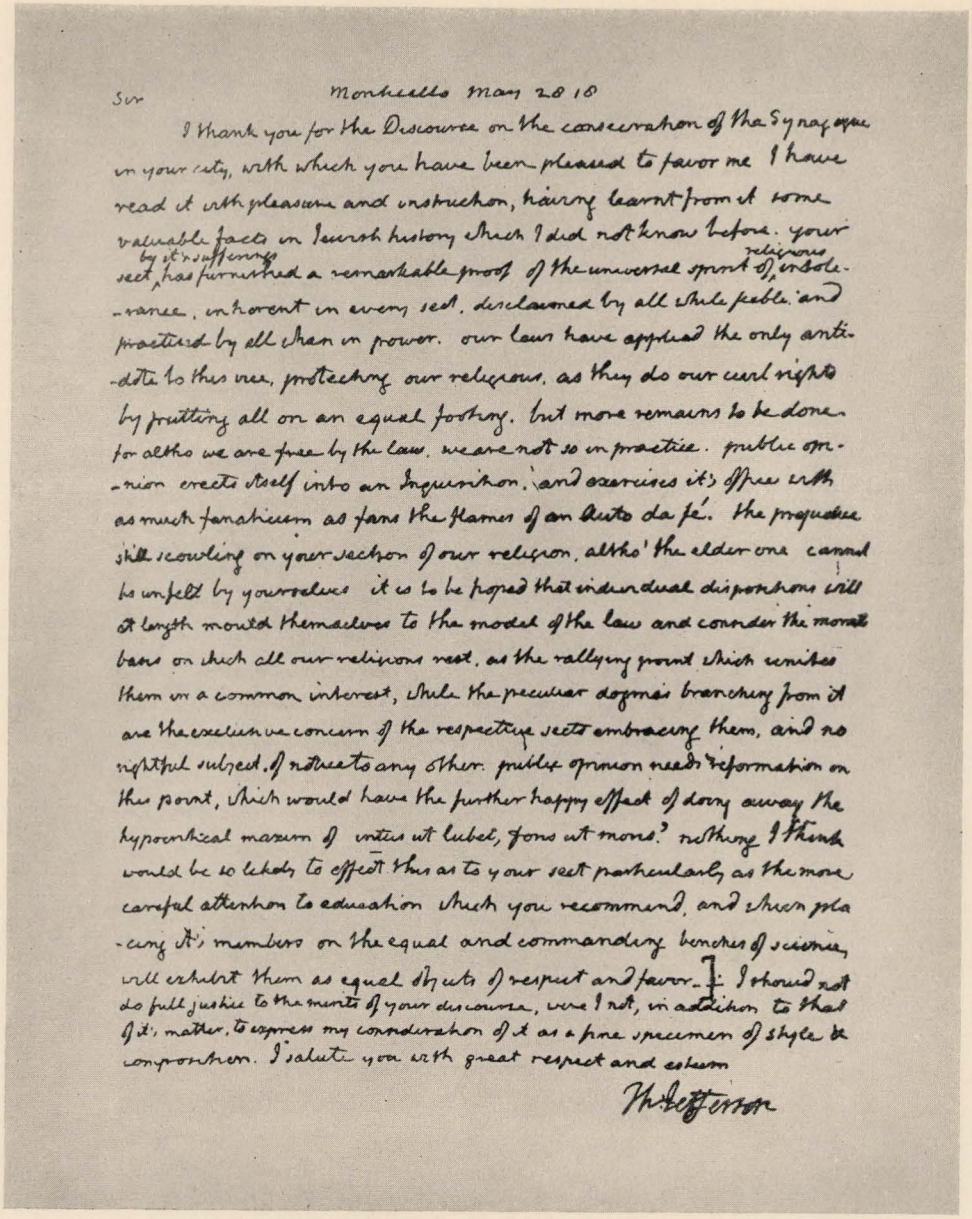
— — for the Gentlemen who have given Sephareem

— — for all those who have given any of the Utensils, or Ornaments of any kind for the use of this Congregation —

— — for the Hatanieem — & proceed with the different Blessings, as they are now printed in the late Editions,

5575

Hazzan Gershom Seixas and Parnas Jonas Phillips set down order of blessings recited in Philadelphia congregation



Sir Monticello May 28 18

I thank you for the Discourse on the consecration of the Synagogue in your city, with which you have been pleased to favor me. I have read it with pleasure and instruction, having learnt from it some valuable facts in Jewish history which I did not know before. your sect, by it's suffering, has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious sole-rance, inherent in every sect, declaimed by all while preached and practised by all when in power. our laws have applied the only anti-dote to this vice, protecting our religious, as they do our civil rights by putting all on an equal footing. but more remains to be done. for altho we are free by the law, we are not so in practice. public opi-nion erects itself into an Inquisition, and exercises it's office with as much fanaticism as fans the flames of an Auto da fé. the prejudice still scowling on your section of our religion, altho' the elder one cannot be unfelt by yourselves it is to be hoped that individual dispositions will at length mould themselves to the model of the law and consider the moral basis on which all our religions rest, as the rallying ground which unites them in a common interest, while the peculiar dogmas branching from it are the exclusive concern of the respective sects embracing them, and no rightful subject of notice to any other. public opinion needs reformation on this point, which would have the further happy effect of doing away the hypocritical maxim of vitia ut libet, foras ut moris? nothing I think would be so likely to effect this as to give your sect particularly, as the more careful attention to education which you recommend, and which pla-cing it's members on the equal and commanding benches of science, will exhibit them as equal objects of respect and favor. I should not do full justice to the merits of your discourse, were I not, in addition to that of it's matter, to express my consideration of it as a fine specimen of style & composition. I salute you with great respect and esteem

Th: Jefferson

Jefferson, in responding to Mordecai M. Noah's address at Mill Street Synagogue, says mankind's rallying point is the moral basis on which all religions rest

leader, Hazzan Seixas, and sent to Philadelphia its temporary hazzan, Jacob Raphael Cohen, to take the place of Seixas. Haym Salomon, one of Shearith Israel's patriots who had found refuge in the Quaker City, remained there. New York heard from him in 1784. Then at his request Shearith Israel sent some small lamp "branches" to be used in Mikveh Israel's synagogue.[50] When in 1789 Shearith Israel was struggling to preserve its cemetery from catastrophe, it did not hesitate to appeal to its old friends in Philadelphia for financial aid.[51]

Half a century later, Simon Gratz, Isaac Hays, and Zalegman Phillips, who was a son of Jonas Phillips, sent word from Philadelphia to Shearith Israel that their new synagogue building on Cherry Street was completed. They asked New York to help them find a hazzan.[52] Hazzan Peixotto of New York went to Philadelphia to take part in the service of dedication of the building on January 21, 1825.[53] It was on this occasion that he impressed Rebecca Gratz as "a venerable learned and pious man who gave great effect to the solemnity" and who chanted "in a voice tremulous from agitation and deep feeling."[54] Four years later, in the summer of 1829, Raphael de Cordova in Philadelphia turned to Shearith Israel to request help once more in finding a religious leader.[55] The man whom the Philadelphia congregation found to fill the position was the distinguished minister, Isaac Leeser of Richmond.

Such personal contacts recur throughout the story. Hazzan Lyons went to Philadelphia in 1855 to solemnize the marriage of the Reverend Mr. Morais.[56] Nearly half a century later the Reverend Leon Elmaleh, who had blown the shofar in Shearith Israel, went in 1898 from New York to become hazzan in Mikveh Israel, just as in the twentieth century Hazzan Isaac C. Edrehi and the Reverend D. A. Jessurun Cardozo went from Shearith Israel in New York to serve the Philadelphia congregation. For the service of consecration of Mikveh Israel's synagogue at York and Broad Streets in 1909, Shearith Israel sent its choir and its minister, H. Pereira Mendes, to conduct the dedication ceremony, and in 1928 Dr. Pool inducted Abraham A. Neumann as its rabbi.

CHARLESTON

Similar active relations have existed from almost two centuries ago between Shearith Israel and the more distant Jewish community in Charleston.[57] In the summer of 1767, Isaac da Costa sent to New York a copy of a deed in which Congregation Beth Elohim established a burying place for the Jews of Charles-

ton and nominated as trustees of the ground five New York Jews: Jacob Franks, Daniel Gomez, Benjamin Gomez, Isaac Mendes Seixas, and Hayman Levy. That document was deposited in Shearith Israel's tin chest in which were kept the most important of the congregational papers.[58] Twenty-two years later, the New York congregation appealed to Charleston for help in saving from destruction its own cemetery on Chatham Square.[59]

There were many personal contacts between the two closely related congregations. In 1808 Emanuel Nunes Carvalho came to New York from Charleston where he had been hazzan and whither he returned after three years of service as head of the Polonies Talmud Torah School in New York.

In 1831, Charleston's Beth Elohim Congregation turned to New York with the request to help it find a hazzan. Whereupon for two consecutive Sabbaths Hazzan I. B. Seixas read a notice to that effect in Shearith Israel's synagogue.[60] Five years later Gustavus Poznanski, the shohet of the New York congregation, resigned to become the religious leader of the Charleston congregation. He was sent on his way with a certificate testifying that during the time he had resided in New York his conduct had been in every way honorable and praiseworthy.[61] In Charleston he became active in the beginnings of the Reform movement, a fact that sorely disturbed the New York congregation which he had served with unquestioned conformity to Jewish religious tradition. When years later, in 1865, he and his family returned to New York, at first the trustees felt unwilling to lease them the seats for which they applied, but on more mature consideration five seats were allotted to them.[62]

Requests for help towards building a synagogue came to New York from time to time from Charleston.[63] One such appeal was received in 1775. While in those disturbed times this request could not be acted on, when in 1792 Gershon Cohen, Jacob Cohen, and Isaac da Costa asked for aid in building a new synagogue in Charleston, Shearith Israel took up a subscription for that purpose.[64] In April, 1838, when the Charleston synagogue was destroyed by fire, help was asked towards its rebuilding.[65] In 1841 when the Reform movement had brought division into the Charleston community, Jacob de la Motta and others who would not compromise their cherished religious traditions stepped out of Congregation Beth Elohim. They turned to New York and asked for help in building a synagogue for the new Congregation Shearith Israel which they had organized and had named after the New York congrega-

tion.[66] In 1950 the New York congregation lent to Charleston two large oil paintings of Judge and Mrs. Mordecai M. Noah on the occasion of the bicentenary celebration of that Jewish community.

MONTREAL

Canada's oldest Jewish congregation, and for its first eighty years Canada's only Jewish congregation, Shearith Israel of Montreal, founded in 1768, has had numerous relations with its namesake congregation in New York City.[67] Some of these have been personal contacts through members of the old-time Franks, Hart, and Gomez families. In 1782 as the Revolution was drawing to a close, Jacob Raphael Cohen arrived in New York from Montreal's Shearith Israel Congregation and ministered to the remnant of "the Remnant of Israel" still to be found in the city. Exactly a century later, in 1882, Abraham de Sola, who had edited the Sephardi prayer books used in Shearith Israel and who was the distinguished religious leader of the Montreal congregation, died in New York. The parnas, Horatio Gomez, with David de Meza and Dr. Mendes, were designated as a committee of the New York congregation to escort his remains to Montreal.[68] Though a British subject, it was Abraham de Sola who on General Grant's invitation had opened the Congress of the United States with prayer. His son, Meldola de Sola, who followed him as religious head of the Montreal congregation, had constant personal and official contacts with Shearith Israel in New York.

In 1885, Canadian Shearith Israel asked for aid towards erecting its synagogue on Stanley Street. In response New York's Shearith Israel sent $500 to help "perpetuate Sephardic minhag." [69] In 1927, H. Pereira Mendes officiated and preached in the Montreal synagogue on the High Holy Days and on Succoth. In 1928, Dr. Pool installed the Reverend Charles Bender, and seventeen years later he invested Rabbi Joseph Karasick as spiritual leader of that congregation. In 1948, he went from New York to dedicate the first unit of the congregation's new series of buildings in the Snowdon suburb of Montreal, and in 1951 Dr. Gerstein went there for the initiation of the drive for funds for the synagogue to be built there. It was from Congregation Shearith Israel in New York that Congregation Shearith Israel in Montreal drew Hazzan Isaac de la Penha, Hazzan Joseph Corcos, and Rabbi Raphael H. Melamed.

RICHMOND

The Sephardi Congregation Beth Shalome in Richmond established contacts with the New York congregation in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[70] In 1809 it asked New York for help in building a synagogue. A subscription was taken up. This realized $260 to which $100 was added from the congregation's funds.[71] Another $100 was sent from the congregational funds in 1811. In March, 1822, an appeal was received in New York for aid in building a new synagogue in Richmond, the former one having been destroyed. Three years later, however, we find the trustees unable to comply with Richmond's request for the loan of two scrolls of the Torah, "not having a greater number than is required for our place of worship, at the same time advise Mr. Mordecai that they know of none here." [72]

The Reverend Abraham H. Cohen, who headed the Polonies Talmud Torah School from 1823 to 1828, left that position to become hazzan and shohet in Richmond. But in return, Isaac B. Seixas, who had been the second hazzan of the Richmond community, became hazzan in New York, and in 1839 Hazzan Jacques J. Lyons came from Congregation Beth Shalome in Richmond to become the religious leader of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel. Another who ministered to the New York congregation after having served in Richmond was Henry S. Jacobs.

BALTIMORE

In 1817, there were in Baltimore very few Jewish families. The heads of two of these families, Solomon Etting and Levy Solomons, contributed no less than $150 toward the cost of erecting New York's second Mill Street Synagogue. In the middle of the nineteenth century, on September 16, 1857, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, a Sephardi synagogue, Beth Israel, was consecrated in Baltimore by the Reverend Isaac Leeser and the Reverend Solomon Jacobs of Philadelphia. Its religious leader was Jacob M. de Solla. It had difficult going, and at the end of its first year it appealed to the New York congregation for aid. This appeal was laid before the electors for action. In 1860 the congregation was compelled to close.[73] Another Sephardi congregation which had but a brief life was that in the predominantly Russian Jewish settlement in Woodbine, New Jersey. Shearith Israel sent $200 towards its establishment in 1895.[74]

BOSTON

Relations with non-Sephardi synagogues also recur constantly through the story. In 1728, long before there was any organized synagogue in Boston, Isaac Levy, Simon Barzilay, Michael Asher, and Isaac Solomons resident there, contributed £4.14.0 toward the construction of New York's first synagogue building.[75] Nearly a century later when the second Mill Street Synagogue was being built, Judah Hays and Abraham Touro of Boston contributed toward its cost. The name of Abraham Touro is mentioned every year in blessing and commemorated on a tablet because of his many benefactions to Shearith Israel. The leading Jewish citizen of Boston in the eighteenth century, Moses Michael Hays, was a son of Judah Hays, parnas in New York in 1749–50 and 1756–57.

CINCINNATI

In the first half of the nineteenth century numerous Ashkenazi congregations began to spring up in the East and Middle West of the country. Shearith Israel in New York not infrequently cooperated in helping them integrate themselves. In 1825, from Cincinnati, S. Joseph, Joseph Jonas, D. I. Johnson, and Phineas Moses, asked for aid in erecting the first synagogue in that town. Ten years later when they were ready to build, the New York congregation raised $300 towards carrying this out.[76] It also offered the Congregation Bene Israel in Cincinnati the five handsome brass chandeliers for candles which had been used in the Mill Street Synagogue but which were no longer needed in the newly erected building on Crosby Street where there was the novelty of gas lighting. Four of these chandeliers had been the gift of Naphtali Hart Myers in 1764, and the fifth the gift of Abraham R. Brandon of Barbados in 1819. The condition was then made that "in case at any future period the said congregation in Cincinnati shall decline so to use them, they to return them to the trustees of this congregation." The Cincinnati congregation accepted this condition, and the chandeliers were shipped to them by sea to New Orleans and from there up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.[77] In like manner, in 1898 the congregation gave to the Bnai Abraham Synagogue in Newark, New Jersey, the chandeliers which had hung over the president's and vice-president's seats in the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, and other candlesticks which had been used for a short time in its new synagogue building on Central Park West.[78]

NEW ORLEANS

Relations of Shearith Israel with the New Orleans Jewish community in its early days were particularly frequent. On August 27, 1829, the following letter was addressed to Harmon Hendricks, the outstandingly generous member of the New York congregation in those days.

Having heard of your Noble action and your magnanimity, towards our brethren. therefore, we the officers of the Israelite Congregation, Sharei Shisset of New Orleans, take the liberty to adress ourselve to you, hoping that you will not reject our request. New Orleans had always the reputation by Israelites, Gentiles &. to be the last place in the union for religious Societies, it is but 17 months ago that there was not here, the least iot of an Ysraelite Congregation, Since that the time they have a place of interment, a Metaher House and a lot to build a temple on, and all that through your worthy fellow Citizen Mr. Jacob S. Solis, we now pray you to advance the Said Society the Sum of Six Thousand Dollars, with a Small interest and Morgage on the property till final payment for wich we have authorize Mr. Jacob S. Solis to make arrangements with you. In So Doing the blessings of the God of Israel will never cease to come on you and your family for ever and ever, and will even never Cease from your descendants, we remain for ever

your most humble Servants:
MANIS JACOBS, pres.
AARON DANIELS, vice-presed.

In 1833 the New York congregation complied with a request received from the Congregation Shaare Hased in the southern city. The request had stated that in New Orleans no more than thirty-three years earlier Jews had not been known. Now a Jewish congregation was established, and it asked for

a list of all the Sidras and Maftirim [Pentateuchal and prophetic readings] to be read every Sabbath and holy days . . . a few sets of Detuska Machzerim [German festival prayer books] in Hebrew and translations in English and also a few Daily praying books. They will be paid for . . . for we have no holy days praying books here after that Minhag which are translated into English, neither praying books for every day, neither have we a shofar . . . and . . . a spare Sephar at a reasonable price . . .

That request was readily filled, and a scroll was provided, Congregation Shearith Israel sending to the New Orleans congregation a Sefer Torah which had been deposited with it by Jacob Lurie.[79] Ten years later, in 1843, New York Jewry raised $710 towards building a synagogue in New Orleans. Of this amount Shearith Israel contributed almost two-thirds—$460.

In other ways also a helping hand was extended to that distant community in

times of stress. To mention but three instances: in 1853 the Ashkenazi Congregation Shaare Hased of New Orleans wrote of "our distressed condition" because of the pestilence. "We have not the means of attending our sick nor burying our dead. Our funds have been long since exhausted." Immediately, $150 was sent, just as fourteen years later, in 1867, $250 was sent for the widows, orphans, and sick and poor and destitute Jews of the city. Eleven years later, in 1878, a subscription was raised in aid of the sufferers from yellow fever in the South. One half of the funds then collected was sent to the Touro Infirmary and Hebrew Benevolent Society of New Orleans, and the other half to the Hebrew Society of Memphis.[80]

On the other side of the accounting mention must be made of the munificent legacy of $13,000 received by the Polonies Talmud Torah School under the will of Judah Touro of New Orleans, brother of Abraham Touro of Boston from whose bequest the congregation had benefited so substantially in 1822.

OTHER COMMUNITIES

As the number of Ashkenazi congregations increased throughout the country, the number of contacts increased correspondingly. In the 1840s Newark asked for aid in purchasing a cemetery,[81] and "sundry Jews in Providence" sought permission to inter their dead in the cemetery at Newport.[82] Appeals for help towards building a synagogue were received from New Haven; from Cleveland, where the synagogue had been destroyed by fire; from Mobile, to which a Sefer Torah was loaned; from Albany; and from Louisville. In the exiguous financing of the New York congregation at that period, such appeals could not as a rule be granted out of congregational funds; they were therefore usually acted on through a special subscription sponsored by the board of trustees or by the electors. One of those appeals is of unusual interest. It is that received in 1838 from a company of Israelites who had founded in Ulster County, New York, an agricultural village, which they called Sholem.[83] One of the active founders of that settlement was Marcus van Gelderen, who was later shohet of Shearith Israel. Sometimes Shearith Israel joined with other congregations in New York in making up a fund. At other times it took the initiative, as in 1865 when Columbia, S.C., was nearly destroyed by fire. Then the congregation gave $500 towards the relief of that suffering Jewish community, and appointed a committee to confer with the other congregations of the city to obtain from them additional aid.[84]

NEW YORK CITY

Shearith Israel was the only Jewish congregation in New York City until 1825. By that time the need for a second congregation was increasingly felt as the numbers in the Jewish community progressively increased. Among recently arrived English and German Ashkenazi Jews there were those who found difficulty in adjusting themselves to the customs and traditions of the Sephardi Congregation Shearith Israel, with its different pronunciation of Hebrew, its variants in the wording of the prayers, and its altogether unfamiliar chanting. Not a few felt the urge to establish a congregation following the traditions of the Ashkenazim.

Originally, indeed, there was the thought that within Shearith Israel itself there might be found room for a group which would worship according to Ashkenazi minhag. A number of members met together and planned to organize an Ashkenazi congregation of their own within Shearith Israel. In keeping with this, in May of that year 1825 they sent to the board of trustees a letter formally

> requesting the use of our place of Worship and Sefarim at times different from the usual hours of service, the management of the same to be entirely under the control of a committee to be chosen by themselves.

The board of trustees saw in this proposal something that would be a definite break in the congregation's unity, and a departure from its constitutionally required distinctive Sephardi religious tradition. They therefore "resolved unanimously after the most serious attention that this can not be granted." [85] In this they were upheld by "a large and respectable majority" of fifty-three members of the congregation who put themselves on record as giving a strong testimonial of their approval of the decision of the trustees

> as a guarantee that in all future deliberations having a tendency to promote the welfare and the dignity of the congregation the people are with and will support them. . . . They oppose any measure or proposition having a tendency to destroy the well known and established rules and customs of our ancestors as have been practised in said congregation for upwards of one hundred years past.[86]

In reply to a further communication about membership rights, the trustees after taking legal opinion replied that they were under the full conviction that they could not recognize any society or association for religious worship distinct from the Congregation Shearith Israel.[87]

After the summer's lull, the following letter was received from Rowland Davies, John I. Hart, and Daniel Jackson, dated October 6, 1825:

TO THE PARNAS AND TRUSTEES OF THE KK SHEARITH ISRAEL:

Respected Brethren and Friends:

We are deputed a Committee from a meeting of Israelites held at Washington Hall to announce to you their intention to erect a new Synagogue in this city.

It is our duty, and we most cheerfully comply with it, to acquaint you with the motive which has induced us to take this step. We have a large portion of our brethren who have been educated in the German and Polish minhag, who find it difficult to accustom themselves to what is familiarly called the Portuguese minhag, in consequence of their early impressions and habits. It is also proper to state that the increase of our Brethren is so great and in all probability will be much greater in a few years that accommodations, particularly on holidays, cannot be afforded to all. Again, the great increase of New York and the distant situation of the Shul render it necessary to have a new place of worship in a more convenient situation for those residing uptown. These reasons we respectfully trust will be satisfactory to your honorable Board, and will at once show our intention is not capriciously to withdraw ourselves from the ancient and respectable Congregation of Shearith Israel which God may prosper, but is urged by motives of necessity.

Conforming therefore to our duty as Jews and the obligations of our Holy Faith, we first make known our intentions to your Board and solicit such aid in the furtherance of this laudable object as liberality, justice and the situation of the Congregation warrant.

We have the pleasure to state with loans and subscriptions we have about $4,000., a sum which your Honorable Board will at once perceive is insufficient to build a place of worship.

The religious and the equitable claim which we have as brethren of one great family of the Congregation of Shearith Israel will, we have hope, be recognized and every aid, accountenance and protection afforded us calculated to ensure success and give respectability and character to our project.

Wishing peace to Israel and prosperity and life to you gentlemen,

We are respectfully, your Friends,

ROWLAND DAVIES
JOHN I. HART
DANIEL JACKSON,

New York, October 6th, 5586.

We, the undersigned, concur in the views taken by the Committee in their letter to the Trustees of K.K. Shearith Israel and respectfully solicit their liberal aid and friendly cooperation.

[Signed] Joseph Davies, Morland Micholl, John M. Davies, John D. Jackson, Naphthali Judah, David Cromeline, I. B. Kursheedt, Abraham Collins, Solomon Seixas, Simon Myers, Joseph L. Hays, John Jackson, Benjamin Morange, E. L. Phillips, M. M. Noah.[88]

This letter in effect announced that a new congregation was in the process of formation. It gave threefold justification for this. In the first place there was the need of satisfying those who found it difficult to accustom themselves to the "Portuguese minhag" of Congregation Shearith Israel. It further pointed to the inescapable fact that Shearith Israel's little synagogue building which measured but 35 feet by 58 feet, could not possibly accommodate the ever growing number of Jews in the city. It also brought out the unquestioned fact that the situation of the synagogue on Mill Street, a site which had been chosen almost a century earlier, was now hopelessly outdated, since virtually all the congregants had moved to new residential districts one mile or two miles away.

It must not be thought that there were no problems of personal feelings in this unprecedented development. Alongside the legitimate claims and useful purpose served in the creation of a second congregation, there was one trivial, and from the distance of a century and a quarter completely inconsequential, incident which contributed to the formation of the new congregation. This was a misunderstanding of Shearith Israel's requirement at the time that anyone at a religious service who was called to the reading of the Torah was required to make an offering of at least two shillings. Barrow A. Cohen, an English Jew, ignorant of this requirement, failed to make the required offering when called to the reading of the Torah on the eighth day of Passover. In order to show that he had meant no disrespect, later in the service he made the required offering before the open Ark. But this altogether trifling incident emphasized the special needs of those who desired a congregation conducted in keeping with their own traditions, and it hastened the birth of the new congregation as an outgrowth of the parent congregation. It was hard for Shearith Israel to lose so many vigorous members and to see its nearly two centuries of completely representative unity finally broken, more especially as it was facing so many difficulties caused by the remote situation of its synagogue building. But it rapidly realized that the secession had become inevitable, and when a year and a half later, in June 30, 1827, Congregation Bnai Jeshurun dedicated its first synagogue building at 119 Elm Street, five of Shearith Israel's scrolls of the Torah were loaned to the new congregation for the consecration exercises. Moreover, with the exception of some disagreements about the land at Cypress Hills which was divided between the two congregations for their cemeteries, later relations between the mother and the daughter congregations have been consistently cordial and cooperative. In

1854, Congregation Bnai Jeshurun inaugurated its ambitious Educational Institute. More than a third of those on its sponsoring committee were members of Congregation Shearith Israel.[89] When in 1851 Bnai Jeshurun dedicated its new synagogue building on Greene Street, among those of Congregation Shearith Israel who were officially present were the hazzan of Shearith Israel, the Reverend J. J. Lyons, just as in later generations Shearith Israel has been officially represented at the cornerstone laying and the consecration of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun's later synagogue buildings and its synagogue center. Characteristic of these relations is the fact that in 1925 when Congregation Bnai Jeshurun celebrated its centenary, that congregation came to its mother congregation Shearith Israel for the religious service of Thanksgiving Day.

ANSHE CHESED

The next congregation which came to birth in New York City was Anshe Chesed, a congregation that has been out of existence for many years. This was an offshoot of Bnai Jeshurun. German Jews, especially from Bavaria, felt more at home in a new congregation of their own creation than in the dominantly English Congregation Bnai Jeshurun. From that time on, the development of new religious, social, and at times even communal, groupings often followed the pattern of their countries of origin. The Sephardi newcomers at the beginning of the twentieth century similarly organized themselves at first into demographic religious, burial, and benevolent associations made up of those who had come from a particular town such as Salonica or Janina in Greece; Constantinople, Adrianople, Rodosto, Gallipoli, or Monastir in Turkey; or Aleppo in Asia Minor. Time, of course, blurs and rapidly erases such initial Landsmannschaft lines of demarcation.

It was in response to the urge for those from the old home town to hold together that a century and a quarter ago, in 1828, Congregation Anshe Chesed came into being. We have caught some glimpses of its relations with Shearith Israel in the story just told. From the beginning of Anshe Chesed there came up the question of a place of burial for any of its members who might die. It turned to Congregation Shearith Israel asking to be allowed to use its cemetery ground. The answer sent in January, 1829, was affirmative, but the legal minded trustees made it of record that this permission was not a matter of right for Anshe Chesed, but an expression of the friendly disposition toward it on the part of Shearith Israel. Moreover, this privilege was granted until

such time as the new congregation might have its own burial ground, or until reasonable notice were given that the privilege would be withdrawn. In effect, some burials from Anshe Chesed were made in the cemetery of Shearith Israel. At the end of the first year, notice was given that this privilege would terminate at the end of the second year.[90]

By 1836 Congregation Anshe Chesed had progressed to the point of hiring the large room over the New York Dispensary at White and Centre streets. This was the room which Congregation Shearith Israel had used for its services while building its synagogue on Crosby Street. In reply to Anshe Chesed's request for articles that would help it fit up the room again as a synagogue, Shearith Israel authorized its president to give such articles as were available. These proved to be three benches, two green doors, two columns, a railing for the galleries, and ornaments.[91] A year later Anshe Chesed found itself compelled to move because the New York Dispensary was vacating the building. It then turned once more to Congregation Shearith Israel, this time with the request that it be granted the use of the basement of the Crosby Street Synagogue for its religious services. To grant this request would have meant a departure from Sephardi minhag in the synagogue building. To this the trustees could not accede because of the constitutional requirement that the religious services in its synagogue must be forever Sephardi in character.[92]

The friendly relations continued, and it was with the help of substantial support granted by members of Shearith Israel that Congregation Anshe Chesed was able three years later to acquire a Quaker church building on Henry Street which it converted into a synagogue. For the dedication service Shearith Israel sent four scrolls of the Torah.[93] Later, Congregation Anshe Chesed became merged with Congregation Adas Jeshurun. In its turn Adas Jeshurun was absorbed by Congregation Beth El, which finally was merged into Temple Emanu-El.

With the year 1839 began a rapid increase in the number of Jewish congregations in New York. In that year Congregations Shaare Zedek (Gates of Righteousness) and Shaar Hashamoyim (Gates of Heaven), now the Central Synagogue, came into existence. Three years later, in 1842, Rodeph Sholom (Pursuing Peace) was born, and in the following year, 1843, Beth Israel (House of Israel) was formed. Thereafter a new Jewish congregation came to birth in New York virtually every year. With these newly formed congregations Shearith Israel often had friendly and cooperative contacts. At

times it would give financial aid; at other times it would be officially represented and its holy scrolls might be used at the dedication of a new synagogue. When in 1843 Rodeph Sholom consecrated its synagogue on Attorney Street, Shearith Israel lent it two scrolls of the Torah for use at the consecration service.[94] Similarly in 1847 it lent to the newly born Congregation Bnai Israel, then worshiping in William Street, two scrolls of the Torah for use at its High Holy Day services.[95] Such courtesies of symbolic encouragement have continued to our own day, as when in 1946 a pair of silver bells and a pointer were sent to Congregation Kehillath Jacob for use in the installation ceremonies of its synagogue on West 79th Street.[96]

CONGREGATION SHAARAY TEFILA

Relations with Congregation Shaaray Tefila, more generally known as the West End Synagogue, have been continuous for over a century. In the summer of 1846 that congregation which was meeting in temporary quarters in Franklin Street was preparing to lay the cornerstone of its synagogue on Wooster Street. Its invitation to Shearith Israel to be present at the ceremony was accepted, and the members were notified of the invitation.[97] A year later Shaaray Tefila was ready to move into its new building. For its consecration service it used five scrolls of the Torah and two pairs of silver bells lent by Shearith Israel. Until that synagogue was ready, seats for members of Congregation Shaaray Tefila were made available in the Crosby Street Synagogue.[98] This courtesy was reciprocated twelve years later. Then the Crosby Street Synagogue was given up and the successor synagogue on 19th Street was not yet ready. At that juncture Shaaray Tefila offered the facilities of its synagogue to the members of Shearith Israel.[99]

In 1871, the younger congregation invited the older one to join in its service on Thanksgiving Day. To accept this invitation might have involved Shearith Israel's not holding a Thanksgiving Day service of its own. The situation was therefore met by the trustees through the following compromise:

> While we deem it not expedient to dispense with the usual service in our Synagogue on Thanksgiving Day, and while for that reason we cannot cooperate with the Congregation Shaaray Tefila in the joint service in the manner proposed, yet in acknowledgment of the spirit of the invitation thus extended, the hazan of our congregation will if agreeable to Congregation Shaaray Tefila announce that an invitation to participate in the service of the latter congregation has been kindly extended, and if the service in such congregation takes place at a time which will

not interfere with those of our own, which will be as usual at 11 A.M. leave is hereby cheerfully given to our hazan and choir to participate.[100]

In November, 1877, however, Shaaray Tefila accepted the invitation to join in Thanksgiving Day services. Next year when Rabbi Samuel M. Isaacs passed away in 1878, Shearith Israel put on record a resolution of sympathy, as it did forty years later on the death of Shaaray Tefila's president, Isaac S. Isaacs.[101] It was at the suggestion of Shaaray Tefila's Rabbi Frederick de Sola Mendes that his brother H. Pereira Mendes came to Shearith Israel. The older congregation shared in the celebration of Frederick de Sola Mendes' fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries of his ministry in Shaaray Tefila, and expressed its sympathy when death wrote the final chapter to his good and useful life.[102] When in 1937 fire destroyed part of Shaaray Tefila's synagogue building on West 82d Street including the Ark, Shearith Israel lent to the stricken congregation a Sefer Torah.[103]

BETH HAMEDRASH HAGODOL

One other instance may be cited of helpfully cooperative relations between the Sephardi Congregation Shearith Israel and Ashkenazi congregations in the city. In June, 1852, a group of a dozen Jews from Russian Poland, Lithuania, and Hamburg organized themselves as Congregation Beth Hamedrash, meeting at 83 Bayard Street. Five months later they moved to the corner of Elm and Canal streets, and in 1853 they made their synagogue on the top floor of the former courthouse at Pearl and Centre streets. One day in 1855 John I. Hart visited that synagogue in order to recite there the kaddish prayer in memory of his parent. He was so impressed by the spirit of the congregants and by their need for better quarters, that he conferred about this with Shearith Israel's prominent member Sampson Simson. Through Simson's gift of $3,000 and other substantial aid received from members of Congregation Shearith Israel, this small and struggling congregation was enabled to purchase the Welsh Chapel at 78 Allen Street and transform it into a synagogue.[104] A generation later, Dr. Mendes gave support to this synagogue's attempt to organize a central chief rabbinate for New York.

MOSES MONTEFIORE CONGREGATION

From time to time in the nineteenth century it was planned to open a Sephardi synagogue in the city for the convenience of Sephardim living far

from the location of Shearith Israel's synagogue. As early as 1805 subscriptions were taken up for creating a Sephardi synagogue in Greenwich Village for those who lived forbiddingly far from Mill Street. In 1864 when the Sephardi synagogue was on 19th Street it was reported

> that a new Portuguese congregation has been started, with a Mr. de Casseres as hazan, and that it is composed of persons, who, living in the lower part of the city, find it very inconvenient, if not impossible to attend worship so far from their homes.[105]

This group did not long remain in existence.

The first New York Sephardi synagogue outside of Shearith Israel to become a reality was the Moses Montefiore Congregation in 1885. This was made up primarily of a group of Jews from Gibraltar including Moses and Leon Guedalia, Abraham Pariente, A. M. Laredo, Solomon Saruya, and Samuel and Jacob A. Benaim. A number of Moroccan Jews and Sephardim from other parts joined with them. Organized to meet the needs of the Sephardim then resident in Harlem, the Montefiore Congregation met at first in a rented hall on the south side of 110th Street, east of Park Avenue, and later in a synagogue building on the south side of 112th Street between Lexington and Third avenues. All the officiants were volunteers, the only one of the group receiving any salary being the shammash. This congregation was given moral and material aid by Shearith Israel when it came into being and from time to time later. It met for almost two decades until the scattering of its members to other parts of the city brought its story to an end.[106]

OTHER SEPHARDI SYNAGOGUES

The year 1908 marked the beginning of an increased immigration of Sephardim from Turkey, the Balkan countries, and Asia Minor. In 1910 Dr. Mendes helped the recently arrived Syrian Jews living downtown to organize their religious services. Shearith Israel and especially its Sisterhood took an active interest in the problem of the organization of the religious life of the newly arrived Turkish Jews in New York. The example may be given of the Sephardi Berith Shalom Synagogue organized in the Sisterhood's Neighborhood House at 86 Orchard Street. In 1913 Shearith Israel's trustees expressed their desire to help these Sephardim obtain a rabbi of their own. In March, 1914, the congregation proposed a plan by which any member of the Orchard Street synagogue, for the nominal dues of fifty cents a month, could become

an associate member of Congregation Shearith Israel, including burial rights in Shearith Israel's cemetery. This plan was unanimously approved by the Orchard Street congregation, and sixty of its members were immediately enrolled in the membership of Shearith Israel. Six months later the number of members had doubled.[107] Two years later the form of application was modified, and two years thereafter it was changed once more. This time there was added to the title of the Congregation Berith Shalom on Orchard Street the words "affiliated with the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Shearith Israel." [108] In 1923 five representatives of Shearith Israel were added to the board of Congregation Berith Shalom. For some years, Henry S. Hendricks, a leader in Shearith Israel, was president of Berith Shalom. Two years later an Advisory Council for Berith Shalom was formed composed of members from Shearith Israel, its Sisterhood, and Berith Shalom.[109] Over the years there was consistent financial, moral, and personal association of Shearith Israel in helping organize and develop into final independence this congregation of Sephardim living downtown, distant from the synagogue situated on Central Park West.

Active interest in the publication of the liturgy was an expression of Shearith Israel's concern with the needs of other Sephardi communities both in the city and throughout the land. These books have come into standard use. Former congregants who settled in other parts of the country, from Long Beach, Long Island, to Long Beach, California, were helpful in establishing synagogues with Sephardi tradition. These congregations regard Shearith Israel as their American spiritual forebear. A pastoral tour of the Pacific coast by Dr. Pool symbolized the unity of tradition and faith which they shared. These contacts are renewed by family ties and personal visits. In such ways has Shearith Israel established relations with newer Sephardi communities in Atlanta, Atlantic City, Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Highland Park, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Montgomery, Peabody, Portland (Oregon), Rochester (New York), San Francisco, and Seattle.

Thus Shearith Israel's fellowship relations with other Jewish congregations have reached Caribbean lands, Europe, Canada, cities in the United States, and, within New York City, many of the rapidly multiplying Jewish congregations of the last century and a quarter. At times in its early days, it drew on other congregations for help. Later, with the attainment of status and strength, Shearith Israel gave financial aid and moral cooperation to others.

INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES

From early days on Manhattan island civic and business relations and personal friendships tended to transcend denominational differences and discrimination. Jews could rejoice that they did not have to contend with the handicaps of the European inherited medieval system of guilds and segregating industrial organization. Moreover, many of the early Jewish settlers were men with Marrano background who had externally lived with full integration into the economic, cultural, and even social life around them. They had not known the isolating influences of the ghetto. Their life pattern assumed identification with its environment.

During the dire winter of 1654–55 in which the original penniless Jewish settlers first came to know Nieuw Amsterdam, Domine Johannes Megapolensis, the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Manhattan, with Christian charity helped them through grants from his church funds. He grumbled somewhat about it, but in the perspective of time it is recalled that the good domine helped save a Jesuit priest and helped feed Jews in distress. The French frigate which had brought those Jewish settlers to Nieuw Amsterdam brought also on the same voyage Domine Johannes Theodorus Polhemus, the first minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Brooklyn. Three hundred years later, these facts were recalled when the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the Town of Flatbush and the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church of the Town of Flatlands, celebrated the tercentenary anniversary of their birth in Brooklyn. Symbolizing these memories of religious brotherhood, Shearith Israel then gave to both the historic Flatbush church and the Flatlands church a picture of a diorama representing the arrival of the pioneers.

Relations with neighbor churches began very early in the history of Shearith Israel. In 1671 Asser Levy advanced to the Lutherans the money they needed to establish their first church that was built near Broadway and Pine streets "outside the city gate because ground was cheap there." Another man bearing the name of Levy gave very material aid to another historic Lutheran church in the United States. This was Aaron Levy, the founder of Aaronsburg, Pennsylvania. In 1789 he and his wife gave to the congregation of the Salem Lutheran Church the land on which the church and its cemetery stand to this day. On the deed of gift his wife, Rachel Levy, signed her name in Hebrew. A little later he gave to the church a pewter communion set on

The Congregation Shearith Israel

New York, New York

Dear Brethren:

On the occasion of the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the establishing of the first Jewish community in North America

The Collegiate Church of New York

sends fraternal greetings to The Congregation Shearith Israel, the spiritual household of those settlers who came to our shores in 1654, and of their descendants.

We pay tribute to the devotion of those Jewish pioneers; we are happy that the ties between your Congregation and our Collegiate Church, founded in Manhattan in 1628, have been increasingly cordial; we rejoice in the witness to truth of the rabbis and people of Israel in our nation during these centuries; and we give thanks that today Jews and Christians, in comradeship of dedication to our nation's weal, and to world brotherhood, are maintaining the principle of freedom under God.

It will be our privilege, in answer to your gracious invitation, to send a representative to the meetings and religious services signalizing the

Tercentenary of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel.

In the meantime we pray for God's blessing upon your Rabbi, Dr. D. de Sola Pool, your Office-bearers, and all who are of your fellowship. May our Sovereign Lord grant you the benediction of His presence through the years.

Faithfully yours, in behalf of the Ministers, Elders and Deacons.

September 20, 1954

Walter L. Herrod
Clerk

Edgar F. Romig
President

each of the four pieces of which are inscribed the words "Das Geschenk zu denen Deutschen Gemeinden in Arensburg von Aron Levy." (The gift to the German congregations in Aaronsburg from Aron Levy.)

On June 21, 1953, one hundred and fifty-four years later, before several thousand persons gathered at the Aaronsburg Assembly, a forum for the discussion of America's human problems, the Salem Lutheran Church presented to Shearith Israel a specially designed pewter kiddush goblet engraved with the words "Presented to Congregation Shearith Israel by Salem Lutheran Church, Aaronsburg, Pennsylvania, June 21, 1953." The gift was an expression of the spirit of interdenominational brotherhood which characterizes American life. A little later in that year, in appreciation Mr. Albert E. Mingle, the president of the Salem Lutheran Church of Aaronsburg, was honored at a congregational function in Shearith Israel.

In 1711, a subscription was taken up in New York for completing the steeple of Trinity Church. That subscription realized £312.13.7. Even before Governor Fletcher had issued a proclamation calling on the citizens for contributions towards completing the church building, members of the tiny Jewish community of the city gave £5.12.3. The individual Jewish contributors were the synagogue's minister, Abraham Haim de Lucena, who gave £1, Lewis Gomez, Rodrigo Pacheco, Moses Levy, Mordecai Nathan, Jacob Franks, and Moses Michalls. Some nine years later, Lewis Gomez gave £1 to the wardens of Trinity Church towards enlarging the building and extending it to the street. These were all voluntary contributions expressing a spirit of neighborliness.

There was another relationship between the Jews of New York and Trinity Church which for nearly a century was annually recurrent. On September 22, 1693, five years before the building of Trinity Church was completed, the General Assembly of New York passed an act, known as the Ministry Act, which levied an assessment on all citizens for the support of the Church of England ministry of Trinity Church. Thus in 1730, the year in which the first synagogue was erected in New York, towards the total assessment of £619 which had to be raised for the ministry of Trinity Church, Jacob Franks was assessed £2.4.4, Lewis Moses Gomez £2.1.2, and so through a list of thirty-four Jewish names down to those like the shammash Valentine Campanal, who was assessed at the not inconsiderable unitary amount of one shilling and nine pence. Even "The Jew Sinnagogg" as an institution was as-

sessed for the tax, and the synagogue paid four shillings and nine pence towards the support of the ministry of Trinity Church.

These levies were peacefully collected by constables, who sometimes were Jews. Baruch Judah, a constable of the South Ward in 1732–33, signed the required bond that he would faithfully pay to the churchwardens the money he would collect, adding to his regular signature also his signature in Hebrew. The Ministry Act remained in effect until its repeal after the Revolution.[110]

Hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas had personal contacts with the Church of England ministry of the city in his thirty-year service as regent and as trustee of Columbia College. It must be remembered that in his day Kings College had been a Church of England institution. The land on which it was situated, running between Barclay and Murray streets down from Broadway to the Hudson River, had been granted to the college by Trinity Church with the stipulation expressed with unmistakable clarity that the president of the college

> must be of the Church of England and that morning and evening services in said college should be in the liturgy of said Church . . . and that upon failure thereof the said grant and release should cease, determine and be utterly void & of none effect.

The president had every day to give a doctrinal course in "the necessary truth and excellence of Divine Revelation as contained in the Holy Scriptures." In keeping with the Hebraic spirit that touched many early American colleges, at the suggestion of Columbia's first head, the Reverend Samuel Johnson, a passionate lover of Hebrew, the seal adopted by the college had as its motto the words written in Hebrew characters *Ori El* (My light is God).

Even from its earliest days this Christian college had contacts with Jews. Shortly after its founding it became ruinously impoverished during the critical times of the French and Indian War. Its directors looked overseas for emergency help. One of the five men whom it authorized to raise funds for it in England was Moses Franks, a child of the New York congregation. His efforts to help the college financially have been described as "eminently successful."

When after the Revolution King's College became Columbia College, Seixas was one of its incorporators. In those days the college was administered under the direction of the state. Until 1787 the meetings of its regents, of whom

Seixas was one, were held as a rule in the Senate Chamber, the Assembly Chamber, or the City Hall, presided over by Governor Clinton, the speaker of the assembly, the secretary of state, or the mayor of the city.[111]

In later generations Supreme Court Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo, and Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the publisher of the New York *Times*, both members of the congregation and descendants of families active in Shearith Israel when the college was born two hundred years ago, have been trustees of Columbia University.

Annie Nathan Meyer, sister of Maud Nathan who was a recognized leader in the woman suffrage movement and who for a time was chairman of the woman suffrage committee of the National Progressive Party, was like Judge Cardozo and Judge Nathan a descendant of Simon Nathan and Grace Seixas. Together with Frederick A. P. Barnard, then president of Columbia, she was the most active influence in bringing about the creation of Barnard College. She leased its first quarters with the financial aid of her husband, and served as trustee of Barnard College continuously for sixty-two years from its foundation in 1889 to her death in 1951.

In 1942, the Columbia University medal, given to alumni who have attained distinction in public service, was awarded to Edgar J. Nathan, Jr. Other members of the congregation who have received honorary recognition from Columbia University have been William Fondiller, executive vice-president of the Bell Laboratories, who received the medal in 1945 for his "outstanding achievement in advancing the art of electrical communication" in the development of the telephone. The medal was awarded in 1934 to Arthur Hays Sulzberger for his public service as a newspaper executive, and in 1915 the University gave to Benjamin N. Cardozo an honorary degree as "a profound student of the law who has won for himself and for Alma Mater the leading honor which is due to a just, a learned and an upright judge." In its bicentennial celebration in January, 1954, Columbia singled out still another member of Shearith Israel, Angelo Piero Sereni, for the distinction of receiving an honorary degree. The alumni medal was awarded by the trustees of the University to two other members of the congregation, Ernest A. Cardozo in 1933 and Justice Bernard L. Shientag in 1946. Early in the program of Columbia University's bicentennial celebration in 1954 Dr. Pool preached in the university's chapel. The theme of his sermon was "The wisdom of the heart."

Gershom Seixas was invited to preach both in Trinity Church and in St.

Paul's Church. Friendly relations with churches and their ministers continued. In 1823, Naphtali Phillips, the president of the congregation, reported that "Bishop Hobart was about to depart for Europe for the benefit of his health." Mr. Phillips "called on him to pay his respects on his departure," with the result that the congregation gave to Bishop John Henry Hobart this letter of introduction to Solomon Herschell, the chief rabbi of the Jews of Great Britain:

The Trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel avail themselves with great satisfaction of this occasion to introduce to your acquaintance and personal attention the bearer of this letter, the Right Reverend Bishop Hobart, Bishop of the Episcopal Church for the State of New York &c. This respectable and esteemed Gentleman visits Europe for his health and is desirous to be personally known to you. His learning and the liberality of sentiment towards the Chosen people which has distinguished his ecclesiastical career give him a high claim to the respect and friendly consideration of our Brethren the *House of Israel*, and we have great pleasure in Commending him to Your kind and friendly attention.[112]

When Bishop Hobart passed away in 1830, the following letter was sent to Trinity Church:

The Trustees of the Congregation of Shearith Israel have learned with deep regret that Bishop Hobart is no more. The liberal principles and unaffected piety of this estimable Prelate commended him to the esteem and respect of all denominations of Religion, and the Trustees take an early occasion, in the name of the Congregation they represent, to condole with the Church Wardens and Vestrymen of the Corporation of Trinity Church, with his family and Bearers, in the irreparable loss which they have sustained.[113]

On January 1, 1900, three prayers to usher in the twentieth century were published throughout the nation as a unitary outpouring of the heart. These were invoked by Pope Leo XIII, Bishop Henry C. Potter, and Rabbi H. Pereira Mendes, each praying in a spirit of brotherhood for all.[114]

Similarly, when Cardinal Farley passed away in 1918, the board of trustees of the congregation expressed their sympathy and accepted the invitation to attend the funeral in the Cathedral on Fifth Avenue and 50th Street. Dr. Pool officially attended the service in that Cathedral when William R. Arnold, who had been Chief of Chaplains, was invested as Bishop. In 1924 as a gesture of good will the synagogue formally presented a United States flag to Grace Church. The trustees of both of these houses of prayer marched in the processional.

In 1924 an interdenominational appeal for more intensive religious edu-

cation in New York City were made by Cardinal Hayes for the Catholics, a representative of the Federation of Churches for the Protestants, and by Dr. Pool for the Jews. On Sunday, November 20, 1938, a special prayer of intercession for the victims of religious and racial persecution was offered up in churches throughout the country. This was composed by Dr. Pool and the Reverend Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo, vice-president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. As chairman of the National Jewish Welfare Board's Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities during the Second World War, Dr. Pool had innumerable cooperative relations with Christian military, naval, and air chaplains. He was often called on to give interfaith messages over the radio to the armed forces.

The Shearith Israel Men's Club included interfaith activities in its program. At a meeting in 1942 it welcomed as its guests the members of the Men's Club of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity on Central Park West at 65th Street. In the following year the synagogue's Men's Club returned the visit to the church. In 1951 the Men's Club of the Universalist Church at Central Park West and 76th Street were the guests of the Men's Club of the synagogue, and the Reverend Benjamin B. Hersey of the church was the speaker at the meeting.

Congregants of Shearith Israel and its rabbi were members of the study group of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews which met for some years to study problems in interfaith relations in the United States. From those earnest discussions was born the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

On occasion in the history of the congregation, distinguished statesmen of the country have expressed their views about relations of Christians and Jews. In 1818 Mordecai M. Noah gave the oration at the dedication of the second Mill Street Synagogue. He sent copies of his address to Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Adams. Jefferson in his acknowledgment wrote from Monticello on May 28, 1818,

> I thank you for the Discourse on the consecration of the Synagogue in your city, with which you have been pleased to favor me. I have read it with pleasure and instruction, having learnt from it some valuable facts in Jewish history which I did not know before. your sect by its sufferings has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious intolerance inherent in every sect, disclaimed by all while feeble and practised by all when in power. our laws have applied the only antidote to this vice, protecting our religious, as they do our civil rights, by putting all on an equal footing. but more remains to be done, for although we are free by the law, we are not so in practise. public opinion erects itself into

an Inquisition, and exercises its office with as much fanaticism as fans the flames of an Auto da fé.

the prejudice still scowling on your section of our religion, altho' the elder one cannot be unfelt by yourselves it is to be hoped that individual dispositions will at length mould themselves to the model of the law and consider the moral basis on which all our religions rest, as the rallying point which unites them in a common interest, while the peculiar dogmas branching from it are the exclusive concern of the respective sects embracing them, and no rightful subject of notice to any other. public opinion needs reformation on this point, which would have the further happy effect of doing away the hypocritical maxim of intus ut lubet, foris ut moris. nothing I think would be so likely to effect this as to your sect particularly, as the more careful attention to education which you recommend, and which placing its members on the equal and commanding benches of science, will exhibit them as equal objects of respect and favor. . . . I salute you with great respect and esteem.

Madison wrote to Noah,

. . . Having ever regarded the freedom of religious opinions and worship as equally belonging to every sect, and the secure enjoyment of it as the best human provision for bringing all, either into the same way of thinking, or into that mutual charity which is the only proper substitute, I observe with pleasure the view you give of the spirit in which your sect partake of the common blessings afforded by our Government and laws.

In acknowledging Noah's address John Adams wrote,

I have had occasion to be acquainted with several gentlemen of your nation, and to transact business with some of them, whom I found to be men of as liberal minds, as much honor, probity, generosity and good breeding, as any I have known in any sect of religion or philosophy.

I wish your nation may be admitted to all privileges of citizens in every country of the world. This country has done much. I wish it may do more; and annul every narrow idea in religion, government, and commerce. Let the wits joke; the philosophers sneer! What then? It has pleased the Providence of the 'first cause,' the universal cause, that Abraham should give religion, not only to Hebrews, but to Christians and Mahometans, the greatest part of the modern civilized world.[115]

In 1930, joining in the 200th anniversary of the dedication of the first Mill Street Synagogue a group of Protestant ministers of historic New York churches gathered in the synagogue assembly hall and exchanged reminiscences. At another meeting a tablet commemorating that synagogue of 1730 was displayed. Among those who took part in the ceremonies were Dr. Henry Everton Cobb of the Collegiate Dutch Reformed Church; Le Roy E. Kimball, director of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society; and Hardinge Scholle, director of the Museum of the City of New York. Some

years later, in 1941, the National Conference of Christians and Jews held a meeting in the synagogue's assembly hall at which Jewish ceremonial was discussed.

Christian visitors have been welcomed at all times at services in the synagogue. On formal occasions high dignitaries of the city and state have often been honored guests. In 1818 when the reconstructed Mill Street Synagogue held its Thanksgiving Day service, Governor De Witt Clinton, the mayor, and other non-Jewish citizens were present. When the Crosby Street Synagogue was consecrated in 1834, and the Nineteenth Street Synagogue in 1860, there were present at the services several ministers of the church and other notable Christian guests. Andrew H. Green (1820–1903), comptroller of New York City and the man who was largely responsible for the idea and the creation of Greater New York, was a not infrequent visitor at the Crosby Street Synagogue. He was one of the guests at the consecration of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue, and he was formally presented with the taper which lighted its eternal lamp. When the custom began of annually selecting an American Mother, Shearith Israel became the center through which the national and the state mothers were brought into touch with American Jewry. Many of the mothers who were chosen had never before seen a synagogue service.

Individual visitors to synagogue services have left an often not unamusing record of the impressions made on them by the synagogue service with its separation of the sexes, its simple ancient chants, the Hebrew prayers, and the distinctive ceremonial customs often harking back to Biblical days. In the eighteenth century the visitors were impressed by the great wax candles three feet long and "as large as a man's arm." In 1744 Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Scotch physician from Annapolis, commented on the congregation's "chanting and singing their dolefull hymns," the sound of which he could not get out of his head all day.

> The men wore their hats in the synagogue and had a veil of some white stuff which they sometimes threw over their heads in their devotion, the women, of whom some were very pritty, stood up in the gallery like a hen coop.[116]

In the early summer of 1776, Edward Bangs, an army doctor, visited the synagogue on a Sabbath afternoon. He was impressed by the Reverend Mr. Seixas whom he described as "a handsome young man . . . dressed in a black gown, such as is worn by Bachelors of Arts." [117] When the Reverend John Pierce and the Reverend Timothy Alden visited the synagogue on the Sab-

bath, December 12, 1812, Pierce recorded afterwards that "They were very attentive to us; and finding that we could read Hebrew, they pointed out to us the places from which their services were taken." [118] In 1841 Lydia Maria Child, the Boston feminist and ardent abolitionist, described the effect on her of a visit to the synagogue as "strange and bewildering, spectral and flitting."

> My mind was, therefore, not only unfettered by narrow prejudice, but solemnly impressed with recollections of those ancient times when the Divine Voice was heard around the thunders of Sinai, and the Holy Presence shook the very seat between the cherubim. . . . All the male members of the congregation, even the little boys, while they were within the synagogue, wore fringed silk mantles, bordered with blue stripes . . . but these mantles were worn over modern broadcloth coats, and fashionable pantaloons with straps.[119]

A year later Walt Whitman is also struck by the "white silken mantle" which "encircled the neck, falling down the back, and the ends in front reaching to the floor." With his inward eye he saw "a remnant of the mighty nation who received the Law from the great I Am upon the mountain of clouds. . . . The heart within us felt awed . . . the mystery and all the associations that crowded themselves in troops upon our mind made a thrilling sensation to creep through every nerve." Though the language he heard sounded "strange and discordant," he thrilled to the same tones . . . which Jonathan and Saul used . . . the plaintive Hagar . . . the widow's son . . . the holy Psalmist . . ."

His outward eye did not fail to note the gallery "filled with women—dark-eyed Jewesses . . . by no means the most unpleasing sight in the whole proceeding. . . . We found ourselves casting our glances thither quite frequently . . ." [120]

The synagogue's harvest booth of the Tabernacles festival has always attracted numerous visitors. Classes from Christian theological seminaries, groups of students from colleges, religious school classes from churches, and groups of the most varied nature on goodwill tours, come to see the transplantation of the simple ancient harvest booth of the Biblical Holy Land to the modern skyscraper metropolis of New York. Not alone at the time of Tabernacles but throughout the year there come to the synagogue youth groups and upper classes from church schools. They better understand their own spiritual roots by seeing a Jewish religious service so deeply rooted in its ancient forms.

Maimonides points to the striking fact that while the Hebrew Bible commands us to show our parents honor and respect, it bids us treat the stranger with love. Joseph A. Scoville reports that during the yellow fever epidemic of 1795 Bernard Hart and Mr. Pell, a Jew and a Christian, were

unceasing in their exertion night and day, hardly giving themselves time to sleep and eat; they were among the sick and dying, relieving their wants, and were angels of mercy in those awful days of the first great pestilence.

Lest this seem to us to have been but a natural expression of neighborly friendship, let us recall the scene as pictured by a contemporary reporter from Philadelphia:

Dismay and affright were visible in the countenance of almost every person. Of those who remained many shut themselves in their houses and were afraid to walk the streets. . . .

The corpses of the most respectable citizens, even those who did not die of the epidemic, were carried to the grave on the shafts of a chair, the horse driven by a negro, unattended by a friend or relative. . . . A person with a crape, or any appearance of mourning, was shunned like a viper. . . .

Who, without horror, can reflect on a husband deserting his wife, united to him, perhaps for twenty years, in the last agony—a wife unfeelingly abandoning her husband on his death-bed—parents forsaking their own children without remorse —children ungratefully flying from their parents and resigning them to chance. . . . At the hospital . . . the sick . . . were left almost entirely destitute of every assistance. The sick, the dying, and the dead were indiscriminately mingled together.[121]

As a member of St. George's Society, Bernard Hart "was a constant watcher on the health of the few members of that society in the sickly season of 1795." [122] Three years later, in the yellow fever epidemic Ephraim Hart is recorded as a generous contributor to the Health Committee for the Relief of the Poor and Indigent, while Walter J. Judah is remembered in the graphic words still to be seen on his tombstone in the cemetery below Chatham Square as a "student of physic who worn down by his exertions to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow citizens in that dreadful contagion [yellow fever] that visited the City of New York in 1798 fell a victim in the cause of humanity aet. 20 years 5 months and 11 days." [123]

To the challenge of urgent need, whether the call came from near or far, from Jew or Gentile, the congregation has responded as an organized whole as well as through individuals. To give some characteristic examples: In January 1814 money was collected at a special service held in the synagogue for

the distressed sufferers on the battle lines of Niagara. Some ten years later when the people of Wiscasset, Maine, were struck by a disastrous fire, Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto preached a special sermon, in response to which contributions were made for the relief. In the middle of the century, in 1847, the Reverend Mr. Lyons sent the congregants a written appeal for the relief of the people of Ireland suffering from famine. "A large and respectable assembly of the Congregation Shearith Israel took place . . . at the Synagogue in Crosby Street . . . for the relief of the famishing thousands of their fellow mortals in that unfortunate and destitute country, Ireland." The meeting was addressed by Mr. Lyons, Mordecai M. Noah, Jonathan Nathan, Uriah H. Judah, Jonas B. Phillips, and Alexander Kursheedt, and "a large collection was taken up." [124] In 1850 the congregation contributed for relief of those bereaved by the explosion of a steam boiler in Hague Street, an explosion which took the lives of nearly eighty persons. In 1871, money was contributed toward aiding the sufferers from the great Chicago fire. In 1878, a collection was made for relief of victims of yellow fever in the South. In 1900, an appeal was made for aid for the sufferers from the Galveston flood. In 1907, several hundred dollars was collected for relief of those suffering from the earthquake in Kingston, Jamaica. As early as 1879 we find the congregation making a collection for the hospitals of the city, a collection which continues to be made annually for the United Hospital Fund. Another is made for the American Red Cross.

The congregation has also benefited in various ways from Christian generosity. One characteristic form of this has been through gifts of religious books. When in 1839 the young women of the congregation were conducting the school created by their Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith, they received from W. E. Shepherd a liberal gift of Bibles. A Mr. Stevens showed them "untiring efforts and unfailing politeness," and presented them with some copies of the Union Spelling Book, the Union Minstrel, Rules for Sunday Schools, Commandment Cards, and Card Lesson First Class Books. The Young Men's Bible Society also gave them fifteen Bibles. In a similar spirit, on January 16, 1864, William J. R. Tayler, the corresponding secretary of the American Bible Society, wrote to Mrs. Rebecca Gratz Nathan,

I have pleasure in stating that on your request twenty-five Bibles were granted to the Sunday School of the Nineteenth Street Synagogue. We trust that the bless-

ing of Him who gave the word will attend every one of these precious volumes which we are glad thus to place in the hands of the poor children of your Sunday Schools.

Christian neighborliness which helped save the cherished burial ground of the congregation has an unforgettable place in the history of Shearith Israel. The story has been told in detail elsewhere how in 1746 John Roosevelt, the great-great-great-grandfather of Theodore Roosevelt, took in fence some of the unused land of Shearith Israel's cemetery for a rent of three peppercorns. A generation later, land adjoining the cemetery was purchased from State Senator Isaac Roosevelt to be used in the attempt to hold back the ominous slipping of cemetery land. The Jewish community in New York found itself facing a heartbreaking catastrophe because of the ever increasing subsidences of the soil of its cemetery. The Jews of the city contributed time after time towards the cost of building retaining walls in the attempt to check the havoc. But all to no avail. Then in 1789 the heirs of Hendrick Rutgers gave to the Jews a piece of ground adjacent to the burial ground on which to build a protecting wall. Furthermore, Christian merchants of the city took up a subscription amounting to the very substantial sum of £122.8.0 to help their Jewish neighbors save their burial ground from destruction.[125]

The long story of interfaith relations in Shearith Israel has been heartwarming. Christian and Jew, Jew and Christian, have been neighbors and friends during all the long history of the congregation. At all times synagogue and church have helped one another and have joined to further causes of human justice and brotherly love. It is a story characteristic of a land which in the great words of George Washington and Moses Seixas "to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance—but generously affording to all liberty of conscience, and immunities of citizenship." It is a story in which we have seen the happy fulfilment of George Washington's words in his reply to Moses Seixas, "May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while every one shall sit in safety under his own olive and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

XV. Twelve Generations



"Who hath wrought and done this?"

"He that called the generations from the beginning."

ISAIAH 41:4

WHENCE CAME THE MEN AND WOMEN who over a period of three centuries made up Congregation Shearith Israel?

The founders who arrived in the seventeenth century were sometimes secret-Jews recently escaped from the Iberian Peninsula, or freemen who had lived in Holland far from the dangers of the Inquisition. In the thirty years preceding 1579, the Low Countries were an integral part of the Spanish Empire. Transit, albeit slow, was normal between these two parts of the powerful state. Thereafter, the momentum of economic interests long outlasted the political tie and made of the Netherlands the nexus between Jews from the Peninsula and their world of escape. Marranos who might ask for a permit to travel to remote parts would have been suspect of Judaizing; but they could without too great difficulty manage to go to Holland, with which so many of them had close business connections. Thence many went on to the Dutch possessions and other parts of the New World.

From the beginning, Shearith Israel had a wide geographic background.

The founding fathers were for the most part much-traveled Sephardim, and their journeyings from Portugal or Spain to Holland, from Holland to Brazil, from Brazil to New Netherland, would even in later eras reveal a high spirit of adventure and courage. Ashkenazim were also part of the congregation from its earliest days. In the very first group there was one member, Asser Levy, who came originally from Schwelm in Westphalia in Germany. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, hardship and discrimination in Germany goaded from that land a number who sought the freedom of the New World. Occasional individuals also made the more difficult transition from central and eastern Europe. The Ashkenazim were soon integrated into the predominantly Sephardi congregation, and they accepted whole-heartedly the Sephardi traditions. They married into the older families, and devotedly maintained in home and synagogue the customs and ritual of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. New members continued to come not only from Portugal, Holland, and England, but also from the far flung Sephardi diaspora in the New World: South America and Caribbean centers such as Curaçao, Surinam, Jamaica, Barbados, St. Eustatius, and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands.

Until 1700, during the community's first half century the proportion of Sephardi and of Ashkenazi names found in the public records was approximately two to one. The developing importance of the Ashkenazim in the early days can be read between the lines in a letter written by the Reverend John Sharpe in 1712, in which he states that there could be found in New York "a synagogue of Jews, and many ingenious men of that nation from Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc." [1]

Early in the eighteenth century, the number of Ashkenazim in the community began to outstrip that of the Sephardim. This becomes clear from many figures which can be adduced. In 1728 there were sixteen Ashkenazim and twelve Sephardim who contributed to the purchase of the burial ground. Thirty-four Ashkenazim and twenty-nine Sephardim were contributors to the fund for the erection of the Mill Street Synagogue.[2] In 1746, the forty-seven electors who signed an agreement consisted of twenty-four Ashkenazim and twenty-three Sephardim. But twelve years later, of the new electors accepted on March 12, 1759, only eight bore Sephardi names as contrasted with nineteen bearing Ashkenazi names.[3]

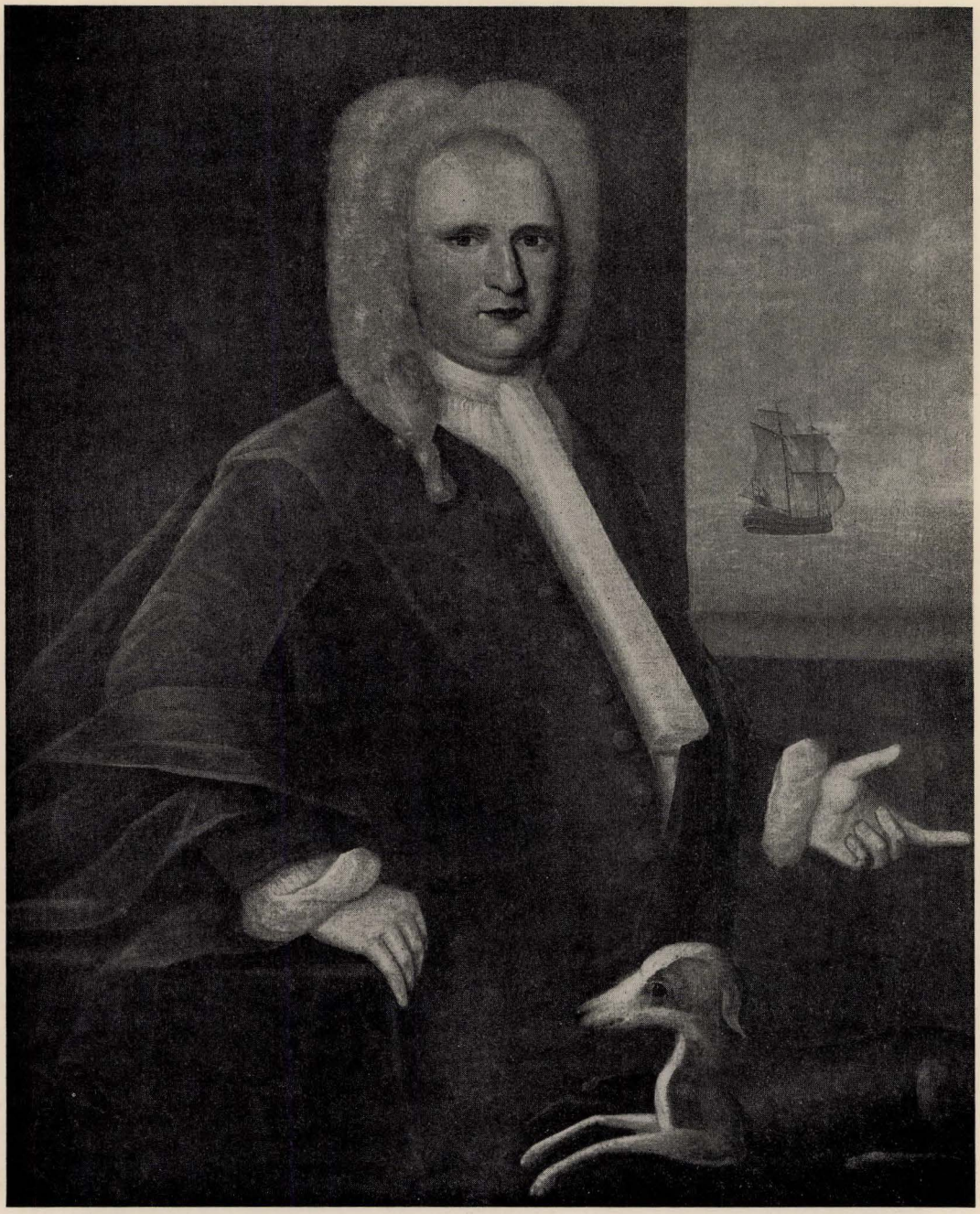
It is clear that in the first half of the eighteenth century Ashkenazim became more numerous than Sephardim. Their economic position also improved

rapidly. In 1728, the twelve Sephardi contributors to the purchase of the burial ground had given £27.1.0, while the more numerous but then less prosperous sixteen Ashkenazi contributors had subscribed £19.11.0. But far and away the biggest contributor to the fund for the erection of the first Mill Street Synagogue was the Ashkenazi Jacob Franks with his gift of £40.10.0. By 1786, the largest part of the synagogue's income came from those bearing Ashkenazi names. Thirty-three of them were assessed £151.9.4 as compared with the assessment of £116.17.4 set on nineteen Sephardim. Indicative also of the more numerous immigration of the Ashkenazim are the naturalization figures of Jews from this period. Between 1740 and 1759, of the twenty-nine Jews naturalized, eighteen bore Ashkenazi names and eleven Sephardi.[4]

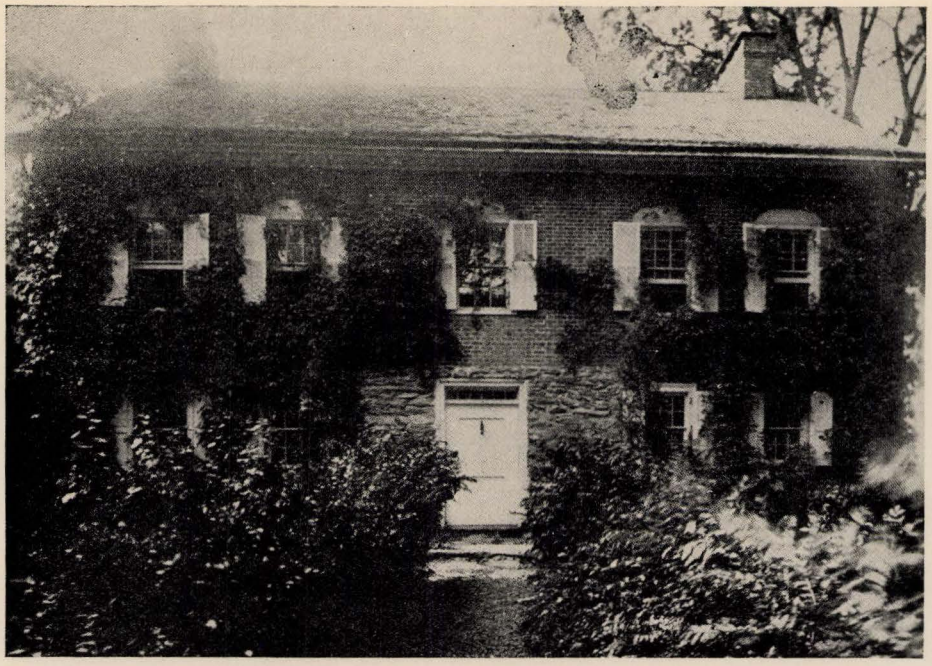
Corresponding with their steady increase in numbers and status Ashkenazim attained positions of influence in the affairs of the congregation. The regulations for Shearith Israel adopted in 1728 were signed by fifteen leaders of the congregation. Nine of these bore such Sephardi names as Gomez, Mendes Pacheco, Rodriguez de Rivera, de Medina, Nunes, or Nunes da Costa. Alongside of these were those with such non-Sephardi signatures as Nathan Levy, Jacob Hays, Jacob Franks, Benjamin Wolf Schwab, Abraham Isaacs Emden, and Baruch Judah of Breslau. Yet in 1728 the congregation's administrative character was still so definitely Sephardi that the regulations signed by six Ashkenazim included the ruling that "the Parnas shall be oblidged twice a year to cause these articles to be read in the Sinagog both in Portugues & English." [5]

The Portuguese and Spanish languages had been in use in the congregation from its earliest days. Various Portuguese or Spanish terms continued to be used in designating synagogue functionaries, and we have seen that part of the prayer for the government and the announcement of allotments of functions in the service was partly in Portuguese. On the existing older tombstones in the congregational cemeteries the inscriptions recording Sephardim from 1683 to 1753 with but one exception contain either some Spanish or some Portuguese words. Until 1736 the minutes of the congregation were recorded for the most part in Portuguese, and the congregational accounts were kept in Portuguese until 1745. After that date they were written in English.

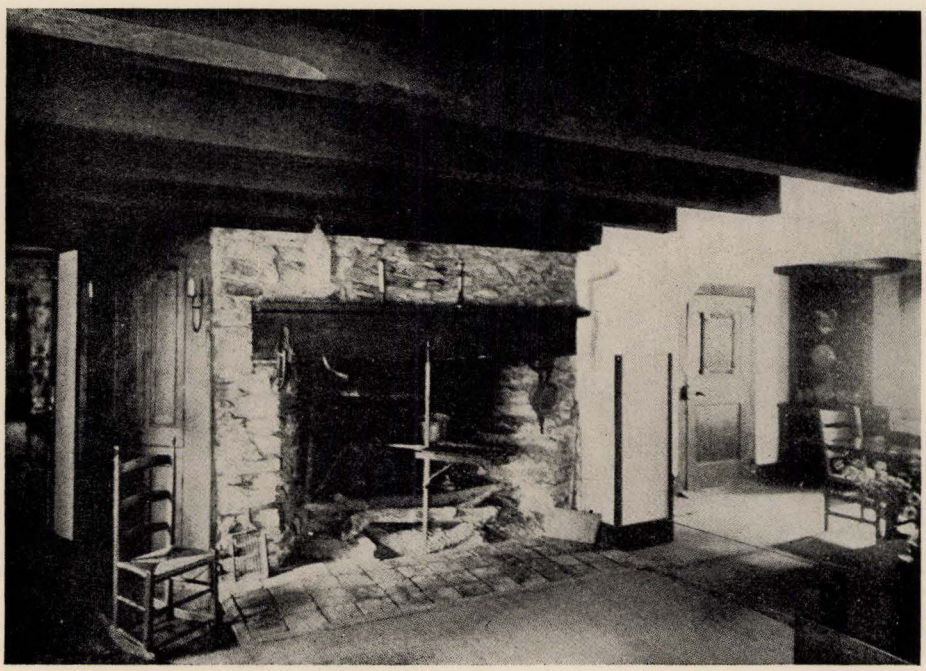
On making their munificent contribution towards the building of the Mill Street Synagogue in 1729 the Sephardi community of Curaçao a few years earlier had written



Moses Levy, 1665–1728, pioneer merchant, parnas, ancestor of many American families



Gomez House built by intrepid pioneer family about 1720 near Duyvil's Danskamer up the Hudson River where they dealt with Indian fur trappers



The interior matches the sturdy exterior, well preserved and picturesque

Now I must tell you that the Members of this Holy Congregation [Curaçao] Whom devotly Contributed to Wards this Benefaction, as we Know that the asquenazum or Germans, are more in Number than Wee there [New York], the(y) desire of you not to Consent not Withstanding they are the most, to Let them have any More Votes nor Authority then they have had hitherto and for the performance of Which you are to get them to Signe and agreement of the Same by all of them, and that one Copy of the Sayd agreement Remain in the Hands of the Treasurer of your Congration another in the Hands of Mr. Luis Gomez as the Eldest Member, and another to be Sent to me for the Treasurer of this Congregation to Keep in his Books, and as this request is funded In Solesiting the Peace and Unety of that Holy Congragation I hope that you as Well as the Asquinazim, Whom all I wish God may bless, Will Comply With this my Petition, for our devines tells us that the foundation of the Begist Blesing that God found to Bless his dear people was Peace (as it is written) God Bless his People With peace With Which he may Bless and Keep you many years—according to his power . . .[6]

In the closely related Sephardi congregations in Holland and England, and in Latin America, the drastic division between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was as a rule rigidly preserved. In the early days of the London Sephardi congregation when the Ashkenazim in that city were only a handful of individuals, they were welcomed in the Sephardi synagogue in Creechurch Lane. The shammash of that Sephardi congregation was a Polish Jew. These Ashkenazim contributed to the congregation through their offerings, and some were included in the finta (assessment). But in 1678–79 a regulation was adopted by the London community that no Ashkenazi should ever hold an office in the synagogue, or vote, or be given any mitzvoth, or be called to the Torah, or recite the mourner's kaddish, or pay the congregational impostas (income taxes) unless special permission were granted by at least ten elders. From this imperious ruling three Ashkenazim were exempted, one of them being the shammash. In 1682, these rulings were modified to allow Ashkenazim to make voluntary offerings and to permit "deserving Tudescos" to be called to the Torah.[7] In the two and a half centuries since those days these rigidly segregating prescripts have been practically outlived.[8]

Nothing whatsoever of this character is recorded at any period in the history of the American synagogue. The spirit of the New World echoed the Psalmist's ecstatic words, "how good and how lovely it is when brethren dwell together in unity." In 1719, the Ashkenazi Samuel Levy was president of the congregation. In 1728, when consecutive records begin, his brother Moses Levy, and in 1730, Jacob Franks, were presidents of the congregation.



E Pluribus Unum

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH MEMBERS OF CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL HAVE COME.

Over the following decades the number of presidents bearing Ashkenazi names steadily increased, as the following figures show:

	Sephardim	*Ashkenazim*
1728–1740	8	5
1741–1750	4	8
1751–1760	6	11
1761–1770	4	16
1771–1776	3	7
	25	47

Of these twenty-five Sephardi parnassim, no less than twenty were members of the Gomez family. In the years from 1728 to the Revolution, forty-six of the hatanim bore Ashkenazi names and only sixteen Sephardi names, while of the adjuntos sixty-one had Ashkenazi family names and only nineteen, all of whom were of the Gomez family, bore a Sephardi name. In 1761, the rules adopted by the congregation were signed by its electors. Of these, no less than twenty-nine bore Ashkenazi names and only ten Sephardi.

Such figures uniformly attest that from the second or third decade of the eighteenth century those with Ashkenazi names progressively outnumbered the Sephardim in the congregation and took increasing control of its affairs. We can therefore well understand how in the records of the congregation not infrequently there occur Ashkenazi transliterations of Hebrew terms and purely Ashkenazi terms. The Sephardi religious leader of the congregation, Gershom Mendes Seixas, in his intimate personal letters delighted to use German or Ashkenazi expressions which he picked up from popular usage both in the congregation generally and in his own family.[9] The integration of Sephardim and Ashkenazim and frequent marriage between them was a hallmark of life in the New World, in sharp contrast with the Old. However, Sephardi tradition dominated the union, and the resulting offspring almost invariably considered themselves Sephardi.

Jews sometimes came not from Central or Western Europe, but from more distant parts. Ezra Stiles mentions two from Constantinople who came to the city in 1767. They did not prove to be the forerunners of the Messiah whom the Jews of New York were expecting to appear in 1768, and when he did not come, Stiles records that the Jews were greatly disappointed.[10]

After the War for Independence, despite the bleak years of economic uncertainty in the new nation, the call of liberty drew increasing numbers from

outremer. The upheaval of the French Revolution brought refugees from France to the more sober American republic. From Germany also increasing numbers sought escape under the impact of the violent political reaction and economic dislocation subsequent to the Napoleonic wars. Within Shearith Israel the story continued of the complete and harmonious mingling of all groups of varied origins. After the Revolution, at the meeting called in 1784 for reorganization under the new conditions, there were present twelve congregants bearing Sephardi names and thirty-nine bearing Ashkenazi names. At the first meeting of the electors held thereafter, on May 24, 1784, twenty-one of those who voted had Ashkenazi names and only Joseph Pinto and Benjamin Mendes Seixas represented those with Sephardi names. In the lists of allotment of seats in 1788, of the eighty-six seats assigned only thirteen went to those with Sephardi names, just as in 1795, of the ninety seats allotted to men only fifteen were assigned to those with the names of Seixas, Gomez, Lopez, de Leon, Castro, Pinto, de Crasto, and Ricardo.[11]

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century the proportion of seatholders bearing Ashkenazi names was around eighty percent.[12] In the third decade of the nineteenth century the trickling immigration of Ashkenazim from western Europe began to increase phenomenally. Sephardim also continued to come from Central and South America, the West Indies, Canada, England, and Holland, and some few from France. The failure of the brave liberal Revolution of 1848 in Germany brought a great band of freedom loving political refugees to America. The rise of the German Jewish group to leadership in the community throughout America dates from that mid-nineteenth-century influx. Wherever they settled they made a place for themselves and helped develop the country. Some of them or their children became members and leaders of Shearith Israel.

During all those decades, new members came to Shearith Israel also from other American cities and communities. There were many marital ties and business connections between families in Shearith Israel and the early settlers in Newport, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, and Montreal, with consequent accretion or exchange of memberships.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of a new era in American Jewish history with the spectacular floodtide of refugee immigration into the United States from eastern Europe. The era of steerage travel reached its apogee. Robert Fulton's miracle-on-the-Hudson of 1807,

the steamships which followed the clipper sailing vessels, and finally mushrooming steamship companies, opened wide the transatlantic lanes. For the impoverished immigrant the quarters on board ship were wretchedly congested. But the almost miasmic steerage quarters were only temporary tribulation of little moment to those who sought escape from the confines of the Pale of Settlement in Russia within which the Jew had known no security, no freedom, and no human rights. The seeds of hatred sedulously sown there finally burst into a series of pogroms and massacres typified in the dark name of Kishinev. These gave the signal for a new and momentous exodus of Eastern European Jewry. To America, the great "Mother of Exiles," came year by year myriads who escaped from a life of fearfulness, ignominy, and humiliation. The Americanization of the immigrants from eastern and central Europe is a saga in the social history of the United States. Though its impact on Shearith Israel was less marked than on the socio-economic development of the expanding city, it was not long before some of those who had gone from the gangplank to the ghetto emerged to freer life elsewhere in the expanding metropolis. A number of these new Americans or their children, whether of Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Rumanian, Galician, or Hungarian background, chose the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue for their religious home, notwithstanding striking differences between their east European synagogue services and the Sephardi tradition. The overriding oneness of the religious fellowship within the congregation made all welcome and gave all alike equal opportunity to serve God and man.

As if the new land were a seismograph of history, cataclysmic events in other countries continued to touch off movements of emigration to America. One such wave of migration began in the Ottoman world in the first decade of the twentieth century. Minor alongside the spectacular era of eastern European mass immigration or the infinitely tragic Hitlerian dispersion, the Ottoman wave was yet of major import to Shearith Israel. It affected deeply congregational life as well as Sephardi development throughout the United States. Beginning with the disruption of the Sultan's domain, a new stream of emigration to the West spread through the entire Mediterranean basin. In hours of decision, Turkey, Greece, Syria, and the Island of Rhodes; the Balkan states of Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania; the North African lands of Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, were all touched by the magnet that was the United States. The Jews of those countries overwhelmingly shared in the

Spanish and Portuguese religious tradition, though since the exile from Spain more than four centuries separated them from the Sephardim of northern Europe and America. The retentive loyalty of both the Eastern and the Western Sephardim to the ancient religious tradition of their ancestors made the reunion of the two groups on American soil a dramatically stirring moment.

The First World War brought no marked change in the demography of Shearith Israel beyond the acceleration of the Oriental Sephardi immigration which had begun a decade earlier. Suddenly the serene tempo of quiet organic growth which marked Shearith Israel's history was profoundly shaken as was Jewish life everywhere, and finally as was the whole world, by the orgy of Nazi barbarism and its cataclysmic aftermath of the Second World War. The tragic trail of sorrow-borne emigration from central Europe had started soon after Hitler came to power. Upon Shearith Israel it had an impact that time will but deepen. America's oldest synagogue absorbed and integrated within the deeply rooted congregation "remnants of Israel" from wheresoever they came and was strengthened by the renewed fraternity of faith.

With the outbreak of hostilities and the occupation of the Low Countries and of France by Nazi forces, with America's entry into the war and the involvement of the Far East and much of Asia, Shearith Israel became a microcosm of the Jewish diaspora. Members of a bewildered generation leaving behind them turmoil and anguish came to its tranquil sanctuary and found peace in a renewed and free faith. More countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa gave congregants to Shearith Israel in one decade than in the well nigh three centuries before. In a few brief years the congregation became a world assembly. European Sephardim came from Holland, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Rumania, Greece, Rhodes, Gibraltar and the Azores. European Ashkenazim came from England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania. The African lands bordering on the Mediterranean, Morocco, Tangier, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, and Egypt; and the Sudan and the central African countries of the Belgian Congo and Rhodesia sent of their Sephardim to Shearith Israel. From Asia at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, Israel, and also Lebanon, added to the congregational membership, while from farther east, from Syria, Iraq, Georgia, Iran, and Bokhara, an increasing number came into the fold of the congregation. More recently Shearith Israel, "the Remnant of Israel," welcomed into its fellowship of worship remnants of Israel

from lands even more remote and still farther east—Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, the Philippines, China, and Japan. Neighboring Canada and South Africa, New Zealand, and other parts of the far-flung British Commonwealth also brought members to the congregation.

As might well be expected, throughout its history members have come to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue from most of the countries of Latin America, such as Guatemala, San Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, British and Dutch Guiana, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay and the Argentine Republic, as well as from Central American islands such as St. Thomas, Cuba, and Jamaica.

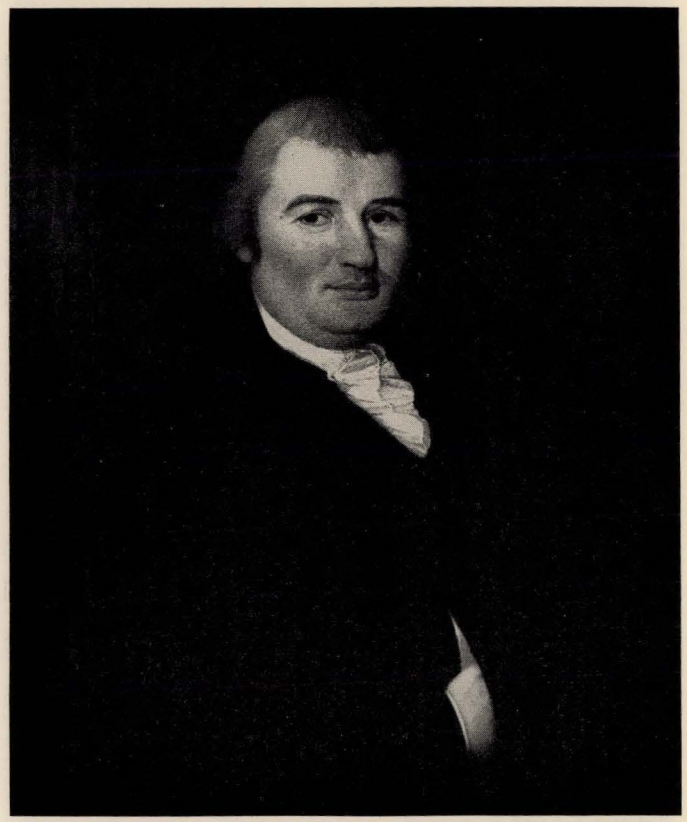
Probably in no other congregation in the world is there so wide an ingathering of Jews from the four corners of the earth as is to be found in Shearith Israel in New York City. Throughout the congregation's three centuries, its history has been marked by the integration of the elements which have come to it from sixty or more countries of the earth. Within the compass of the congregation the motto of the country, *E pluribus unum*, has achieved happy fulfilment.

Who have been these men and women who thus have foregathered and worshiped together in the unity and the integrity of Shearith Israel? What has been their distinctive character? What fragments of their lives can be captured across the pages of its history to our own day? What forces shaped their lives? How have they earned their bread? What imprint have they left on the community, the city, the country of which they have been a part? How have they shared in the hopes, trials and triumphs of the Jewish people? The synagogue is molded by its religious traditions, its historic associations, creed and ritual. Its place and meaning in the community are determined by the congregation, the individual men and women who constitute its membership. The portrait of Shearith Israel reveals a congregation that has vitality, drama, and the pioneer spirit of life in this new world. Its twelve generations, however, appear here only in outline.

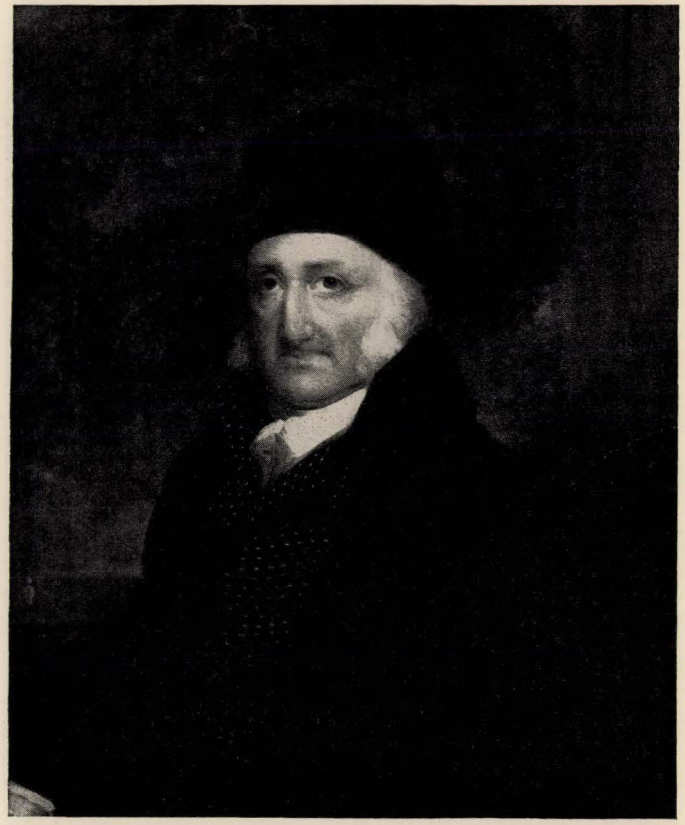
The first to arrive in Nieuw Amsterdam was Jacob bar Simson. From his name and the absence of the usual Sephardi cognomens we assumed that he was an Ashkenazi Jew. He worked, as he said, as a manual laborer. The group of twenty-three who arrived about two weeks later in September, 1654, and settled among the some eight hundred inhabitants of Nieuw Amsterdam formed about three percent of the population. We have already come to know

among them the Sephardically named Moses Ambrosius, Abraham Israel de Pisa, Ricke Nounes, and Judicq de Mereda; the Ashkenazi Asser Levy, and Abraham and David Israel who from their names as recorded may have been either Sephardim or Ashkenazim. Within a few months they were followed by Abraham de Lucena, David de Ferera, Salvador d'Andrade, Joseph d'Acosta, and Jacob Cohen Henriques. We have met all of these in the story of the struggle for civil rights in Nieuw Amsterdam. As early as 1656 we find mention of Benjamin Cardozo, Joshua Mordecai Henriques, Elias Silva, one Isaac Mesa who did not stay in the colony, and a year later Moses and Jacob de Lucena.

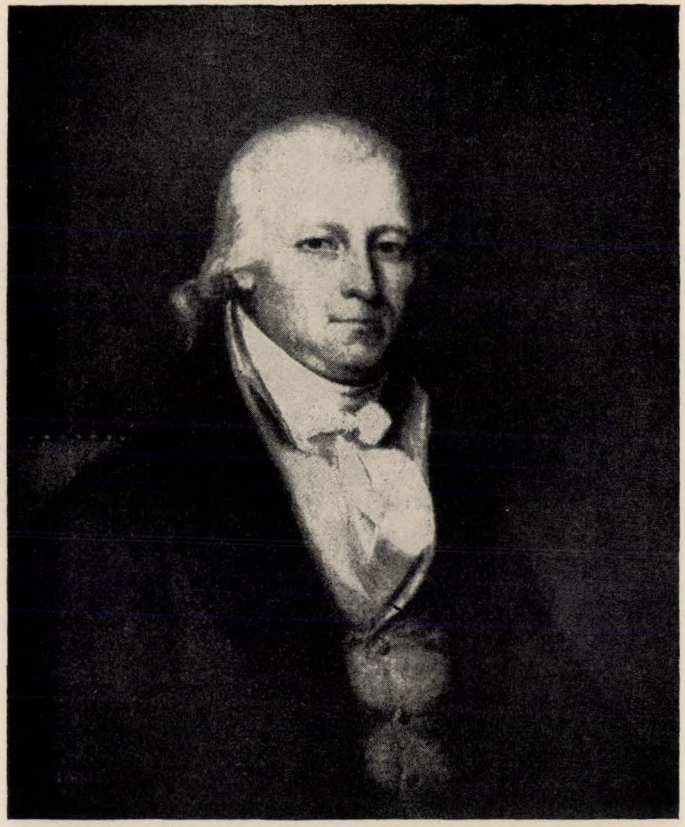
When after 1664 Nieuw Amsterdam became New York, we see Asser Levy and Jacob Israel signing an oath of allegiance to the new government in 1668. Two years later, David Machoro appears on the scene. All records that may have been kept by the Jewish congregation in New York in the seventeenth century have disappeared. In order to learn what Jews were in the congregation in those days, we have to search through public records, such as the names of those given letters of denization and those admitted as freemen, tax lists, and records of court procedures in such matters as the adjudication of business claims. That tireless student of American Jewish history, Samuel Oppenheim, delighted to search laboriously through all such documents, and we owe most of the names which follow to his papers which are now in the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society. Among the Jews who made up the Jewish community in New York in the last four decades of the seventeenth century were David (1681) and Raphael (1694) Abendana, and Mordecai Abendanon, who died of smallpox in 1690; Moses Aboab, a merchant who in 1684 received a license to trade; Isaac Asher; Simon Bonam (1687); David Pardo (1684) and Joseph Pardo (d. 1690), and Shearith Israel's rabbi and merchant Saul Brown-Pardo (1685), and his wife Esther (d. 1708); Daniel Campanal (1697); Isaac Cotinho (1676); an Italian Jew, Rabba Couty (1666–1674); Isaac da Costa (1686); Benjamin and Esther de Casseres (1689); Isaac Cohen de Lara (1699); Shearith Israel's rabbi and merchant Abraham de Lucena (1699); Benjamin Bueno de Mesquita (d. 1683), who is the first known to us to be buried in the Chatham Square Cemetery purchased in 1682, and Joseph Bueno de Mesquita (1682) and his wife, Rachel Doval(e); Jacob de Robles and David and Bienvenida de Robles, who had been forced to leave France on account of persecution, and who on their arrival in 1687



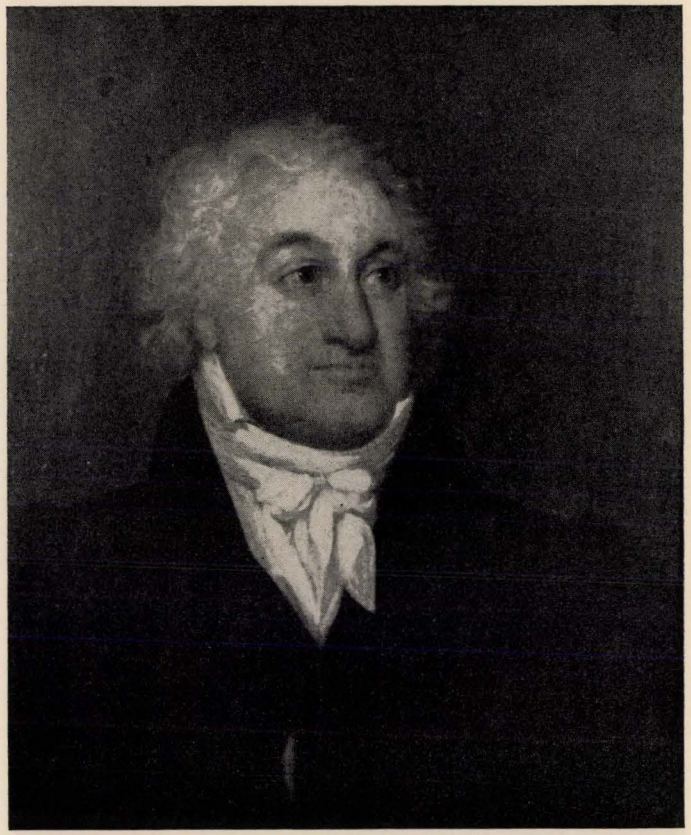
Joshua Isaacs, Revolutionary soldier, parnas in 1799



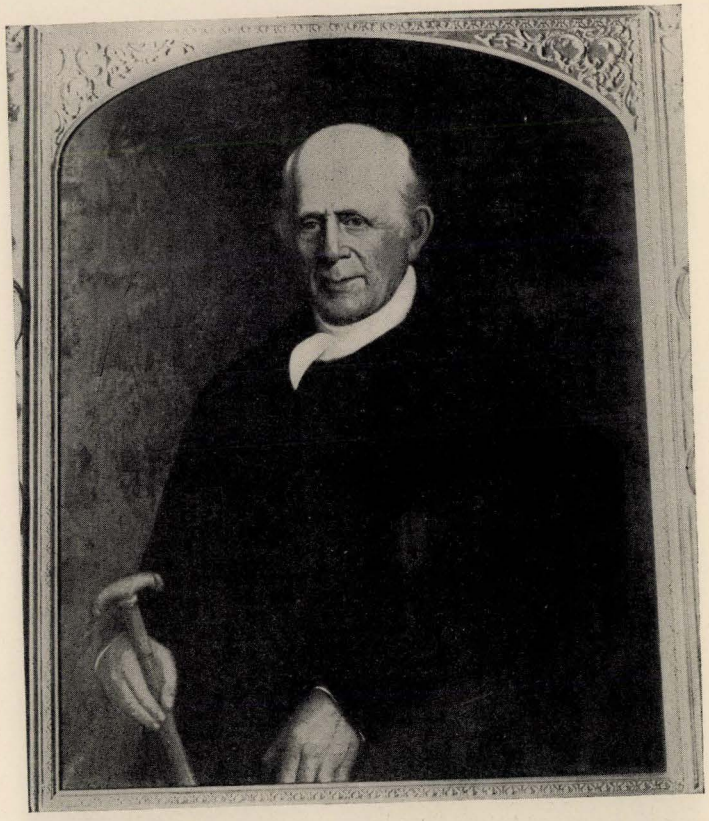
Isaac Moses, 1741–1818, patriot, shipowner, parnas



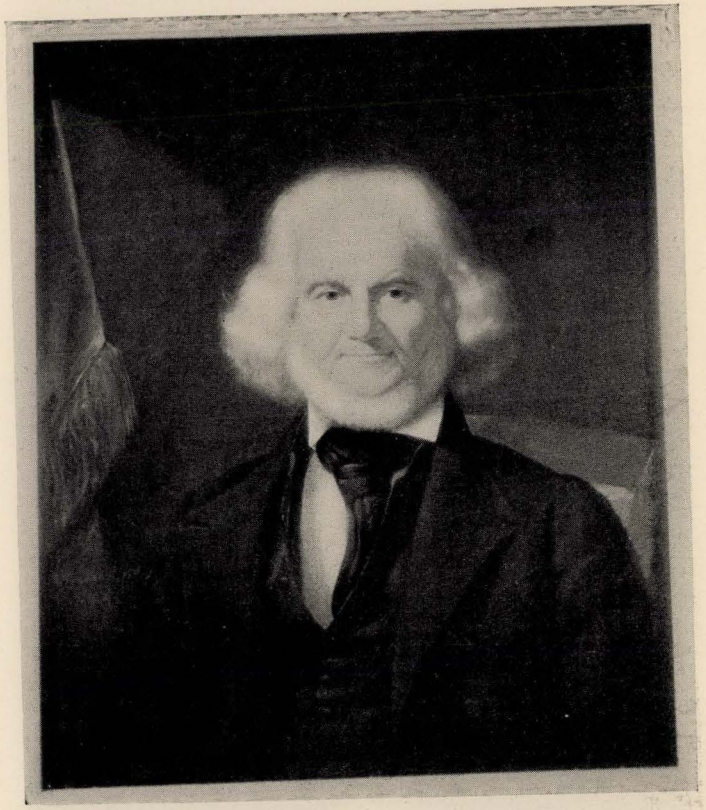
Jonas Phillips, 1735–1803. Advocated religious freedom and served in Revolution. Father of 21 children.



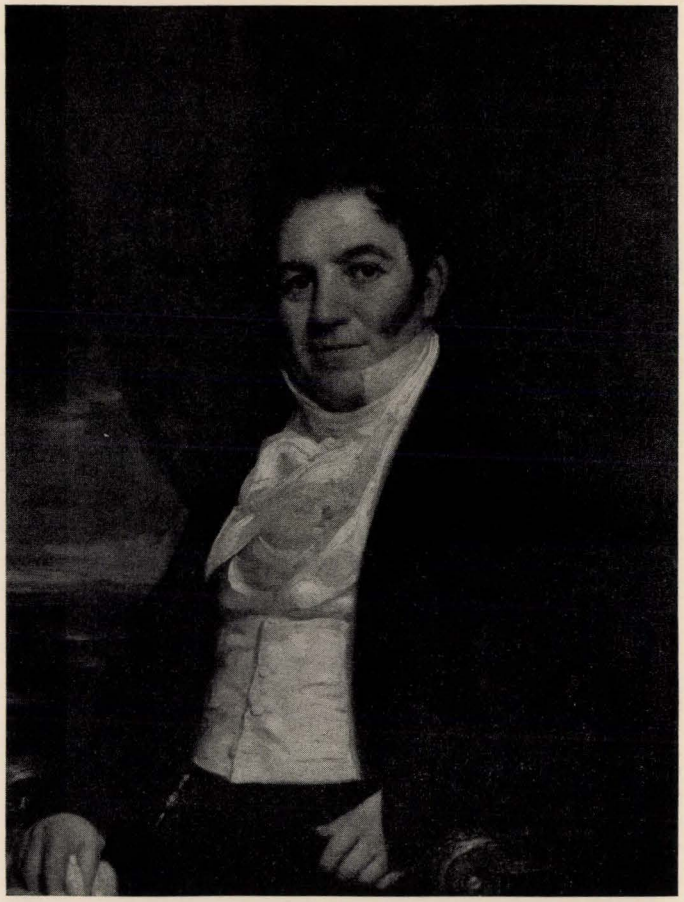
Bernard Hart, 1764–1855, a soldier in the War of 1812. He was parnas 1806–9, and secretary of the New York Stock Exchange, 1831–55. Grandfather of Bret Harte.



Naphtali Phillips, 1773–1870, newspaper owner, parnas



Israel Baer Kursheedt, 1766–1852, learned Jew, parnas, founder of Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh for aiding Holy Land



Harmon Hendricks, 1771–1838, philanthropist, parnas



Louis Napoleon Levy, 1854–1921, parnas 28 years. Directed construction of today's synagogue.

petitioned for letters of denization and permission to bring ashore goods which they had on board ship; Isaac Fernandes Dias, who in 1700 is on record as voting for a city alderman, and his assistant; Jacob do Porto (1697); Isaac Gabay Faro (1686) and Esther Bueno de Mesquita, his wife, and their daughter Bilhah (d. 1694); Benjamin Franks, a jeweler, formerly resident of Barbados and Jamaica, who sailed away from the city in September, 1696, on Captain Kidd's vessel and survived the captain's piratical adventures; Bianca Henriques Granada, who died in the smallpox epidemic of 1690, and Isaac and Sarah Henriques Granada; the butcher Isaac Henriques, who became a freeman in 1688; Elijah Ilhoa, who died in 1699, and whose grave had to be moved a century and a half later from the Chatham Square graveyard to that on 21st Street; Abraham Isaacs (1699), Jacob Isaacs, the butcher Joseph Isaacs, who became a freeman in 1698, and who died in 1737, and his wife; the widow Rifka Isaacs; the soapmaker Benjamin Israel (1699), who is also recorded as a city voter, and Jacob Israel (1675); Moses Levi (1691), who in 1695 was granted denization rights and admitted as a freeman; an unsuccessful butcher, Ansell Samuel Levy (1685), and his wife, Margaret, who when he married her was the widow of the community leader Asser Levy; Moses Levy (d. 1728), the parnas of the community when the decision was made to build the Mill Street Synagogue, his wife Grace Mears Levy, and his brother Samuel Levy characterized by James Alexander as a most honest man and a man of most easy temper, and his wife Rachel (d. 1732), daughter of Asher Michalls de Paul; Isaac Rodrigues Marques (1695) and Rebecca Rodrigues Marques (d. 1697); Abraham de Sosa Mendes (1683); Asher and Rebecca Michalls (de Paul); Isaac and Sarah Naphtali; the learned young merchant Joseph Tores Nunes, who died in 1704 when only thirty years of age; David D. Robles (1696); and David Valentine van der Wilder.[13]

When we enter the eighteenth century, we are still concerned with a very small Jewish community in a town which counted a total population of only a little over four thousand souls. The city's trade was for the most part in furs and skins, tobacco, horses, beef, pork, oil, peas, and wheat, but trade was apparently decaying. In the year 1700, among the taxpayers in the East Ward were David Campanal, Isaac Fernandes Dias, I. C. de Lara, Jacob do Porto, the butcher Joseph Isaacs, Moses Levy, and David Valentine. In the Dock Ward were living the taxpayers Simon Bonam, Saul Brown-Pardo, Joseph Bueno de Mesquita and his wife, and Isaac Rodrigues Marques. In the North Ward,

Isaac Gabay, and in the South Ward, Benjamin Israel, were the only Jews appearing among the taxpayers. Yet we know that there were Jews other than these comparatively prosperous taxpaying Sephardim in the little town whatever number may have been covered by the word "many" in the Reverend John Sharpe's statement about New York's Jews in 1712, that there were among them "many ingenious men of the nation from Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc." [14]

After 1728, it becomes easier to get a picture of personalities in the Jewish community of the town, for from that time on we have the congregation's own records. It is from the congregational minute books, books of accounts, and other records that this story has for the most part been drawn. From time to time there were limned objective pictures of New York Jewry of olden days by observers on the outside. One of these was Peter Kalm, professor of "Oeconomy" in Swedish Finland, and a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Science. In 1748, he reported:

> Besides the different sects of Christians, there are many Jews settled in New York, who possess great privileges. They have a synagogue and houses, and great country seats of their own property, and are allowed to keep shops in town. They have likewise several ships, which they freight, and send out with their own goods, in fine, they enjoy all the privileges common to the other inhabitants of this town and province.[15]

Such impressions put on record by Christians, newspaper notices, and other general sources, reveal that there were happy relationships among Christians and Jews in eighteenth-century New York. Generally each accepted the other with an equality in human contacts that was all too rare in the Old World. The civic rights enjoyed by Jewish citizens were regarded by their Christian fellow citizens as a matter of course. Jews went their way naturally alongside of Christians. Indeed, it was the Jewishness of the Jew which the Christian found interesting. Most Jews accepted their American birthright without feeling that it necessitated religious concessions. Solomon Simson, in his letter to the Jews in China written in 1795, could say that

> We here in America in New York and other places live in great tranquility. Jews sit in judgment in civil and in criminal cases just as do gentiles. Here are about seventy-two heads of families, and we have a synagogue called Shearith Israel. There are other places also with synagogues and in all Jews live in great security.[16]

For the years following the Revolution we can draw from the reports of travelers, from city directories, from newspapers, from legal records, and

from official city documents of many kinds, an objective picture of the Jewish congregation in New York City. The New York Directory of 1787 listed twenty-two names of Jews, beginning with Isaac Abrams, soap boiler, on Cortlandt Street, and going down through the alphabet to Alexander Zuntz, broker, at 4 Little Dock Street. Two years later the number had risen to forty-six, with Abram J. Abrams, tobacconist, at 1 Little Dock Street heading the list. Colorful advertisements in eighteenth-century New York newspapers tell of Jewish merchants engaged in the most varied commercial pursuits.

Already in pre-Revolutionary days New York Jewish merchants had been shipowners engaged in commerce far and wide to Central America, Europe, and even India. In 1788, Bernard Hart was a member of the Marine Society of the City of New York, while Manuel Josephson, Isaac Moses, Sampson Mears, Issachar Pollock, and Isaac Adolphus, "deceased," were listed among its honorary members. Sometimes an acute situation would develop for a shipowner, as when on a sloop belonging to Solomon Simson, one of the proprietors of the United Whaling Company, the quartermaster Coudent, turned pirate, and went his way on Mr. Simson's ship.[17]

Jews in New York enjoyed the widest latitude in their choice of occupation. Among the fifty-nine listed in the New York directory for 1799, fourteen were classed generally as merchants and four as auctioneers. Two were bookbinders and stationery merchants, two brokers and commission merchants, two fig blue and chocolate manufacturers, and two were coppersmiths. There was one of each of the following occupations—tobacconist, harness-maker, insurance broker, grocer, owner of a dry goods store, hairdresser, accountant, shipwright, mariner, druggist, carpenter, smith, boatman, pilot, and curer of rheumatics. Two women, Rachel Hays and the widow of Issachar Pollock, were mantilla makers. However, what with large families to rear and the exhausting routine not to say drudgery of household cares, women in those days seldom took part in outside activities.

With the early years of the nineteenth century, as a result of the marked increase in numbers through immigration a still greater diversity began to invade the heterogeneity of New York's Jewish community. In the record of offerings made in the synagogue during the years 1804 to 1819 such entries occur as Alexander bar Salomon, a German; Asher from Frankfurt, dentist; Joseph Andrade, son of the Haham of France; Baruch ben Yonah or Mr. Jones of Gibraltar; David bar Eleazar of Bremen; Jacobs of Surinam; Marcus Jacobs

of London, and Wolfe, a tailor from London. We also find evidence of increasing movement of individuals from the other Jewish communities which were growing up in the United States at that time. The synagogue was visited and offerings were made by Moses Davis and Israel Joseph of Richmond, Charlotte David of Canada, Judah Hart of Savannah, Ben Hays of Ossining, John Jacobs of Boston, Aaron Lopez of Charleston, Levi Salomons of Albany, and Mr. Rochell of New Orleans. Others, often transients whose name was hardly known, appear under such picturesque descriptions as Rabbi Solomons with beard; Rabbi with beard; Isaac ben Abram, small man with red beard; and Fetz, tall pedlar. Clearly the beard was an unusual phenomenon in New York Jewry at that time. Others who made offerings in synagogue were quaintly described as blackman, Rabbi Numpo, Cosher Myers, and Steamboat Isaacs. The community had begun to expand, even though in 1812 Gershom Mendes Seixas, who assuredly knew the New York Jewish community as well as anyone else, estimated that it consisted of sixty families. Households were not small in those days, and this may have meant that there were somewhere between 400 and 500 Jews in the city which by then counted 96,000 inhabitants. The New York City census of 1806 reveals that in the household of Gershom Seixas there were twelve persons, nineteen in that of his brother Benjamin, and in that of Isaac Moses there were twenty-one. That census also indicates a disproportionate excess of females over males. It lists only 120 Jewish males as contrasted with 159 females.

The seatholders in Shearith Israel in 1834 were engaged in the most variegated occupations. Among them there were serving in public life three inspectors, two marshals, two police officers, a revenue officer, and a master in chancery. In the professions there were two attorneys, one counselor at law, one editor, one physician, and one professor of languages. In the world of finance there were four brokers, one exchange broker, and one who conducted a lottery office. There were manufacturers of blacking, of pencils, of quills, of reflectors, and of umbrellas. There were five auctioneers, three clothiers, three druggists, two copper store owners, two liquor dealers, two tobacconists and two watchmakers. In the congregation there was also a dry goods merchant, a dyer, a fancy store keeper, a dealer in hardware, an importer, a lithographer, a mercer, one who dealt in real estate, a coal yard owner, and a boardinghouse keeper.

From virtually the beginning of the congregational records we find medical practitioners among the congregants.[18] About the year 1740, Dr. Elias Woolin, a native of Bohemia, arrived in the city. He advertised in Zenger's *New York Weekly* that he had served in his "Imperial Majesties Army as Chirurgeon four years." Another Jewish medical man of whom we catch a glimpse at the same period was Dr. Nunes.[19]

Ten years later, in 1750, Dr. Nathan Levy appears on the scene, and in 1752 Jacob Isaac, lately arrived from Germany, advertised wonderful cures performed by him.[20] In 1759 Ralph, son of Jacob de Paz, married Rachel, widowed daughter of Moses Etting. In the marriage contract drawn up for him by the congregation he is described as *harophe* (the doctor). In August, 1761, Dr. Andrew Judah arrived from Holland via England. On his arrival he advertised himself in Wyeman's New York *Gazette* as a medicinal doctor to be found at the corner of Bayard and Broad streets. In his advertisement in the New York *Gazette* on September 3 he offered his service to the poor gratis, but the congregation paid him when it called on him to attend its poor between 1761 and 1763. He then went on to South Carolina.[21]

In 1786 Saul Israel appears on the scene as a "curer of deafness," and five years later Dr. Barnet (also spelt Barnett or Bernard) Cowan (or Cowen or Coan) appears in the New York City Directory as a physician.[22]

In 1787 there is mention of a Jewish Dr. Graham. Dr. Hyman Isaac Long from Jamaica, B.W.I., is found in the congregation in 1795, and a Dr. Leo Wolf is mentioned from the same period. Walter J. Judah, the young medical student who gave his life in the yellow fever epidemic of 1798, was a son of an old family in the congregation. He was probably the second native-born child of the congregation to enter the medical profession, for Isaac Abrahams, the only Jewish graduate of Columbia College prior to the Revolution, also bore the title of doctor.[23]

One of the most notable of the physicians among the members of the congregation, and one who was very active in synagogue affairs, was Dr. Joel Hart. He was born in Philadelphia in 1784, a son of the distinguished New York congregant, Ephraim Hart. After graduating from the Royal College of Surgery in London, he returned to New York. He was a charter member of the Medical Society of the County of New York in 1806. He was also an incorporator and a trustee of the New York College of Physicians in 1807. On appointment by President Madison he served as United States Consul at

Leith from 1817 to 1832. Then he returned to New York and resumed his medical practice which he followed until his death in June, 1842.[24]

The gifted and versatile Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto was the son of the congregation's Hazzan Peixotto. In 1825–26, together with Dr. Beck and Dr. Bell, he edited the New York *Medical and Physical Journal;* in 1829, he was its sole editor. He was an organizer and the first secretary of the Academy of Medicine, and president of the New York County Medical Society from 1830 to 1832. In 1836 he went to Cleveland to become the president of Willoughby Medical College. He later returned to New York. Many medical and Jewish publications bear the name of this religiously conscientious and generous citizen who died in 1843 at the early age of forty-two.[25]

Dr. Israel Moses was a grandson of the patriot merchant-prince of Revolutionary days, Isaac Moses. He was born in New York in 1823. Shortly after completing his medical training, he entered the army and served in the Mexican War in 1847 and 1848. He was a member of the small sanitary commission which was largely instrumental in laying down the modern concepts of medical service in the army. He remained as assistant surgeon of the army until he had to resign in 1855 on account of injured health. When Mt. Sinai Hospital opened the doors of its new building in 1855, he operated on the first case admitted to that hospital. Some years later the War between the States broke upon the nation. Then in 1862 he entered the army once more, remaining with it through campaigns in various parts of the country. He was wounded and was finally mustered out in 1865 as lieutenant-colonel. Five years later at the early age of forty-seven he died. He was a man who had truly given the best of his life to the service of his country.[26]

One physician of the middle of the nineteenth century who has received frequent mention in this story is Dr. Simeon Abrahams (d. 1867). Like Israel Moses he was a bachelor. He served as treasurer of the congregation. His Jewish scholarly interests were strong; he was a Talmudic scholar, a mohel, and a lecturer for the Hebrew Literary and Religious Library Association. As one who was an ardent lover of Zion, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was president of the North American Relief Society, and active in the Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh. In the field of philanthropy he was associated with the New York Hebrew Assistance Society, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, and an organizer of a free clinic for the Jewish poor. He was a trustee of the fourth city ward. He left a legacy of $10,000 to Mt. Sinai Hospital.[27]

Dr. Mark Blumenthal, one of two brothers actively identified with congregational life and the founder and president of the Sabbath Observance Society, left his mark on New York medical history. Born in 1831 in Bavaria, he was brought to New York as a lad of eight. He organized the medical administration of Mt. Sinai Hospital in its early days, and formulated its records and monthly reports. He was further a pioneer in training the deaf through lip reading and articulate speech, and from 1882 to 1894 he was the president of the Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf Mutes. He was president of the Medical Union and of the New York Physicians Mutual Association. He served as Surgeon Major in the Third Regiment of the National Guard.

Dr. Horatio Gomez (1827–1909) was for a number of years treasurer of Shearith Israel. Dr. Jesse G. M. Bullowa, professor of medicine at New York University, is remembered for his pioneer work in the serum treatment of lobar pneumonia. Dr. Max Huhner, who made the study of Shakespeare his avocation, developed what has generally been called the Huhner test for determining the fertility of the male. Dr. Isador C. Rubin, a pioneer in modern gynecology, devised the diagnostic and therapeutic Rubin test by insufflation for female potential fertility, and was the first to devise hysterography for diagnosing the presence or the absence of uterine tumors.

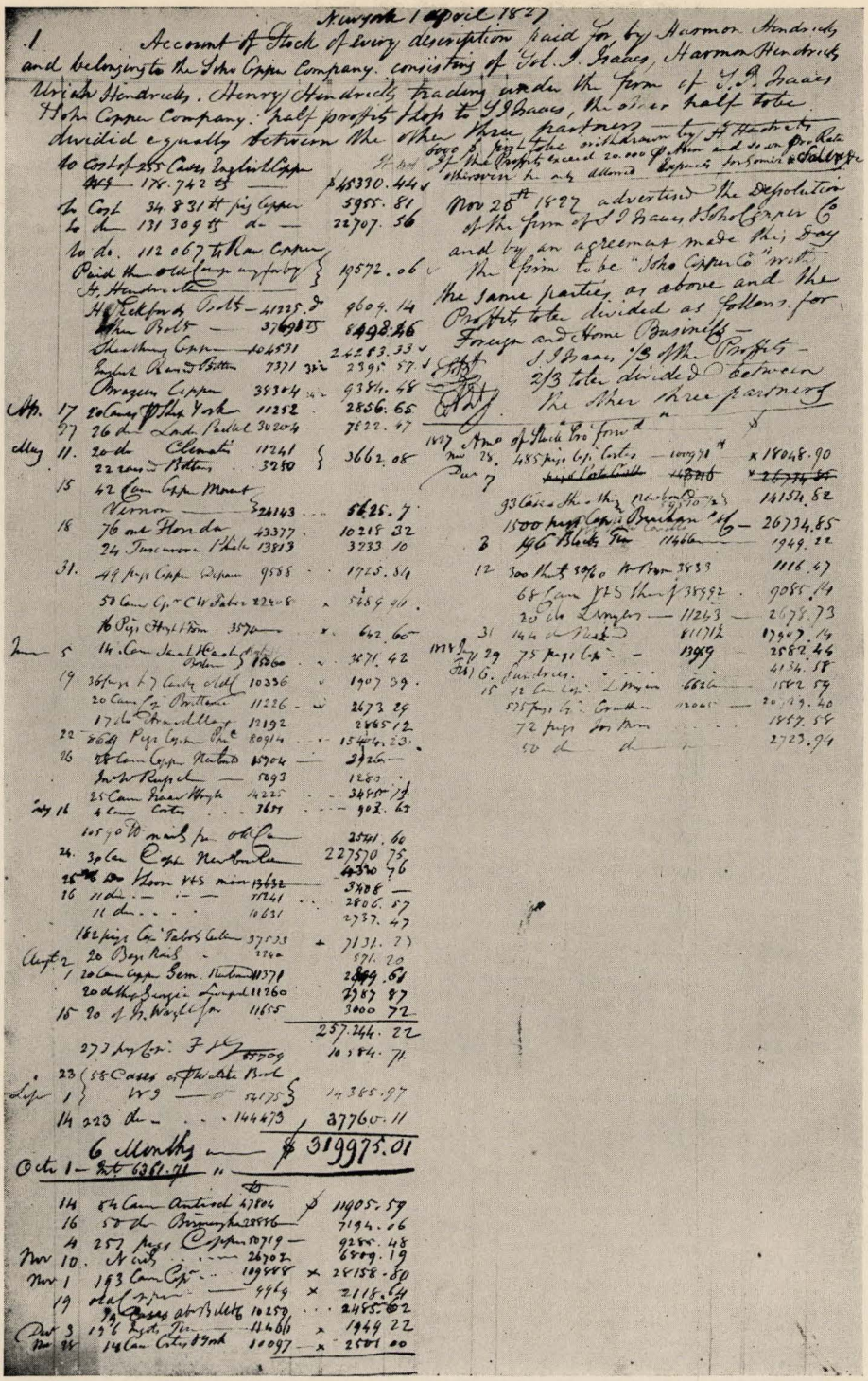
The story of the writers in Shearith Israel begins with Isaac Pinto and Gershom Mendes Seixas, whose literary productions have been referred to in earlier chapters. Another congregant whose writings were solely in the Jewish field was Solomon Henry Jackson. In 1824, he undertook the publication of a magazine devoted to Jewish defense, *The Jew; Being a Defense of Judaism Against All Adversaries and Particularly Against the Insidious Attacks of Israel's Advocate. The Jew* was the first Jewish periodical to be issued in the United States. It appeared for two years. Jackson was also the translator and printer of the first Hebrew and English prayer book to be issued in the United States, the Sephardi prayer book published in New York in 1826. Eleazar S. Lazarus as editor of the Hebrew text cooperated with him in this typographically difficult undertaking.

Naphtali Phillips, who was born in 1773, and who passed away nearly a hundred years later, in 1870, was for many years the publisher of the *National Advocate*. As a youth of fifteen, on July 4, 1788, he had taken part in Philadelphia in the parade of the Federalists celebrating the adoption of the nation's Constitution. In 1797 it was Naphtali Phillips when working in the of-

fice of Claypole's *American Advertiser*, a Philadelphia newspaper, who took off the press the first copy of Washington's farewell address. That document was placed in 1846 in the cornerstone of New York's projected monument to Washington in Hamilton Square, which is now part of Central Park at 64th Street and Fifth Avenue. As the monument was not completed, the cornerstone was taken to Washington where it was deposited in the cornerstone of that city's monument to the first President, dedicated on the Fourth of July, 1848. Naphtali Phillips, a man of staunch piety, served for ten years as president of Congregation Shearith Israel.

The Hays family from the early eighteenth century and the Sulzbergers in the nineteenth century, associated with Shearith Israel and with Mikveh Israel, were actively identified with civic life in New York and Philadelphia. Arthur Hays Sulzberger achieved world renown as publisher of the New York *Times*, and through his support of the Dictionary of American Biography and the comprehensive publications of Jefferson's works he made a major contribution to American letters. He helped the initial publication of the prayer books issued by the Union of Sephardic Congregations and furthered the project of making the historic synagogue in Newport a national site. He was chairman of the Columbia University bicentennial celebration widely observed in 1954.

Brought up by his grandfather Naphtali Phillips was the well known and versatile Mordecai M. Noah (1785–1851). Remarkable is the variety of the work of this brilliant, picturesque, flamboyant, witty, and dashingly quixotic man who was a dramatist and an editor, and who appears in our record also as diplomat, judge, Grand Sachem of the Tammany Society, proto-Zionist, trustee of Congregation Shearith Israel, and its chosen orator on occasions of public significance. Noah was at different times the editor of and a vigorously polemical contributor to several newspapers, such as the *National Advocate*, the New York *Enquirer*, the *Evening Star*, and the *Weekly Messenger*, which, merged with the *Sunday Times*, he edited until his death. In the field of Jewish literature he issued a translation of the Book of Jasher, and published his memorable *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews*, in addition to other addresses of Jewish interest. He was a successful dramatist who wrote and produced *She Would Be a Soldier; or, The Plains of Chippewa; The Wandering Boys; or, The Castle of Olival; The Siege of Tripoli; Marion; or, The Hero of Lake George; The Grecian Captive; or, The Fall of Athens; The Siege of Yorktown;* and *Natalie; or, The French Maid.* Noah's first published



A page from accounts of Hendricks copper-rolling mill which had a notable place in American industry



Fairfield, December 4, 1761.

ALL Perſons indebted to the Eſtate of William Williams, late of Fairfield, in the County of Fairfield, and Colony of Connecticut, deceaſed, are hereby deſired ſpeedily to pay the ſame to us the Subſcribers, Adminiſtrators to the ſaid Eſtate; and all Perſons who have any Demands on the ſaid Eſtate, are deſired ſpeedily to bring in their Accounts to the ſaid Subſcribers, in order that the ſame may be ſettled.

EPHRAIM JACKSON, and ELEAZER WILLIAMS, } Adminiſtrators.

1762

To be Sold,

BY the Widow Hays, living in New-Street, next Door to Col. Thody, All Sorts of Pickles, conſiſting of Peaches, Cucumbers, Beans, Peppers, &c.

RUN-away, on the 5th of January, Given under our Hands at New-Paltz aforeſaid, this third day of November, in the Year of our Lord, One Thouſand Seven Hundred and Sixty-Two,

ABRAHAM HARDENBERGH.
JONAS FREER.
JOHN TERWILGER.

1762

SAMSON MEARS, Gold-ſmith,

HAS open'd his ſhop in Pearl-ſtreet, in the houſe Mr. Andrew Breaſted formerly lived, where he intends to carry on the gold and ſilver-ſmith's buſineſs, after the neweſt and neateſt faſhion; and all commands he is favoured with, will be executed with the moſt thankful diſpatch.

HYAM MYERS,

At the ſign of the poulterers, in Broad-ſtreet, near the City-hall, takes this method to inform the public, that he intends to keep

A Proper poulterer's ſhop, in the ſame manner as they are kept in London. All perſons may be ſupplied with moſt kinds of poultry, at a reaſonable rate, ready for cooking. All maſters of veſſels, or paſſengers, may have live poultry, with coops and corn, upon the ſhorteſt notice. Thoſe that will favour him with their cuſtom in plentiful times, may depend on being well ſerved in the ſcarceſt. As he propoſes to carry on the buſineſs in perfection, it will not be convenient to open ſhop 'till the firſt of December.

TO al[l] & Seton, Traſts or Pa[r]as, her late the Coffee Houſe, under the G[ra]Date the T[h]of her Reſ[i]John Bride[s] Eyck, Dirk[ſ] Denn, Land[s] John Merr[i]nelius Chriſ[t]thoſe Traſts in the Court[s] Names of Traſts or [P]the Eaſtward the Parent the Diviſion Ulſter; on ard of Mey pe of the confluence of the which Hudſon river, being an Bridg[e] granted by letters fibers are[ſ] late province of For further particulars, apply to THEOPHILUS BROWER, Burling-Slip.

FOR [A]tia, St. Croix, & Curracoa, The new Schooner Eliza, N. Fanning, maſter. Will ſail in 6 days. For freight, apply to Joſeph Roſe or Thomas Stagg, jun. & Co. Roſes Dock.

AW BOOKS, in the Factor from London, by CIS CHILDS & Co.

D's reports Fraſer on do
do Powell on deviſes
do Beccaria on crimes
2 vols Gilbert's common pleas
do Ditto deviſes
2 vols Homes nature of juſtices
do

1793

Sales by SIMON NATHAN,

On Tueſday, at the Coffee houſe, 12 o'clock, The ſloop MARIA.

As the ſame from Faulkland-iſland—inventory to be ſeen at the Vendue Room.

On Wedneſday, at the Vendue Room, No. 9 Hanover ſquare,

A general aſſortment of Dry Goods, conſiſting of 4-4, 5-4, 6-4 India jaconet and book muſlins, muſlinets, caſſias, Gunahs, Langen cottons, jaconet and book muſlin handkfs. muſlinets, dimities, faſtians, Iriſh linens, cambricks, light and dark chintzes, callico-s, purple ſhawls, ſtriped nankeens, durants, tammies, ſilk and cotton veil ſhapes, ſilk and thread laſe, kid gloves, coventry laces, fans.

At the ſame time, a large variety of faſhionable Buttons and Buckles.

At private ſale,

Bandana handkfs. India muſlins, Pimento, Cider Brandy, Gin, and 15,000 lb. green Coffee, on which the drawback can be obtained.

Sales by James Smith carrying on a manufacturing buſineſs. Any perſon having premiſes anſwering the above deſcription, may hear of a tenant by leaving a line directed for C. B. at the printers hereof.

1793 7. 2aw

BENJAMIN GOMEZ,

BOOKBINDER and STATIONER, No. 32 Maiden lane, near the Fly-market,

Has received by the late arrivals from Europe, a large aſſortment of BOOKS and STATIONARY, in addition to his former ſtock—amongſt which are,

WHITFIELD's and Blair's Sermons, Otterwa[y] quarto Bibles, with plates, quarto Bibles wi[th] and without apocraphy, octavo do. ſmall gilt bibles; Stanhopea Kempis, Allens alarms, Bunyan's work complete, Brown's chriſtian journal, confeſſion of the faith, Edward's hiſtory of redemption, ditto of the free will, Hume's hiſtory of England, Millots elements of hiſtory, Prieſtley lectures on ditto, Robinſon's hiſtory of India, ditto of Charles the fifth, Ferguſon's hiſtory of the Roman republic, Gillies hiſtory of Greece, Gibbons hiſtory of Rome, Brydones tour thro' Sicily and Malta, Bruce's, Cook's and Cox's Travels, Swinton's ditto; Blighs Anſons, Boyles, and Sparrmans voyages; Blackſtones commentaries of the laws of England; Harriſon's chancery practice, Impey's and Common's kings bench practice, Lillys entries, Eſpinaſſes and Puller's niſi prius; Plowden, Raymond, Crooke, Cooke, Dallas, Durnford and Eaſt, and Peer Williams Reports; Romance of the foreſt, Simple Story, Deſmond Caleſtina, anecdotes of the foreſt, and Sicilian Romance; Cheſelden's anatomy, Monroes do. Bell on ulcers, Douglaſs on the muſcles, Gregorys conſpectus Cullens firſt lines with Rotherham's notes, Shakeſpeares works with poems, Elegant epiſtles, Burke on the Sublime, Tweil upon two ſticks, Adelaid and Theodore, Arabian nights entainments, long book of the neweſt kind, Pope's and Sternes works complete, Parnell's and Pomphrets poems; quills, ſtates, and ſtate pencils, ſealing wax, primmers, chap books and ſpelling books, demi folio, quarto poſt and foolſcap writing paper, wrapping do. journals, day books and ledgers, invoice books &c. &c.

A great allowance will be made to thoſe who buy to ſell again. Binding of all kinds done with neatneſs, accuracy and diſpatch.

April 30. 3aw

Advertiſer.

[...]et of King-ſtreet;—Enquire at the door in King-ſtreet.

1793 [No. 2594]

Alexander Zuntz,

Has removed to No. 15 Great Dock-ſtreet, where he has opened a COMMISSION STORE, and provided Cellars, &c. for the reception of Weſt and Dry Goods, and has now for ſale,

Compoſition Ornaments,

For CHIMNEY PIECES, &c.

A large aſſortment imported by THOS. BARROW, No. 16 Smith ſtreet.

Alſo, a great variety of mouldings and beads

Publiſhed by Authority.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS it appears, that a ſtate of war exiſts between Auſtria, Pruſſia, Sardinia, Great-Britain and the United Netherlands, of the one part, and France on the other, and the duty and intereſt of the United States require, that they ſhould with ſincerity and good faith adopt and purſue a conduct friendly and impartial towards the belligerent powers.

[...]efore thought fit by theſe preſents to declare the diſpoſition of the [...] to obſerve the conduct aforeſaid towards thoſe powers reſpectively, and to exhort and warn the citizens of the United States carefully to abſtain and proceedings whatſoever may in any manner tend to contravene ſuch diſpoſition.

[...]hereby alſo make known [...]er of the citizens of the United States ſhall render himſelf liable to [...]r forfeiture under the law [...] committing, aiding or abetting hoſtilities againſt any of the ſaid [...] by carrying to any of [...]rticles, which are deemed [...]y the *modern* uſage of nations, will not receive the protection of the United States, againſt ſuch puniſhment; and further, that I have [...]inſtructions to proſecute [...] belongs to cauſe proſecutions to be inſtituted againſt all perſons, [...]within the cognizance of the courts of the United States, violate the [...]tions, with reſpect to the [...]ar or any of them.

[...]ony whereof I have cauſed the ſeal of the United States of America to be affixed to theſe preſents and ſigned the ſame with my hand. Done at the City of Philadelphia, the twenty ſecond day of [...]ne thouſand ſeven hundred [...]ety three, and of the Independence of the United States of [...]ca, the ſeventeenth.

WASHINGTON.

[...]ſident,

TH: JEFFERSON.

1849

Broad business interests helped development of city from Colonial days

work was also a play, *The Fortress of Sorrento*. He published a criticism of the plays of another dramatist (whose writings will be remembered longer than those of his critic)—William Shakespeare.[28]

Another son of Shearith Israel was Isaac Gomez, Jr., who in 1820 produced *Selections of a Father for the Use of his Children: In Prose and Verse*. There was also another dramatist in the congregation who produced plays as copiously as did Mordecai Noah. This was Samuel B. H. Judah. In the early 1820s he published *The Mountain Torrent, A Grand Melo-drama, Interspersed with Songs, Choruses*, etc.; *Odofriede, the Outcast, a Dramatic Poem; the Rose of Arragon, a Melo-Drama; A Tale of Lexington, A National Comedy;* and some years later *The Buccaneers* and *The Maid of Midian*. His enthusiasm for publishing his literary efforts was suddenly checked in 1823 when serious trouble came to him because of a pulmonary affection, but still more because of his publication of *Gotham and the Gothamites*. This was a rhymed composition overflowing with scurrilous abuse and libelous personal attacks on more than a hundred prominent citizens. It was his physical condition which induced the court to treat him with clemency and save him from drastic penalty.[29] Another member of Samuel B. H. Judah's family, Uriah H. Judah, was a frequent contributor to the public press.

There was still a third dramatic writer in the congregation in those days. This was Jonas B. Phillips (1805–1869), who later gave up the theater, studied law and became assistant district attorney. Among his plays were *The Evil Eye* (1831), *Camillus* (1833), and *Cold Stricken* (1838), besides *Zamira*, a dramatic sketch (1835). It was he who composed the melody used by the congregation and its school on Purim. His brother, Henry B. Phillips, was an actor well known in his day. Aaron J. Phillips (1778–1846), a comedian, a son of Jonas Phillips and uncle of Mordecai M. Noah, and another nephew of his, Moses S. Phillips (1798–1854), both originally from Philadelphia, were familiar figures on the New York stage. In the current century Ben Hecht has sought to interpret the turmoil of his generation. Lawrence Langner made the American art theater his avocation. A founder of the Theatre Guild, he initiated the American Shakespeare Festival Theater.

The congregation has counted many writers and on its Author's Library shelves are displayed volumes of most varied interest. The writings of Benjamin N. Cardozo are classics in legal literature. Arnold Bondi wrote a work on the physical chemistry of lubricating oils. Gabriel Davidson pub-

lished an authoritative study of the Jewish farmer in America. Elisha M. Friedman wrote a number of penetrating studies of the Jewish problem and on general economic matters. Emanuel Hertz enriched the literature on Abraham Lincoln. Leon Huhner published the biography of Judah Touro and very many other American Jewish historical studies, as well as a number of poems. Ithiel de Sola Pool published works on symbols of democracy and internationalism and international communications. Alexander Sachs wrote a number of searching economic studies. Angelo P. Sereni wrote on the Italian concept of international law.

It has been not only men in Shearith Israel who have been writers; women also figure in the story. A sister of Gershom Mendes Seixas, Grace Nathan, penned a number of gracious writings. It is true that these had their readers only within the intimate circle of her family, for in her time a gentle lady refrained from putting her writings into the hands of a printer. Her literary gift came to published expression in later generations in many of her descendants, from Emma Lazarus to Robert Nathan.

In her all too brief life, Emma Lazarus (1849–1887) made for herself an enduring place in the annals of American literature. She wrote much more than the sonnet that is set in bronze on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. About that sonnet James Russell Lowell wrote to her, "I liked your sonnet about the statue much better than I like the statue itself. But your sonnet gives its subject a *raison d'être* which it wanted before quite as much as it wanted a pedestal." Her other writings include ambitious poems of a general nature, and *Songs of a Semite* and *The Dance to Death.*

Three of her great-grandparents, Simon Nathan, Benjamin Mendes Seixas, and Samuel Lazarus, lie buried in the congregation's graveyard below Chatham Square. It was Samuel Lazarus who, in 1798, joined with Hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas and some others in organizing the Kalfe Sedakah for relief in the city that was being swept by an epidemic of yellow fever. Shortly thereafter he himself fell a victim to the disease. Her grandfather, Eleazar S. Lazarus, a president of the congregation, was jointly with Solomon Henry Jackson, editor of the Sephardi Hebrew and English prayer book published in New York in 1826.

Three other women in Shearith Israel, also descendants of the gifted Grace Seixas Nathan, contributed to the printed word. One was Josephine Lazarus

(d. 1910), a sister of Emma Lazarus, a talented essayist; the others were Mrs. Frederick Nathan and Frances Nathan (Mrs. Julius R.) Wolff.

In 1926, Mrs. Frederick Nathan published *The Story of an Epoch-Making Movement*, telling the history of the Consumers League, a social-economic movement of which she had been president for twenty years from 1897 to 1917. She also published her autobiography, *Once Upon a Time and Today*. In 1939, Mrs. Julius R. Wolff published her *Four Generations*, the biographical story of her family, revealing something of her own rare personality.

Other women in the congregation whose names appear on the title page of a book include Alice D. Menken, a great granddaughter of Hazzan Peixotto. She wrote *On the Side of Mercy*. In the introduction to this book of studies in problems of social readjustment, Herbert H. Lehman, then governor of New York, termed Mrs. Menken a pioneer volunteer worker, a woman who helped elaborate the technique of social service . . . with thirty years of service "on the side of mercy."

The pen name May Lewis was adopted by Aline May Lewis Goldstone, a descendant of the old congregational de Lucena, Gomez, and Hendricks families. She gained a name for herself as a poet by her "Red Drumming in the Sun" and many other published poems. In a different literary field Johanna Lobsenz published her study of "The Older Woman in Industry."

Thus members of Shearith Israel took their place in varied professional fields. The full story of the industry, commerce, and trade in which congregants engaged would in itself be illustrative of the whole community of which they were a growing and a constructive part. We have caught glimpses of that sturdy pioneer, Asser Levy, qualifying as an Horatio Alger hero of his day. He arrived in 1654, a penniless immigrant. When he attained the humble economic rank of a day laborer he took the lead in demanding and obtaining civic rights for himself and his fellow Jews. Later he was licensed as a butcher. He built a slaughterhouse in 1677–78, taking with him in the venture a Christian partner, Garret Jansen Rose. He also dealt in real estate, owned a tavern, and was a fur trader. He was not only a most successful business man; he also became one of the trusted figures in the city. His name appears as executor in the wills of some of his Christian fellow townsmen.[30] In 1655, Abraham de Lucena immediately after his arrival opened up a shop. At the time, Jews were not permitted by law to engage in retail trade. That limitation by merchants

who feared competition encouraged the Jewish settlers to turn to broader sources of livelihood far afield in undeveloped country, in line with their right to trade far beyond the city limits even as far as Albany and the Delaware River.

The family connections of Sephardim in New York with England, Holland, Mediterranean lands, and the Caribbean area, encouraged a relatively high proportion of the Jews in New York in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to enter the shipping business for import and export trade. This had the effect of helping spread New York's commerce far and wide and of setting the pattern of the future. For the growing city it meant more adequate provision of consumer goods at that time not available from home sources. Joseph Tores Nunes (d. 1704) dealt in osnaburgs, cambrics, cottons, silk, kerchiefs, ribbon, hats, buttons, rings, earrings, sugar, household wares, and also iron, guns and swords, much of which of necessity he imported from England. His contemporary, Isaac Rodrigues Marques (d. 1706), was a shipowner, importer and exporter, and on one occasion he petitioned the city for permission to manufacture rum.

When we move on to the eighteenth century, we find the same wide diversity of economic interests among the members of Shearith Israel. Moses Levy (d. 1728), Lewis Moses Gomez (d. 1740), and Abraham Haim de Lucena (d. 1725) all sold various food supplies including butter, flour, bread, peas and Indian corn to the expeditionary forces moving against French Canada in 1711. Moses Levy among his other business interests shipped cocoa to London. Lewis Moses Gomez, an importer and exporter, imported such articles as chintz, silk, calico, taffetas, and wine; and exported wheat. The scope and importance of the overseas trade can be gauged by the fact that some of the merchants were also substantial shipowners. They took their place in the early development of the American mercantile marine. Peter Kalm before the middle of the eighteenth century reported that some Jews in New York had "several ships which they freight and send out with their own goods." At that time Sampson Simson, associated with the Chamber of Commerce, was actively engaged in importing and exporting in his own vessels, especially with the West Indies. The six men mentioned above were members of the Marine Society. Hayman Levy and Benjamin Mendes Seixas at one time also owned ships. Judah Hays (d. 1764) was variously a mercer, a merchant in beef and pork, an importer of rum, and the owner of ships including the

sixteen-gun ship *The Duke of Cumberland*. Especially noteworthy were the shipowning activities of Isaac Moses in connection with the privateering which wrought such damage to British vessels during the Revolutionary War. Among the schooners, brigs, and sloops in which he was interested, sometimes together with Robert Morris, were the six-gun *Chance*, the six-gun *Havannah*, the sixteen-gun *Marbois*, the four-gun *Cornelia*, the twelve-gun *Black Prince*, the eight-gun *Fox*, and the *Mayflower*.

In the eighteenth century many congregants appear also as manufacturers of such diverse articles as snuff (Mordecai Gomez, 1688–1750), spermaceti, (Solomon Simson, d. 1801, also an importer of beaver coating), and starch and hair powder (Alexander Zuntz, 1742–1819). Men like Moses Levy (d. 1728), Isaac Adolphus (d. 1774), and Uriah Hendricks (1737–1798) were dealers in the most varied commodities, some of these surviving only as words in a dictionary, such as stock muskets, blunderbusses and swivel guns, as well as green ratteens, swan skins, raven's duck, osnabrigs, penniston, blue and red strouds, bays, dowles, clouting diaper, plumb-colour grazets, ferrits, silk romals, peelongs, black alamodes, black padusoy, fine French vetery, Irish dowlas, castor hats, women's callimancoe, hyson tea, muscavado sugar, glaubert salts, ratesia and capilair in cases, Jesuits' bark, fine and common Russian drilling, stone blue in casks, steel chapes, scarlet and blue rattinets, tobines, gensa velverets, huckabacks, Florentines, Sattinets, buff-colored Jennets, India dimity, cane for ladies' hoops, hair shaggs, white dimothee, log lines, boulting cloths, fine Yorkshire and bath coatings, wordenrop, assorted queens ware, diaper doweling, chip hats, Indian strouds, Russia duck, nests of India kettles, caks, cotton cards, curls and bells, white taby women's stays, stript mantuas, ticklenburg, velvet corks, bead foals, Holland Rope oil, and Flanders bed ticks.

Jonas Phillips (1735–1803) while still in Albany had dealt in various goods, especially foods and drinks, and he advertised that he was willing to take in payment beaver and deer skins at the New York market price. He was far from being the only Jew who was interested in trade with the Indians. Indian trappers would exchange their furs and other articles for manufactured goods such as blankets, firearms, and spirits. Asser Levy dealt with the Indians. Moses Levy is on record in 1693 as dealing with Indians. Lewis Moses Gomez and his sons built around 1720 with walls two to three feet thick a fortress of a stone house, which still stands in the remote forest some six miles

north of Newburgh on the Hudson River, in the vicinity of De Duyvel's Danskamer where it was said the devil and witches had been seen dancing. Members of the Gomez family would take the dangerously adventurous trip to the distant outpost, the Gomez house, to trade there in the wilds with the Indians who would come along converging trails from the hinterland to their religious ceremonial ground at the Danskamer.[31]

The early colonial history of Indian-white relations is darkened by the story of all too common exploitation, abuse, and provision of bad liquor to the simple-minded red man who provided the white man with the precious products of his hunting and forest life. This forms a contrasting background for the picture of Hayman Levy (1721–1789), fur trader and friend of the Indians. He dealt not only in goods for military use, such as English shoes, tents, kettles, and canteens, but also in Indian goods such as black and white wampum, beaver, racoons, dressed martin skins, deer leather, and bear skins. He was outstanding in his undeviating honesty in paying the Indian traders what their goods were worth. They trusted and loved him. Judge Daly wrote:

> His place of business was in Mill Street, not far from the synagogue, and as he not only purchased all that the Indians brought for traffic, but kept everything in his large establishment to supply their wants, the Indians who came to the city dealt largely with him, and at certain seasons of the year were to be seen in large numbers lining the street in the vicinity of the warehouse.
>
> The great respect they entertained for him and the universal confidence they had in him, were due to his thorough knowledge of their character, habits and wants, and to the fact that he was, in all his relations with them, and with others, an honest and highminded merchant. From his extensive connections with them, he became the largest fur trader in the colonies and one of the most opulent merchants in the city.[32]

It was this Hayman Levy who gave to John Jacob Astor his first job—that of beating furs for a dollar a day.[33]

In the year 1700, New York's Governor, Richard, Earl of Bellamont, wrote to the Board of Trade in London that he found it very difficult to pay "the soldiers' subsistence in money weekly." He said that the New York merchants were traversing him all they could by lowering the rate of exchange, and, what was far more serious, they would

> now advance no money at all on my bills; so that, were it not for one Dutch Merchant and two or three Jews that have let me have money, I should have been undone.[34]

In the development of New York as a financial center, early congregants played their part. In 1705, a petition was drawn up by New York merchants seeking to establish a fair standard of values for foreign coins. Among the sixty-six signers of this petition were Joseph Bueno, the merchant and minister Abraham de Lucena, and the president of the congregation, Samuel Levy.[35] Throughout the eighteenth century we find members of the congregation taking an active part in financial affairs. Among those who in 1770 signed the resolution to make the non-importation agreement more stringent were Samuel Judah, Hayman Levy, Jacob Moses, Jacob Myers, Jonas Phillips, and Isaac Mendes Seixas. We have seen that Isaac M. Gomez, Benjamin Mendes Seixas, and Ephraim Hart were among the founders of the New York Stock Exchange in 1792. From 1824 to 1830, Jacob Isaacs was its secretary, and he was followed in that office by Bernard Hart. In the middle of the nineteenth century Benjamin Hart held the same position.[36]

Occasionally we meet a farmer among the Shearith Israel families. One of these was David Hays (1732–1812), who left in his estate one bay horse, one colt, eight cows, one bull, one yoke of oxen, one heifer, one fat steer, three calves, ten sheep, fourteen hogs, half a field of rye, one and a half fields of corn, one field of wheat, and all the other paraphernalia of a farm.

Benjamin Gomez (1769–1828) started out as a bookseller and publisher, then ran a lottery office, and finally earned his living as a tobacconist. Benjamin Mendes Seixas (1747–1817) was a saddler who sold everything needed for horses and horse riders. The variety of the economic interests of the Jews of eighteenth-century New York is further illustrated by the supplies which two of them furnished for the City Hall. The brazier Asher Myers, younger brother of Myer Myers, soldered the flat copper roof of the old City Hall, and sold to the city two bells, one for the City Hall, the other for the new jail. Jaques Ruden supplied timber of oak and yellow and white pine for the present city hall that was completed in 1812.

Sometimes a woman left alone in the world and compelled to earn her own living would run a boardinghouse as did Hetty Hays, or a retail shop as did Grace the widow of Moses Levy (d. 1740), who thus tried to care for herself and her seven children.

Let there be added from the nineteenth century the names of two public spirited business men. The first is that of Harmon Hendricks, president of the

congregation from 1824 to 1827. His father Uriah Hendricks (1737–1798), after being a dealer in general merchandise, had become an ironmonger. His son Harmon built up a pioneering copper smelting business with its rolling mills at Belleville, New Jersey. Gabriel Disosway tells of him that

> He used to boast that in all of his immense money operations no one could accuse him of taking more than the legal interest, and that in this respect he strictly kept the Law of Moses.

Disosway adds by way of commentary how rare this was among all the business men on Wall and William streets.[37]

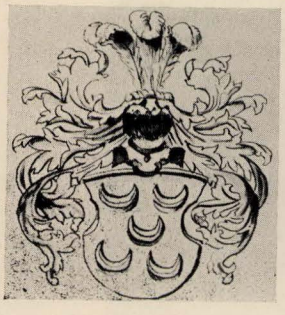
Another congregational leader, who served as parnas five times between 1858 and 1884, was Asher Kursheedt. He built up the Kursheedt Manufacturing Company, which was the largest firm in the country manufacturing lace, braids, and embroideries.

It is perhaps too soon to recount and evaluate in greater detail the many-faceted story of today's generation in Shearith Israel. We have caught only glimpses of the men and the women who within recent generations and in our contemporary city have been leaders in the religious, educational, and philanthropic services of the community. There is much to add that is picturesque, vital, and perhaps also of more than personal interest. History is not a volume to which the word *finis* applies. Twelve generations have spanned the three centuries of Shearith Israel. Those who have given the congregation its character have been not only its rabbis, cantors, religious school teachers, and shammashim. They have been congressmen and assemblymen; judges, lawyers, and policemen; physicians and pharmacists; engineers and architects; artists and artisans; playwrights and actors; writers, newspaper publishers, and booksellers; manufacturers and merchants; importers, exporters, and traders with Indians; dealers in commodities, and members of the Stock Exchange; brokers and auctioneers; butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers; shipowners, traveling merchants, and stay-at-home farmers; soldiers and sailors; pigeon fanciers and billiard champions; men of wealth and men of poverty; landlords and landladies. All of these, whether successful or hapless, brilliant or humble, seeking to build their lives and homes, have a place in the synagogue, their spiritual sanctuary. It has been these men and women, old and young, and not the legal constitution of the congregation, nor the rights of its electors, nor the decisions of its trustees, which truly determined the character of Shearith Israel. Though no one can live altogether free of life's shadows and struggles,





Grace Seixas Nathan, 1752–1831 and Simon Nathan, 1746–1822 made their mark in Colonial New York. In every generation after them, Shearith Israel found leaders among their descendants



PINTO



GOMEZ

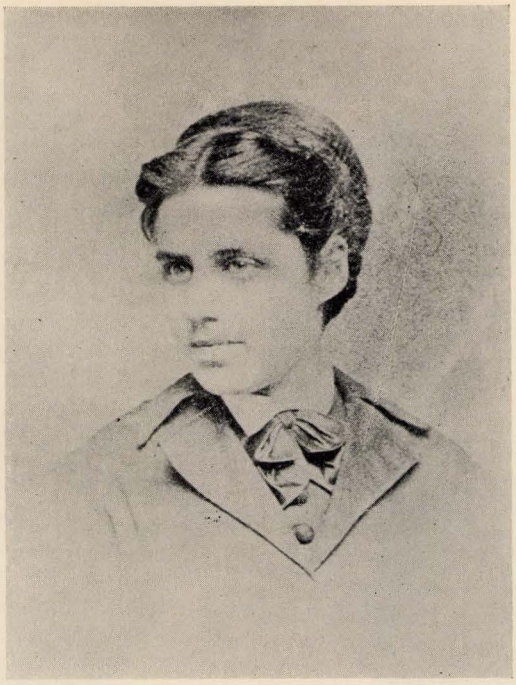


PHILLIPS

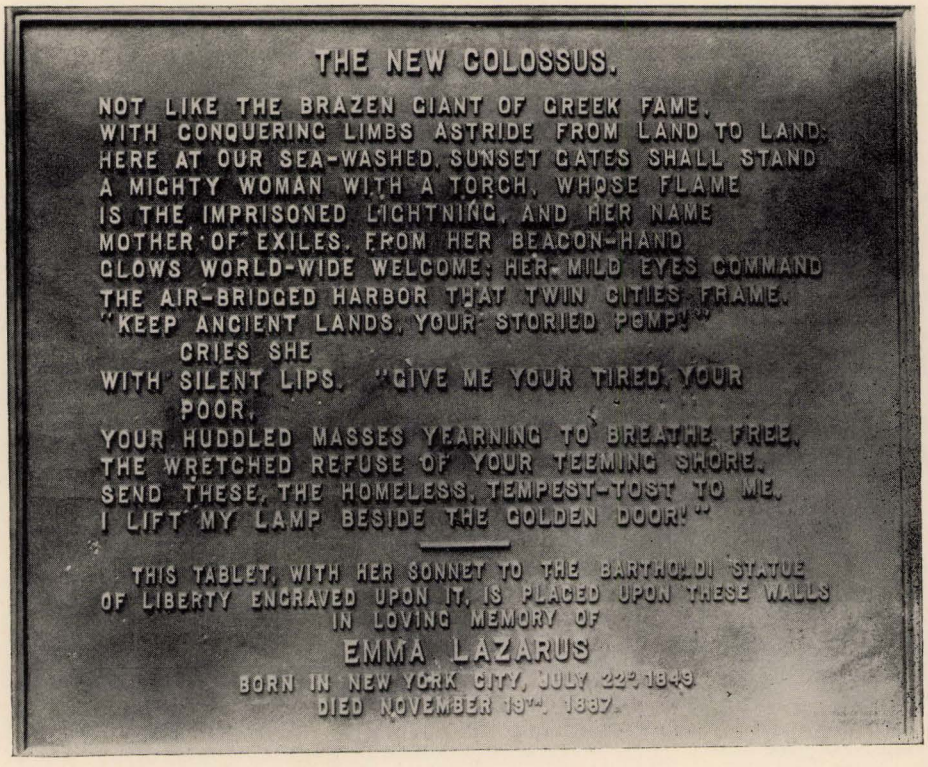


DE SOLA

Crests



Emma Lazarus, 1849–87, patriot poetess, humanitarian, and proto-Zionist



Her sonnet The New Colossus *interprets America as the mother of exiles*

yet those who set the pattern of their days within the orbit of the synagogue found their lives cast in ways of pleasantness. The good country in which they lived, their faith pursued in freedom, have brought on this day when the youngest in this generation in celebrating the tercentenary of the synagogue's founding can dream of a future longer and yet brighter than the past.

XVI. The Past Is Everlasting



I will show mercy unto the thousandth generation

for those who love Me and keep My commandments.

EXODUS 20:6

THE HISTORY OF SHEARITH ISRAEL does not begin sharply at the point of arrival of the twenty-three Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam in 1654. They whose worldly goods were reduced by war, defeat, exile and perilous journeyings, yet carried with them to their new homeland an undiminished, indeed an enriched heritage from the past. They looked upon that past with pride. In their own lifetime they had known courage, pioneering, and forward-looking faith. And in their inward life, they had a sense of the vision and the revelation, the martyrdom and the greatness of thousands of years. They and those who followed them into the New World brought the inexhaustible spiritual wealth of an old faith, time-tested, and triumphant over every outward disaster. It was the faith of their fathers.

All the glories of that faith are contained within the covers of a book. But

that book is the Bible. Within it is the Torah of Moses, the God-given laws of the greatest legislator in mankind's history. The pages of that Book are pierced by the moral fervor of the prophets, the uplift of soul of the Psalmist, the priest's reverent vision of God, the wisdom of the heart of the sages. The widely encompassing teachings of Talmudic and rabbinic lore, the spiritual wisdom of philosophers, moralists, poets, and seers of the Middle Ages, Jewish history itself—its triumphs, its defeats, its darkness and its light, may well be viewed as commentary on the Book of books.

In the year 1654, the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers came possessed of the basic heritage of the Bible and Talmud and the later treasury of the Golden Age of Spain. The appellation Sephardi is derived from the name Sepharad. Whatever place or people this may have designated when the prophet Obadiah mentioned it, later tradition has regarded Sepharad as the Hebrew name for Spain. The first scattered beginnings of the settlement of Jews in Spain may possibly antedate the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem nearly nineteen centuries ago. Travel, far-reaching overseas trade, maritime exploration, and a spirit of adventure possessed the Hebrew people at a very early time. In Biblical days there were "those who go down to the sea in ships," and whom trade took to the utter end of the European world, to Tarshish, often identified with the Tartessus in ancient Spain. In the first century of the common era, the Jewish diaspora was widespread in lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

In Visigothic Spain the lot of the Jews was often not a happy one. But with the conquest by the Arabs in 711 their lot improved. Although the relations between Moslem and Jew were not uniformly a blissful fellowship, there arose beyond the conflicts in both Moslem and Christian Spain an era of epoch-making intellectual interplay and spiritual collaboration which flowered into the Jewish Golden Age of medieval Spain. This linked faith and reason, religion and science. To the world it brought a juncture between East and West. It saw the rise of a spiritually aspiring neo-Platonist philosopher such as the eleventh-century Solomon ibn Gabirol, who also wrote inspiring hymns and poems and whom the Christian world quoted under the name of Avicebron, and it witnessed the phenomenon of the gigantic intellect of Moses Maimonides whose *Guide to the Perplexed* still opens up for many modern minds a revealing vision of a transcendent faith that is at one with man's most rational thinking. It was an age which gave birth to the twelfth-century physician and philosopher Jehudah Halevi. It was a time that witnessed the activity

of the tenth-century Hasdai ibn Shaprut (915–961), Samuel Hanagid (993–1055), Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508), and other Jewish viziers and statesmen who served their country with ability and devotion. From that intellectual soil sprang Jewish geographers, cartographers, mathematicians, and astronomers, whose work helped make possible the daring expedition of Columbus.

Jewish life in Spain ended in the tense agony and supreme sorrow of the exile decreed in 1492. A century earlier, in 1391, flaming conversionist zeal of the Inquisition had offered to very many of Jews in Spain the choice of baptism or death. Many of those who chose to enter the Church in order to escape martyrdom retained in their hearts the love of their ancestral faith. They were secret Jews or neo-Christians. Though outwardly they conformed to the dictates of the Church, in anguished secrecy they observed as best they could the religion of their fathers. They were called derogatively Marranos, and the Inquisition set itself methodically to ferret out their secret. Its powerful arm apprehended them on the slightest pretext, tried them by torture and ordeal, and inflicted on them sadistic penalties often climaxed by orgies of fire and death. Organized terror, perhaps never exceeded until the day of Hitler, marked the closing chapter of Jewish life in the Iberian Peninsula.

In the opinion of some historians, Columbus may himself have been a descendant of secret Jews.[1] His anchored ships, prepared to sail on their historic voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, lay alongside vessels which were to take the exiles from a land which had been their home for more than a thousand years. The edict of expulsion of the Jews by Ferdinand and Isabella, king and queen of Spain, went into effect on the day before the eve of the Fast of Ab, the day of mourning for the destruction of the Temple. On the morrow of that fast, Columbus set sail from Palos. Those were shattering days for the untold tens of thousands who had made their choice to accept expulsion from their homeland of a thousand years rather than to purchase security and ease by the surrender of their soul. The prophetic reading on the Sabbath which follows the Fast of Ab is the resonant call of the prophet Isaiah, "Comfort, comfort My people." The Jews expelled from Spain, though they knew not where they might find a home, indomitably clung to those words. Certainly they knew not that there was comfort for them and untold millions of others in the winds which were blowing westward the sails of Columbus.

Many of the Spanish exiles found refuge in other Mediterranean lands

where they clung for more than four centuries to the Castilian Spanish language of Cervantes and the Hispanic Hebrew culture which they had helped create and embellish.

It is small wonder that the period following the expulsion saw among Sephardi Jewry mystic movements gripping many of these sorely tried children of Israel. A strong Cabbalistic culture blossomed among those who found their way to the romantic hill town of Safed in the Holy Land. From Turkey there swept over much of the Sephardi diaspora an impassioned revivalistic movement which lured the hope-hungry to follow for a time the spurious Messiah who appeared in the person of Sabbatai Tsebi (1626–1676). But at the same time there developed in Holland the practical statesmanship and Jewish learning of a man like Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), and the universal metaphysical philosophy and vivid insights of thought of a Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677).

The authentic Sephardi heritage was deeply ingrained in East and West alike. It has been recalled that in the early days of Shearith Israel the archaic Spanish and Portuguese languages were familiar in the synagogue. The music to which prayers were chanted, the traditional pronunciation of the sacred Hebrew tongue, the sublime hymns and mystic additions to the liturgy, carried unforgettable echoes of the long sojourn in Spain. Moreover, Sephardi folk customs penetrated intimately into the homes where Spanish phrases were heard, and where Mediterranean culinary habits prevailed. Such were some of the Sephardi influences which gave basic character to the congregation in the formative years of Shearith Israel in Nieuw Amsterdam and early Colonial New York, and which in a determinative measure have prevailed to this day.

In the twentieth century a new influence made itself felt. Members from the Mediterranean basin brought with them the culture and Western outlook inculcated in them by schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle established in countries from the Atlantic coast to the Persian frontiers. Many graduates of these schools entered the ranks of Shearith Israel.

There has always been a tendency to organize synagogues on the basis of geographical origin of the members. Paul mentions among the synagogues in Jerusalem, "the synagogue of the Freedmen, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of those of Cilicia, and of Asia." The Talmud speaks of a synagogue of the Alexandrians in Jerusalem, and of the Babylonians in Sepphoris. Benjamin

of Tudela, a twelfth-century traveler, mentions the synagogue of the Palestinians and that of the Babylonians in Cairo. In medieval Rome there was a synagogue of the Sicilians, another of the Castilians, and another of the Catalonians. To this day immigrant groups tend to foregather in synagogues in which they can find the vernacular and the traditions, and the customs and melodies of the synagogues of their former home town. It is therefore not remarkable that in many parts of the world there have been Sephardi synagogues which throughout their history have had virtually only those of Sephardi tradition in their membership. In this regard Shearith Israel, as this story has shown, is a notable exception.

From the beginning Shearith Israel was strengthened by cross-fertilization with the dynamic, creative, spiritual heritage of Ashkenazi Jewry. The name Ashkenaz in the Bible seems to refer to a people who lived in the general district of Phrygia or Armenia.[2] In the Middle Ages, Jews applied this name Ashkenaz to the Germans by a punning connection of Gomer, the father of Ashkenaz, with Germania. While the Sephardi religious tradition bore the imprint of a detour through Babylon, the Ashkenazi line of development went directly westward from the Holy Land, and flowered over the centuries in the lands of northern, central, and eastern Europe. Jews were in Russia before the Russians came to that land, and in Hungary before the Magyars. There were hardy Jewish pioneers in the far-flung outposts of the Roman empire in Germany and in other heathen and barbarian lands of Europe nineteen hundred years ago. As the centuries passed and one country after another was added to the realm of the Holy Roman Empire, with the coming of the still darker Dark Ages there grew up ever increasing repressive legislation against the Jews. The Crusaders of the Middle Ages waded through parts of Europe in Jewish blood. There were senseless sanguinary outbreaks against Jews when the Black Death swept over Europe. More weary centuries passed while robber-baron fought robber-baron, prince fought prince, Cossack fought Pole. The Jews became the scapegoat, the helpless victim of savagery and excesses on both sides. Through the spiritual alchemy of faith the unending persecutions suffered by the Jews gave birth to a compensating and comforting intensification of religious life. Physically cooped up in dark ghettos, Ashkenazi Jewry nonetheless created within the grim physical ghetto a brightly colorful, rich and joyous social and cultural Jewish life, with its own distinctive mores and spiritual overtones. With poetic vision Bialik sang,[3]

And should you wish to know the source
From which your tortured brethren drew
In evil days their strength of soul . . .
Enter then the house of God,
The house of study old and gray

. . . .

Perchance your eye may still behold . . .
The profile of some pallid face
Upon an ancient folio bent.

Learning became the panacea, a very present refuge and source of strength. Whether it was the generation of Rashi (1040–1105) in Northern France, or of Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797) in Eastern Europe, intensive scholarly preoccupation with Talmudic learning created a periphery of diffused Jewish knowledge among the masses. From this resulted the fact that in the general membership of Shearith Israel it was frequently the Ashkenazim who exemplified the higher standards of Jewish learning.

Occasionally, individuals brought to the congregation the gladsome religious spirit of the Eastern European Hasidic followers of Israel Baal Shem (1700–1760). They were not without influence in the life of the congregation. Indeed, the broadly representative character of Shearith Israel was formed by the organic union of all types of Sephardim and of Ashkenazim. A congregation is more than a fellowship of individuals. It is primarily the united expression of a basic idealism shared by all who come together in worship, subordinating differences to common loyalty, and setting the basic and comprehensive religious tradition above minor variations. In a synagogue all inherit alike the Jewish revelation of a spiritual world as expressed in the Bible, the Talmud, and the centuried ritual of prayer. It is in the line of that revelation that Shearith Israel proudly takes its place.

The three-hundred-year-old congregation is integrally part of the three thousand and more years of Jewish history. Immediately after the redemption from bondage to Egypt, in the freedom of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, was born the spiritual parent of the synagogue, the tabernacle in which Aaron the priest conducted the services of worship. Those were the years of the Sinaitic revelation. That era was followed by the generations which after the entrance to the Promised Land established the spiritual centrality of the Holy Land and the Holy City. It was in Jerusalem that King Solomon built the Temple, the archetype of the synagogue. There was de-

veloped the ritual celebration of each new-born day, weekday, Sabbath, festival, or day of awe. It was in that Temple that the Levites chanted the Psalms sung in the synagogue today, and the priests reechoed the teachings of Moses recalled week by week in the synagogue reading from the Torah. It was in those Biblical centuries that Israel first heard the flaming words of the prophets to which the synagogue turns for moral guidance Sabbath after Sabbath. It was in those Biblical days that there were enunciated the teachings of the Hebrew sages which the synagogue of today reechoes with undiminished validity—the beginning of wisdom is reverence for the Lord, and true wisdom is the wisdom of the heart.

More than two thousand years ago synagogues had developed with their own services. The first great stimulus to this came from the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem over twenty-five centuries ago. The synagogue succeeded but did not take the place of the unitary shrine of Israel in Jerusalem. Prayers in the synagogue took the place of the sacrificial ritual that could no longer be carried out in the Temple. As the generations passed, the Temple was rebuilt, but the synagogues had made a place for themselves in the life of the people and did not disappear. Their religious services continued, supplementing those of the nationally unifying central Temple in Zion. When Israel's enemies victoriously overran the land and tried to destroy its people by wiping out both the Temple and the synagogues, the Psalmist cried out to God, "Thine enemies have roared within Thy meeting places. They have set Thy sanctuary on fire, they have profaned to earth the dwelling place of Thy name. . . . They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land."

But like a phoenix from the fire, the sacred shrines emerged to live again. The victories of the Maccabees twenty-one hundred years ago rescued the flame and the light that a pagan world had well nigh extinguished. That great victory spelled the survival of Judaism. Something over two centuries later, Roman legions destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem. Once more it looked as if Judaism might disappear from the face of the earth. But once more the synagogue became the rallying center of the Jewish people. The exile gave to the synagogue a new mission and a unique status. It became for Jews everywhere the House of God. Upon it were impressed memories of vanished glories, invincible hope, and ardent prayer. The synagogue more than ever before became the Beth Hakeneseth, the assembly house of the people, the

unique communal center, the rallying enclave, and the heart and hearth of the life of the Jewish people. As the repository of its memories and the sanctified shrine of its worship, it has been for nineteen centuries the cementer of the House of Israel. Its ritual, born while the Temple yet stood, was developed by the rabbis of the Talmudic and geonic eras. Its basic services of prayer enriched by passing generations encompass traditions well nigh two thousand years old.[4]

The centuries have made the synagogue also the Beth Hamidrash, the home of study and transmission of Jewish lore. Thence flowed the synagogue's functions as a center of charity and hospitality. Two thousand years ago Simon the Just declared that the supports on which the world order rests are the Torah, religious worship, and deeds of loving kindness.[5]

Shearith Israel is heir to all these ages. It looks back on its own three hundred years and its pre-history of three thousand years with gratitude for a priceless heritage which loyalty to the past can secure for the future.

The story we have told, of big things and little things, of pioneering and adventure, of worship and service, of courage and fears, of hope and sorrow, of accomplishment and error, is an American and a Jewish story of faith and freedom. The three centuries of American Jewish settlement have been a purposive history, and part of the charting and building of a common democracy. The ideals of the Hebrew Bible were twice cemented into the structure of America: first by the Pilgrim Fathers of 1620 and their sturdy successors, and then by the growing numbers of Jewish settlers from 1654 on, they who knew well the sweet dream of freedom and all too well the bitterness of oppression. These Biblical ideals of the American pioneers have become both foundation and capstone of the American Republic.

Privileged to be the synagogue which primed the happy continuity of American Jewish life, Congregation Shearith Israel knows that its strength comes from the merit of the fathers. The small band of storm-driven Jewish pioneers who fortunately landed in Nieuw Amsterdam in mid-seventeenth century also derived their strength from their ancestral heritage. In loyalty to that tradition they laid the foundations of a congregation which faithfully has striven to bear witness to its ancient faith. They and their successors developed a community with religious facilities, social services, and a school for children, rich and poor alike. They had the vision and courage, the dignity and firmness, to establish their just rights in a new land, and thereby they opened the way

along which in our generation two-hundred-thousand-times their number can walk in freedom. Above all, they helped win religious liberty intrinsically for other faiths no less than for their own.

In the struggle of the colonies for independence and nationhood, Congregation Shearith Israel took its stand overwhelmingly in favor of freedom. In the nigh two centuries that followed, in peace and in war, its members have played their part in the acceptance and the attainment of that classic definition of American democracy enunciated by the first President of the United States in his letter to the Newport Jewish community:

> All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.

George Washington, in invoking also the words of the prophet Micah, "Everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid," paid homage to the Hebraic ideal of social justice and heralded mankind's fourth freedom.

Exciting as were the congregation's first and second centuries, its third lagged nought behind. In every generation the synagogue continued to inspire ideals of service and faith. Expanding the horizons of its intimate synagogue, Shearith Israel and its members took their place in the creation and the maintenance of a succession of religious, educational, and benevolent institutions and organizations. These sowed the seeds for the preeminent social flowering of the New York Jewish community's philanthropic program. We have seen Shearith Israel help in meeting the challenge presented by mass immigration to the "Mother of Exiles." In moving symbol of the spiritual bond with the Holy Land, Shearith Israel was made the repository of the historic Torah consecrated on Mount Zion at the trimillennium celebration of Jerusalem, and its Sisterhood the recipient of a granite slab from the Holy Land sent by the State of Israel for a tercentenary year monument to Emma Lazarus.

An old rabbinic parable tells that when at Mt. Sinai God bestowed the Torah on Israel, He betrothed the twain, Israel and Torah, unto each other. Wheresoever Israel and his bride may wander upon them was set the behest to build a sanctuary whither the Divine presence might come to bless them. Such a sanctuary the members of Shearith Israel have built in the United States of America. In remembrance of that Sinaitic covenant, the Ten Commandments stand above the Ark of the Torah as a crown. Before the Ark burns

the eternal light. Through these timeless symbols, past generations have guided their lives and have transmitted their unique heritage of blessing.

The first of the twelve generations that have built Shearith Israel gave to it its basic character. But it is all the twelve generations together which have constituted the congregation. Each has contributed to the whole and to a cause beyond the individual self. One generation escaped from the Inquisition. Others sought refuge from less pronounced yet still oppressive political, economic, and social injustice. One remembers Kishinev. Another is a saved remnant from the shattering barbarism of Hitler. In all of them suffering was mellowed into compassion; cruel memories were transmuted into faith. Remembrance of the past and faith in the future formed a consecrated union.

"Zehor yemoth olam," "remember the days of old, consider the years of each generation." Thus in his song of farewell, Moses commanded the Children of Israel. In Hebrew, *olam* is the word for eternal, everlasting. It means also the past and the future, history, the world and the universe. These many concepts are expressed by a single word not because of poverty of language, but because of unity of thought. In Hebrew semantics history and eternity are one. The past is everlasting. Our story then is of three centuries and always.

APPENDICES

Constitutions of Shearith Israel

AS DRAWN UP IN 1728

In the Name of the Blessed God Amen

WHEREAS on or about the Year 5466 (1706) certain wholesome Rules and Restrictions have been made By the then Elders of our Holy Congregation, to Preserve Peace, tranquility and good government amongst ym and those after them, and as they have Been neglected to be put in due force for some time past, wee now meet with common consent and Resolve to Revive the same with some amendments and additions, which are as follows—

Ftly. There shall be elected a Parnaz & Two Hatanim, wch shall Like wise serve as assistants for ye good Government of our Holy Congregation, & in order to wch we have now this this Year of 5489 Elected Mr Mosses Gomez for Parnaz To whom we gave Power that he might Elect Two Hatanims and as assistants for this present year. & accordingly he did elect Mr Daniel Gomez for Hatan Torah & first assistant, and Mr Binjn Mendez Pacheco as Hatan Bereshit and Second assistant; & for the future the Parnaz and his assistants then in Being has Power to chuse another Parnaz & assistants in their Roome Yearly.

2ndly. We give authority to the Gentm That shall be elected yearly as, is, Customary in the Jewish Congregations that with the fear of God they may act as their Conscience shall dictate them for the well Governing of our Said Congregation.

3dly. If any person or persons whatsoever shall offer to give any affront or abuse, Either by words or action to any person or persons within the said Sinagog, he or they so offending shall be obliged to pay to the Parnaz then in Being the Sum of Twenty Shillings. if it be adjudged By the Said Parnaz and assistants that he or they have offended, which money shall be applyd for the use of the Sinagog. & if refus'd to pay the said fine the whole Congregation shall assist the said Parnaz and assistants to recover the same.

4thly. Whoever shall be elected Parnaz and refuse to serve shall pay the sum of three Pounds, alsoe those Hatanims that shall be elected and refuse to act in the sd post shall pay a fine of Foarty Shillings each one which sums shall be apply'd as in the 3d article is specified.

5thly. In case any disputes may arise so that the Parnaz and his assistants cannot agree, an Indifferent person whom they shall chuse shall decide the difference between them.

6thly. No unmarried man shall be elected Parnaz, nor a married man before he has served eitheir for Hatan Torah or Hatan Bereshith.

7thly. If any poor person should happen to come to this place and should want the assistance of the Sinagog the Parnaz is hereby impowered to allow every poor person for his maintainance the sum of Eight Shillings pr Week and no more Not

Exceeding the term of twelve weeks. And the Parnaz is also to use his utmost endeavours to despatch them to sum othere place as soon as Possible assisting them with necessarys, for their Voyage, that is for a single person fourty Shillings, but if it be a family then the parnaz shall call his assistance and consult with them both for their maintainance whilst ashore and also for their necessarys when they depart; those poor of this Congregation that shall apply for Sedaca shall be assisted with as much as the Parnaz and his assistants shall think fitt-

8thly. The offerings shall be Gather'd every three months by the Parnaz; as Likewise it not being convenient the selling of Misvots. its Resolved for the future that in Lieu thereof the Parnaz with his assistants shall tax the mens Seats in the Sinagog, as they are now seated, But not exceeding Fifteen Shillings each Seat pr annum, nor less then five Shillings, and the Misvots shall Be given out by the Parnaz as the whole year.

9thly. We now prezent and those that shall hereafter be admitted as Yechidims into this Congregation do & shall submit to the foregoing articles.

10thly. The Parnaz shall be oblidged twice a year to cause these articles to be read in the Sinagog both in Portugues & English-

Sign'd In New yorck in the *Kl Ks* of Sheerit Israell ye 12 of Tisry @ 5489 [September 15, 1728].

AS DRAWN UP IN 1761

ON THE 20th day of SHEBAT 5521 the YEHIDIM of the K. K. were assembled and by plurality of votes Elected the following five persons, viz: Jacob Franks, Isaac Gomez, Myer Myers, Hayman Levy and Sampson Simson assistants to the PARNASIM, which office they accepted, and with the authority given them by the said YECHIDIM do Institute the following HASCAMOTH.

1. In conjunction with the PARNASIM they are to collect and Form such Laws and Rules as may be necessary for the benefit and tranquility of the Congregation. For which purpose they are to meet on the first day of every Month, or when required by the PARNASIM. Sabbath and Festival excepted.

2. When a PARNAS or CHATAN is nominated, and refuse to serve, an Assistant in proper turn is to officiate in either of said offices, and in absence of the PARNASIM, to act as such.

3. They are to continue in office of Assistants untill others, (such only as have serv'd in the office of PARNAS) are elected in their place, Which the Congregation have a Right to do Yearly on the first Monday in ADAR.

4. Each PARNAS for the time being shall render a full and particular account to the Assistants every six months in the book provided for that purpose, and pay the ballance (if any in hand) to the succeeding PARNAS or be repaid by him if any due.

5. The PARNAS shall deliver to the Congregation their account of offerings every three Months and then pay the CHAZAN, SHOCHET and SHAMMAS their Quarterly Salaries, and the charitable Pensions according to their several allowances, with necessary expences, such as Wax, Oyl, &c; and shall not otherwise bestow or dispence more than the value of twenty shillings, without the consent of the Assistants.

6. The PARNASIM shall summon all the YECHIDIM to displace or elect a CHAZAN, SHOCHET or SHAMMAS, or for purchasing or selling real Estate, which cases shall be decided by plurality of Votes.

7. The PARNASIM shall consult the Assistants on some convenient time to Elect for the ensuing Year two PARNASIM, a CHATAN TORAH and CHATAN BERESHITH, who are to be nominated on the first day of ROSH HASHANA and then to enter in said Offices; the first PARNAS to Rule from that time untill *Pesach* then the second, to the end of the year. Any nominated PARNAS refusing to act shall pay Ten Pounds, and a CHATAN so refusing shall pay Five Pounds.

8. The acting PARNAS may appoint a vacant seat to any person, Male or Female, untill the Seats are more properly regulated, and shall order all the MITZVOTH in the Synagogue.

9. Every person congregating with us is to behave orderly, and accept the MITZVAH appointed him, and when called to SEFER shall offer at least three-pence for the acting PARNAS and KAHAL KADOSH.

10. In case of any indecency or disturbance during our Holy Service, The PARNAS or acting Ruler is hereby obliged calmly to admonish the offender and if he, she or they, notwithstanding persists and continue to offend, the PARNASIM on the first proper day following, with the advice of the Assistants shall make complaint and application to a Magestrate for redress.

11. Any person not conforming to the Rules of this Congregation, the PARNAS and Assistants have a right to Erase their name, and deprive them of any Right or Benefit as a YACHID not to be admitted again untill proper Concessions be made.

12. To prevent any dispute that may arise concerning who is properly a YACHID and intitled to a Vote, Each YACHID who hath formerly signed as such, is to renew the same unto these present Regulations, in this Book. A native here shall be admitted to sign and become a YACHID at the age of twenty one years. No Stranger to be admitted untill he has resided here at least one Year. Then with the approbation of the PARNASIM and Assistants, shall pay twenty shillings, sign the list of YECHIDIM and shall be admitted to Vote, three months after signing.

13. Every YACHID shall be intitled to all Rights & Benefits appertaining to the Synagogue; and none but YECHIDIM shall be Elected PARNAS, HATAN TORAH or HATAN BERESHITH or have privilege to order the MITZVOTH in Synagogue, for a Marriage, or Circumcision.

Servants of the Congregation

HAZZANIM

Saul Pardo	1702–03	Gershom Mendes Seixas	1784–1816
Abraham Haim de Lucena	1703?–25	Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto	1816–28
Moses Lopez de Fonseca	? –1736	Isaac Benjamin Seixas	1828–39
David Mendes Machado	1736–47	Jacques Judah Lyons	1839–77
Benjamin Pereira	1748–57	David Haim Nieto	1878–86
Isaac Cohen da Silva	1757–58	Abraham Haim Nieto	1886–1901
Joseph Jessurun Pinto	1758–66	Isaac A. H. de la Penha	1902–07
Isaac Cohen da Silva	1766–68	Isaac A. Hadad	1911–13
Gershom Mendes Seixas	1768–76	Joseph M. Corcos	1919–22
Isaac Touro	1780	James Mesod Wahnon	1921–41
Jacob Raphael Cohen	1782–84	Abraham Lopes Cardozo	1946–

PREACHERS

Arnold Fischel	1856–61	David de Sola Pool	1907–
Henry S. Jacobs	1874–76	David A. Jessurun Cardozo	1936–43
Henry Pereira Mendes	1877–20	Louis Coleman Gerstein	1942–

PARNASSIM

Lewis Moses Gomez	1728–29	Naphtali Hart Myers	1755–56
Jacob Franks	1729–30	Moses Gomez	1756
Mordecai Gomez	1730–31	Judah Hays	1756–57
Daniel Gomez	1731–32	Isaac Isaacs	1757
Abraham Isaacs	1732–33	Isaac Gomez, Sr.	1757–58
Jacob Franks	1733–34	Sampson Simson	1758
Mordecai Gomez	1734–35	Jacob Franks	1758–59
Samuel Levy	1735–36	Myer Myers	1759
Abraham Isaacs	1736–37	Benjamin Gomez	1759–60
Abraham Rodriguez de Rivera	1737–38	Hayman Levy	1760
Daniel Gomez	1738–39	Daniel Gomez	1760–61
Mordecai Gomez	1739–40	Samuel Hart	1761
Issachar Polock (?)	1741–42	Joseph Simson	1761–62
Judah Mears (?)	1742–43	Samuel Judah	1762
Samuel Myers Cohen	1743	Isaac Gomez	1762–63
Jacob Franks	1743–44	Manuel Josephson	1763
Mordecai Gomez	1744–45	Jacob Franks	1763–64
Jacob Franks	1745–46	Myer Myers	1764
Jacob Rodriguez de Rivera	1746–47	Sampson Simson	1764–65
Joseph Simson	1747–48	Asher Myers	1765
?	1748–49	Benjamin Gomez	1765–66
Judah Hays	1749–50	Samuel Judah	1766
David Hays	1750–51	Moses Daniel Gomez	1766–67
?	1751–52	Isaac Adolphus	1767
Jacob Franks	1752–53	Samuel Hart	1767–68
Benjamin Gomez	1753	Moses M. Hays	1768
Daniel Gomez	1753–54	Hayman Levy	1768–69
Samuel Hart	1754	Manuel Myers	1769
Joseph Simson	1754–55	Sampson Simson	1769–70
Isaac Gomez, Jr.	1755	Myer Myers	1770

Benjamin Gomez	1770–71
Asher Myers	1771
Hayman Levy	1771–72
Manuel Myers	1773–74
Mattathias Gomez	1774–75
Isaac Moses	1775
Hayman Levy	1775 and 1776
Alexander Zuntz	1783
Hayman Levy	1783–84
Myer Myers	1785–86
Hayman Levy	1786–87
Myer Myers	1787
Hayman Levy	1787–88
Samuel Judah	1788
Manuel Myers	1788–89
Isaac Moses	1789
Solomon Simson	1789–91
Manuel Myers	1791–92
Isaac Moses	1792–93
Manuel Myers	1793
Alexander Zuntz	1793–94
Ephraim Hart	1794
Manuel Myers	1795
Simon Nathan	1795–96
Alexander Zuntz	1796–97
Manuel Myers	1797
Alexander Zuntz	1797
Manuel Myers	1797–98
Isaac Moses	1798
Manuel Myers	1798–99
Joshua Isaacs	1799–1800
Jacob Hart	1800–01
Isaac Abrahams	1801–02
Benjamin Gomez	1802
Naphtali Judah	1802–03
Benjamin Gomez	1803
Aaron Levy	1803–04
Naphtali Phillips	1804
Aaron Levy	1804–05
Naphtali Judah	1805–06
Jaques Ruden	1806
Bernard Hart	1806–09
Naphtali Judah	1809
Israel Baer Kursheedt	1810–11
Seixas Nathan	1811
Benjamin Gomez	1811–13
Haym M. Salomon	1813
Benjamin S. Judah	1814
Naphtali Phillips	1815–24
Harmon Hendricks	1824–27
Moses L. Moses	1827–29
Solomon I. Isaacs	1830–33
Moses L. Moses	1834–41
Eleazar S. Lazarus	1842
Benjamin Nathan	1843–45
Solomon I. Joseph	1845
Samuel Lazarus	1846–49
Solomon I. Isaacs	1850–51
Benjamin Nathan	1851–54
Solomon I. Isaacs	1854–55
Isaac Phillips	1855–58
Asher Kursheedt	1858
Jacob L. Seixas	1858–61
Jonathan Nathan	1861–63
Judah S. Abecassis	1863–69
Barrow Benrimo	1869
A. R. Brandon Moses	1870–72
I. S. Abecassis	1872–75
A. R. Brandon Moses	1875–78
Solomon L. Cohen	1878–79
Asher Kursheedt	1879–81
Horatio Gomez	1881–82
Joseph Blumenthal	1882–83
Asher Kursheedt	1883–84
J. Edgar Phillips	1884–92
Isaac Brandon	1892–93
L. Napoleon Levy	1893–1921
N. Taylor Phillips	1921–22
Mortimer M. Menken	1922–26
Benjamin D. Fidanque	1926
Samuel L. Hyman	1926
Henry S. Hendricks	1927–30
Julius Bueno de Mesquita	1930
N. Taylor Phillips	1930–34
Henry S. Hendricks	1934–35
N. Taylor Phillips	1935–39
Henry S. Hendricks	1939–51
Edgar J. Nathan, Jr.	1951–

TREASURERS

Henry Hendricks	? –1835
David Hart	1835–45
Asher Kursheedt	1845–60
Mortimer Hendricks	1860–61
Simeon Abrahams	1861–67
Alfred Tobias	1867–73
Harmon H. Nathan	1873
Solomon L. Cohen	1873–74
Harmon H. Nathan	1874–75
Horatio Gomez	1875–81
A. R. Brandon Moses (ad interim)	1881–82
Antony Wallach	1882–85
David M. Piza	1885
L. Napoleon Levy	1885–93
Mitchell A. Cass Levy	1893–1918
Harry H. Liebovitz	1918–20
Phineas H. Toledano	1920–23
Samuel A. Hartogensis	1923–28
Jacob B. Fidanque	1928–48
Joshua V. Fidanque	1948–

Soldiers and Patriots of the American Revolution

Whose Graves Are Decorated on Memorial Day

INTERRED IN THE ST. JAMES PLACE
(CHATHAM SQUARE) CEMETERY

SOLOMON MYERS COHEN, 1745–1796. Merchant. Son of Abraham Cohen. Private in Captain Isaac Austin's 5th Battalion, Upper Delaware Ward, Pa. Militia; also Private in Captain Thomas Bradford's Company, 1st Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia, and later in Captain Andrew Geyer's Company, in Colonel William Will's 3rd Battalion, Pa. Militia. Died February 15, 1796.

JACOB HART, 1746–1822. Merchant. Born in Germany, son of Jacob Hart. Associator. Advanced money to General Lafayette to clothe and feed his troops; thanked by Congress May 24, 1781. Died May 9, 1822.

DAVID HAYS, 1732–1812. Merchant. Born in New Rochelle, N.Y., in March 1732, son of Jacob Hays. Associator. His house and store were destroyed by Tories in July 1779, while he was away in Long Island with colonial troops. He also served in the New York Militia at Braddock's Field in the French and Indian War. Died at Mt. Pleasant, N.Y., Oct. 18, 1812.

JOSHUA ISAACS, 1744–1810. Merchant. Born in New York City, N.Y., posthumous son of Joshua Isaacs. President of the New York Jewish community 1799. Private in Captain Joseph Hubley's 3rd Company, Colonel James Ross' 8th Battalion, Lancaster Co., Pa. Militia, and later in Captain Hubley's 1st Company of that Battalion. Died in New York City, February 17, 1810.

BENJAMIN JACOBS, 1737–1811. Merchant. Born in Curaçao, West Indies. Son of Jacob Jacobs. Private in Captain George Brown's 1st Company, Lieutenant Colonel Will Nichols' 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia, and in Captain Fred Shull's 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment of Philadelphia, Pa., Militia. Signer of Bills of Credit for Continental Congress. Died in New York City, December 15, 1811.

MOSES JUDAH, 1735–1822. Merchant. Born in New York City, son of Baruch Judah. Private in Captain Thomas Bradford's Company, 1st Battalion of the Philadelphia Militia. Died in New York City, September 25, 1822.

ELEAZAR LEVY, ?–1811. Merchant. Son of Hayman Levy. Private, Captain Samuel McLean's Company, 1st Battalion, Pa., Militia. Died in New York City, February 12, 1811.

HAYMAN LEVY, 1721–1789. Merchant. Born in Hanover, Germany, January 25, 1721, son of Moses Isaac Levy. Private in Captain Adam Foulk's Company 4th Battalion, Pa. Militia. Signer of Non-Importation Resolutions of 1770. Died in New York City, August 20, 1789.

ISAAC MOSES, 1742–1818. Merchant, ship owner. Born in Germany, son of Moses David. Private in Captain Andrew Burkhard's Company, in Colonel William Will's 3rd Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia. Signer of Bills of Credit for Continental Congress. Died at Mount Listen, New York City, April 16, 1818.

MYER MYERS, 1723–1795. Son of Solomon Myers. Silversmith. President of the New York Jewish community 1759 and 1770. Associator.

SIMON NATHAN, 1746–1822. Merchant. Born in Frome, England, son of Judah Nathan. Private in Captain Andrew Geyer's 3rd Company, Colonel William Will's 4th Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia; also provided large sums of money for the Revolutionary cause. Died in New York City, September 8, 1822.

JOSEPH NATHANS, 1738–1798. Merchant. Born in Germany, 1738, son of Nathan Jacob. Private in Captain Jacob Buss' Company, in Lieutenant Colonel Christian Shouse's Battalion, Northampton County, Pa. Militia; Private in Captain Henry Alshouse's 5th Company, Colonel Roup's 2nd Battalion, Northampton County, Pa. Militia; Private in Captain Abraham Horn's Company, Easton, Northampton County, Pa. Militia. Died in New York City, October 1, 1798.

MANUEL NOAH, 1755–1822. Merchant. Born in Mannheim, Germany, son of Noah. Private in Captain Thomas Willis' 7th Company, Lieutenant Colonel John Shee's 1st Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia. Died in New York City, January 22, 1822.

JONAS PHILLIPS, 1736–1803. Merchant. Born in Busick, in Rhenish Prussia, Germany, son of Aaron Uri Phillips. Private in Captain John Linton's Company, Colonel William Bradford's Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia. Signer of Non-Importation Resolutions of 1770. Died in Philadelphia, Pa., January 29, 1803.

ABRAHAM RODRIGUES RIVERA, 1762–1823. Merchant. Born in Newport, R.I. in December 1762, son of Jacob Rodrigues Rivera. Private in Newport Artillery Company, Rhode Island Militia. Died in New York City, January 10, 1823.

BENJAMIN MENDES SEIXAS, 1748–1817. Merchant. Born in New York City, on January 28, 1748, son of Isaac Mendes Seixas, Third Lieutenant in Fusiliers' Company, 1st Battalion, New York Militia. Died in New York City, August 16, 1817.

GERSHOM MENDES SEIXAS, 1745–1816. Minister of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. Born in New York City on January 14, 1745, son of Isaac Mendes Seixas, Associator, Preached the American cause in the Revolution, closed the synagogue and removed the holy scrolls to Stratford, Connecticut, when the British occupied New York City. Died in New York City, July 2, 1816.

SOLOMON SIMSON, 1738–1801. Merchant. Born in New York City, son of Joseph Simson. Supplied cannon to New York Militia; contributed lead for making bullets; member of House of Delegates of New York. Died in Yonkers, N.Y., January 17, 1801.

INTERRED IN THE ELEVENTH STREET CEMETERY

EPHRAIM HART, 1747–1825. Broker. Born in in Fuerth, Germany, son of Samuel Hart. Private in Pennsylvania Militia, 1781–1786. Father of Dr. Joel Hart. President of the New York community in 1794. A founder of the New York stock exchange. Died in New York City, July 16, 1825.

INTERRED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST STREET CEMETERY

ISAAC NUNES CARDOZO, 1737–1832. Born in London, England, son of Aaron Nunes Cardozo. Private in Charleston, S. Carolina Militia. Died in New York City, July 22, 1832.

DANIEL GOMEZ, 1759–1784. Son of Moses D. Gomez. Private in Captain John Corrush's Company in the Fourth Battalion of the Philadelphia Militia. Died August 27, 1784, and interred in the Chatham Square Cemetery. His grave transferred in 1856.

ABRAHAM JUDAH, 1714–1784. Son of Uriah Judah. Private, Dock Ward Company, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia, 1776. Died in New York City, September 2, 1784, and interred in the Chatham Square Cemetery. His grave, transferred in 1856.

Honor Roll

Names marked with an asterisk indicate those who died in service

FIRST WORLD WAR

Joseph Alexander Arbib
Reuben Arbib
Albert Bach, Jr.
Ely M. Behar
Manoel F. Behar
Harold Bernard
Morris Besso
Theodore G. Bloomberg
Gerald Brandon
Dr. Walter Brickner
Danforth C. Cardozo
Michael H. Cardozo, Jr.
Sidney Cardozo
David A. Cohen
Edward Cooper
William Cosel
Jacob Delbourgo
Ernest de Lima
Arthur Diamond
Albert G. Dreyfous
Howard E. Dreyfous
*Frank J. Felbel
*James Hendricks Florance
Ferdinand J. Friedman
Horace M. Graff
Robert Grant
Mortimer Harris
Phillip Harris
William McKinley Harris
Arthur Hart
Walter Hart
Alwyn M. Hartogensis
Arthur Hendricks
Clifford Hendricks
Henry S. Hendricks
Montague N. Hendricks
Abraham Hirsch
Gordon B. Hirsch
Stanley J. Hirsch
Albert Houlon
Harry Hurwitz
Bernard Illoway
*Adolph R. Jungman
J. B. Hubert Jungman
George Jacobs
Sidney F. Katz
Harold B. Kramer
Isidore Kross
Athos D. Leveridge
Herbert A. Levy
John Hezekiah Levy
Harold Mack
Harold M. Marks
Solomon Canter Marks
Monroe Mayhoff
Harold Davis Menken
Carl Morningstar
Benjamin Peixotto Morningstar
Percy Peixotto Morningstar
Lionel Moses, Jr.
Ferdinand S. Oppenheim
Geoffrey Phillips
Elward Jonas Phillips
Lloyd Peixotto Phillips
Naphtali Taylor Phillips
Harry V. Piperno
Victor Russek
Clarkson P. Ryttenberg
Abraham Lincoln Saruya
Floyd Silk
Isaac Silk
Louis Silk
*Julian M. Strassberger
Arthur Hays Sulzberger
Frank L. Swaab
Jacques M. Swaab
David I. Unterberg
Leon J. Weil
Arthur Wolf
Miss Kitty Zacharie

SECOND WORLD WAR

Monroe Adlman
Henry A. Alexander, Jr.
Jack Alson
M. Amateau
*Edmond Joseph Arbib
Salvador Assael
Archie Azerrad
Max Azoulay
Morris Azoulay
Theodore Baumgold
Arthur Baumoehl
Leon Benasaraf
Edwin Benveniste
David Biberman
Ira Bieler
Marcus Bieler
George R. Bises
Joseph Black
Peter B. Black
David Edward Bloom
Seymour Bress
David Brodie
James M. Bullowa
Benjamin J. Buttenwieser
Clarence Buttenwieser
Enzo Calabi
Eugenio Calabi
Joseph Camhi
Fernand S. Canter
Harry Caraco
George H. Cardozo
Myron Charlap
David A. Cohen
John Cohen
Joseph Cohen
Jack Conway
Joseph Corcos
Leon F. Corcos
Sidney Corcos
Joseph F. Cullman
Lewis B. Cullman
Norman David
Aaron Herzl de Haas
Louis Julius de Winter
Joseph W. Eaton
Daniel Elyachar
Jehiel R. Elyachar
Ralph H. Elyachar

Benjamin Delvalle Fidanque
Raymond Fisch
Abel Fischer
Daniel Fondiller
Harry David Fornari
Richard D. Forti
Felix Freudmann
David Belais Friedman
Milton Gabel
Edwin Geisenheimer
Shalom Michael Gelber
Harmon H. Goldstone
Elliot Goldwag
Alfred Goodman
Joseph Graham
Walton Graham
Stuart Green
Wallace Green
Murray I. Gurfein
Clement M. Hakim
Herbert Jay Harris
Jerome Sylvan Harris
William Kingdon Harris
Maurice Hartog
Aaron D. Hirsch
Abraham Hirsh
Wilfred C. Hulse
Adrian Sanford Jacoby
Wesley James
Charles Jaslow
Morton Jolles
Edward Paul Kendall
Milton M. Kendall
Thomas S. Langner
Howard I. Laniado
*Adrian Z. Leon
Henry Z. Leon
Sidney Z. Leshin
Mario Levi
Herbert L. Levine
Arthur I. Levy
A. Milton Lewin
Martin Lewin
Walter E. Lewin
Lewis Philip Lewis
Bendix Lowenthal
Alan David Lubell
Harold Lusskin
Sylvan M. Marshall
Edwin A. Marton
Howard M. Marton
Alvin Piza Mendes
Jonathan de S. Mendes
Richard H. P. Mendes
Edwin Bueno de Mesquita
Sol Messias
Jason Meth
Gert Meyer
Ernest Arthur Michael
Maurice Molho
Erwin Muscat
Edgar J. Nathan, III
Frederic da Silva Solis Nathan
Joseph M. Notrica
Howard S. Oberleder
Leslie P. Oberleder
Justin Sable Oppenheim
Saul Ostrow
Edmund Perez
Herman Podgurski
David A. Prager
Paul Pressel
Raymond Pressel
*Israel Rand
Herman H. Rapaport
Justin Rindsberg
Hector Joseph Ritey
Manuel Rodstein
Jonathan Judah Rosenblatt
William Rosenblum
Henry L. Rosenfeld
Leonard Rosenfeld
Harvey N. Rubin
Robert Salomon
Theodore Edward Salomon
Grace Saporta
Berthold I. Saruya
Jules M. Sax
Edward B. Schifreen
Alvin Harold Schleifer
Julian W. Schmer
S. Stanley Schneierson
Willy Schulz
Julian Schwartz
Henry Sciaky
Howard Shama
Ben Zion Shreiber
Daniel Siegel
Richard W. Siegel
George Simon
Freerk Simons
Ralph Sitt
Philip Slaner
Julian Lawrence Stamm
Bertrand Marcel Strauss
Mayer M. Swaab
Edward Toledano
Ralph Toledano
Yedid Touriel
Bernard F. Vieyra
Arthur B. Wahnon
Martha Wahnish
Adolphe J. Warner
Richard J. Weil
Robert L. Weil
Guy A. Weill
Marvin Wellins
Arthur M. Wolff
John Benjamin Wolff

NOTES

Notes

Unless otherwise specified, the Minutes are those of the board of trustees. PAJHS stands for Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society.

I: SHORES OF HOPE

1. *Hameassef*, 1784, p. 17. Samuel Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:39. "Providencia de Dios con Ysrael" by Saul Levi Mortera, quoted by Arnold Wiznitzer, *Journal of Social Studies*, 1954, p. 112, and PAJHS 44:80–97.
2. Arnold Wiznitzer, *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World*, pp. 1, 2; hereafter cited as *Records*.
3. Wiznitzer, *Records*, p. 37.
4. Samuel Rapport and Helen Wright, *Great Adventures in Medicine*, pp. 343–362.
5. Manuscript in the Bodleian Library. Wiznitzer, PAJHS 44:86.
6. Nieuw Amsterdam Records, 1654. Translation 1848. Wiznitzer, PAJHS 44:87, 88.
7. Berthold Fernow, *Records of New Amsterdam*, I, 240, 241; hereafter cited as *New Amsterdam*. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:68, 69.
8. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 244. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:69, 70.
9. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 249, 257. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:70, 71.
10. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 259. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:72.
11. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, V, 14; hereafter cited as *N.Y. Col. Doc.*
12. *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, April, 1953, p. 152.
13. *Collections of New-York Historical Society, 1885*, 18 Sept., 1648.
14. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:4, 5.
15. Charles E. Corwin, *Manual of the Reformed Dutch Church in America, 1628–1922*, p. 411.
16. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 334–336. Albion Morris Dyer, PAJHS 3:43, 44. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:73, 74.
17. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 291. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:5, 6.
18. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:9–13.
19. Names copied by Arnold Wiznitzer from the manuscript "Livro dos Acordos," 1638–1680.
20. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, XIV, 315. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:8.
21. I. S. Emmanuel, *American Jewish Archives*, Jan. 1955, pp. 15–18, 51–54.
22. I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498–1909*, IV, 148–149.
23. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 290, 291. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:6.
24. Wiznitzer, *Records*, pp. 49, 85–87.

25. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, III, 337.
26. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 197, 198; III, 140, 359. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:74, 76.
27. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 321, 322. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:31, 32.
28. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 321, 322. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:31, 32.
29. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 177; XII, 117, 118. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:27.
30. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, XII, 39. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:33, 34.
31. John A. Kouwenhoven, *The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York*, pp. 41, 42.
32. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 147.
33. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, I, 367–375. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:26.
34. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, VII, 154. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:35.
35. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VIII, 531.
36. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, XIV, 351. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:33.
37. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, II, 262; VII, 149, 154.
38. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, VII, 258, 261. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:64.
39. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 335. Albion Morris Dyer, PAJHS 3:43, 44. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:73, 74.
40. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 348, 349. Frederick J. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherlands*, p. 189.
41. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, XII, 36; XIV, 34. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:21.
42. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:21, 22.
43. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, XII, 39; XIV, 351. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:33.
44. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:19, 20.
45. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 336. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherlands*, pp. 141 f. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:73, 74.
46. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 324.
47. Daniel Horsmanden, *Journal*, Feb. 28–Aug. 29, 1741.
48. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, VI, 285. Oppenheim, PAJHS 18:75.
49. David de Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone*, pp. 489, 490.
50. Fernow, *New Amsterdam*, II, 396, 397.
51. *Documentary History of New York*, I, 59.
52. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, III, 219.
53. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, III, 415.
54. Albion Morris Dyer, PAJHS 3:47.
55. *Minutes of the Common Council*, I, 169.
56. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, III, 373.
57. *Colonial Laws of New York*, I, 244.
58. *N.Y. Col. Doc.*, IX, 549.

II: CITADELS OF FAITH

1. *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, I, 344–346, 348.
2. *Documentary History of New York*, III, 42.
3. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, IX, 549.
4. Albion Morris Dyer, PAJHS 3:49.
5. For a fuller story of the Mill Street Synagogues and the earlier synagogues,

see *The Mill Street Synagogue*, by David de Sola Pool, 1930.
6. Gabriel P. Disosway, *Earliest Churches of New York*, p. 97.
7. The *London Magazine*, VIII, 517.
8. Minutes, Jan. 27, 1803, p. 80.
9. *Diary of Lt. Col. Aaron Levy*, PAJHS 27:340.
10. PAJHS 27:159.
11. Shulhan Aruch, Orah Hayyim 152:1.
12. For a fuller story of this synagogue, see *The Crosby Street Synagogue* by David de Sola Pool.
13. Nehemiah 8:4.
14. Brown's *History of the New York Stage*, II, 344–352. George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, VII, VIII.
15. Minutes, July 10, 1859, p. 358.
16. Shulhan Aruch, Orah Hayyim, 150:3.
17. Electors Minutes, Oct. 29, 1888; Feb. 23, 1893.
18. Electors Minutes, 1859, pp. 212, 213.
19. Electors Minutes, Nov. 23, 1888, pp. 49, 50.
20. Electors Minutes, Feb. 1, 1894.
21. Minutes, May 23, 1897, pp. 100, 101.
22. Shulhan Aruch, Orah Hayyim 150:5; 94:1. Daniel 6:11.
23. David de Sola Pool, *The Seventieth Street Synagogue.*
24. Proverbs 6:23.
25. Minutes, Feb. 7, 1949, pp. 83, 84.
26. Minutes, Oct. 4, 1943, p. 384.

III: LIVING TRADITIONS

1. John P. Pinkerton, *Voyages and Travels*, XII, 455, 456.
2. J. J. Lyons, *Scrap Book*, I, 26, 27. PAJHS 27:392, 393.
3. Numbers 15:38, 39.
4. Exodus 28:4, 40.
5. Talmud, Sabbath 118b, 156b.
6. Exodus 15:2.
7. Talmud, Baba Bathra 4a.
8. Psalm 29:2.
9. Minutes, Sept. 22, 1746. PAJHS 21:50, 51.
10. Minutes, Oct. 21, 1764. PAJHS 21:89.
11. Minutes, Mar. 21, 1768; July 30, 1769. PAJHS 21:97–99, 103, 104.
12. PAJHS 29:129, 130.
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XIII: FOR THE SAKE OF ZION

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XV: TWELVE GENERATIONS

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XVI: THE PAST IS EVERLASTING

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GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

Glossary

The foreign words explained are Hebrew unless otherwise indicated. Irregular varieties of spelling are as they occur in the old records.

Ab: Fifth Hebrew month, approximately July–August.

Acompanhar [Portuguese]: To follow a scroll of the Torah in its procession to and from the Ark.

Adar: Twelfth Hebrew month, approximately February–March.

Adar Rishon: First Adar. The twelfth month in a Jewish leap year, approximately February.

Adas Jeshurun: The Congregation of Jeshurun.

Adjunta (Ajunta) [Spanish]: United. The council or governing body of the synagogue.

Adjunto, Ajunto (plural Adjuntos) [Spanish]: A member of the Adjunta.

Adon Olam: Lord of the universe. Opening words of a synagogue hymn.

Ahoth Ketannah: Little sister. The first words of a hymn opening the service on the eve of the New Year.

Aleinu: The prayer closing a synagogue service.

Aliyah: Going up. Immigration to the Holy Land.

A.M. [Latin]: Initials of Anno Mundi, In the year (since the creation) of the world.

Amidah: Standing. The principal prayer of each service, recited standing.

Anshe Chesed: Men of kindness. Name of a congregation.

Ark: The cabinet or chest within the synagogue in which the scrolls of the Torah are kept.

Ascama (plural, Ascamoth): Agreement. A (by)law of the congregation.

Ashkenazi (plural, Ashkenazim): A Jew residing in, or descended from those who resided in the countries of Central and Northern Europe, as contrasted with Sephardi.

A todos nossos Irmaos prezos pella Inquisiçao [Portuguese]: For all our brethren prisoners of the Inquisition.

Azharoth: Ethical injunctions. A poetic summary of the 613 commandments in the Pentateuch, composed by Solomon ibn Gabirol.

Banco, Banca [Spanish, Portuguese]: Seat, bench, reserved in synagogue for the president or the vice-president. Also at one period a section of reserved seats in the women's gallery of the synagogue.

Bar Mitzvah: The Son of Commandment. A lad who at the age of thirteen assumes his Jewish religious obligations. His part in the public service at which he formally becomes Bar Mitzvah.

Bendigamos [Spanish]: Let us bless. Opening thematic word of a song sung at table after a meal.

Beraha ve-Shalom: Blessing and Peace. Name of a congregation.

Bereshith: In the beginning. First word of the book of Genesis. See Hatan Bereshith.
Berith Shalom: The Covenant of Peace. Name of a congregation.
Beth a Haim, Beth Ahaim, Beth Haim, Beth Hayyim: The Home of Life. The cemetery.
Beth Din: The House of Judgment. The religious court consisting of three qualified rabbis competent to decide Jewish ritual and legal questions.
Beth El: The House of God. Name of a congregation.
Beth Elohim: The House of God. Name of a congregation.
Beth Hakeneseth: The House of the Assembly, synagogue.
Beth Hamidrash: The House of Jewish Study.
Beth Israel: The House of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Beth Olam: The home of eternity. The cemetery.
Beth Shalome: The House of Peace. Name of a congregation.
Bnai Jeshurun: The Children of Jeshurun. The name of the second oldest Jewish congregation in New York City.
Bodek: Examiner, inspector, searcher. The one who conducts the examination of the carcass of an animal immediately after it is ritually killed to determine its fitness for food.
Borei ad anah: O Creator, how long. Opening words of a dirge chanted on the morning of the Fast of Ab.
Cabaña [Spanish, Portuguese]: Booth, hut. The harvest booth, succah.
Casserado [Hispanized Hebrew]: Made kasher, ritually permissible.
Cautivos [Spanish]: Captives.
Cercle français [French]: French circle.
Classis [Latin]: The ministers and ruling elders in Amsterdam constituting the governing body of the Dutch Reformed Church.
Codes (Kodesh): Consecrated for community use.
Cohen (plural, Cohanim): Priest. One of the descendants of Aaron.
Cosmikos Patriarchis [Greek]: World Patriarch.
Dayyan: Judge in Jewish law.
Derech Hayim: The way of life.
Detuska: See Tudesco.
Eachal: See Hechal.
Ein Kelohei'nu: There is none like our God. Opening words of a hymn.
Eit shaarei ratson: The time of the gates of favor. Opening words of a hymn chanted on New Year's day.
Elul, Ellul: Sixth Hebrew month, approximately August–September.
Emanu-El: God is with us. Name of a congregation.
Erets Israel: The Land of Israel.
Erev: The eve of.
Esnoga (Sinagoga) [Spanish]: Synagogue.
Etz Hayyim: Tree of Life.
Fast of Ab: Occurring on the ninth day of the month of Ab, it commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Jewish exile.
Finta [Spanish–Portuguese]: Tax.

Gabbai: Treasurer, or President.
Gaon (plural, Geonim): Eminence, excellency. Title of the head of the Babylonian Talmudic academies in the early Middle Ages.
Gaonic, Geonic: Adjective of Gaon.
Gaveta [Spanish]: Box or drawer under a seat for holding prayer books, a prayer shawl, etc.
Gebed voor Land-en stadtsbestuur [Dutch]: Prayer for the government of the country and city.
Gemiluth Hasadim: The bestowal of acts of kindness. The name of a sick benefit burial society; also of a congregation.
Genizah: Place of putting away, where outworn scrolls of the Torah and other holy objects are set aside.
Goy (plural, Goyim): Nation, Gentile.
Great Sabbath: The Sabbath before Passover.
Habanoth: The daughters.
Haftarah, Haftorah, Haphtarah (plural, Haphtaroth): The liturgical reading from the historical or prophetic books of the Bible.
Haggadah: Recital. The recital of the story of the redemption from bondage in Egypt told in the home in song and prayer on the eve of the first two days of Passover.
Hagomel: He who bestows. Key word in a blessing of thanksgiving.
Haham (plural, Hahamim): Sage. Title given to a rabbi in a Sephardi community.
Hallel: Praise. Psalms 113–118.
Haluka: Division—of relief funds in the Holy Land.
Hanukkah: Dedication. The eight day Festival of Lights beginning on Kislev 25, occurring in December.
Hardkoppig [Dutch]: Hard-headed.
Haroseth: A confection used on Passover eve, made of apples, almonds, raisins, wine, and other fruits.
Hashcabah (plural, Hashcaboth): Memorial prayer. The prayer recited in memory of the dead.
Hashkibei'nu: Cause us to lie down. Opening word of an evening prayer.
Hatan (plural, hatanim): Bridegroom.
Hatan Bereshith: Bridegroom of "In the Beginning." The one chosen for the honor of commencing the annual cycle of reading the Pentateuch in synagogue.
Hatan Torah: Bridegroom of Torah. The one chosen for the honor of being called for the reading of the final verses in the annual cycle of reading the Pentateuch in synagogue.
Hatikvah: The hope. Zionist hymn, now also the national anthem of Israel.
Hazan, Hazzan (plural Hazzanim): The cantor-reader of the synagogue service, the minister.
Hebra, Hebrah: Society, Fellowship. Short for Hebra Gemiluth Hasadim or for Hebra Hased va-Amet. Also, the building in which the society or the congregation held meetings.
Hebra Hased Va-Amet: Fellowship of Kindness and Truth. Name of the burial society formed in New York in 1802.

Hebra Hinuch Nearim Veezrat Ebyonim: Society for the Education of Children and Help for the Poor.
Hebra Terumoth Hakodesh: Society for Offerings for the Sanctuary.
Hehal: Temple. The cabinet or chest within the synagogue in which the scrolls of the Torah are kept.
Hereb (Ereb) Yom tob: Eve of a festival.
Heshvan: Eighth Hebrew month, approximately October–November.
H.H.: Abbreviation for Haham Hashalem, the accomplished rabbi, the chief rabbi.
High Holy Days: The New Year and the Day of Atonement.
Honen Dallim: Gracious to the Lowly. Name of a congregation.
Hoshaana Rabbah: The Great Hosanna. The seventh day of the Festival of Booths.
Hoshen Mishpat: The breastplate of judgment. The fourth section of the authoritative code of Jewish law, summarizing the civil and criminal law.
Imposta [Portuguese]: Tax.
In absentia [Latin]: In absence.
In solidum [Latin]: All united as one.
Intus ut lubet, foris ut mori[ri]s [Latin]: On the inside and it is well; outside and you will pass away.
Iyyar: Second Hebrew month, approximately April–May.
Jahrzeit [German]: Anniversary of a death.
Jeshuat Israel: The salvation of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Jesiba: See Yeshibah.
Joden Savanne [Dutch]: The Jews' plain. A settlement in Dutch Guiana.
Junta, Junto: see Adjunta, Adjunto.
Kaddish [Aramaic]: Holy. A prayer marking the close of part of a service. Also recited by mourners.
Kahal, Kehila, Kehillah: Congregation.
Kalfe Sedaka Mattan Basether [Greek and Hebrew]: Charity Depository Gift in Secret.
Kal Nidrei [Aramaic]: All vows. The opening words of a solemn formula of absolution recited on the eve of the Day of Atonement.
Kasher, Kosher: Clean, fit, ritually permissible, applied to food and dishes.
Kashruth: The quality of being kasher.
Kehillah: Community, congregation.
Kehillath Jacob: The congregation of Jacob. Name of a congregation.
Kethubbah: Marriage Contract.
Kiddush: The blessing of sanctification of a Sabbath, a festival, or New Year's Day.
Kiddushin: Sanctification of the marriage troth.
Kippur: Atonement. Short for Yom Kippur.
Kislev: Ninth Hebrew month, approximately November–December.
K.K.: Abbreviation for Kahal Kadosh, Holy Congregation.
Ladino: Judaeo-Spanish.
Lag La-Omer: The thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer.
Landsmannschaft [German]: Grouping of fellow countrymen.
Levantador [Spanish]: The one who lifts up the scroll of the Torah.
Levantar [Spanish-Portuguese]: To lift up the scroll of the Torah.

Levi, Levite: A descendant of the tribe of Levi.
Lulab: Palm branch, carried in the morning services on the festival of Tabernacles, together with branches of willow and myrtle and a citron.
Machset Hashakel: Half of the shekel.
Machzerim: Festival prayer books.
Maftirim: The readings from Biblical historical or prophetic books associated with each Sabbath.
Magen Abraham: The Shield of Abraham. Name of a congregation.
Mahamad: Standing representation. The governing body of the congregation, the executive board.
Marrano [Spanish]: A Jew of Spain or Portugal or their possessions, from the fifteenth century onwards who perforce lived outwardly as a Catholic, while secretly adhering to Judaism.
Maskil: Scholarly in Jewish law.
Maskil ve Navon: Scholarly and enlightened in Jewish law.
Matan Ba Seter: A gift in secret (Proverbs 21:14). The name of a charitable fund.
Matzoth: Plural of Matzah. Unleavened bread, eaten during Passover.
Megillah: Scroll, specifically of the Book of Esther.
Mekor Hayim: The Source of Life.
Menahem: Comforter. Abbreviated form of Menahem Ab, designation of the month of Ab.
Mesheberach, Mi Sheberach: He who blessed. Opening words of a prayer invoking blessing on those named therein.
Meshibat Nefesh: Restoring of the soul. Name of a benevolent society.
Metaher House: Purification House. The mortuary chapel in which the dead were prepared for burial.
Mezuzah: A small Hebrew parchment scroll attached to a doorpost. (Deuteronomy 6:9.)
Midrash: Exposition. Homiletic rabbinic exposition of the Biblical text.
Midrash Debarim Rabbah: Name of a collection of rabbinic homiletic expositions of the Book of Deuteronomy.
Mikveh (Micva): Ritual bath.
Mikveh Israel: Hope of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Minhag: Custom, traditional usage.
Minhah: Afternoon service.
Minhat Areb: The offering for the West.
Minyan: Number. The quorum of ten Jewish males above the age of thirteen required for the conduct of congregational services.
Mishmarah: Vigil. A night session of study, that may be continued throughout all the night.
Mishnah: The written digest of traditional Jewish law compiled at the beginning of the third century.
Mitzvah (plural, Mitzvoth): A commandment. Hence, a good deed, religious duty. Specifically an honorary function in divine service performed by a member of the congregation.
Mizrach: The east.

Moadim: Festivals.
Mohel: One qualified to perform the religious rite of circumcision.
Musaph: Additional. The additional service added to the morning service on the Sabbath, holy days, and major and minor festivals.
Navon: See Maskil ve Navon.
Nedaboth: Freewill offerings.
Nefutsoth Jehudah: The dispersed of Judah. Name of a congregation.
Nec plus ultra [Latin]: Nothing more besides. Not to be surpassed.
Ner Tamid: Perpetual lamp.
Neveh Shaanan: Dwelling of Ease.
Nevie Shalome: Dwelling of peace. Name of a congregation.
Nidhe Israel: The Dispersed of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Nisan, Nissan: The first Hebrew month, approximately March–April.
Nishmat Hayim: The soul of life.
Obras pias [Portuguese]: Pious works, charity.
Omer: The period of seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost, counted day by day in accordance with the command of Leviticus 23:15, 16.
Oneg Shabbat: The joy of the Sabbath.
Ori El: My light is God.
Parashah, Parza: The weekly liturgical reading from the Pentateuch.
Parnas, Parnass (plural, Parnassim): President of a congregation, warden.
Parnas Presidente [Hebrew and Spanish]: The presiding warden, acting president of the congregation.
Parnas Residente [Hebrew and Spanish]: The president chosen for the second half of the year from Passover to the New Year.
Parnas u Manhig: President and Leader.
Parokhet: Curtain hung before the Ark.
Patria [Latin]: Fatherland, native land.
Pentecost: The Feast of Weeks, occurring on Sivan 6 and 7, approximately in May–June.
Pesah: Passover, occurring on Nisan 15–22, approximately in April.
Pirke Aboth: The chapters of the fathers. Five chapters in the Mishnah containing ethical sayings by the early rabbis.
Piyyutim: Religious poems, hymns.
Polonies Talmud Torah School: The religious school of Congregation Shearith Israel, New York, named after Myer Polonies.
Purgado [Spanish-Portuguese]: Purged, meat with the prohibited sinews, veins and fat extracted.
Purim: Lots. The festival of Esther (Esther 9:26), occurring in March.
Regenten [Dutch]: Governors.
Ribbi, Ribby: My master. Teacher.
Rimmonim, Remoniens: Pomegranates. The twin silver bells used for crowning the scroll of the Torah.
Rishon: First.
Rodeph Sholom: Pursuing Peace. Name of a congregation.

Rosh Hashanah: The head of the year. The Jewish New Year, occurring on the first and second of Tishri, approximately in September.
Rosh Hodesh: The head of the month. New moon, the first day of the Jewish month.
Ruach Hayim: The spirit of life.
Salom hal (shalom al) Israel: Peace be on Israel.
Schepels [Dutch]: Bushels.
Schepen [Dutch]: Alderman.
Schola [Latin]: A place of learning, a school, a sect, a group of one profession.
Schout [Dutch]: Sheriff.
Sedaka: see Tsedaka.
Seder: Order, arrangement. The order of service conducted in the home on the first two evenings of Passover.
Sefer, Sepher (plural, Sefarim): Book. The scroll of the law, the Pentateuch.
Segan: Deputy presiding officer, vice-president.
Selihoth: Penitential prayers for pardon.
Sephardi (plural Sephardim): A Jew of Spain or Portugal or the Mediterranean area, or one of his descendants.
Sepher Torah: The Book of Law. The parchment scroll of the five books of Moses.
Seudah (plural Seudoth): Meal.
Seudah Shelishith: Third meal, of the Sabbath day.
Shaaray Tefilah: The Gates of Prayer. Name of a congregation.
Shaare Hased (Sherer Shisset): The Gates of Lovingkindness. Name of a congregation.
Shaare Shamayim: The Gates of Heaven. Name of a congregation.
Shaare Zedek: The Gates of Righteousness. Name of a congregation.
Shaar Hashamaim: The Gate of Heaven. Name of a congregation.
Shabbat: Sabbath.
Shabbat Hagadol: The great Sabbath, the Sabbath preceding Passover.
Shabbat Shalom: Sabbath of Peace.
Shabuoth: Weeks. The Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, occurring on the sixth and seventh of Sivan, approximately in May–June.
Shammash, Shamas, Shammas: The beadle, sexton, superintendent of a synagogue.
Shearith Israel: Remnant of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Shearith Jacob: The Remnant of Jacob. Name of a congregation.
Shebat: The eleventh Hebrew month, approximately January–February.
She(c)hitah: Slaughtering. The method of killing poultry or cattle for food in accordance with Jewish ritual prescription.
Shelihuth: Sending of emissaries.
Shema: Hear. The opening word of Deuteronomy 6:4, the declaration of the Divine unity.
Sherched [Searched]: Examined and the parts prohibited for food taken out.
Shivath Hanneroth: The seven lamps.
Sho(c)het: Slaughterer. The official licensed to kill poultry or cattle for food in accordance with Jewish ritual prescription.

Shofar: Ram's horn, sounded in the penitential period as a call to repentance.
Shool, Shul [German, Schule]: Synagogue, so called from its use as a religious school.
Shulhan: Table.
Shulhan Aruh: The Ordered Table. Name of the summarized code of Jewish law compiled in the sixteenth century by Joseph Caro.
Sidra: Order. The weekly liturgical reading from the Pentateuch.
Simhath Torah: The Rejoicing of the Torah, the day when the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah is brought to a close and opened anew.
Sivan: The third Hebrew month, approximately May–June.
Slyck Steeg(h) [Dutch]: Muddy Alley.
Sofer: Scribe.
Stadthuys [Dutch]: City Hall.
Succah: Booth. Built as a symbol of the harvest for the festival of Succoth.
Succoth: Booths. The Festival of Tabernacles, Tishri 15–21, approximately the beginning of October.
Tabernacles: The harvest festival of Succoth occurring approximately early in October.
Tallith, Talleth: Fringed prayer shawl worn by men. (Numbers 15:37–41.)
Talmud: The volumes containing three centuries of rabbinic elaboration of the laws contained in the Mishnah, as well as non-legal narrations and homiletic interpretations.
Talmud Torah: The learning of the Torah, school. Also name of a congregation.
Tammuz: The fourth Hebrew month, approximately June–July.
Tebah: Enclosure in the synagogue where the hazzan's reading desk is set.
Tebet: The tenth Hebrew month, approximately December–January.
Tefillin: Small Hebrew parchments in a leather case attached to a man's head and arm in prayer. (Deuteronomy 6:8).
Terefah: Term used broadly of meats that are not prepared in accordance with ritual prescription, or of a house in which such meat is served.
Terra Santa [Portuguese]: Holy Land, holy soil.
Tishri: The seventh Hebrew month, approximately September–October.
Tocht en Wacht [Dutch]: Watch and Ward.
Torah: Teaching. The Pentateuch, five books of Moses.
Tsedakah: Righteousness, charity. Used also to denote the general synagogue funds.
Tsitsith: Ritual fringe on the four corners of the prayer shawl. (Numbers 15:37–41.)
Tsur Yisrael: Rock of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Tudesco [Spanish]: German.
Velhos [Portuguese]: Elders.
Veshalom: And peace.
Yahid (plural, Yehidim): A member of the congregation, elector.
Yehudim, Yahudim: Jews.
Yeshibah, Yeshiva: Session. House of higher Jewish study.
Yeshuat Israel: The salvation of Israel. Name of a congregation.
Yigdal: A hymn summarizing the thirteen creeds of Maimonides.

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement, occurring on the tenth of Tishri, approximately late in September or early in October.
Yomtob: Good day. A religious festival.
Yotser: Creator. A prayer to the Creator of the light of the newborn day.
Zedaka: see Tsedakah.
Zemiroth: Songs. Specifically those chanted at the beginning of the morning service.

Reading List

For the reader who is interested in some particular aspect of American Jewish history, the following list has been divided into these categories: Shearith Israel, books and manuscripts; Biographies and family histories; New York History; and Other Communities and their synagogues. Unless otherwise specified, the Minutes are those of the board of trustees. PAJHS stands for Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society.

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Constitution and By laws, 1761, 1801, 1805.

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Hebra Hased Va Amet, minute books and papers.

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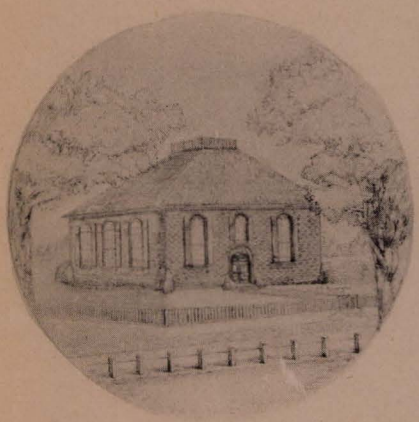
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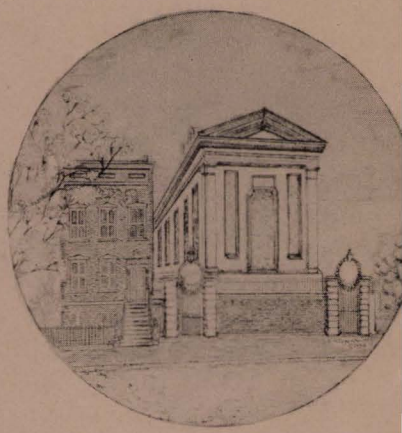
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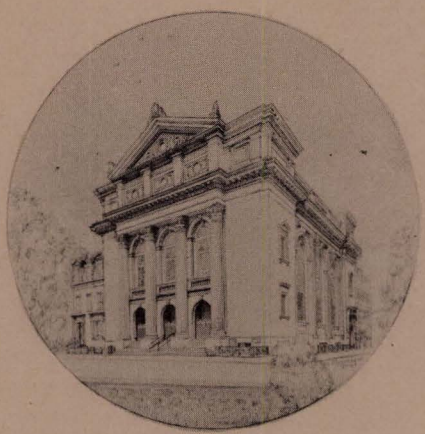
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1818



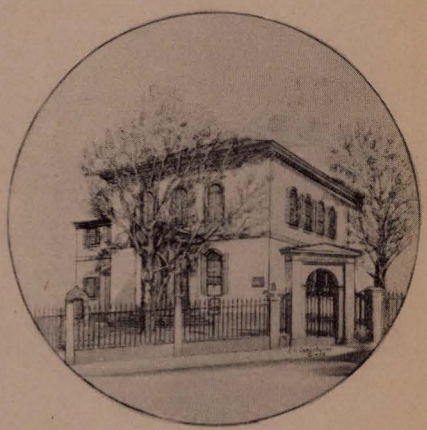
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