

THE INFLUENCE OF THE JEWS UPON CIVILIZATION

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

JEWISH CITIZENSHIP

In every age, in every land, against all odds, and out of all proportion to their actual numbers, the Jews have distinguished themselves in every branch of human achievement. Even their enemies admit that. It is well for one to remember that everywhere the Jew was considered an alien. He could not even choose the place for his residence, but rather had to live in a secluded and designated neighborhood. It was not until the close of the eighteenth century that the Jews were given the rights of citizenship in many of the lands where they had been dwelling. Even then, the rights came only because a few leading spirits volunteered to fight for them.

In the following pages, we shall endeavor to present a few of the contributions which the Jews have made to citizenship, to statesmanship, and to political life throughout the world.

One of the greatest statesmen that England has produced is Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, who became Prime Minister. Although Disraeli was a life member of the Church of England, he was proud of his Jewish ancestry.

Sir Moses Montefiore, sheriff of the city of London, was knighted by Queen Victoria. Baron Worms, another English Jew, served as Colonial Minister. Lord Reading, who served first in the House of Commons, was appointed Solicitor General in 1910, and then Attorney General. In 1912, he was promoted to the cabinet rank, and in 1913 he became Lord Chief Justice of England. In 1921, he was placed in the highest post which any British subject can hold under the Crown, Viceroy of India. Sir Alfred Mond, later known as Lord Melchett, was Commissioner of Works and Commissioner of Health. Sir Philip Sassoon, who has been a member of Parliament since 1912, has held other high offices. Both Lord Melchett and Sir Philip Sassoon were members of David Lloyd George's cabinet. Other important English Jews are the Countess of Desart, Sir Myer Spielman, Sir Joseph Duveen, Sir Edward Stern, Lady Adolph Tuck, Sir Robert Wesley Cohen and Sir Samuel Alexander. Among the aristocratic families of England are the Montagues, the Goldsmiths and the Jessels. On at least two occasions a Jew has held the office of Lord Mayor of London.

An Australian Jew, Sir Isaac Isaacs, held many government posts, and in later years was Attorney General. Another Australian, Sir Henry Emanuel Cohen, was Minister of Justice, and still another, Sir John Monash, was one of the outstanding generals in the Allied Army.

In France, the Jew has played an important role from earliest times, perhaps from the very beginning of the Christian Era. Following the Revolution of September, 1791, France gave full civil and political rights to the Jew, and thus set the precedent for other European countries. France can boast the largest number of Jewish ministers, the most famous of whom was Isaac Adolph Cremieux, who served in several cabinets as Minister of Justice. Another Jew, Camille Ferdinand Dreyfus, was Prime Minister of France in the early 1880's. During the reign of Napoleon III, Abeles Fuld, a Jew, served as Minister of Finance. Another Jew, Michel Goudchaux, served in the same capacity under the same king. A ministerial portfolio in several cabinets was held by David Reynal. Joseph Reinach, one of the most distinguished of French statesmen, who is celebrated particularly for his part in the defense of Captain Dreyfus, was a cabinet chief in the Gambetta government. Another important role was played by a Jew, Gil Simon, as minister, publicist and statesman.

The remarkable advance made by the Jews in France was illustrated in World War I, when, among others, the follow Jews held cabinet offices: Henri Bergson, in Clemenceau's cabinet, 1917; Fernand David, Minister of Agriculture; Louis Lucien Klotz, Minister of Finance, Painlevé cabinet, 1917; Edmond Ignac Ignace, Under Secretary of War, 1917; Henry Simon, Minister of the Colonies, 1917.

In contemporary French politics, an outstanding role has been played by the Jewish premier, Léon Blum.

In 1919-20, it was estimated that there were 85,000 Jews in France. In the year 1923, eight-two Jews received various grades of the Legion of Honor.

Perhaps in no country have the Jews risen to greater heights than in Germany, where they are being persecuted so mercilessly. There, in 1871, after a long struggle, they were granted civil and religious rights. The victory was far from complete, however, for even then few Jews were allowed to become full professors at the universities, and even few were commissioned officers in the Imperial Army. It was virtually impossible for a Jew to be appointed to either diplomatic or civil service. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the wealthiest and most cultured Jews of Germany were still struggling for complete emancipation.

In Italy, Luigi Luzzatti was four times Minister of the Treasury. He served also as Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, as Prime Minister, and was an author of distinction.

The contribution of the Jews to statesmanship is not confined to the pages of European history alone. It is significant, perhaps, that in the same month that Christopher Columbus sailed on his epochal voyage which led to the discovery of the New World, Spain ordered the Jews out of her land. It was Luis de Santangel, counsellor and comptroller of Aragon, and his brother-in-law, Gabriel Sanchez, the treasurer of Aragon, who contributed 17,000 ducats. It was not Isabella who sold her Jewels to outfit the Columbus expedition. "Now Jewels, but Jews were the real financial basis of the first expedition of Columbus." It was a Portuguese Jew who drew up the maps used by him, and at least five Christian Jews were members of that company who sailed with him.

Columbus found the astronomical tables, maps and almanacs of Abraham Zacuto most useful on his voyage. The ship physician, Maestre Bernal, the ship surgeon, Marco, and one of the sailors, Alfonso de la Calle, were all Jews. Rodrigo de Triana, a Jew, was the first to sight land, and Luis de Torres, the interpreter, was the first to set foot on American soil. Kyserling, in his work, *Christopher Columbus and the Participation of the Jews in the Spanish Portuguese Discoveries*, translated into English by Professor Charles Gross of Harvard, has established the identity of these men who took part in the voyage. In his new volume, *Christopher Columbus*, the distinguished historian, Madariaga, attempts to prove that Columbus himself was of Jewish origin.

The harassed Jews of Spain were forced to flee, and they sought refuge wherever they could. Some of them went to Holland, and others to the Dutch colonies in Brazil. The claws of the Inquisition reached their new homes, however, and once again they were forced to leave. In 1655, a group of twenty-three Jews from Brazil arrived in New Amsterdam. Later in the same year, others came. But even there, they encountered great difficulties at the hands of unfriendly magistrates. Peter Stuyvesant, the governor, who was equally hostile to all religious minorities, wrote to the Dutch West India Company in Amsterdam, and requested that “men of the Jewish nation be not permitted to infest the New Netherlands.”

The Dutch West India Company, which counted among its shareholders a number of Jews, thought it unfair to exclude them, since they had sustained considerable loss in the taking of Brazil by the Portuguese. Consequently, the Jews were permitted to remain in New Netherlands, with the provision that the poor among them should not become a burden to the company or to the community, but that they should be supported by their own people. When the decision of the Dutch West India Company reached Governor Stuyvesant, he attempted to deprive the Jews of their rights as burghers, but the attempt was protested by Asser Levy, who later became the first Jewish citizen in America.

In 1664, the city of New Netherlands was captured by the English, who changed its name to New York, in honor of the Duke of York, and in 1683, a charter of liberties and privileges was adopted by the colonial assembly, extending religious freedom to all persons who faith in God through Jesus Christ. In 1685, the Jewish residents petitioned Governor Dongan “for liberty to practice their religion.” This petition was referred to the mayor and the common council of New York, who decided that “no public worship is tolerated by act of assembly but to those who profess faith in Christ and therefore the Jew’s worship was not to be allowed.” However, King James II gave instruction to Governor Andros, who succeeded Governor Dongan, to permit freedom of worship to all peoples, whatever their nationality or religion.

As soon as the Jews in New York were given religious liberty, they began to adapt themselves to their environment. Soon other Jewish colonists came, and settled in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Georgia and Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The most important Jewish community at that time was at Newport, Rhode Island. Rhode Island appealed to the Jews particularly because of its consistent stand for religious freedom. Roger Williams, of Rhode Island, was not a stranger to them. Not only had he interceded between the Dutch and their inflamed Indian neighbors, but previously, during his residence in England when the question of the readmission of the Jews arose, it was he who championed their cause, writing:

“I humbly conceive it to be the duty of the civil magistrate to break down the superstitious wall of separation (as to civil things) between us Gentiles and Jews and freely (without this asking) to make way for their free and peaceable habitation amongst us.” Still later he said: “There goes many a ship to sea with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or human condition, or society. It hath fallen out sometimes, that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked in one ship upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for turns upon these two hinges, that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews or Turks be forced to come to the ship’s prayer or worship, if they practice any.”

In his famous argument for the readmission to England, he said: “By the merciful assistance of the Most High, I have desired to labor in Europe, in America, with English, with barbarians, yea, and also I have longed after some trading with Jews themselves, for whose hard measure I fear the nations and England have yet a score to pay. I desire not that liberty myself, which I would not freely and impartially weigh out to all the consciences of the world besides. All these consciences (yea, the very consciences of the Papists, Jews and so forth, as I have proved at large in my answer to Master Cotton’s sayings) ought freely and impartially to be permitted their several respective worships, and what manner of maintaining them, they freely choose.”

It was the liberal spirit of Roger Williams that made Newport the favorite community of the Jews. The Jewish cemetery at Newport, laid out in 1677, has been memorialized by Longfellow in his poem, *Justice to the Jews*.

After a long struggle, the Jews gained equal rights and power in the various colonies and states. The Jews aided greatly in the shaping of America. Their influence has been felt ever since the first Jew stepped upon American soil in 1492. And, today, as we look retrospectively upon the pages of the history of our development, we find the names of many Jews who have rendered meritorious service.

Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Franks, a Jew, was aide-de-camp to General Washington during the Revolution. In August, 1790, George Washington visited the home of Moses Isaacs in Newport. Quoted below is Washington’s reply to a letter from the Hebrew congregation in Newport:

“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, upon our paths and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way, everlastingly happy.”

The many Jews who were associated intimately with the development of our country distinguished themselves in every phase of service. Among the pioneers in each of the original thirteen colonies were Jews, whose indomitable energy enabled them to share the hardships and perils of pioneer life. We have space to do no more than suggest a few of the names which compose the long list of celebrated Jews who served this country so honorably.

This list includes Gratz, Franks, Sampson, Jacobs, Bush, Mordecai, Hays, Moses, Meyer, Mendes, De La Mott, Etting, Cohen and Benjamin.

Among the signers of the decision to make more binding the non-importation agreement which the colonists had adopted to bring England to terms on the question of taxation were Samuel Judah, Hayman Levy, Jacob Moses, Jacob Meyers, Jonas Phillips and Isaac Seixas.

One of the most prominent figures during this period was Haym Salomon, a Polish Jew, who settled first in New York and later in Philadelphia. Salomon arrived in this country at that time when feeling against England was mounting steadily. He soon joined a secret society, the Sons of Liberty. After a few years' residence in this country, he became prosperous enough to marry the daughter of Moses Benjamin Franks, one of the most influential Jews in the colonies. Easily he ranked next to Robert Morris as the man who made possible the financing of the war. On one occasion, Salomon responded to an appeal by Morris with \$300,000, none of which was ever repaid to his heirs. He was of great assistance to James Madison, who wrote of him: "I have for some time been a pensioner on the favor of Haym Salomon, a Jew broker." And again, "The kindness of our little friend on Front Street, near the Coffee House, is a fund which will preserve me from extremities, but I never resort to it without great mortification, as he obstinately rejects all recompense."

Salomon was not the only Jew who sacrificed his fortune for independence, for among the signers of the bills of credit for the Continental Congress in 1776, we find such names as Levy of Philadelphia and Jacobs of New York. Samuel Lyon of New York was among the signers of similar bills in 1779. Isaac Moses of Philadelphia contributed \$15,000 to the colonial treasury.

Even a brief survey of the Jewish enlistment in the wars of our country will indicate, to an extent, their consciousness of their patriotic privileges and duties.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, there were few Jewish residents in this country. Notwithstanding, however, there were more than fifty Jews in Washington's army, twenty-four of whom served as officers. Grover Cleveland paid a beautiful tribute to the Jewish participation in the Revolutionary War on the occasion of an address which he delivered at Carnegie Hall, November 30, 1905. He said:

"When with true American enthusiasm, we recall the story of our War for Independence and rejoice in the indomitable courage and fortitude of our Revolutionary heroes, we should not fail to remember how well the Jews of America performed their part in the struggle, and how in every way they usefully and patriotically supported the interests of their new found home. Now can we overlook, if we are decently just, the invaluable aid cheerfully contributed by our Jewish fellow-countrymen in every national emergency which has since overtaken us."

During the War Between the States, some 8,000 Jews participated, although there were but 150,000 Jews in the entire country at that period.

During World War I, approximately one quarter of a million Jews served under our colors, this figure being about four per cent of the total number who served in the armed forces, whereas proportionately the Jew in this country formed about three per cent of the total population. Of this number, nearly 40,000, or twenty percent of the entire Jewish contingent, were volunteers.

During the war, American Jews were cited for valor over 1,100 times: 723 by the American command; 287 by the French; 33 by the British; and 46 by the other Allied Commands. The Congressional Medal of Honor was conferred on 3 Jews posthumously. Over 150 were the recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross, and 4 received the French Croix de Guerre.

During this war, the Jews not only served in military capacities but in civil and political capacities as well. Bernard M. Baruch was chairman of the War Industries Board. The Swopes, Gerard and Herbert Bayard, and Samuel Gompers served as members of the Board. Julius Rosenwald and Bernard Baruch served on the Advisory Commission of the National Council of Defense. Eugene Meyer, Jr., was Chairman of the War Finance Corporation. Felix Frankfurter was Assistant Secretary of War. Manny Straus conceived the idea of War Savings Stamps. General S. Herbert Wolfe arranged the plan for war risk insurance.

The Jews have distinguished themselves as diplomats, some twenty having served this country abroad as ambassadors, counsellors and ministers. Other Jews have served in the homeland as senators, congressmen and governors.

The following is a list of Jews who have represented the United States abroad:

- Belmont, August (1816-1890) – Charge d'affaires and Minister Resident to the Netherlands, 1853-54.
- Berstein, Herman (1876) – Minister to Albania, 1929-33.
- Einstein, Lewis (1877) – Minister to Costa Rica, 1913-21; Minister to Czechoslovakia, 1921-30
- Elkus, Abram I. (1867) – Ambassador to Turkey, 1916-17
- Cuggenheim, Harry F. (1890) – Ambassador to Cuba, 1929-33
- Hirsch, Solomon (1893-1902) – Minister to Turkey, 1889-92
- Kaufman, Joseph S. (1876) – Minister to Bolivia, 1929-30
- Kornfield, Joseph S. (1876) – Minister to Persia, 1921-24
- Morganthau, Henry (1856) – Ambassador to Turkey 1913-16
- Morris, Ira Nelson (1875) – Minister to Sweden, 1914-23
- Otterbourg, Marcus (1827-93) – Minister to Mexico, 1867; Previously served as Consul in Mexico
- Peixotto, Benjamin F. (1834-90) – General Consul to Roumania, 1870-76
- Ratschesky, Abraham C. (1864) – Minister to Czechoslovakia, 1930-32
- Steinhardt, Lawrence A. (1892) – Minister to Sweden, 1933
- Straus, Jesse Isidor (1872) – Minister to France, 1933.
- Straus, Oscar S. (1850-1926) – Minister to Turkey, 1887-88; Minister to Turkey, 1898-1900; Ambassador to Turkey, 1909-10
- Wolf, Simon (1836-1923) – August and General Consul to Egypt, 1881-82

The following Jews have served their respective states as United States Senators:

Benjamin, Judah P. (1812-84) – Louisiana, 1853-61
Guggenheim, Simon (1867) – Colorado, 1907-13
Jonas, Benjamin Franklin (1834-1911) – Louisiana, 1879-85
Rayner, Isador (1850-1912) – Maryland, 1905-12
Simon, Joseph (1851) – Oregon, 1903
Yulee, David Levy (1811-1886) – Florida, 1855-61

The following Jews have served their respective states as governors:

Alexander, Moses (1853-1930) – Idaho, 1915-19
Bamberger, Simon (1847-1926) – Utah, 1912-21
Bartlett, Washington – California, 1887
Emanuel, David (1744-1808) – Georgia, 1801
Horner, Henry (1878) – Illinois, 1932-40
Lehman, Herbert H. (1878) – New York, 1933
Meier, Julius L. (1874) – Oregon, 1930
Seligman, Arthur (1873) – New Mexico, 1931
Solomon, Edward S. (1836-1913) – Washington Territory, 1870-74

Undoubtedly, the two leading publicity counsels in this country, with the possible exception of the late Ivy Lee, are Jews: Charles Michaelson, of the Democratic National Committee, and Edward L. Bernays.

It is interesting to know that the first Jewish senator was a Southern Jew, David Levy Yulee. He served also in the Confederate Senate. Another Jew, Judah P. Benjamin, was called the “brains of the confederacy.” President Pierce offered him a place on the bench of the United States Supreme Court. Benjamin declined the honor, however, in order to continue his legal practice in New Orleans. Later, he became a senator and was the first man to receive appointment in the Confederate Cabinet. It was said of him, “No man alone had a greater share in directing the destinies of the South than Judah P. Benjamin, save the President.”

Francis Salvador, of South Carolina, although he had been a resident in the country only three years, became an active member of the Provisional Congress and later suffered a hero's death while leading an attack against hostile Indians.

Benjamin Sheftall, of Georgia, while assisting in the defense of Savannah, was captured and imprisoned by the British. Later he escaped and served throughout the war as Commissary General for the South.

A considerable number of Jews served in Captain Richard Lushington's company of militia in Charleston. A number of Jewish officers in the regular army also distinguished themselves. Major Benjamin Nones, a native of Bordeaux, France, served under Count Pulaski during the Revolutionary War, and was decorated for his courage under fire.

The Jews have rendered service in many capacities, but in no way can they surpass in merit their “brave and tireless fight for complete religious liberty.” Perhaps this is of itself their supreme contribution as statesmen. Moses was the first real liberator recorded in history. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Jews, the most oppressed and persecuted of peoples, should be the ones who possess the keenest conception of liberty.

The 600,000 Jews in the South today are patriotic. Loyalty to the land of his fathers or to the land of his adoption is an inherent trait of the Jew. The Jew loves the country “in which are clustered the proudest reminiscences of the history of his race.” He loves no less the country where his own home is, where his own dear ones live, and where they will be buried.

In brief, no matter where he is domiciled, the Jew remembers the admonition of the great prophet, Jeremiah, who said to the people of Israel when they were captives in Babylonia, **“Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”**

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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