

THE INFLUENCE OF THE JEWS UPON CIVILIZATION

by

Jacob Gartenhaus

Copyright @ 1943

CHAPTER EIGHT

JEWISH FINANCE

In a recent edition of *Who's Who In American Jewry*, 2,527 Jews were listed as having made important contributions to the life and thought of contemporary America. These names represented all walks of life: science, art, literature, philosophy, drama, civic affairs, and included some five hundred physicians, three hundred lawyers, one hundred twenty-five engineers, one hundred artists, eighty musicians, ninety-three professors, fifty-six educators, and many others engaged in varied vocations.

To an extent, this refutes the charge that the Jews are solely commercial.

Many of the Jews began as peddlers. With their wares, which they carried on their backs, they wandered from place to place. As they prospered they increased their wares and bought horses and wagons. In time they settled in the community which had been the most favorable to them, and opened small stores. From this humble beginning some of them became merchant princes. Many of the largest department stores had similarly insignificant beginnings. In New York alone the Sterns, the Strauses, the late Ben Altman, the Gimbels, the Bloomindales and Franklin Simon have become synonymous with large-scale merchandising.

Outside New York, one thing immediately of Julius Rosenwald, who built the gigantic Sears, Roebuck and Company, the largest mail-order house in the world, and the late David May, founder of the May Department Stores Company.

In the markets of commerce and in the halls of trade, one has associated the Jew with money.

As early as 1705, Jews introduced soap making in Rhode Island.

The whaling industry became one of the most important in the early colonies, and the Jews assumed important roles as manufacturers and distributors of whale products. Also, they engaged in the molasses trade with the West Indies, thus bringing wealth to New England. During the period of Colonial America, Meyer Hart was the largest taxpayer in Eastern Pennsylvania, and Aaron Lopez, a Portuguese Jew, owned a fleet of 130 ships.

From the volume, *Weave A Wreath of Laurel*, by Allen Lesser, we learn that these ships carried fish, lumber, horses, whale and oil food products and numerous manufactured articles of Jamaica, Hispaniola, Surinam and Honduras, where they were exchanged for molasses. Arriving back at Newport, they were loaded this time with run for the African trade. Coastwise vessels carried tar, pitch and turpentine from the Carolinas, tobacco from Virginia and flour, pork and beef from the middle colonies. Meanwhile, from the west coast of Africa, ships carried ivory, palm oil, camwood and gold dust to European ports. Goods were imported from London and Bristol and sold to the middle and southern colonies. With the New Bedford merchant, Francis Rotch, Lopez sponsored many codfish and whaling expeditions, and played an increasingly influential part in the expansion of colonial commerce.

Abraham de Lyon, a Jewish pioneer of Georgia, introduced viticulture in the United States. Thousands have prospered economically because of his foresight, and millions have enjoyed products of his imagination.

During the latter part of colonial America and during the early years of the United States, there arose in Europe the beginnings of a banking house, the effects of which were to encircle the globe. Meyer Anselm Rothschild, a German Jew, in his effort to protect his own against the prejudice of his neighbors, conceived the idea of international banking. Like Terah of old, who died before he reached the land of Canaan but passed his dream to his son, Abram, Meyer Anselm Rothschild died before his plans were crystallized, but not until he had instilled them within the soul of his oldest son, Nathan, who later became Baron Rothschild. In later years, the Rothschilds were known as “the kings among bankers,” and as “the bankers of kings.”

The Jew was the first to use letters of credit. It is impossible to estimate the value of this one contribution alone in the shaping of the mercantile enterprise. The Jews were also the first to use the system of checks and bills of exchange. They were the pioneers of trade. They were the first to engage in the cotton, tobacco and coffee trades.

The Jews have always been philanthropic. From the beginnings of their history they have had organized charity for the care of the needy among them. Although their charity had its origin out of their desire to care for the needs of their own people, their philanthropy has extended to all peoples. Former President Hoover said of their indefatigable generosity during the strenuous days of the first World War:

“During the nine years that I have been actively connected with the larger American measures of relief to Europe, I have had intimate association with various Jewish organizations engaged in these labors. I have frequently had cause to comment upon the extraordinary generosity and liberality of the American Jews in their charitable contributions. Indeed their voluntary contributions exceeded that of any other American group, and ranged from the stinted savings of the poorest workman to the full outpouring of those in more fortunate positions.

“There is no brighter chapter in the whole history of philanthropy than that which could be written of the work of the American Jews during the past nine years.”

Who has not heard of the philanthropy of Nathan Straus, whose pasteurized milk stations in New York, London, Jerusalem and other places saved the lives of thousands of babies? His motto was: “Give till it feels good.”

And who has not heard of Jacob Henry Schiff or Julius Rosenwald, who set aside a fund of some \$22,000,000 for rural Negro schools, the building of Y.M.C.A., and so forth? Endowments by Jews for educational and scientific foundations run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

In the home or in public life, whether financiers, humanitarians or scientists, the Jews have given their best effort and thought to the development of the land of their adoption.

Their contributions to civilization have been noteworthy, even exceptional in many instances, and in return for that contribution they ask no more than the rights of peaceful citizenship and the privileges of tolerance.

We might continue the citation of worthy members of this remarkable race, but space forbids.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
