

INTRODUCTION

The Jew and the American Revolution

THE WAR AND ITS BEGINNINGS, 1775

The United States in 1975 finds Jews, together with their fellow-citizens, celebrating the bicentennial of the American Revolution. From the ranks of the Jewish community—now 6,000,000 strong—have emerged about two dozen Nobel Prize winners during the last generation. It is the most affluent, the most generous Jewry the world has yet known; the gross national product of its social and cultural institutions totals annually about \$1,500,000,000. This imposing complex of societies and organizations is a far cry from the Jewry of 1776 with its maximum total of 2,500 men, women, and children ensconced for the most part in the tidewater towns of Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah.

Like their neighbors, this miniscule American Jewry of the 1770's was not happy with the new fiscal and political policies Great Britain was formulating for her empire. With the French driven out of North America after the Seven Years' War, the colonists were expected to carry their share of the burden by defraying part of the expense of the long, hard conflict. To achieve this end, imperial controls were tightened; the new empire was to be much more closely integrated. The American people reacted to these pressures in the mid-1760's by signing nonimportation and nonconsumption agreements, boycotting English goods and industry. Since the menace of the French had been removed, the colonists no longer needed the mother country and moved toward autonomy. Taking advantage of the emergent national consciousness which had been shaping itself for almost a generation, the extremists pushed for independence and began piling up military supplies. In the attempt to anticipate an uprising, the British marched on Lexington and Concord in April, 1775, and the war was on.

LOYALISTS

The overwhelming majority of Americans were not happy about the thought of war that spring and summer of 1775. Even after the Battle of Bunker Hill, the Continental Congress hoped to evade a full-scale struggle and ordered a fast day in July. There is reason to believe that the Jews assembled in their chapels all the way from Newport to Savannah and prayed devoutly for peace. Out on the Pennsylvania frontier, in the growing village of Northumberland, Mrs. Aaron Levy and her nephew attended a make-shift Presbyterian service and prayed with their neighbors for the cessation of hostilities. But this war, too, was irrepressible, and Jews, like all others, had to take a stand.

In determining their loyalties, Jews did not differ from their fellow-Americans. Some were Loyalists (Tories); others were Whigs; in between were those who swung from side to side as need and circumstances dictated. No one will ever know with any exactitude where the American people and the Jews among them stood in those sad days. Even families split—there were Gomezes, Frankses, and Hayses in both camps. This was a civil war. In the larger towns, some Jews too poor even to go into exile and hoping to keep their little shops open accepted the authority of the British crown. Some of the rich and powerful, too—Jews like the Franks clan, army purveyors—remained loyal to the crown. The Loyalists were grateful for the economic security of the empire; they resented its expanded fiscal demands and bureaucratic controls, but they knew that as businessmen and as Jews they were more happily situated than any other Jewry in the whole world. It is true that Jews here were politically disabled, but this could be expected to change in time; rebellion and violence were not the answer. Some of these Loyalists were driven into exile. Devoted to a Great Britain that had been so good to them, they sacrificed their estates and even their lives. Isaac Hart, the cultured Newport merchant shipper who had fled to Long Island, was bayoneted and clubbed to death by patriotic Whigs.

NEUTRALS AND WHIGS

Because most Jews were in commerce, supporting themselves as petty shopkeepers, they were rather conservative. The thought

of revolution and secession frightened them. They had a great deal to lose. They, too, grumbled at the Stamp Act and the import duties, but they were not willing to go to war to decide whether the colonies were to be part of a loosely federated or a well integrated empire. In order to survive, these individuals did what they had to do. These are the men who in their perplexity halted between two opinions. The humble Jewish businessman Philip Moses was typical of this group. He soldiered with the Charleston militia, but when the city was taken by the British he, like most of his Christian and Jewish neighbors, swore allegiance to the English; his only other choice would have been to leave town—which later, indeed, he did, quitting Charleston for Whiggish Philadelphia. A number of Jews certainly lived and shifted about in the twilight zone between Whiggism and Loyalism, for there were probably as many kinds of Whigs and Loyalists as there were Jews.

Whether successful or not, the American Jews were primarily businessmen, literate and intelligent. In agrarian America they were nearly all part of a respected middle class, though politically they were second-class citizens denied the vote in some colonies and forbidden office in all the colonies. The political disabilities which they had to endure disturbed and humiliated them. They were fully aware that—potentially at least—political discrimination went hand in hand with economic disadvantages and social prejudice. All this they felt keenly. A growing number were native Americans, children of the 1760's, the decade of protest. Young Jacob Mordecai typified the new generation. In 1774, at the age of twelve, this young patriot, armed and clad in a hunting shirt, joined a boys' military company which escorted the delegates to the Continental Congress as they rode into Philadelphia.

Not being of English stock, the Jews, most of them natives of Central Europe, often believed that they owed the English little. To be sure, their lot had fallen in pleasant places; they did enjoy many liberties and opportunities in British America, but these only whetted their appetite for more. As Whigs they were not satisfied with half a measure of freedom; they wanted it full and whole. Unlike the Loyalists, they were not willing to wait. They were not gradualists. The Whigs, nearly always a minority group, were eager to embrace these responsible, substantial, middle-

class reinforcements. Many of the Jewish Whigs were ardent patriots; they left their shops, homes, businesses, and warehouses in New York, Newport, Savannah, and Charleston, preferring exile to life under British rule. Gershom Seixas, the minister of New York's Remnant of Israel (Shearith Israel), packed up the Torahs and moved with many of his elite to Connecticut.

The Jews in colonial America never constituted more than one-tenth of 1 percent of the population; yet in Georgia it was a Jew who took the lead in establishing the first "American" government in that province. Mordecai Sheftall was a native whose father had come to Savannah shortly after the arrival of Oglethorpe himself. In the late summer of 1774, Sheftall became the head of the Parochial Committee of Christ Church Parish; he assumed the leadership of the new de facto county government implementing the anti-British boycott resolutions of the Continental Congress. When the war moved into an active phase, he became the commissary general for Georgia's militia and Continental troops. Knowing the part he had played, the British, when they took Savannah in December, 1778, imprisoned him for about a year and a half before allowing him to return to his family. Sir James Wright, the British governor, was well aware that Sheftall was one of the "liberty" leaders. Reporting back home to his superior in London, the governor suggested that the Georgia Jews not be allowed to return to the province and that Jewish newcomers be entirely excluded:

For these people, my lord, were found to a man to have been violent rebels and persecutors of the king's loyal subjects. And however this law may appear at first sight, be assured, my lord, that the times require these exertions, and without which the loyal subjects can have no peace in the province or security in this province.

SOLDIERS

Mordecai Sheftall's career during the Revolution was hardly typical. He was the highest ranking Jew in the Revolutionary forces, for his office carried the titular grade of colonel. Two other Continentals became lieutenant colonels—quite an achievement when it is borne in mind that no one could hold a military office in the British-American colonies unless he took a Christian oath.

David Salisbury Franks was an American who had moved to Canada, the fourteenth colony. When General Richard Montgomery took Montreal from the English, the civilian Franks lent the troops money, sold them supplies, and advanced them funds when there was not a farthing in the military chest. Looked upon by the British as one of the principal leaders of sedition, Franks had to flee with the American forces when they were driven out. He joined them as a volunteer, remained in the service throughout the war, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

An even more enthusiastic patriot was Franks's fellow Pennsylvanian Solomon Bush, who became a kinsman of Mordecai Sheftall when Sheftall's son Moses married Bush's sister Nelly. Young Solomon Bush joined the army in the early days because he wanted to "revenge the wrongs of my injured country." He soon rose to the rank of deputy adjutant general of the state militia. Severely wounded in a battle near Philadelphia, he was carried to his father's home till betrayed to the British by a "villain." The English were kind enough to parole the wounded officer, but while receiving medical treatment from them, he discovered that a spy had infiltrated Washington's headquarters. Bush lost as little time as he could in alerting the Whigs.

Isaac Franks, a Whig member of this widespread Anglo-American clan, became a lieutenant colonel in the Pennsylvania militia, but that was after the war. In 1776, at the age of seventeen, he enlisted in a regiment of volunteers, arming and equipping himself at his own expense. After the Battle of Long Island, when his company retreated to New York City, he was captured by the British and thrown into prison. Three months later this daring youngster escaped in the dead of winter, crossing the Hudson in a leaky skiff with only one paddle. Arriving on the Jersey shore, he rejoined the American forces and remained in the service until 1782. For most of these years he was a forage master and a noncommissioned quartermaster in and about West Point. The highest rank he reached during the Revolution was that of ensign in a Massachusetts regiment. After six years of practically continuous service with the Continentals, this veteran retired at the ripe age of twenty-three and went into business in Philadelphia. Achieving a modest degree of success, he bought the Deshler House in Germantown. During the war this attractive home had

served the British briefly as army headquarters; in 1793, during the yellow fever epidemic, Franks rented the place furnished to President Washington. After the scourge had abated and the President had vacated the mansion, Washington could not fail to notice as he scrutinized his bill that Ensign Franks had charged him for six missing items: one flatiron, one large fork, and four platters.

How many Jews served in the militia and in the Continental line? That will never be known, no matter how carefully one checks the records in the National Archives. Combing the lists will indeed bring to light the names of Cohens, Levis, Moseses, and Solomonses. Some of these men were born Christians; Joseph Smith was not. After enlisting in the Third Maryland Regiment at the age of twenty-three, Smith saw service in Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, and the South. Wounded at Camden, South Carolina, in 1780, he fell into British hands and remained a prisoner until he returned home to Baltimore. In signing the company payroll, he made his mark. When he applied for a pension after the war, it developed that Smith's real name was Elias Pollock; he could write, but the only script he employed was the Hebrew. Why had he concealed his name? He may well have been a runaway debtor seeking to escape imprisonment; he may have been an indentured servant or a Maryland "transport," a criminal serving out his term in the colonies. Or the simple answer may be that, fearing prejudice, he adopted the innocuous Anglo-Saxon "Smith" to conceal his Jewish origin.

The Jewish historian Barnett A. Elzas documented the presence in South Carolina of at least thirty-four Jewish Revolutionary War veterans, among them a few Georgia refugees. Most of these Jews served under Captain Richard Lushington, whose outfit was known—rather erroneously—as the "Jew Company." The Jews who served in his command did not constitute a majority, but since most of them were King Street shopkeepers, all bunched together, they had been conscripted as a group. They gave a good account of themselves. One of the captain's men was Jacob I. Cohen, who fought with his comrades at the Battle of Beaufort. Lushington certified in 1779 that Cohen had "in every respect conducted himself as a good soldier and man of courage."

Five years later, as a member of the Richmond firm of Cohen & Isaacs, Cohen hired a frontiersman named Daniel Boone to survey his lands on the Licking River in distant Kentucky.

The most distinguished Jewish Carolinian of Revolutionary days was Francis Salvador, a member of one of the richest Jewish families in England. After Joseph Salvador, Francis' uncle and father-in-law, had lost his money, he repaid his nephew, to whom he was indebted, by ceding to him large tracts in the Carolina hinterland. They were known as the "Jews' Lands." When young Francis lost his own fortune, he left his London family behind and, in 1773 and 1774, carved out a large plantation for himself in South Carolina's Ninety Six District. Salvador soon emerged as a Whig leader. It may not be difficult to guess what motivated him. Twenty years earlier his uncle, then one of the great financiers of the empire, had helped sponsor a Jewish Naturalization Act. After passing, it had been speedily scuttled by Parliament in a wave of anti-Jewish hostility and scurrility. Uncle Joseph Salvador had been hooted out of a London theater. Who can doubt that Francis Salvador, cultured and wealthy, never forgot that back in London he was only a second-class citizen? Because of his background, he was immediately accepted in good Carolinian society and was invited to sit in the rebel provincial congresses and in the first general assembly of the new state of South Carolina. Salvador was the first unconverted Jew to serve in an American legislature. By 1776, this attractive young man had become a member of a number of important committees and thus a notable political figure.

When the British army and navy struck at the Carolina coast in 1776, and their allies, the Indians and Tories, moved in to massacre the settlers and farmers on the western frontier, Salvador rode twenty-eight miles to rouse the militia. On the night of July 31-August 1, the punitive expedition which he had joined was ambushed. Salvador fell, shot and scalped by the Indians. He may have been the first Jew to die in defense of the new United States. Today in Charleston's City Hall Park there is a plaque dedicated to his memory:

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

COMMERCE

Though not a soldier, still another member of the Franks clan rendered a great service to the new Continental Army. In 1776, as Washington was preparing in Boston to move against New York, the general requested Congress to send him \$250,000 in hard coin to pay off the militia whose term of service had expired. Washington's problem was not to raise the money, but to transport it to Boston past hostile Tories. Shipping the specie by boat and evading the British sea patrol was too hazardous. It was at this juncture that John Hancock called upon "three gentlemen of character"—among them, Moses Franks—to cart the money secretly to Washington's headquarters. It took them two weeks to reach Boston, unfortunately too late to meet the needs of the militia, but the cash was used to satisfy the regulars. The total expense incurred in this trek north amounted to \$238.

The fact that 100 or more American Jews may have served in the armed forces is of no great historic significance. Their commercial activities were far more important in an agrarian economy where industry and manufacturing were minimal and the coasts were blockaded by the powerful British fleet. The farmers and townspeople had to have yard goods and tea; it was imperative that the soldiers be supplied with uniforms, blankets, and shoes. One way to relieve the shortage was to arm merchant ships and send them out as privateers to prey on enemy commerce. This Jews did, arming small ships heavily and packing them with large, tough crews who scoured the seas for valuable British cargoes.

Many an American who joined or financed a privateer dreamt of striking it rich. Impoverished Mordecai Sheftall decided to try his luck. After his imprisonment and exile from British-occupied Georgia, he determined on a bold stroke to recoup his losses. In one way or another he managed to secure hold of a twenty-ton sloop, the *Hetty*, sold shares in her to secure working capital, loaded her with thirty men including a Negro slave, and armed her with eight guns, tomahawks, blunderbusses, and boarding pikes. Then he set sail on what was to be a most inglorious adventure. The English captured the *Hetty* and scuttled her, but the persistent Sheftall raised and reoutfitted the vessel. He tried his luck once more, but never struck it rich; indeed, it is questionable whether any of the Jewish merchants of that day made any "big money" lying in wait for British merchantmen.

After a fashion, privateering was a form of blockade-running. Many American ships got through the English naval barrier, for the enemy could not guard every cove and inlet of the long coast. Certainly one of the most daring of the blockade-runners was the firm of Isaac Moses & Co. Its three partners Isaac Moses, Samuel Myers, and Moses Myers had an Amsterdam buying office which shipped their goods to Dutch St. Eustatius in the Caribbean. From there the company's ships made the run to an American port, trusting to fate that they could slip past the cordon set up by the English cruisers. Isaac Moses and his associates were great Whigs. Shortly after the War broke out in 1775, when the Americans set out to conquer Canada, the three partners voluntarily offered the Congress \$20,000 in hard currency in exchange for Continental paper which—as they might have foreseen—ultimately proved worthless. If it was any consolation, they received the grateful thanks of John Hancock for their generous gift.

Isaac Moses & Company operated on a large scale; Jonas Phillips, of Philadelphia, was not so ambitious. One of Phillips' blockade-running letters, written in July, 1776, has been preserved. It was dispatched via St. Eustatius to an Amsterdam kinsman, a prominent Jewish merchant in that city. Enclosed in the letter was a broadside copy of the Declaration of Independence which had just been published by the Americans. Phillips did not expatiate on the revolt, merely remarking laconically that the Americans had 100,000 soldiers, the British 25,000 and a fleet. What was going to happen? Only God knew, but before the war was over England would be bankrupt. In an appendix to the letter, Phillips got down to business, asking for cloth, apparel, notions, and medicines. The letter was written in Yiddish, no doubt with the expectation that if the British intercepted it, they would let it go by because they could not read it. That was a vain hope, for the ship, which sailed from St. Eustatius, was taken, the letter was impounded, and just because the English could not read it, they concluded that it was in code. It rests today in the English Public Records Office in Chancery Lane.

Since the quartermaster department of the Revolutionary armed forces was primitive and inadequate, the government turned to civilian purveyors for badly needed supplies. Many, if not most, Jewish merchants of that day were purveyors on a large or small scale, offering the government clothing, gunpowder, and

lead. Harassed for lack of funds, the authorities took their time before settling accounts; some trusting suppliers were never paid at all. One of the merchants who were never reimbursed for their advances was Levy Solomons, of Canada, a brother-in-law of the ebullient David Salisbury Franks. Solomons, a Whig, served the American troops in Canada in 1775 and 1776, helping them establish hospitals and lending them money. When the Americans were forced to retreat, this zealous patriot provided the sick and the wounded with transportation on their way to the border. The British, knowing where his loyalties lay, seized his goods and furniture on July 4, 1776, and threw them into the street; his neighbors shunned him and refused him shelter.

The Jewish businessmen of the period were nothing if not ingenious; there was no supply job that they would not undertake. Exiled to Philadelphia, the New York fur trader Hayman Levy became a garment manufacturer producing breeches and shirts in the local poorhouse. The tailor Levy Marks petitioned Congress—unsuccessfully—to give him the job of superintending the manufacture of army uniforms. Levy's cousins, Barnard and Michael Gratz, turned to anything that offered a profit. They exported tobacco from Virginia, outfitted troops, and shipped supplies to George Rogers Clark, who was dedicated to the task of driving the British out of the western frontier. Michael Gratz's father-in-law, Joseph Simon, a Pennsylvania pioneer, manufactured rifles in Lancaster with his gunsmith partner, William Henry. Out on the Ohio frontier, one of Simon's companies, Simon & Campbell, provided the Indian commissioners with goods for pacifying the natives. The Gratzes performed the same service in New York State, where the Iroquois had to be held in check. The Americans could not afford to fight on two fronts: against Indians in the back country as well as the English in the East. In short, the Jewish importers, wholesalers, and blockade-runners managed—no one really knows how—to ferret out goods even in the darkest of days. The shopkeepers distributed them. This relatively successful job of keeping commodities flowing was the real Jewish contribution to the war effort.

POLITICAL GAINS

When the war was over, the Jewish Whigs were very proud of their party's achievements. Those New Yorkers who had gone

into exile returned home in late 1783 and sat down to write Governor George Clinton a letter:

Though the [religious] 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.

They were happy that they now enjoyed full political equality, for they were fully conscious of the fact that theirs was the only state of the thirteen where Jews were privileged to hold office. Still unemancipated, Jews in all the other states waited for the fulfillment of the Great Promise made in the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal." Finally, in 1786, Virginia began to move when it passed Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom. A year later Congress adopted the Northwest Ordinance which guaranteed religious and political freedom in the new states to be formed in the future north of the Ohio and west of the Alleghenies. When the federal constitution was approved by a majority of the states in 1788, the Jews were satisfied: Article VI declared categorically that no religious test would ever be required for any office under the federal government.

The adoption of the United States Constitution was one of the most important events in the entire history of Diaspora Jewry. There had been nothing like it since 212 C.E., when the Emperor Caracalla granted citizenship to all free men in the Roman empire. American Jewry was the modern world's first free Jewry. One can well understand why the Jews of Philadelphia joined so gladly in the Federal Parade of July 4, 1788. In this, the greatest spectacle that America had yet witnessed, the Christian clergy walked arm in arm with "Rabbi" Jacob R. Cohen. When the parade was over, the tired but happy Children of Israel clustered around a kosher table of their own at Bush Mill to munch crackers, salmon, almonds, and raisins. It was a great day; the messiah was just around the corner!

Unfortunately, something delayed him. There were still eleven other states which withheld office from Jews. The very summer the Constitution was being debated Jonas Phillips wrote to the constituent convention. In his letter, the only one sent it asking for religious equality, Phillips pointed out to the assembled politicians that the 1776 Pennsylvania organic statute contained a Christian test oath. He asked the federal convention to take action against it. But, of course, the federal delegates had no authority to

alter any state constitution; states' rights were paramount. The eleven laggard commonwealths were slow to honor the commitments implicit in their individual bills of rights. It took 100 years after New York emancipated its Jews before the last sluggard, New Hampshire, permitted Jews and Catholics to serve in a legislative office—in 1877.

HAYM SALOMON

Phillips was not the only Pennsylvania Jew who deeply resented the exclusionary test oath in Section X of the state's constitution. Many other Jewish Whigs felt as he did. Among them was the immigrant Haym Salomon, who had landed on these shores about the year 1775. Polish-born Salomon, then thirty-five years of age, became almost over night an impassioned patriot as he peddled among the American troops stationed on New York's northern borders. He was so well-known as an ardent Whig that, when the British occupied New York City, they arrested him and threw him into one of their infamous military prisons. He might have perished there had he not been released by the German mercenaries who served the British. It is very probable that one of the German-Jewish quartermasters who had accompanied the "Hessians" induced their general to free and employ him. Salomon went to work for them, but operated underground as an American agent inducing Hessian officers to resign and helping French and American prisoners to escape. Unfortunately, the British finally caught up with him. If he had not fled, he would certainly have been executed. He escaped to Philadelphia, leaving behind a wife and an infant child. After some two years of struggle, Salomon achieved a degree of affluence. Because of his remarkable linguistic skills, he became a financial agent for the consul general of France and the treasurer of the French army. By 1781, he was probably the best known bill broker in the country, and it was in that capacity that Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance, employed him to sell the bills of friendly governments. Preparing to undertake the Yorktown campaign which was to end with the surrender of Cornwallis, the Americans needed large sums of money to equip their troops. Salomon's job was to serve Morris as an alchemist; he was to transmute paper into gold, and this he did.

Because the delegates to the Continental Congress were often in need, they were driven to borrow money to tide them over. In the summer of 1782, a necessitous delegate from Virginia appealed to Salomon for help—and not in vain. “I have for some time past been a pensioner on the favor of Haym Salomon, a Jew broker,” wrote James Madison to his friend Edmund Randolph, and in a later letter he reported how Salomon had again rescued him. “The kindness of our little friend in 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.” That same year, as Philadelphia Jewry set out to build its first synagogue, Salomon was the most generous contributor.

It is obvious why a man like Salomon who had risked his life twice because of his Whig convictions would feel hurt that his state saw fit to treat him as a second-class citizen. As a member of the board of the new synagogue, the Hope of Israel, he joined with them and the congregation’s cantor-minister in 1783 in a vigorous protest to Pennsylvania’s authoritative Council of Censors, asking them to remove the offensive test oath. The protestors accomplished nothing. Two years later Salomon died and lies today in an unmarked grave in the Spruce Street Cemetery. Five years after this “Jew broker” was laid to rest, Pennsylvania did remove the discriminatory clause. On Wacker Drive in present-day Chicago there is a monument commemorating the services of Salomon to the beloved land of his adoption. General Washington stands tall and erect on a pedestal of black marble flanked on his right by Robert Morris, on his left by Haym Salomon. The legend underneath runs:

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 the spring of that same year Mordecai Sheftall had sat down and written a letter to his son Sheftall Sheftall. By that time young Sheftall was already a veteran with at least five years of service behind him. He was twenty-one years of age. When only sixteen, he had been appointed an aide to his father with the title of Assistant Deputy Commissary of Issues. When father Mordecai was captured by the British in 1778, Sheftall Sheftall was also

imprisoned. In 1781, some time after his release, the young commissary was charged by the United States government with the important task of bringing relief to General William Moultrie and his fellow-prisoners in Charleston. Sheftall was the flagmaster of the flag of truce sloop *Carolina Packett*. He completed the mission successfully. Charleston was Sheftall's second home. As the megalopolis of the American South, it was always attractive to Mordecai's son; it was a market center and, what was even more important, could boast a number of Jewish girls. In April, 1783, while on one of his trips to the big city, Sheftall received a letter from his father telling him that the war was over:

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

Georgia Jews: Liberty People and Violent Rebels—1775-1781

One of the leaders of the Revolutionary movement in Georgia was Mordecai Sheftall (1735-1797), the chairman of the rebel Committee of Christ Church Parish, which included Savannah, the colony's largest city. Associated with him were his brother Levi (1739-1809) and a friend, Philip Minis (1733-1789), probably the first white male child born in Georgia who survived to manhood.

The activity and importance of these men, particularly Mordecai Sheftall, as rebel leaders are documented in the following letters and deposition. The two letters printed below were written by Sir James Wright, the governor of Georgia for the largest part of the period, from 1760 to 1776 and from 1779 to 1782. It was he who referred to the Whigs, rather contemptuously it would seem, as "liberty people."

Savannah, in Georgia,
the 17th of August, 1775.

My Lord: . . .

We have received an account here that an armed vessell or two, fitted out from Charles Town [South Carolina], proceeded to the

bar of St. Augustine [Florida], and there met with a vessell bound to that port, which had a great quantity of gun powder and king's stores on board, part of which had been sent on shore, but that they took out of her 15,000 weight of the gun powder which they had landed safe at Beaufort, Port Royal, South Carolina.

The conduct of the people here [in Savannah] is most infamous. One Sheftall, a Jew, is chairman of the Parochial Committee, as they call themselves, and this fellow issues orders to captains of vessels to depart the king's port without landing any of their cargoes, legally imported. And fresh insults continue to be offered every day, and no sloop of war arrived yet. . . .

James Wright

To the Earl of Dartmouth.

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The deposition of Richard Bissell, master of the ship *Clarissa*, belonging to Rhode Island, but now lying in Savannah River, taken on oath the 12th day of September, 1775, before the Honourable Anthony Stokes, barrister at law, Chief Justice of the said provence.

This deponent, being duly sworn on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, maketh oath and saith:

That he arrived in this province on or about the twenty fifth day of July last, from the island of Jamaica, having on board the said ship ten hogs heads of melasses, and sundry other goods;

That this deponent, about the middle of August, advertized the said melasses for public sale; that soon after the said advertizement appeared, one Stephen Biddurph, messenger to the Parochial Committee in Savannah (as this deponent has been informed and verily believes), came to this deponent and told him that the committee ordered him to appear before them;

That when this deponent went before the said committee, he there saw sitting in the chair one Mordecai Sheftal, of Savannah, Minis, of Savannah, both which persons profess the Jewish religion; one Platt who acts as secretary to the said committee, one Lyons of Savannah, blacksmith, one Tondee of Savannah, tavern keeper, and several others, whose names this deponent doth not know;

That the said Mordecai Sheftal told this deponent that the

aforesaid melasses could not be landed in this provence and that they must be carried back to Jamacai or abide by the consequences;

That this deponent hath since been obliged to sign a bond, at the Custom House, for the delivery of the said melasses at the island of Jamaica aforesaid.

Richard Bissell

Sworn the day and year aforesaid: Anthony Stokes

A true copy: Preston & Pryce

* * * *

Savannah, in Georgia,
the 9th of March, 1781.

Duplicate

On the 6th inst., I did myself the honor of writing to your Lordship, in which I gave your Lordship some account of the situation of affairs in this province. . . .

On the 6th inst., my Lord, I assented to five bills, and have the satisfaction to acquaint your Lordship that one of them is entitled: "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Dutys upon All Goods, Wares, and Merchandize of the Growth or Production of This Province, Which May be Exported from Hence, as the Contribution of Georgia to the General Charge of the British Empire. . . ."

Another is entitled: "An Act for Securing His Majesty's Government and the Peace of This Province, and for the More Effectual Protection of the King's Loyal Subjects Here against the Wicked Attempts and Designs of the Rebels and Other Disaffected Persons, and for Other Purposes Hereinafter Mentioned." From the great number of sculking rebels and disaffected persons remaining in this province, I saw, my Lord, that it was impossible for his Majesty's loyal subjects to remain in any tolerable degree of peace or security, and therefore proposed this law to enable the inhabitants to take up and secure all rebels and persons guilty of harbouring, concealing, aiding, or assisting rebels and plunderers, or giving them intelligence [information], and to compell them to remove out of the province.

I judged it also necessary to prevent the Jews who formerly reside[d] here from returning, or others from coming to settle

here. For these people, my Lord, were found to a man to have been violent rebels and persecutors of the King's loyal subjects; and, however this law may appear at first sight, be assured, my Lord, that the times require these exertions, and without which the loyal subjects can have no peace or security in this province.

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[Letter from Sir James Wright, apparently to Sir George Germaine, his Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for America.]

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Hiring a Religious Factotum—1776

The Pennsylvanische Staatsbote announced in its July 30, 1771, issue that a synagogue had been opened in Cherry Alley, Philadelphia. Five years later Congregation Mikveh Israel took a step forward when its leader Michael Gratz, the merchant, hired young Ezekiel Levy to serve in the threefold capacity of ritual slaughterer of cattle and fowl, hazzan or reader, and Hebrew teacher. In the contract he signed, he agreed to instruct six children. Obviously, these were the children of the poor whom he contracted to teach without extra charge. There were certainly other Jewish children in town, but he would be paid extra for teaching them. Primary education for all was not a communal responsibility. Compensation was a matter to be arranged privately between the communally subsidized teacher and the parents.

To guarantee that the three-in-one shohet, hazzan, and me-lammed would stay on the job for at least a year, the congregation saw to it that Ezekiel Levy's father signed the contract and bond. The two witnesses called in to subscribe their names were businessmen. One of them, Alexander Abrahams, worked for Michael Gratz as a clerk. The other, Israel D. Lieben, had been Aaron Levy's personal shohet in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. Shortly after 1774 he went to Philadelphia and began to assume the duties of shohet, and possibly teacher, for the Gratzes. There was some question about his slaughtering, and a major controversy ensued. Apparently, when that quieted down, the contract between Gratz and the Levys was drawn up.

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¹ Jacob R. Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents—Eighteenth Century* [AJD] (Cincinnati, 1959), pp. 232-35.

Articles of Agreement made between Michael Gratz of the City of Philadelphia, for and in behalf of the Jewish Society held here, of the one part, and Abraham Levy and his son Ezekiel Levy of this province, of the other part.

Whereas, the said Michael Gratz for himself and the rest of the society hath engaged the said Ezekiel Levy to act in the capacity of a Jewish killer [ritual slaughterer], reader in the synagogue, and to teach six children the art of reading the Hebrew tongue for one year, for which offices he, the said Ezekiel Levy, is to receive an annual salary of £30, paid him quarterly by the acting *gaboy* ["treasurer"], for the time being with board and lodging.

And the said Ezekiel Levy doth hereby bind himself for and in consideration of £30 to act for the society in the capacities of killer [slaughterer], reader, etc., for the continuation of one year, to commence from the day of the date hereof; and that the said Ezekiel Levy cannot discharge himself after the expiration of the year, without giving one quarter's notice of his intention to the society,

For the true performance of which we, the said Abraham Levy and Ezekiel Levy, have signed our hands to these presents to observe the same in all its due forms, under the penal sum of thirty pounds Pennsylvania currency, for the use of the said society. Given this day, Philadelphia, the 18th June, 1776.

Abraham Levy
Ezekiel Levy

Signed in the presence of I. D. Lieben
Alexander Abrahams²

* * * *

Moses M. Hays Stands on His Rights—1776

In June, 1776, Moses M. Hays, a Newport merchant, subscribed to a statement affirming his allegiance to the newly independent thirteen American colonies. The next month, July 12, 1776, Hays was summoned to appear before a committee of the Rhode Island General Assembly to sign an additional test of loyalty to the revolutionary regime, an oath requested only of those suspected of hostility to the new American government.

² Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 104-5.

Hays refused to sign the test, and in a formal document explained why he deemed the request unjust. Five days later, still resentful that his patriotism had been questioned, he sent the General Assembly of the Province of Rhode Island a letter justifying his stand. The three documents follow:

We, the subscribers, do solemnly and sincerely declare that we believe the war resistance and opposition in which the United American Colonies are now engaged against the fleets and armies of Great Britain is on the part of said colonies just and necessary and that we will not directly nor indirectly afford assistance of any sort or kind whatsoever to the said fleet and armies during the continuance of the present war, but that we will heartily assist in the defense of the United Colonies.

1776, June, Session of Assembly, M. M. Hayes

* * * *

He refused to sign the test and called for his accusers. He was then told there was a number present whom he there saw. He likewise called for his accusation which was read. I have and ever shall hold the strongest principles and attachments to the just rights and privileges of this my native land, and ever have and shall conform to the rules and acts of this government and pay, as I always have, my proportion of its exigencies. I always have asserted my sentiments in favor of America and confess the war on its part just. I decline subscribing the test at present from these principles:

First, that I deny ever being inimical to my country and call for my accusers and proof of conviction,

Second, that I am an Israelite and am not allowed the liberty of a vote or voice in common with the rest of the voters, though consistent with the constitution, and the other colonies,

Thirdly, because the test is not general and consequently subject to many glaring inconveniences,

Fourthly, Continental Congress nor the General Assembly of this nor the legislatures of the other colonies have never in this contest taken any notice or countenance respecting the society of Israelites to which I belong. When any rule order or directions is made by the Congress or General Assembly I shall to the utmost of my power adhere to the same.

* * * *

To the Honorable, the General Assembly of Rhode Island now setting at New Port:

Moses M. Hays of New Port begs leave humbly to represent to your honors that he hath ever been warmly and zealously attacht to the rights and liberties of the colonies, and ever uniformly conducted himself consistant with the rest of the good and friendly people of these colonies, and allways despised inimicall principles, and as farr as one person can testify for another, numbers of creditable persons can testify. Yet, on the 12th inst. was sighted [cited] by the sheriff to appear at the court house on that same day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon when I attend'd accordingly, and being called was informed by your Hono'ble Speaker [Metcalf Bowler] that an information had been lodged against me, among a number of persons, of being inimicall to the country (Mr. Sears, Mr. Fowler, and Mr. Geo. Wanton and some officers [of the Rhode Island Brigade] present). I denied, and do still deny holding or entertaining such principles, and desired to know my accusers and accusations.

I was answered by Mr. Bowler's reading a paper purporting to be a complaint from the officers [of the Rhode Island Brigade] that there were many suspected inimicall persons in town and naming them. [I] Desired they might be called on. And no other allegations appearing against me, I declined signing the test [oath of loyalty] then for reasons I gave in writing, which will no doubt be laid before your Honors and trust they will appear justifiable.

I ask of your Honors the rights and priviledges due other free citizens when I conform to everything generally done and acted, and again implore that the justice of your Honors may interfer in my behalf, and will give me leave again to call for the cause and my accusation of inimicality, that I may have an oppert[unit]'y of vindication before your Honors. I am, with great respect,

Your Honors most ob. and most hb'e serv't,

M. M. Hays

New Port, July 17, 1776.³

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³ Lee M. Friedman, *Jewish Pioneers and Patriots* (Phila., 1942), pp. 143-45; Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry [EAJ]* (Phila., 1951), I, 156-57.

The Beginnings of the Political Emancipation
of the American Jew—1776-1777

The Declaration of Independence promised equality to all men—except the Blacks. For Jews “The Great Promise” of July, 1776, was not fulfilled on a state level for about a century. The first state to emancipate its Jews was New York, in 1777. The last of the thirteen original states to grant full rights to Jewish citizens was New Hampshire, in 1876-1877. New York’s grant of full equality in 1777 was for Jews the first truly emancipatory act in modern history. The relevant portions from the Declaration of Independence and the New York state constitution follow:

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . .

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general congress assembled, appealing to the Su-

preme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor

THE NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTION OF 1777

ARTICLE XXXVIII

And whereas we are required, by the benevolent principles of rational liberty, not only to expel civil tyranny, but also to guard against that spiritual oppression and intolerance wherewith the bigotry and ambition of weak and wicked priests and princes have scourged mankind, 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 forever hereafter be allowed, within this state, to all mankind; *provided*, that the liberty of conscience, hereby granted, shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this state.⁴

* * * *

Francis Salvador Rouses the Countryside Against the Indians and the Loyalists—1776

English-born Francis Salvador became a fervent patriot after landing in South Carolina in December, 1773. A man of wealth

⁴ Henry Steele Commager, *Documents of American History* (8th ed., New York, 1968), pp. 100-102; Francis Newton Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions* (Washington, D.C., 1909), V, 2636-37.

and culture, scion of one of the great Spanish-Portuguese Jewish families of England, he soon began to play an important role in revolutionary South Carolina. Shortly after he settled on a plantation, at Ninety Six on the northwestern frontier, he was coopted to serve in the Provincial Congresses and in the later General Assembly.

Beginning the last week of June in that summer of 1776, the British launched an attack on South Carolina, front and rear. The army and navy attacked at Charleston on June 28th; the British-incited Indians and Tories attacked in the back country on July 1st. Salvador joined up immediately as a volunteer with his fellow-congressman, Major Andrew Williamson, who commanded the district militia; it was their duty to defend the outlying settlements from the raiding Cherokees. The civil war between the Tories and the Whigs heightened the terror. There was hatred and cruelty on all sides. In a fight at Lyndley's Fort, near the Saluda River, during the night of the 14th-15th of July, some of the captured "Indians" turned out to be painted Tories. Ten days later, Chief Justice William H. Drayton wrote Salvador bluntly that Williamson and his men were to punish the Indians mercilessly. Their cornfields were to be cut up, captive Indians were to be enslaved, their towns burnt, their land confiscated, and the nation extirpated.

As the first of the following two letters testifies, Salvador was in constant touch with the aggressive Drayton, keeping him informed of the situation on the northwestern frontier. The letter was written at a little settlement just four miles away from the Cherokee boundary line. The second letter, sent by Major Williamson to the President of South Carolina, describes the scalping and death of Salvador on the night of July 31-August 1, 1776. This young man of twenty-nine was one of the first Jews—if not the first—to die for the new American republic.

Camp near Dewett's Corner, 18th July, 1776

Dear Sir:

. . . . You would have been surprized to have seen the change in this country two days after you left me [June 29th, at my plantation, Coronaca]. On Monday morning one of Capt. Smith's sons came to my house with two of his fingers shot off and gave an account of the shocking catastrophe at his father's.

[The Indians had killed his parents and two of his brothers and sisters.]

I immediately galloped [twenty-eight miles] to Major Williamson's to inform him but found another of Smith's sons there, who had made his escape and alarmed that settlement. The whole country was flying—some to make forts, others as low as Orangeburgh [over halfway to Charlestown].

Williamson was employed night and day sending expresses [couriers] to raise the militia, but the panic was so great that the Wednesday following, the Major and myself marched to the late Capt. Smith's with only forty men. The next day we were joined by forty more and have been gradually increasing ever since, tho' all the men in the country were loth to turn out till they had procured some kind of fancied security for their families. However, we had last night 500 men, but have not been joined by any from the other side of the [Saluda] River. I rode there last Saturday and found Col. Williams and Lisles [Lisle] and two companies from Col. Richardson's regiment, amounting to 430 men.

They were attacked on [early] Monday morning, July 15th, by Indians and Scopholites [Tories and partisans], but repulsed them, taking thirteen white men prisoners. The Indians fled the moment day appeared.

I will not trouble you with more particulars, as Major Williamson will send a circumstantial account to his Excellency [John Rutledge, President of South Carolina].

I am afraid the burthen of the war will fall on this regiment, and that the people over the [Saluda] River [to the north] will do nothing. They grumble at being commanded by a Major; and, I fear, if they join us at all, which I doubt, they will be very apt to prejudice the service by altercations about command. I cannot help saying that if Williamson is fit to conduct such an expedition, he certainly ought to have a much higher rank than any of these chaps, who don't object to his person but his rank. I likewise think it an omission that the colonels on the other side the River have no written orders to put themselves, or their men, under his command.

On the last accounts from town [Charlestown]—that [Robert] Cuninghame and his companions [suspected Tories] were set at liberty—we were very near having a mutiny in camp. And it [this

release] is really a measure which, though certainly intended for the best, [is] very alarming to all ranks of people. The ignorant look upon it as turning their enemies loose on their backs in the day of their distress. And the sensible part consider it as a dangerous exercise of a dispensing power, assumed contrary to the express determination of [the Provincial] Congress and a corroborating resolve of the succeeding House of Assembly. . . .

Our men seem spirited and very much exasperated against our enemies. They are all displeased with the people over the River for granting quarter to their prisoners, and declare they will grant none either to Indians or white men who join them. We have just received an account that two of the Cherokees' head warriors were killed in the late skirmish at Lindley's Fort.

19th July.

. . . . We have just heard from over the River that the white people in general [the Tories] had quitted the Indians after the repulse at Lindley's and were delivering themselves up to Col. Liles. He has sent all these to Ninety Six jail against whom there is proof of having been in the action.

I hope you will pardon the freedom with which I express my sentiments, but I look upon it as an advantage to men in power to be truly informed of the people's situation and disposition. This must plead my excuse, and believe me to be, with great respect, dear sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,
Francis Salvador

P. S. We, this day, increased to 600, all from the same regiment. Capt. [James] McCall, with twenty men, was sent by Major Williamson to the Cherokees at Seneca [Essenecca] to make prisoners of some white men [Tories], by the encouragement of some Indians who had been at the Major's. When the detachment got near, the Indians came out to meet them, spoke friendly to them, and invited the captain, lieutenant, and another man to sup with them, leaving three of their own people in their room. And, in a few hours after, in the night, the Indians returned and suddenly attacked the detachment which fled as fast as possible. They are all returned but the captain and six men.

This happened immediately [before July 1st] before Smith's

family was cut off, who lost five negro men, himself, wife, and five children [Three of these five were later found alive]. . . .

* * * *

Camp, two miles below Keowee,
August 4th, 1776

Sir:

I received your Excellency's favours of the 26th and 27th ult. by express. In my last letter to your Excellency, of the 31st ult., I informed you of my spies being returned with two white prisoners; who gave an account of [Alexander] Cameron's being arrived from over the Hills with twelve white men; and, that he, with the Seneca and other Indians, were encamped at Ocnore Creek, about thirty miles distant from Twenty-Three Mile Creek, where I then lay encamped. This intelligence induced me to march immediately to attack their camp, before they could receive any information of my being so far advanced.

I accordingly marched about six o'clock in the evening, with three hundred and thirty men on horseback (taking the two prisoners with me, to show where the enemy were encamped; and told them before I set out, if I found they deceived me, I would order them instantly to be put to death), intending to surround their camp by day-break and to leave our horses about two miles behind, with a party of men to guard them. The River Keowee lying in our route, and only passable at a ford at Seneca, obliged me (though much against my inclination) to take that road; the enemy either having discovered my march, or laid themselves in ambush with a design to cut off any spies or party I had sent out, had taken possession of the first houses in Seneca and posted themselves behind a long fence, on an eminence close to the road where we were to march. And, to prevent being discovered, had filled up the openings betwixt the rails with twigs of trees and corn-blades. They suffered the guides and advanced guard to pass when a gun from the house was discharged meant, as I suppose, for a signal for those placed behind the fence, who, a few seconds after, poured in a heavy fire upon my men, which, being unexpected, staggered my advanced party.

Here, Mr. Salvador received three wounds and fell by my side. . . . My horse was shot down under me, but I received no hurt.

Lieutenant Farar of Captain Prince's company immediately supplied me with his. I desired him to take care of Mr. Salvador, but before he could find him in the dark the enemy unfortunately got his scalp, which was the only one taken. Captain Smith, son of the late Captain Aaron Smith, saw the Indian, but thought it was his servant taking care of his master or could have prevented it. He died, about half after two o'clock in the morning, forty-five minutes after he received the wounds, sensible to the last. When I came up to him, after dislodging the enemy and speaking to him, he asked, whether I had beat the enemy. I told him yes. He said he was glad of it and shook me by the hand—and bade me farewell—and said he would die in a few minutes. Two men died in the morning; and six more who were badly wounded I have since sent down to the settlements and given directions to Doctors Delahowe and Russell to attend them.

I remained on the ground till day-break and burnt the houses on this side the river; and afterwards crossed the river the same day—reduced Seneca entirely to ashes. Knowing that the Indians would carry immediate intelligence of my strength to the place where Cameron lay encamped, who would directly move from thence; and having ordered the detachment from Colonels Neel's and Thomas' regiments to attack and destroy Estatoe, Qualhatchie, and Toxaway, and join me this day at Sugar Town, obliged me to march that way, which this day a strong detachment consisting of four hundred men has totally reduced to ashes. An old Indian was found there, who said the enemy had deserted the town four days ago on hearing by a white man that an army was advancing against them.

I am respectfully,
Your Excellency's most obt. servt.
A. Williamson

His Excellency John Rutledge,
President of So. Carolina, Charlestown.⁵

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⁵ Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry [EAJ]* (Phila., 1955), II, 262-64; John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution from Its Commencement to the Year 1776, etc.* (Charleston, 1821), II, 369-71.

Jonas Phillips-Blockade Runner—1776

Jonas Phillips (1730-1803), a Hessian immigrant, landed at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1756, but soon made his way north to New York and to Albany, where he ran a small shop and traded with the troops. Like many of his fellow-Jews, he went bankrupt after the French and Indian War. In order to feed his numerous and growing brood, he became a ritual slaughterer, a shohet for New York's Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel) Congregation. Later, after he had managed to accumulate a little capital or credit, he went back into trade. By 1775, during the early days of the revolt against the British, he had settled in Philadelphia, doing business as a retailer and auctioneer, moving around from location to location, and striving to attract custom by extensive advertising. He sold everything from broadcloth to bacon. He dealt in pork—but one may rest assured that he never ate it himself, for he was an observant Jew and had a good knowledge of rabbinic law.

In July, 1776, he sent a letter to his relative and business correspondent in Holland, Gumpel Samson. Along with the letter went a copy of the Declaration of Independence. Because of the British blockade, Phillips sent his letter by way of the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. In it he enclosed a draft for his mother and hinted, rather broadly, as one might to a relative, that money was to be made by running the blockade. He thought he could fool the British by writing in Yiddish. He fooled only himself: they intercepted the mail, and it lies today in the British Public Record Office with the sage notation of an archivist that it was written in some shorthand! Jonas had been away from home for many years and flattered himself that he wrote a better English than Yiddish. Maybe he did—but there is nothing wrong with the original Yiddish of his letter.

Philadelphia, Sunday, 12 Menahem Ab, 536, according to the shorter reckoning [July 28, 1776].

Peace to my beloved master, my kinsman, the eminent and wealthy, wise and discerning God-fearing man, whose honored, glorious name is Mr. Gumpel—May his Rock and Redeemer protect him and all his family! Peace!

As it is not always possible to send a letter to England on

account of the war in America, I must therefore write by way of St. Eustatia.

I have not yet had any answer to a letter of May, 1775, when I sent my master a bill of exchange for ten pounds sterling for my mother. Should that letter not have arrived, then the enclosed third bill of exchange will obtain the money, and please send it to my mother, long life to her. Should it, however, have already been obtained, you need not return the bill of exchange again, and a hint to the wise will suffice. [Use it to buy goods for me to run the blockade!]

As no English goods can come over at all, and much money can be earned with Holland goods if one is willing to take a chance, should you have a friend who will this winter acquaint himself with the goods mentioned below, I can assure you that four hundred per cent is to be earned thereby. I could write my meaning better in English than Yiddish.

The war will make all England bankrupt. The Americans have an army of 100,000 soldiers [literally: "tough guys"], and the English only 25,000 and some ships. The Americans have already made themselves [free] like the States of Holland. The enclosed is a declaration [of independence] of the whole country. How it will end, the blessed God knows. The war does me no damage, thank God!

I would like to send you a bill of exchange, but it is not possible for me to get it. If my master, long life to him, will disburse for me 100 gulden to my mother, I can assure you that just as soon as a bill of exchange on St. Eustatia can be had, I will, with thanks, honestly pay you. I have it, thank God, in my power, and I know that my mother, long life to her, needs it very much; and I beg of my master, long life to him, to write me at once an answer, addressed as herein written.

There is no further news. My wife and children, long life to her and them, together send you many greetings and wish you good health up to one hundred years.

Your friend, to serve. From me, Jonah, son of Mr. Feibush [Phoebus]—the memory of the righteous is a blessing—of Buseck,

Jonas Phillips

[Address all goods sent:]

To

Mr. Jonas Phillips in Philadelphia to the care of Mr. Samuel Curson, merchant in St. Eustatia.

Goods that will sell to advantage in this place. All sorts of coarce and fine white linen, Russia sheetings, coarse white thread, ravens duck, Russia sail duck, oznabrigs [coarse linen made of flax and tow], drillings, check linens, Harlem stripes, thomoise [shomoise? = chamois type cloth], ivory combs, needles, pinns, drugs and medicines, sewing silks, worsted stockings, large, striped woollen blankets, different sorts of woollen goods for the winter season.

To

Mr. Gumpel Samson, merchant in Amsterdam, by way of St. Eustatia.

St. Eustatia, 24 Sep'r, 1776, Rece'd and forwarded by

Your hum'e serv't,
Sam. Curson.⁶

* * * *

Samuel Jacobs, British Supplyman—1776-1777

Samuel Jacobs, a German Jew, came with the English in 1759 during the French and Indian War when they moved on to Montreal. He was a commissary for the troops and a purveyor to the commissioned officers. Deciding, after the war was over, to remain in the Colonies, he settled near Montreal, in the village of St. Denis, on the Richelieu River, the river road between New York and Canada. Once, it would seem, he had been a merchant shipper when he first landed in the country, but now, reversing the usual trader's ascent, he left his ship to become a country merchant and a grain buyer and speculator. When the Revolutionary War broke out in 1775, he knew that the British, to whose cause he was devoted, would need provisions for the troops. It was going to be a long, hard conflict. In September, 1776, he wrote to Gatien, his purchasing agent in St. Charles, to start buying grain. Buy all you can, was his instruction, as quickly as you can and as cheaply as you can. Pay cash or buy on credit, whatever the occasion demands. Don't be picayunish where a few sols are concerned.

⁶ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 62-63.

And to make sure that his factor would understand what he meant, he repeated this order in a brief postscript. Other merchants, he warned, will soon be swarming all over the place to buy up the wheat, therefore "don't loose a sheep for a halfpeny worth of tarr." Pay a little more but get the grain!

By September 30th, Jacobs had modified his plans somewhat. He decided to turn his grain into flour. This would give him an even more desirable commodity. Accordingly, he instructed the faithful Gatien—and he probably sent similar instructions to other agents—to engage all the flour mills in his area.

By February, 1777, Jacobs was a commissary officer, back at the same type of job that had probably brought him into the country during the campaign for Quebec eighteen years earlier. These were busy months for him. The German mercenaries had begun to arrive. Preparations were already under way for Burgoyne's expedition up the Richelieu and down into New York, along the familiar Champlain-Hudson route, past Jacobs' doorstep in St. Denis. In this expedition to threaten the New Englanders at their back doors and ultimately to envelop them, much would depend on the food supplies for the soldiers making the perilous trip along the rivers and through the wilderness. There were at least 7,000 troops to be fed, and Jacobs was one of the many men commissioned to undertake this most difficult of jobs.

His store at St. Denis served as headquarters for his operations. Jacobs was in constant communication with Gatien, now busily engaged in supplying troops with rations and other food-stuffs. Gatien evidently had written that the soldiers did not like the beef which he supplied. Supply them with better beef, was the answer. Do all you can to satisfy the troops. Jacobs, obviously, was trying to do a good, honest job. He knew what the men wanted; he was an old hand at the supply game. The two letters follow:

St. Denis, 30 Septem'r, 1776.

Mr. Gatien:

I received yours. There is a plann just now come into my head which I wou'd be glad on receipt of this you wou'd execute.

Go round to the sundries mills that are up your way, particularly them that the wheat can be easily carried to. Ask each of them how much they can grind for me before the frost setts in. And as much as they can engage to grind, so much I will furnish

them. But as there is sundries mills that requires land carriage, the millers shou'd oblige themselves to bring it from the bateaus to the mill, and return it, when ground, to the bateaus that comes for it, beginning to work imediately.

I have sent you by the bearer Mr. Bodreau, five hundred and ten livres, eight sols. Pray let me know what quantity the mills can grind, and about what quantity of wheat you may have, that I may not engage myself too much for vessells. And send me down Lapparre [my clerk], as I can't do without him. In haste,

Yours sincerely,
Sam'l Jacobs

Let the above be done without roumour.

* * * *

St. Denis, 28th Feb'y, 1777.

Mr. Gatien,
Sir:

Yours of this date I received. I am sorry there appears some misunderstanding between you and the troops at your place.

If the beeff you have killed is not merchantable they, without doubt, have a right to refuse it, and as the Commissary General takes delight in haveing the troops well served, and does not like to hear complaints of either side, if it can be avoided, it is my advice, [if] the ox, you say, is *maigre* ["lean"], keep it back and serve the rest of the fresh meat.

Wait on the commanding officer, tell him you will buy what you can more, which I wou'd have you to do, by giveing six coppers per pound, as that will encourage the inhabitants to kill and bring you the quarter which will enable you to judge of its goodness. When the commanding officer finds you do your endeavour, and fresh provisions can't be had at that rate, I dare say he won't blame you.

As to the cash I sent you up to pay for the rations, if not already done, I wou'd have you to give it into the captain of militia's hands to distribute amongst those to whome it is due, takeing his receipt for the same, which is the way I do here to avoid all complaints. In haste,

Yours,
[Sam'l Jacobs]

N.B. To make your fresh provisions hold out the longer, wou'd

have you endeavour to serve oatmeal or peas, as part of the rations, which you may have by sending for.⁷

* * * *

Benjamin Levy Throws His Home Open to
Robert Morris—1776

The Baltimorean Benjamin Levy (1726-1802) was a scion of one of the most distinguished Jewish families in all America; the Levys were notable merchants. By the second half of the century Benjamin had already drifted away from Judaism. There is no record that he was a contributor to any Jewish congregation, and it is to be doubted that he was. In fact, the members of the Levy family still left in Philadelphia were not active any longer in synagogal affairs; some, indeed, had accepted Christianity. When Rachel and Benjamin Levy died in Baltimore, they were both buried in an Episcopalian cemetery. But such burial is no final proof that they were no longer Jews; as late as 1786 Benjamin took oath on the Five Books of Moses.

It was no doubt in his Philadelphia days that Benjamin Levy had first become acquainted with Robert Morris, who was then already a successful businessman. Later, during the war, the Baltimore merchant stood ready to cooperate with Congressman Morris in raising funds which the Continental Congress so desperately needed. In December, 1776, Levy was authorized to sign bills of credit emitted by the Congress.

This is the note which Robert Morris received from Levy in the trying days when Washington was retreating into Pennsylvania, and it seemed that the fall of Philadelphia was imminent:

My dear Morris:

It is said that if the Congress are oblig'd to leave Philadelphia, they intend coming to this town. We have two very good rooms on our first floor upstairs, which we purpose for you and Mrs. Morris. We have one spare bed, our house is good and large, and think if you can be supply'd with bedding from Mr. Aquilla Hall, who is but about 25 miles from hence, we could accommodate all your children and three or four servants, having other apartments that

⁷ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 246-49.

will do exceeding well. But sincerely pray that you may not be under the necessity of leaving your home and that we shall soon hear of the enemy' retireing. As these are not times for compliments and ceremony, I need not give you assurances of making you welcome as I ever profess'd myself,

Your truly affectionate humb. serv[an]'t,
Benjamin Levy

Rachel [my wife] joins me in compliments to Mrs. Morris. Baltimore, Friday, 13 Decb'r, 1776.⁸

* * * *

Solomon Bush Wishes to Avenge the Rongs of His Injured Country—1777

The immigrant Mathias Bush, a leader and founding father of the Philadelphia Jewish community, had a son Solomon (1753-1795) who was a fervent American patriot, a physician in his later years, and a very prominent Mason. He was one of the grand-masters of the order in Pennsylvania during the late 1780's. Though he married out of the faith and was buried in the Friends' Cemetery, he did not divorce himself from his people and his faith, for he maintained relations, after a fashion, with the local Jews.

This twenty-four-year-old young man was appointed a Deputy Adjutant General of the Pennsylvania State Militia—on July 5, 1777—by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. A few months later, in September, his thigh was shattered by a bullet in a skirmish—no doubt near the Brandywine—and he was carried, badly wounded, to Mathias' house in Chestnut Hill, near Philadelphia. In October, the month after General Sir William Howe took Philadelphia, Bush was discovered and made prisoner. The unfortunate officer described his plight in a letter to his friend Henry Lazarus, a merchant in Fredrick Towne, Maryland.

As an officer on parole Bush was expected to report to the British. On one such occasion—apparently while receiving medical attention at enemy headquarters—he was an unobserved witness to a civilian's bringing a letter to General Howe. Learning

⁸ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 69-70.

that this civilian was an agent carrying messages to the British from a spy at Washington's headquarters, he forwarded that important bit of news to General Washington through General John Armstrong.

Bush's wound in his thigh never healed thoroughly; he was ill for years. In April, 1779, he appealed for financial aid to the federal Board of War. When help was not forthcoming from that source, he wrote in September to Timothy Matlack, the fighting—and spending—Quaker, who was secretary to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania.

That very year he was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel, thus becoming one of the highest ranking Jewish officers in a combat unit of the Continental army. Both letters follow:

Chesnut Hill,
15th Nov'r, 1777.

D'r Sir:

As Mr. [Joseph] Simons tells me that he is going to your town, cannot omit leting my good freind know how we all are, being sensible it will give him satisfaction to hear from his freinds.

I suppose you heard of my being wounded the 18th of Sept'r [a week after the Battle of the Brandywine] when with dificulty was bro't home in a most deplorable condition with my thigh broke, and the surgeons pronounced my wound mortal. Seven days after, the enemy came, who treated our family with the utmost respect. They did not take the least trifle from us, though our neighbours, the poor Tories, lost every thing. Howe's march this way has made many Wigs.

I was conceal'd after the British Army came here twenty-two days and shou'd have got clear, but a villain gave information of me, when [whereupon] I was waited on by an officer who took my parole. When [whereupon] I wrote a line to the [British] commanding officer leting him know of my being a prisoner and requesting a surgeon, which he imedeately comply'd with, and was attended every day during their stay at this place.

I am, thank God, getting beter and have the satisfaction to have my limb perfectly strait. My wishes are to be able to get satisfaction and revenge the rongs of my injured country. I wish you joy of the success of our troops to the northward [Burgoyne surrendered to the colonials at Saratoga, on October 17th] and hope to

tell you New York is ours before long. The [English] shiping is not got up to Philad'a though this is the 9th time of their attacking the Fort [the English took Fort Mifflin the next day]. There is a cannonade whilst I am writeing; shou'd they not be able to carry the Fort their stay in Philad'a will be but short.

As it grows late and am seting in bed writeing, remain, with my best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Lazarus, Uncle Levy, and the worthy Miss Brandla [your daughter],

Your most affection'e friend and hbl'e serv't,
Sol'n Bush

My parents' best wishes to you all. Pray pres't my comp's to Col. Johnson, Mrs. Charlton, and family.

* * * *

Chesnut Hill, 27 Septem'r, 1779.

Dear Sir:

Pardon the liberty I take in troubling you with these few lines, the purport of which as I well know you to be a friend to the Sons of Freedom, especially those who have been unfortunate in the service of their country. I have, my d[ea]'r sir, lain in a most deplorable condition ever since I had the pleasure of seeing you in Lancaster, and still continue in a helpless state. This, with the expensive times, compells me to petition the Honb'le [Supreme Executive] Coun'ill to direct me where I shall apply to have my acco't [for m]y pay and rations setled, as I have through [my] great indisposition been unable to apply for [the] same since my appointment. As I am still a prisoner on parole and in the service of the State [of Pennsylvania], have petition'd the Council that I may draw my pay and rations (untill exchanged) monthly. I therefore beg your assistance in forwarding the same, which will ever be gratefully acknewlidg'd by, d'r sir,

Y'r mo. obd. hbl. ser't,
Sol'n Bush

The Hon'ble Timothy Matlack, Esqr.⁹

* * * *

⁹ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 74-76.

**Sheftall Sheftall Describes His Career as a
Revolutionary Soldier—1777-1783**

In 1777 or 1778, Sheftall Sheftall, only fifteen or sixteen years of age, was appointed Assistant Deputy Commissary General of Issues to the Georgia troops. Captured with his father after the fall of Savannah in December, 1778, he remained a prisoner until he was exchanged in 1780. That year, then a young man of eighteen, he was put in charge of a mercy ship, the flag-of-truce sloop Carolina Packett. His mission, which he carried out successfully, was to bring money for the relief of the imprisoned General William Moultrie and his soldiers in British-held Charleston.

Shortly after his seventieth birthday, in 1832, Sheftall made the following affidavit, testifying to his war service, in support of a pension claim. The document is instructive because it throws light on the career of a man who served his country, and served it well, in positions of responsibility, although he was only twenty-one at the end of the war, after about five years of service as a soldier and prisoner of war.

Georgia

City of Savannah

Sheftall Sheftall of the said city, being duly sworn, saith:

That some time in the latter part of the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy seven, or the beginning of the year seventeen hundred and seventy eight, this deponent was appointed by John B. Gereudeau [Geradieu], Esquire, Deputy Commissary General of Issues of the Continental troops in Georgia, to be an Assistant Deputy Commissary of Issues in his office;

That he continued in that station for some months when Mr. Gereudeau resigned, and this deponent's father, the late Mordecai Sheftall, Esquire, was appointed Mr. Gereudeau's successor; that this deponent was reappointed to his said office by his father, and that he continued in the office untill the British troops took Savannah, which was on the twenty ninth day of December of the said year seventeen hundred and seventy eight, when they took this deponent and his father prisoners, and a few days after put them

on board of a prison ship, say, the second day of January, seventeen hundred seventy nine;

That on the twenty sixth day of March following, his father was admitted to his parole; that on the twenty-sixth day of June of the same year, this deponent was admitted also on his parole. On his landing, he was sent to the town of Sunbury, a distance of forty miles from Savannah, where his father and a number of Continentall officers were on parole; that they continued there [there] untill the month of October following (the British garrison having been previously withdrawn to reinforce Savannah);

That the American and French army, under the command of General Lincoln and Count D'Estaing, laid seige to Savannah; that while in that situation, a Tory armed party that was hovering about the country threatened to kill the American officers and did actually kill Captain Hornby of the Fourth Georgia Continental regiment; that in this situation, the officers applied to the commanders of the Allied army, what they were to do, who, in reply, recommended to them to remove to a place of safety, but to consider themselves as still on parole;

That this deponent, his father, and several officers embarked [October, 1779] on board of a brig in the harbour of Sunbury, which had been taken in the said harbour by a small American privateer, for to proceed in her to Charles Ton [Charlestown], in South Carolina; that on their passage, they were taken by a British frigate called the *Gaudaloupe*, who bore away and carried them and landed them in the island of Antigua; that some time in the month of November, that after being there [there] between five and six months, their [they] were admitted to a parole to return to America;

That this deponent and his father arrived in Philadelphia (via St. Eustatia) on the twentieth day of June, seventeen hundred and eighty; that a few days after their arrival, they were introduced to the Board of War, which consisted of General Thomas Mifflin, Colonel Timothy Pickering, Colonel [Robert Hanson] Harrison, and Richard Peters, Esquire, their secretary, by Colonel George Walton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence;

That the Board of War directed Mr. [Thomas] Bradford, Commissary of Prisoners, to send away two Englishmen, natives of Antigua, by the name of Jacob Jarvis and his brother, John Swinton Jarvis, for to be exchanged for this deponent and his father;

That some time in the early part of the month of December

following, certified copies of their paroles, with certificates of their exchange for the said gentlemen, were received by this deponent and his father, by which means they were released from being prisoners of war;

That a few days thereafter, this deponent was sent for by the Board of War, and informed that he must proceed in a sloop called the *Caroline Packett*, commanded by Captain John Derry, [under] a flag of truce, as flag master to Charles Ton in South Carolina, for to carry goods, flour, and money for to be delivered to General Moultrie or the senior officer of the Continentall troops, prisoners of war at that place;

That he proceeded on the voyage agreeable to his instructions; that owing to storms and head winds, he did not arrive in Charles Ton harbour untill the seventh day of February following, when the aforesaid articles were delivered to a person appointed by General Moultrie and by his order; that he was detained by the British untill some time in April, when he was permitted to pursue his voyage back;

That he arrived in Philadelphia on the twenty third day of April; that on his arrival he delivered up to the Board of War all his papers and vouchers, and, in particular, got a receipt acknowledging the delivery of the money, agreeable to the orders of General Moultrie, which receipt was signed by a Mr. Charlton or Carlton [Joseph Carlton], Paymaster of the Board of War and Ordinance;

That about three years agoe, a fire broke out in this city, in his neighbourhood; that he moved his furniture and things for safety into the street; that among them was the certificate of his exchange, the instructions from the Board of War, and the receipt for the money, [all of which] was unfortunately lost;

That the deponent continued in the service untill the close of the Revolutionary War, and that this deponent's pay was sixty dollars per month, exclusive of rations, and that on the eight[h] day of September last past, he was seventy years of age.¹⁰

* * * *

Rebecca Franks Has a Marvelous Time—1778

Rebecca Franks (1760-1823) was the daughter of David Franks, of Philadelphia. Franks, who remained Jewish to the end

¹⁰ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 238-40.

despite his marriage to a Christian, was one of America's outstanding merchants and army purveyors. As a Loyalist, hostile to a secessionist America, he was constantly under surveillance by the Continental Congress. His uncertain position was certainly not made easier for him by the fact that his daughter Rebecca was notoriously a partisan of the British. When the British took Philadelphia the Franks home, like many of the best homes in the city, was open to the British officers. Rebecca was a charming, brilliant girl, one of the wits of her generation, and a great favorite of the English, who were very much drawn to the attractive young lady.

There is no record of her baptism, but it is safe to assume that she was reared by her mother as a Christian. Unlike her father, she appears to have had no interest whatsoever in Jews and Judaism. Yet she was constantly referred to as the "Jewess"; in the mind of the average Gentile, a person is a "Jew"—until the fact of Jewish origin is no longer known.

One of Rebecca's good friends was Anne Harrison of Wye Island, Maryland, who had married the patriot William Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Paca was considerably older than Anne, who was his second wife. Loyalist Rebecca kept up a correspondence with Nancy, as she called her, even though Nancy was the wife of a delegate to the Congress. Rebecca even asked General Sir William Howe, then in command at Philadelphia, for permission to send Nancy a little gift through the lines and prepared to make arrangements to have her come to visit her. Evidently her political prejudices did not extend to her patriot friends—nor theirs to her. The following letter to Nancy gives us an excellent picture of social life in the occupied city as seen through the eyes of an eighteen-year-old girl.

In 1782, Rebecca married Sir Henry Johnson, a British officer, and made her home in England, where the Frankses, her uncles, were notable entrepreneurs and active members of London's metropolitan Jewish community.

[Philadelphia.]

Dear Nancy:

. . . . You can have no idea of the life of continued amusement I live in. I can scarce have a moment to myself. I have stole this while everybody is retired to dress for dinner. I am but just

come from under Mr. J. Black's hands, and most elegantly am I dressed for a ball this evening at Smith's where we have one every Thursday. You would not know the room, 'tis so much improv'd.

I wish to Heaven you were going with us this evening to judge for yourself. I spent Tuesday evening at Sir Wm. Howes, where we had a concert and dance. I asked his leave to send you a handkerchief to show the fashions. He very politely gave me permission to send anything you wanted, tho' I told him you were a delegate's lady. I want to get a pair of buckles for your brother, Joe. If I can't, tell him, to be in the fashion, he must get a pair of harness ones.

The dress [I am wearing] is more ridiculous and pretty than anything that ever I saw: great quantity of different coloured feathers on the head at a time, besides a thousand other things; the hair dress'd very high in the shape [the Wilmington beauty] Miss Vining's was the night we returned from Smiths. The hat we found in your mother's closet wou'd be of a proper size. I have an afternoon cap with one wing, tho' I assure you I go less in the fashion than most of the ladies, no[t] being dress'd without a hoop. B[ecky]. Bond makes her first appearance tonight at the rooms.

No loss for partners, even I am engaged to [dance with] seven different gentlemen, for you must know 'tis a fix'd rule never to dance but two dances at a time with the same person. Oh, how I wish Mr. P[aca]. wou'd let you come in for a week or two. Tell him I'll answer for your being let to return. I know you are as fond of a gay life as myself. You'd have an opportunity of rakeing [having a good time] as much as you choose, either at plays, balls, concerts, or assemblys. I've been but three evenings alone since we mov'd to town. I begin now to be almost tired.

Tell Mrs. Harrison [your mother] she has got a gentleman in her house who promises me not to let a single thing in it be hurt, and I'm sure he'll keep his word. The family she left in it still remain. I had a long conversation about you the other evening with John Saunders. He is just the same as when you knew him. Two or three more of your old acquaintances are in town such as Pri-deaux and Jock DeLancy [my cousin]. They often ask after you.

Is Mrs. White with you? I long to hear all that concerns you. Do pray try to get an opportunity [to send a letter]. The clock is now

striking four, and Moses [my brother] is just going out to dinner, quite the Congress hours. Moses wrote to your mother about her house six weeks ago. Did she get the letter? All your Philadelphia friends well, and desire their loves; mine to all in Maryland.

When you see the Miss Tilghmans, tell them I never hear a new song or piece of music that I don't wish them to have it. I must go finish dressing as I'm engaged out to tea.

God bless you,
B[ecky]. F[ranks].

Thursday,
Feb'y 26, '78.

I send some of the most fashionable ribbon and gauze; have tried to get Joe's buckles in all the best shops, but in vain. B[ecky]. Redman is here and sends her love.¹¹

* * * *

Elias Pollock, a Continental Regular—1778-1780

During the Revolution, Elias Pollock, a European émigré, served under Colonel Mordecai Gist as a soldier of the line. (One of the Gist girls, a relative of the colonel's, married Benjamin Gratz, the brother of the famed Rebecca.) Pollock served from 1778 to 1780 and, after having been bayoneted and severely wounded at the Battle of Camden, was taken prisoner.

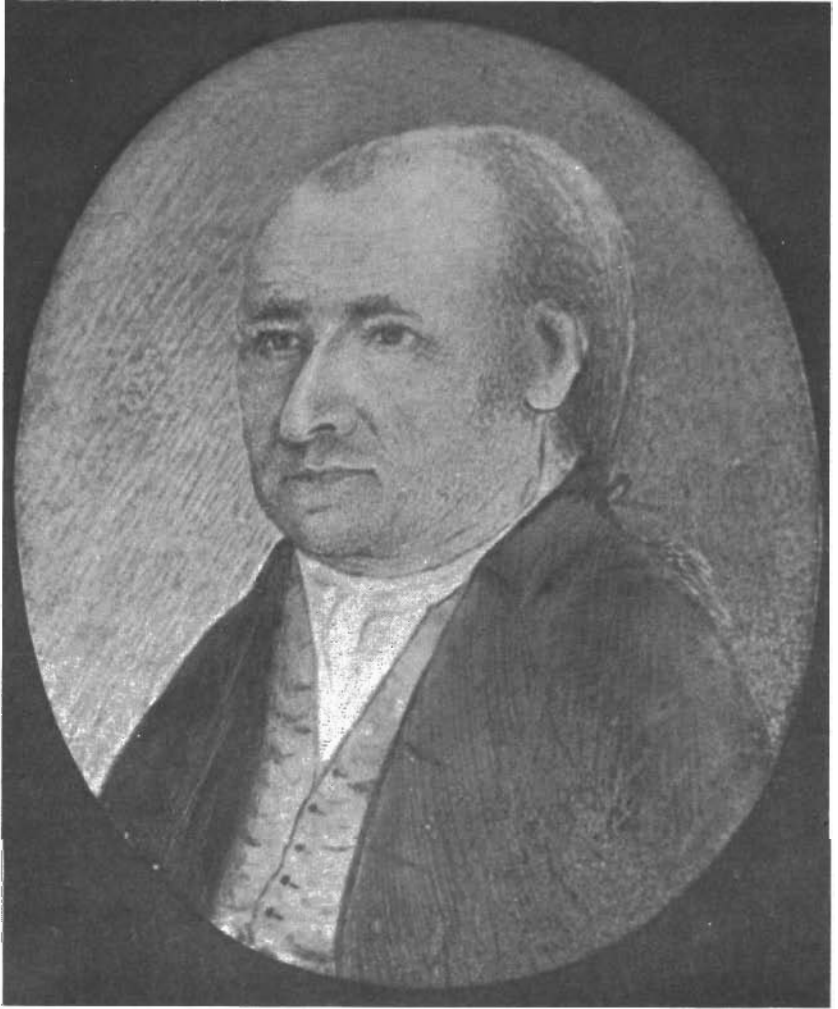
When he applied for a pension in 1818, he was impoverished and still suffering from his war wounds. He had been a moderately successful shoe polish manufacturer and trader till he made the mistake of signing a note for a friend who could not meet his obligations. Pollock lost everything he possessed, including his furniture. Already in his sixties at the time, he had to support a sick wife, two teen-age children, and a married daughter with two infant children. This young unfortunate had been deserted by her husband. Pollock's petition for a pension was granted, and he received \$8 a month.

Pollock's request for aid was signed in Hebrew script; he probably knew no other. While serving in the army, however, he was never known as Elias Pollock, but as Joseph Smith. Why had he

¹¹ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 97-99.

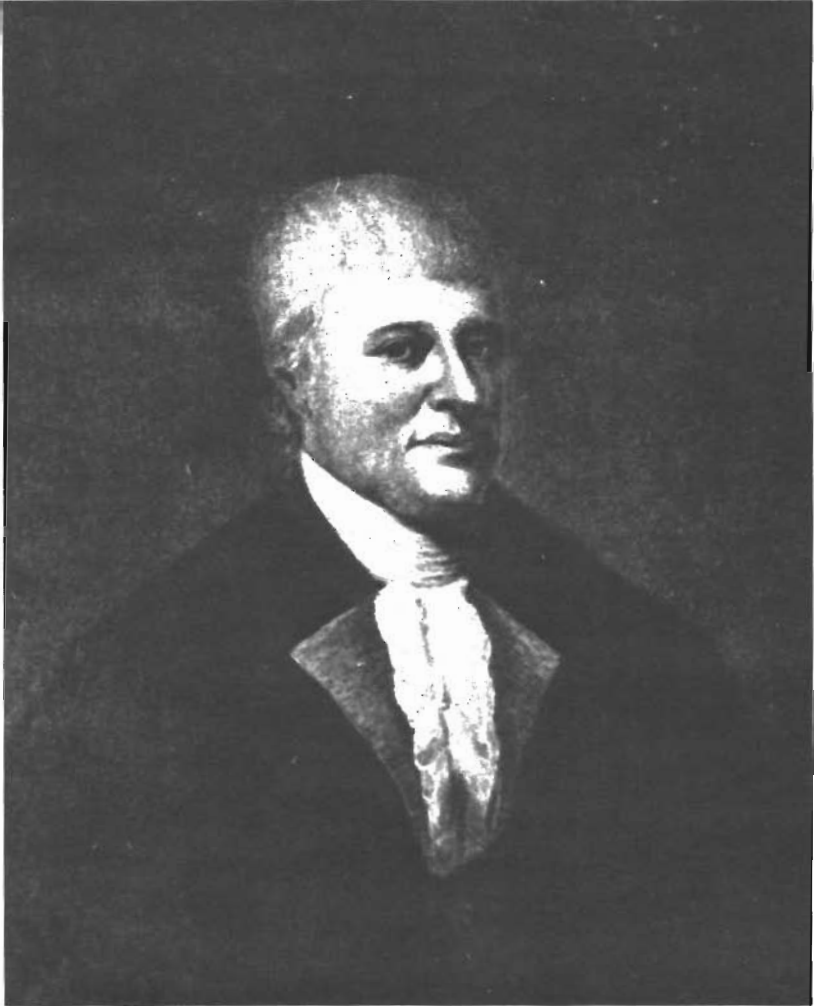


Haim Isaac Carigal
Visiting Rabbi in Newport, R. I., in 1773



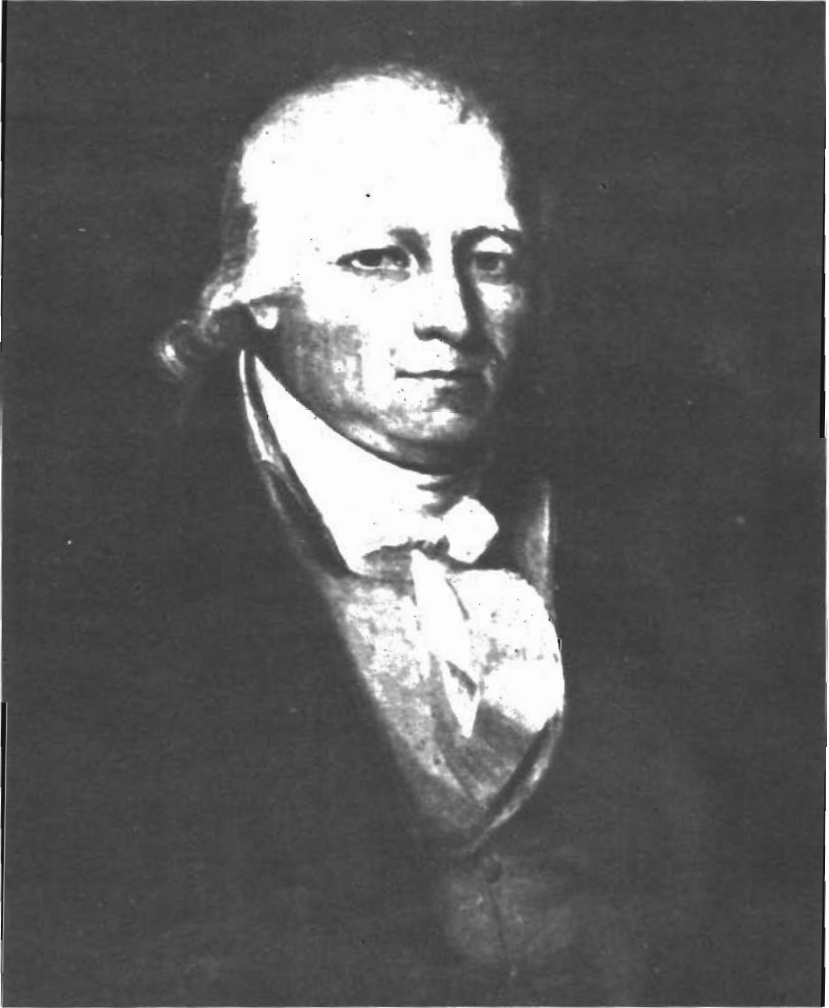
Courtesy, Mrs. B. H. Levy, Savannah

Mordecai Sheftall
Pioneer Georgia Revolutionary War Leader



Courtesy, B'nai B'rith, Washington

Moses Michael Hays
Sturdy Fighter for Political Equality to Jews



Painting by Charles Willson Peale

Jonas Phillips
Revolutionary War Blockade Runner



Gershom Seixas
New York Jewry's Religious Leader



Painting by Gilbert Stuart

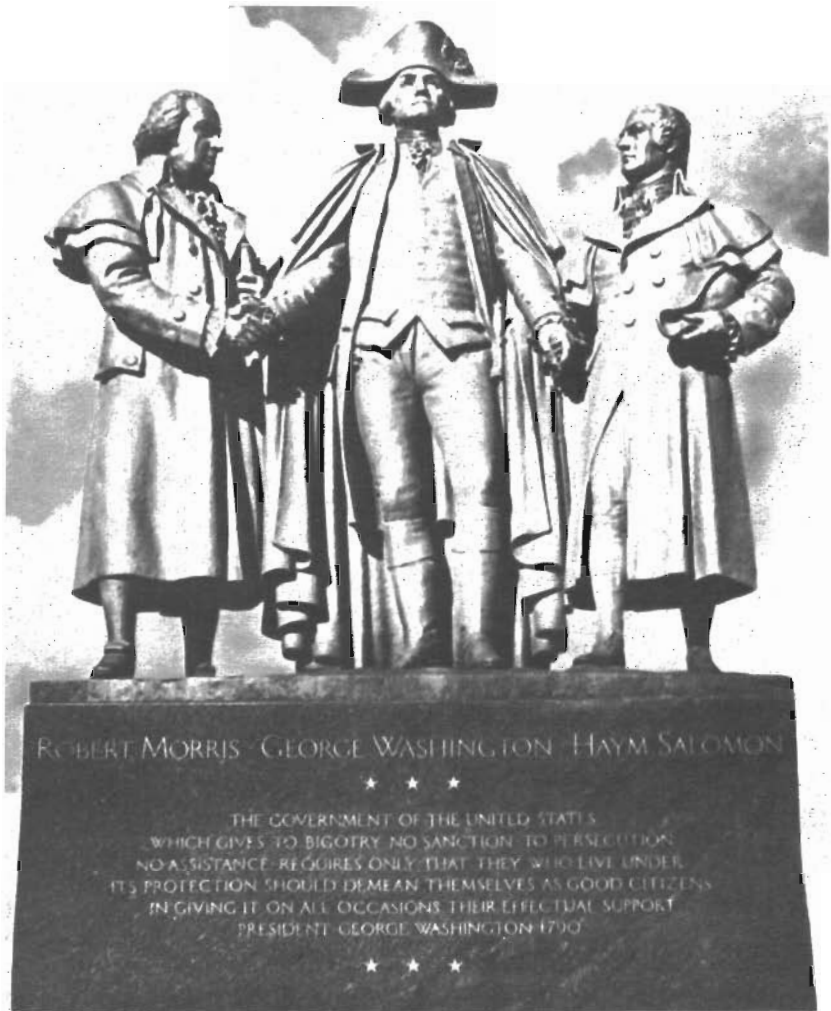
Jacob Rodriguez Rivera
Merchant Shipper and Continental Protagonist



Abigail Minis

Abigail Minis (1701-1794), the Colonial nurturer, arrived in Georgia in 1733, one of the first white women to settle in that colony. After her husband's death, she took over the management of his ranch, store, and tavern. In October, 1776, she petitioned the Loyalist governor, Sir James Wright, for permission to leave Savannah. As a Whig, she preferred going into exile and left British-controlled territory for Charleston, South Carolina.

Abigail Minis
Georgia Patriot



Sculptor. Lorado Taft

Statue of
Robert Morris, George Washington and Haym Salomon
Chicago



Painting by Jeremiah Theus

Manuel Josephson
Lay Leader of Philadelphia Jewry During the
Post-Revolutionary War Period



Photo by Craftsmen, Inc., Norfolk

The Moses Myers Mansion
Norfolk, Virginia

concealed his name? Was he a runaway debtor or an indentured servant? Did he anticipate and fear anti-Jewish prejudice?

Though Elias Pollock still has loyal Jewish progeny, it is a commentary on the assimilatory power of America to record that numbered among his present-day descendants are a Catholic nun, a Baptist minister, a Mennonite, and several Mormons. The Pollocks were poured into a melting pot.

State of Maryland
 City of Baltimore SS

On this twentieth day of August in the year of our lord one thousand eight hundred and eighteen personally appeared before me the undersigned Elias Pollock of the city of Baltimore and state of Maryland, aged sixty three years and upward, as applicant for a pension, under the late act of Congress, entitled "An act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the United States during the Revolutionary War," and then and there made the following declaration on oath by me administered to him on the Five Books of Moses, he being a Jew,

That he enlisted on or about the month of May, 1778, at Baltimore, by the name of Joseph Smith, was marched to, and mustered at Philadelphia in June same year into Capt. Joseph Marbury's Company, 3d Maryland Regiment, commanded by Col. Mordeica Gist, there remained and performed duty for six months (say 'til after Christmas) then marched to Bondsbrook [Bound Brook], New Jersey, and there went into winter quarters,

Remained until the beginning of May, 1779—from thence marched to Buttermilk Falls, on the North River [Hudson], after which during the summer was in several expeditions particularly the taking of Stony Point—assisted in building four forts on the North River viz. No. 1, 2, 3, & 4.

The ensuing winter was placed into the adjutants guard, wintered at Morris Town, during which was on several expeditions with Col. Lee [De] Hart under Lord Stirling on Staten Island after which returned to Morris Town, and on or about the 15 Ap'l, 1780, left there for Charleston, S. C.

But before they arrived, was engaged on the 16 Aug. 1780 in the battle of Camden when Gates was defeated, deponant wounded in the side and taken prisoner, carried to Charleston and from thence sent as a prisoner of war to St. Augustine, East Florida.

Remained there until news of peace, then sent to Hallifax and liberated; returned to Baltimore,

That his name hath never been placed on any pension list, therefore hath none to relinquish and from his reduced circumstances needs the assistance of his country for support.

Elias Pollock [Hebrew script]

Subscribed and sworn to before me

N. Brice C. J. B. [Chief Judge, Baltimore City Court]¹²

* * * *

Haym Salomon Goes Underground—1778

Haym Salomon (1740-1785) was probably American Jewry's most distinguished Revolutionary patriot. This native of Lissa, Poland, arrived in this country about the year 1775 and soon became an ardent Whig. After peddling with the American troops on the New York border in 1776, he was arrested as a spy by the British on his return to New York City, but was soon released, no doubt on the interposition of Hessian Jewish supplymen.

While working for the Hessians, Salomon used the opportunity to help his adopted country by propagandizing the mercenaries, but he was finally betrayed, and on August 11, 1778, fled for his life. He barely managed to reach Philadelphia, and there, two weeks later, he penned the following appeal to the Continental Congress:

To the Honorable, the Continental Congress:

The memorial of Hyam Solomon, late of the city of New York, merchant, humbly sheweth:

That your memorialist was some time before the entry of the British troops at the said city of New York, and soon after taken up as a spy and by General [James] Robertson committed to the Provost; that by the interposition of Lieut. General Heister—who wanted him on account of his knowledge in the French, Polish, Russian, Italian, etc., languages—he was given over to the Hessian commander who appointed him in the commissary way as purveyor chiefly for the officers; that being at New York he has

¹² Pension Certificate, No. 7373, S 40 279 (RG 15), National Archives.

been of great service to the French and American prisoners, and has assisted them with money and helped them off to make their escape; that this and his close connexions with such of the Hessian officers as were inclined to resign, and with Monsieur Samuel Demezes, has rend'ed him at last so obnoxious to the British head quarters that he was already pursued by the guards, and on Tuesday, the 11th inst., he made his happy escape from thence.

This Monsieur Demezes is now most barbarously treated at the Provost's and is seemingly in danger of his life. And the memorialist begs leave to cause him to be rememb'ed to Congress for an exchange.

Your memorialist has upon this event most irrecoverably lost all his effects and credits to the amount of five or six thousand pounds sterling, and left his distressed wife and a child of a month old at New York waiting that they may soon have an opportunity to come out from thence with empty hands.

In these circumstances he most humbly prayeth to grant him any employ in the way of his business whereby he may be enabled to support himself and family. And your memorialist as in duty bound, etc., etc.,

Haym Salomon

Philad'a Aug't 25th, 1778¹³

* * * *

Isaac Seixas Arranges for the Marriage of His Son, Benjamin—1778

Isaac Seixas, a Sephardic immigrant from England in the 1730's, was a shopkeeper, although from all indications not a very successful one. During the Revolution, the Seixas clan fled from the British and settled in Stratford, Connecticut. Among Isaac's several children were Gershom and Benjamin. Gershom was the "rabbi" of the New York Jewish community; Benjamin, also a freeman of the city, was a businessman, a saddler with a shop of his own when he escaped the English moving against New York.

When the Seixas family assembled in Stratford, Isaac found a pleasant task to perform for Benjamin—he asked his friend Hayman Levy on Benjamin's behalf for the hand of his daughter

¹³ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 134.

Zipporah in marriage. The prospective groom was thirty; the bride eighteen. Hayman Levy, one of New York's leading fur traders and merchants, had moved to Philadelphia with the coming of the enemy. The stilted tone of Isaac's letter hides the fact that the Seixases and the Levys knew each other well. Propriety, however, demanded that they address each other on this subject in formal fashion.

Ben married Zipporah the following January; undoubtedly, brother Gershom made a special trip to Philadelphia to officiate. It was a very successful marriage, certainly in one respect . . . they had twenty-one children. Ben Seixas stayed on in Philadelphia until the war was over. He returned to New York about the same time as Gershom. In later years Ben became one of New York's distinguished Jewish citizens, a founder of the New York Stock Exchange, and a president of the synagogue.

Stratford, Novemb. 13, 1778.

Mr. Hayman Levy,
S'r:

It is at the request of my son Ben. Seixas that I presume to trouble you with this, to acquaint you that he has inform'd his mother and my self that he has a very great regard for y'r daughter, Miss Ziporah Levy, and shou'd think himself very happy if he cou'd obtain your consent and approbation, as well as your amiable spouse's and all others connected with the young lady, in permitting him soon to be joined to her in the sacred bonds of matrimony.

We have no manner of objection thereto, and most sincerely wish it may meet with your parental approbation, and that it may prove a source of joy and happiness to all our families. I hope this may find you, good Mrs. Levy, all the children and conexions enjoying perfect health. Mrs. Seixas and all our family join with me in our most respectfull salutations, and I remain, s'r,

Your most obedient and humble servitor,
Isaac Seixas¹⁴

* * * *

¹⁴ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 162.

A True-Hearted Israelite Answers a Slanderer—1778

In 1777, Mordecai Sheftall was appointed to the general staff of the Georgia Brigade with the titular rank of colonel. He became Commissary General of Purchases and Issues to the militia of his native Georgia. His was a state, not a "Federal," appointment. The next year General Robert Howe appointed him Deputy Commissary General of Issues to the Continental Troops in South Carolina and Georgia, but before the appointment could be confirmed by Congress, Mordecai fell into the hands of the enemy.

It was his principal duty to see that the troops had food, clothing, and other necessaries—and he insisted on a receipt for everything he gave out. (Mordecai had been well-trained by his father Benjamin). Mordecai's oldest son, Sheftall Sheftall, already in January, 1778, an Assistant Commissary of Issues, became his father's deputy.

*In November, 1778, the British sent two invading expeditions northward from St. Augustine. The advancing forces were to be met by a sizable British contingent coming down from New York. Between the two forces Georgia was to be squeezed into submission. Thereupon Mordecai and a number of other Savannah Jews, in order to spare their families the horrors of warfare, sent them to safety in Charleston, but themselves remained behind to fight the enemy coming up from Florida. To their astonishment they read, on the first of the month, a vindictive attack on them in *The Charlestown Gazette*, a paper owned by a Mrs. Crouch. The article was signed *An American*. Two days later an answer to the libel appeared in *The South-Carolina and American General Gazette*. It was addressed to John Wells, the publisher. There is no evidence that Mordecai Sheftall was the author.*

Mr. Wells:

On perusing Mrs. Crouch and Co's paper of the 1st instant [December 1, 1778], I was extremely surprised to find, in a piece signed *An American*, a signature sufficient to lead every honest and judicious man to imagine that whatever was said in so publick a manner should be ingenuous and true, assertions directly contrary. Here are his words:

"Yesterday being by my business posted in a much frequented

corner of this town, I observed, in a small space of time, a number of chairs [chaises] and loaded horses belonging to those who journeyed, come into town. Upon inspection of their faces and enquiry, I found them to be of the *Tribe of Israel* who, after taking every advantage in trade the times admitted of in the State of Georgia, as soon as it was attacked by an enemy, fled here for an asylum with their ill-got wealth, dastardly turning their backs upon the country, when in danger, which gave them bread and protection. Thus it will be in this State if it should ever be assailed by our enemies. Let judgment take place."

I am apt to think, Mr. Printer, that the gentleman is either very blind, or he is willing to make himself so. For I am well convinced had he taken the trouble of going closer to the chairs he would have found that what he has thus publicly asserted was erroneous, and a palpable mistake, as he might have been convinced they were of the female kind, with their dear babes, who had happily arrived at an asylum where a tyrannical enemy was not at theirs or their dear offsprings' heels.

I do, therefore, in vindication of many a worthy Israelite now in Georgia, assert that there is not at this present hour a single Georgia Israelite in Charles Town. And that so far to the contrary of that gentleman's assertion, I do declare to the public that many merchants of that State were here on the 22nd ult. [November], and on being informed of the enemy landing, they instantly left this [town], as many a worthy Gentile knows, and proceeded post haste to Georgia, leaving all their concerns unsettled, and are now with their brother citizens in the field, doing that which every honest American should do.

The truth of this assertion will in the course of a few days be known to gentlemen of veracity who are entitled to the appellation of Americans. The Charlestown Israelites, I bless Heaven, hitherto have behaved as staunch as any other citizens of this state, and I hope their further conduct will be such as will invalidate the malicious and designing fallacy of the author of the piece alluded to.

I am, sir, yours, etc.,
A real *American*
and

True hearted *Israelite*
Charlestown, Wednesday, December 2, 1778.¹⁵

* * * *

Mordecai Sheftall, Captive of the British—1778

Mordecai Sheftall (1735-1797), one of Georgia's earliest Whig leaders, was the son of Benjamin, a German who had come to the colony only a few weeks after the arrival of Colonel James Oglethorpe. Mordecai quickly achieved a considerable degree of success as a businessman. Like many other Georgians of his day, he was active in a variety of commercial enterprises: he was a farmer, rancher, tanner, sawmill owner, shopkeeper, and shipper.

Late in December, 1778, the British, led by Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, landed near Savannah, found a way through the swamps, and routed the smaller force of defending American militiamen under General Robert Howe. Both Mordecai Sheftall and his young son Sheftall Sheftall, quartermaster officers, were among those captured when the city fell on December 29th.

Sometime later Mordecai Sheftall sat down to recount the dangers to which he and his son had been exposed during their first few days in captivity and to write a letter to his wife in Charleston. He knew that she was frantic with worry about them. Mordecai's account of his imprisonment and the letter to his wife follow:

This day [December 29, 1778] the British troops, consisting of about 3,500 men, including two battalions of Hessians under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell of the Seventy-first Regiment of Highlanders, landed early in the morning at Brewton Hill, two miles below the town of Savannah, where they met with very little opposition before they gained the height. At about three o'clock p.m. they entered and took possession of the town of Savannah, when I endeavored, with my son

¹⁵ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 349-50.

Sheftall, to make our escape across Musgrove Creek, having first premised that an intrenchment had been thrown up there in order to cover a retreat, and upon seeing Colonel Samuel Elbert and Major John Habersham endeavour to make their escape that way.

But on our arrival at the creek, after having sustained a very heavy fire of musketry from the light infantry under the command of Sir James Baird, during the time we were crossing the Common, without any injury to either of us, we found it high water. And my son not knowing how to swim, and we with about 186 officers and privates being caught, as it were, in a pen, and the Highlanders keeping up a constant fire on us, it was thought advisable to surrender ourselves prisoners, which we accordingly did. And which was no sooner done than the Highlanders plundered every one amongst us, except Major Low, myself, and son, who, being foremost, had an opportunity to surrender ourselves to the British officer, namely, Lieutenant Peter Campbell, who disarmed us as we came into the yard formerly occupied by Mr. Moses Nunes.

During this business Sir James Baird was missing, but on his coming into the yard, he mounted himself on the stepladder which was erected at the end of the house and sounded his brass bugle horn, which the Highlanders no sooner heard than they all got about him, when he addressed himself to them in Highland language, when they all dispersed and finished plundering such of the officers and men as had been fortunate enough to escape their first search. This over, we were marched in file, guarded by the Highlanders and [New] York Volunteers who had come up before we were marched, when we were paraded before Mrs. Goffe's door on the Bay, where we saw the greatest part of the army drawn up.

From there, after some time, we were all marched through the town to the courthouse, which was very much crowded, the greatest part of the officers they had taken being here collected and indiscriminately put together. I had been here about two hours, when an officer, who I afterwards learned to be Major Crystie, called for me by name and ordered me to follow him, which I did, with my blanket and shirt under my arm, my clothing and my son's, which were in my saddlebags, having been taken

from my horse, so that my wardrobe consisted of what I had on my back.

On our way to the white guardhouse we met with Colonel Campbell, who inquired of the major who he had got there. On his naming me to him, he desired that I might be well-guarded, as I was a very great rebel. The major obeyed his orders, for, on lodging me in the guardhouse, he ordered the sentry to guard me with a drawn bayonet and not to suffer me to go without the reach of it, which orders were strictly complied with until a Mr. Gild Busler, their commissary general, called for me and ordered me to go with him to my stores, that he might get some provisions for our people, who, he said, were starving, not having eat[en] anything for three days, which I contradicted, as I had victualled them that morning for the day.

On our way to the office where I used to issue the provisions, he ordered me to give him information of what stores I had in town and what I had sent out of town, and where. This I declined doing, which made him angry. He asked me if I knew that Charlestown [South Carolina] was taken. I told him: "No." He then called us poor, deluded wretches, and said, "Good God! how are you deluded by your leaders!" When I inquired of him who had taken it, and when, he said, General [James] Grant, with 10,000 men, and that it had been taken eight or ten days ago, I smiled and told him it was not so, as I had a letter in my pocket that was wrote in Charlestown but three days ago by my brother.

He replied we had been misinformed. I then retorted that I found they could be misinformed by their leaders, as well as we could be deluded by ours. This made him so angry that when he returned me to the guardhouse, he ordered me to be confined amongst the drunken soldiers and negroes, where I suffered a great deal of abuse and was threatened to be run through the body or, as they termed it, "skivered" by one of the York Volunteers, which threat he attempted to put into execution three times during the night, but was prevented by one Sergeant Campbell.

In this situation I remained two days without a morsel to eat, when a Hessian officer named Zaltman, finding I could talk his language, removed me to his room and sympathized with me on my situation. He permitted me to send to Mrs. [Abigail] Minis, who sent me some victuals. He also permitted me to go and see

my son, and to let him come and stay with me. He introduced me to Captain Kappel, also a Hessian, who treated me very politely.

In this situation I remained until Saturday morning, the second of January, 1779, when the commander, Colonel Innis, sent his orderly for me and [my] son to [go to] his quarters, which was John Habersham's house, where on the top of the step I met with Captain Stanhope, of the "Raven," sloop of war, who treated me with the most illiberal abuse and, after charging me with having refused the supplying of the King's ships with provisions, and of having shut the church door, together with many ill-natured things, ordered me on board the prison ship, together with my son. I made a point of giving Mr. Stanhope suitable answers to his impertinent treatment and then turned from him and inquired for Colonel Innis. I got his leave to go to Mrs. Minis for a shirt she had taken to wash for me, as it was the only one I had left except the one on my back, and that was given me by Captain Kappel, as the British soldiers had plundered both mine and my son's clothes.

This favour he granted me under guard, after which I was conducted on board one of the flatboats and put on board the prison ship "Nancy," commanded by Captain Samuel Tait, when the first thing that presented itself to my view was one of our poor Continental soldiers laying on the ship's main deck in the agonies of death, and who expired in a few hours. After being presented to the captain with mine and the rest of the prisoners' names, I gave him in charge what paper money I had, and my watch. My son also gave him his money to take care of. He appeared to be a little civiller after this confidence placed in him, and permitted us to sleep in a stateroom, that is, the Rev. Moses Allen, myself, and son. In the evening we were served with what was called our allowance, which consisted of two pints and a half [of water?], and a half gill of rice, and about seven ounces of boiled beef per man. We were permitted to choose our messmates, and I accordingly made choice of Capt. Thomas Fineley, Rev. Mr. Allen, Mr. Moses Valentonge, Mr. Daniel Flaherty, myself, and son Sheftall Sheftall.

Savannah, January 1st, 1779.

My dear Fanny:

I am now to inform you of my being a prisoner and confined in the white gaurd house where I am fully as well treated as I could

expect, as it is the duty of every honest man to give praise where it is due. I must acknowledge that I have met with much [more] genteel treatment from the officers than I was formerly led to believe we should receive. Our son Sheftall, thanks be to God, has escaped unhurt and is with me. We are reduced to the cloaths on our back and when we shall get a shifting, God only knows.

I must recommend to you to take care of the rest of the children, as I mean not to quite [quit] the boy that is with me, if it's in my power to prevent. I hope our son Benjamin is or will in a short time be with you.

I have met with the kindest treatment from some of our old friends and neighbours, which I hope I shall ever retain a great-full sense of. When it will be in our power to see you and the dear children, God only knows. Therefor recommend to you to keep up your spirits, as I and the boy do ours, and wish that the Great Disposer of all things may take you all under his immediate protection.

And I am, my dear Fanny, your affectionate husband,
Mordecai Sheftall

Sheftall gives his duty to you and joins me in love to the dear children; give mine to our friends.¹⁶

* * * *

Aaron Lopez Retails Some War Gossip to an Old Friend—1779

Although a businessman of some consequence in Savannah, Mordecai Sheftall was in no sense comparable to Aaron Lopez, of Newport. In the decade of the 1770's, Lopez was the most important merchant-shipper in Newport—which would imply that he was one of the greatest commercial enterprisers in all New England.

In February, 1779, Lopez received a note from his friend Captain Joseph Anthony. Since 1770, and possibly earlier, the captain, who commanded his own sloop, had been in constant touch with him. Engaged primarily in the coast run between Newport and Philadelphia, Anthony served as one of the merchant's

¹⁶ Jacob Rader Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865* [Memoirs] (Phila., 1955), I, 42-44; Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 351.

agents in the latter city. He would send Lopez a sort of newsletter quoting prices of commodities, which he would thereafter transport to Newport in his own sloop.

Both Lopez and Anthony were among those who fled from Newport upon the British occupation. Anthony went to Exeter Township, in one of the eastern Pennsylvania counties, where he scrabbled for a living on a small farm. Learning from a mutual friend, Mr. Josiah Hewes, a Philadelphia merchant, that Lopez was in that city, he wrote him, on January 27, 1779, begging for news of his old friends of Newport.

He was particularly eager to hear from Lopez because he knew him to be "intilegeble," and he wanted to hear "tho' no doubt the account would be distressing yet one is fond of knowing the particulars."

Seven days later Lopez wrote his answer. Though the style is somewhat bombastic, it does not suggest that Lopez himself was anything but a charming, cultured, and kindly gentleman.

Philadelphia, February 3d, 1779.

My dear and very worthy friend:

How shall I express my gratitude to you for the satisfaction you have given me with the rec[eip]'t of your friendly and obliging favor of the 27th ulto. which this moment has been handed me by our mutual friend, Mr. Hewes, who telling me its bearer returns again to Exeter tomorrow morning, I would not miss the opportunity of acknowledging its agreeable contents, and gratifying your wishes of hearing from me, from my family, and some thing from the distress'd inhabitants of our once flourishing Iland [Newport].

But before I render you this intelligence, permit me to tell you that I am extreamly happy to learn that the Almighty has been pleased to guide you and good family to so safe an asylum, and that *there* he has blest you with health, peace, and plenty arround you, during these times of publick and almost universal callamity. But what I esteem still a greater blessing, endowed you with a gratefull heart, susceptible of all those divine bounties, which I pray may be continued you with all the additional felicities this sublunary world is capable of affording. For my part I have the pleasure to acquaint my good friend that I consider myself under

still greater obligations to Heaven, having hitherto enjoy'd every one of those inestimable blessings you are pleased to tell me of, without the least merit or title to them; am therefore to acknowledge myself infinitely more thankfull for so mercifull dispensations.

Since we left our Island [Newport] my principal object was to look out for a spot where I could place my family, secured from sudden allarms and the cruel ravages of an enraged enemy. Such a one I have hitherto found in the small inland township of Leicester, in the Massachusetts Bay, *where* I pitch'd my tent, erecting a proportionable one to the extent of my numerous family on the summit of an high healthy hill, where we have experienc'd the civilities and hospitality of a kind neighbourhood; and moved in the same sphere of business I have been used to follow, which, altho much more contracted, it has fully answer'd my wishes. And you know, my friend, when that is the case, it never fails of constituting real happiness. Add to this the satisfaction of having for a next door neighbour your truly well wishing friend, my father-in-law, Mr. Rivera, who with his family I left in good health, spending in peace the fruits of his last summer's labour on a small farm. The old gentleman [now sixty-two years of age] improves with much the same *farming faculties* you tell me you cultivate yours, and I can farther inform you that while his hands have been employ'd in that usefull art, his agitated mind has uniformly accompanied yours to poor Newport where, I do still hope, we shall soon have the pleasure of meeting each other again and re-enjoy those injur'd habitations, we have so long been deprived of, with all satisfaction.

By this week's post, Mrs. Lopez has inform'd me that the Widow Lee, who had the liberty of going down from Providence in a flag [of truce] to Newport, after staying there some days, she had the indulgency of returning to Providence, and being engaged to nurse my daughter, Mrs. Mendez (who I have the consolation to tell you leaves [lives] also near me and next door to our good neighbour, Capt. Jno. Lyon, formerly of Newport). This Mrs. Lee, coming directly on her return into our family, inform'd Mrs. Lopez that the poor inhabitants of that town have been very much distress'd this winter for the want of fewell and provisions, those individuals of my society [Jews] in particular, who, she said, had

not tasted any meat but once in two months. Fish there was none at this season of the year and they were reduced to the alternative of leaving [living] upon chocolate and coffe. These and many other callamities and insults the wretched inhabitants experience ought to excite our thanks to that Great Being who gave us resolution to exchange at so early a period that melancholy spot for that we now are enjoying.

Your dwelling house I understand has sufer'd much. Your neighbour Augustus Johnson was found dead at his house. My neighbour Gideon Sesson's wife is crazy, and what I lament most, is, that the vertue of several of our reputable ladys has been attacked and sullied by our destructive enemys—so much for poor Newport.

Capt. Benj. Wright [my agent] continues at Jamaica. His zealous wishes to put me in possession of some part of the large property I have had lock'd up in his hands since the commencement of this war led him to address me with three vessels loaded on my sole and proper account, all of which have been taken by our American cruizers [privateers]. The first falling in honest hands was delivered up to me by a reference agreed to by the parties. The other two were libelled and contested, one of them was adjudged at Providence to be restored to me; the opposite party appealed to Congress. The third and most valuable [the schooner "Hope"] was (contrary to the opinion and expectation of every spectator) condemn'd at a Connecticut Court of Admiralty. I appeal'd to Congress, which has brought me here [to Philadelphia] in full hopes of obtaining redress.

Mrs. [Benjamin] Wright was left porly at Newport, when Nurse Lee came away, which prevented Mrs. Wright coming off in the same flagg [of truce], as she intended, but will do it soon as she recovers. I have ofer'd the poor distress'd woman all the assistance in my power to grant her, as I esteeme her an object of real merit.

Now, my dear friend, I have only to add my sincere thanks for your kind invitation to spend a day or two with you at your habitation. I shall inform myself (not being acquainted where Exeter lays), and if I can anyways make it convenient to call on you, may expect to see me. Meantime permit me to announce you

and Mrs. Anthony every good wish pure esteem can suggest,
being very truly, dear sir,

Your affectionate friend and humble servant,
[Aaron Lopez]¹⁷

* * * *

Prisoner of War Mordecai Sheftall and
Frances, His Wife—1779-1780

Mordecai Sheftall suffered for several months on board the prison ship Nancy where, so a contemporary historian wrote, his captors evidenced their contempt for him as a Jew by feeding him pork. Finally he was paroled under the watchful eyes of the British at Sunbury, Georgia. His friends in Savannah did not forget him. William Jones sent him some fine sugar and three gallons of the best Jamaica rum, no small comfort for an exile. The very day he arrived he sat down and wrote a letter to his beloved wife Fanny, as he called her. One of the prisoners with him was Lieutenant Laban Johnson, and when the lieutenant was exchanged and went north to Charleston a free man, he carried Sheftall's letter to Fanny.

Sheftall was terribly worried about his son, not quite seventeen at the time. (Although looked upon by his father as a "lad," he was a very self-reliant young man.) The father wanted the son paroled and sent to Sunbury. To this end, on April 12, 1779, Mordecai addressed Colonel Samuel Elbert, his immediate commanding officer, and Major John Habersham, both of whom were also prisoners of war. He asked the officers to urge General Benjamin Lincoln, the American commander of the Southern Department, to intervene with the British in order to obtain young Sheftall's parole to Sunbury. Mordecai also wanted Elbert and Habersham, should they themselves be exchanged, to remind General Lincoln that he, too, wanted to be exchanged.

Mrs. Sheftall, probably the same month, also wrote to General Lincoln, pleading that he make an effort to secure her husband's exchange. In her note she held General Robert Howe responsible

¹⁷ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 183-86.

for her husband's capture and implied that he had wanted her husband taken prisoner. Whether Mordecai Sheftall's associates interceded for the young man is not known, but by June the son had been paroled and joined his father in Sunbury. Still, although the two were reunited, their troubles were by no means over. After Count Jean Baptiste d'Estaing's failure to recapture Savannah in October, 1779, the Tories and some irregular troops threatened the parolees at Sunbury. The Sheftalls and their friends fled for their lives. When next heard from, they were all on Antigua, where they had been carried by the British and where Mrs. Sheftall wrote to them early in March, 1780.

In her letter she described her efforts to help them and, because they were hungry for news, regaled them with gossip; she was in business, she wrote, and was doing well. All this, however, may have been a device on her part to keep their spirits up. Perla, their seventeen-year-old daughter, served as her mother's scribe.

About June, 1780, Mordecai and his son, Sheftall Sheftall, were paroled by the British and went on to Philadelphia, the capital of the new country, the center of its commercial life, and at the time the home of its largest Jewish community. Fanny and the younger children were obliged to remain at Charleston, South Carolina, then in British hands. In July, Fanny wrote to her husband in Philadelphia, describing what had happened to her and the children and their friends when Charleston was besieged in the early months of the year. The five letters follow:

Sunbury, 6th April, 1779.

My dear Fanny:

The pleasure I received at the receipt of your favour of the 26th Feb'y can be easier conceived than expressed. The happiness of hereing from you and my dear children is the only happiness I can enjoy in my present situation.

I am happy to here that you are once more become mistress of your own house, as I very well know that, notwithstanding the kindness of our freinds, home is home, as the old saying is.

I must beg you will put the poor children to school that they may not be intierly lost in this corroupt age.

I arrived at this place yesterday but have not the happiness of haveing our son with me. He still continues on board the prison

ship "Nancy" where my freinds from Savannah will endeavour to make his life as comfortable as their circumstances will admite.

If you see Miss Patty Wright and finde that she stands in need of your assistance, pray give it her, as it never will be in my power to requite her marm [mother] for the many favors received at her hands during my confinement. Therefore could wish her child made as happy as one of my own.

I am obliged to live at an expence here rather higher than my present circumstances can well admite off, but I must endeavour to make the best of a bad market and keep a good flow of spirits in hopes of once more seeing you and my dear children, whom I pray God to take under his immediate protection. And that you may be a comfort to the dear children whilst I am kept from them, is the sincere wish of, my dear Fanny,

Your affectionate husband,
Mordecai Sheftall

Pray give my blessing to the children and compliments to all my freinds, and let me hear from you as often as possible.

* * * *

Sunburry, 12th April, 1779.

Dear Sir:

I have now been here a week and cannot learn wether my son is to be permitted to come here or no. I thinke if I could make freinds to applie to the General in his behalf, that he would hardly refuse him the indulgence granted to every other Continental officer, as I know of no charge that has or can be brot againste him. Whatever may be said of me, he was taken in the line of his duty as every other officer was; therefor, it is astonishing to me why he should be pointed at in so particular a manner. You must suppose that it is very greivous to me to have the lad kept from me in the manner that he is. Therefor, must request of you and Major Habersham to use what interest you may have to get him on his parole to this place. It will be laying me under a lasting obeligation to you both, never to be forgot.

It is reported here that you and the major have obetained leave to go to New York. If so, I hope, if you write to General Lincoln, that you will mention me to him in such manner as you may thinke will induce him not to forget me. I should be happy to here from

you and the major befor you go; and if you go, I wish you boath a happy and prosperous voyage and speedy return to your freinds and your family. You'l pleas to present my compliments to our fellow prisoner, Mr. Freasure [Lieutenant John Frazier], allso to the Miss Minis's. And am very respectfully, sir,

Your mosst humble servant,
Mordecai Sheftall

Sam'l Elbert Esq.

* * * *

Honored Sir:

Permit me to address you in behalf of my husband, Mr. Mordecai Sheftal, taken with his son at Savanna, now at Sunbury. (My son still remains at Savannah.) Hope it is in your power to have Mr. Sheftal speedily exchanged, as many sorrowful circumstances require it to relieve his distrest family, who most earnestly stands very much in need of it. I would have waited personally on your Excellency, but it is entirely out of my power.

Mr. Sheftal's manner of being taken was singular from others; he could have escaped, but stayed by General Howe's order, and the son would not leave his father, though now obliged to be apart, my son being on board a prison ship at Savanna. Have just now seen a gentleman who made his escape from the same vessel, and by this gentleman have heard that my husband has wrote several letters to your Excellency to beg by some means to be relieved from his imprisonment.

Honored Sir, [I] hope from your benevolent heart to me and my children, who never knew what want was, some step for his liberty may be found [and] taken to restore him to us, or we too soon shall require it [help], as I have not it in my power to support him during his imprisonment. My unhappiness is not to express on this most afflicting occasion; your Excellency's compliance [?] to relieve my husband will ever have the prayers and thanks of myself and children from, honored sir,

Your most [humble and obedient servant],
Francis [Frances] Sheftal

* * * *

Charls Town, March 3th, 1780.

My dear Sheftall:

I had the pleasure to receive your laste letter, with my son's, by Mr. Coshman Polack by the way of North Carolina, and was glad to here [hear] that you and my son injoyed your healths, a continuance of which I sincerely wish you. But [I] was verry miserable to hear that you and my dear child was in so much distress. I would have endeavoured to have sent something for your reliefe, but the enemy now lay off of the bar, so that it is not in my power to do any thing for you at present, but the first safe oppertunity you may depend on my sending you whatever is in my power.

Their is a Jew gentleman gone from here to North Carolina, by the name of Mr. Levy. He has promised me to buy up six halfe johanases [gold coins] theare [there] and to send them to you with a letter, as thay are much cheaper thare than [they] are here.

I had not the pleasur off seeing Mrs. Walton, as the vessel she came in was obliged to put in to North Carolina. Mr. Coshman Polack has been to St. Eustatia and was passenger with Mrs. Walton, since whitch he has arrived here. He likewise told us that he wrote to you, but that he never received an answer. Your brother has shewn your letter to Genaral [Benjamin] Lincoln, and he has assured him that he will do all in his power in your behalfe as soon as times is a little more settled here.

You must tell my son that I would have answered his letter in full, but it is Friday afternoon and very late. But he may depend that I will whrite him by the next oppertunity. Our friend Mrs. Whrite is here and has been with me some time. She sincerely wishes to see you. Our old friend, Miss Sally Martin, is dead, and likwhise poor Mrs. Brady. Old Mrs. Mines [Abigail Minis] is here with all her family and is settled here. They all desire to be kindly remembered to you. I hav the pleasure to inform you that your brother's wife is safely delivered off a fine son and he is called Isaac. Mr. Jacobs and wife, in company with Mr. Cohen and wife, desire to be kindly remembered to you. Mr. Cohen's family is likely to increas shortly. I can assure you that Mr. Jacobs is been a father to your children and a great friend to me. I had like to [I almost] forgot to mention to you that I have received the 2 thousand pounds of Mr. Cape, with which I make exceeding well out by doing a little business. Your children all go to school. I

have no more at present, but that I and all the children are in good health, and am, my dear Sheftall,

Your loving wife,
Frances Sheftall

Pearla begs that you will excuse this scrool, as she has wrote it in great haste and our Sabbeth is coming on so fast.

The children all desire their love to their brothe[r] and their duty to you. They all long for to see you.

* * * *

Charls Town, July 20th, 1780.

My dear Sheftall:

I have now the pleasure to inform you that I received your letter on the 19 instn., dated May the 5, and sincerly congratulate you and my dear childe on your enlargement, hoping that we may once more meet again in a great deal of pleasure, for I can assure you that we have been strangers to that for some time past. But I still hope that our troubles will now be soon at an end.

I make not the least doubt, but ere thise comes to hand that you have herd that thise place was given over to the British troops on May 12th by a caputalation after three longe months sige. During that time I retier'd into the country with my family, and a great many of our people ware at the same place. During the sige thare was scarce a woman to be see[n] in the streets. The balls flew like haile during the cannonading.

After the town was given over, I returned to town and have hierd a house in St. Michael's Alley belonging to Mrs. Stephens at the rate of fifty pounds sterlinge a year. And whear the money is to come from God only knows, for their is nothing but hard money goes here, and that, I can assure you, is hard enough to be got.

I am obliged to take in needle worke to make a living for my family, so I leave you to judge what a livinge that must be.

Our Negroes have every one been at the point of death, so that they have been of no use to me for thise six weeks past. But, thankes be to God, they are all getting the better of it except poor little Billey, he died with the yellow fever on the 3 of July.

The children have all got safe over the small pox. They had it so favourable that Perla had the most and had but thirty. How I shall be able to pay the doctor's bill and house rent, God only knowes.

But I still trust to Providence knowing that the Almighty never sends trouble but he sends some relife.

As to our Adam [a free servant?], he is so great a gentleman that was it to please God to put it in your power to send for us, I do thinke that he would come with us.

I wrote to you about three weeks agoe by way of St. Austatia [Eustatius] to Antigua, whare I mention every particular to you, but must now refer it untill it shall pleas God that we see you again. You[r] brother Levy went out of town during the sige toward the northward and has not returned as yet. Thise day his youngest baby, Isaac, was buried. The poor baby was sicke for about three weeks and then died.

We have had no less than six Jew children buried since the sige, and poor Mrs. Cardosar [Cardozo], Miss Leah Toras that was, died last week with the small pox. Mr. DeLyon has lost his two grand children. Mrs. Mordecai has lost her child. Mrs. Myers Moses had the misfortune to have her youngest daughter, Miss Rachel, killed with the nurse by a cannon ball during the sige.

Perla begs that you will excuse her not whriting by thise oppertunity as she has been with her Aunt Sally for several nights and is very much fatigued, and the flag [of truce ship] goes immediately, but hopes that she will be the bearer of the next [letter] herself. But havinge so favourable an oppertunity as the flag [I] was willing to let you no [know] some little of our family affairs.

I have nothing more at present but wish to hear from you by the first oppertunity.

The children joine me in love to you and their brother, and I remain

Your loving wife,
Frances Sheftall¹⁸

* * * *

Daniel Gomez Asks that His Grandson Be Permitted to Go to British-Occupied New York—1779

Daniel Gomez (1695-1780), a son of Luis Gomez, the New York merchant, was one of the men who helped to build Congregation

¹⁸ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 353-54; Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 262-65; Jacob R. Marcus, *On Love, Marriage, Children . . . And Death, Too* [Marcus, *Love, Marriage*] (1965), pp. 12-13.

Shearith Israel during the early part of the eighteenth century. As a patriot, the elderly merchant fled from British-occupied New York and went to Philadelphia, leaving everything behind. In 1779, the impoverished exile, then eighty-four years of age, asked the Pennsylvania authorities for permission to send a grandson through the lines to collect rents and take care of some other errands in New York.

To the Honourable the President, and the Honourable the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania:

The humble address and petition of Daniel Gomez most humbly sheweth that the said Daniel Gomez has always had a real affection and zeal for the welfare of this country, and especially has attached himself to the cause in which it now contests, in so much that he has left his property among the enemies of these states and has done every thing that in him lay for the benefit of the said states; and that your petitioner [is] being laid up by infirmities, and he is sorry to say he is under the most urgent necessity to send to the city of New York to try to procure some rents and other articles of his property.

He therefore most ardently prays this honourable board to grant permission to his grandson, Daniel Gomez, Junior, to go to the city of New York for that purpose, and that he may return as soon as it is effected.

And your petitioner shall ever pray for the prosperity and independence of the thirteen United States, and for Pennsylvania in particular.

Daniel Gomez

Philadelphia, May [1779].¹⁹

* * * *

Isaac Moses Asks the Continental Congress to Furnish Gunpowder for His Privateer—1779

With the possible exception of Aaron Lopez of Newport, Isaac Moses, of New York, was the greatest Jewish merchant-shipper in North America during the Revolutionary period. He was a

¹⁹ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 425-26.

German immigrant who came to these shores toward the end of the French and Indian War; perhaps his uncle Hayman Levy brought him over. In 1770 Moses married Levy's daughter Reyna. He was a successful merchant-shipper and for much of his business life eminently successful. But, like other men in trade and commerce, he too suffered severe reverses and on two occasions was bankrupt.

While in New York, Moses was a pillar of Congregation Shearith Israel, and when he left that city because of the British occupation in 1776, he became a leader of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. Indeed, he enjoyed the distinction of serving as president both at Shearith Israel and Mikveh Israel.

During the Revolution Moses engaged in shipping on a very large scale, operating branches in Amsterdam and in St. Eustatius in the West Indies. No doubt his foreign offices were established with an eye to running the British blockade. As a large-scale importer Moses was in a position to help the Continental Congress with strategic goods, which he did. We shall see in the following letter that he turned to it, for once, and asked it to do him a favor.

To the Honorable the Congress of the United States of North America:

The petition of Isaac Moses, now of the city of Philadelphia, merchant, most humbly sheweth:

That your petitioner, having loaded a schooner, letter of marque, and fitted her with every necessary but gun powder, in a warlike manner, has made all the search in his power for that article, but finding himself every where dissappointed, is now under the disagreeable necessity of troubling Your Honours, and to pray that you would be pleased to spare him, out of the public stores, two or three hundred weight of powder.

He flatters himself his principals as a true Whig and friend to the liberties of this country are so well known to some of your members that it is needless to mention them here, or to remind your body of the assistance he has afforded these United States from time to time in the importation of divers articles which he spared them, but particularly when he and his partners spared these states upwards of twenty thousand dollars in specie, in exchange for Continental dollars, at the time the Canada expedi-

tion was on foot, and for which they received the thanks from or through your then president, the Honourable John Hancock, Esq.

Your petitioner submits to your honourable House to consider how unsafe it would be in him to risk his property at these times on the high seas without having proper means of defence with it, and pledges himself either immediately to pay for the powder, or to reimburse the public with an equal quantity of that article, and that either on the return of his vessel, or at the time that she ought to return.

Your petitioner therefore flatters himself your honourable House will be pleased on these considerations to grant him his request;

And he, as in duty bound, will ever pray.²⁰

Isaac Moses

July 27th, 1779.

* * * *

Aaron Nunez Cardoza Opens His Home to War Refugees—1779

Samson Mears, a merchant, was one of Aaron Lopez' numerous agents and clients. Some years before the Revolution, Mears had been on St. Eustatius, but by the time the war was in full swing he was one of the New York refugees in Norwalk, Connecticut. He had a great deal of family for company, including the husbands of his three sisters: Solomon Simson and the brothers Myer and Asher Myers. Simson was a merchant; Myer, a silversmith; Asher, a coppersmith.

The third anniversary of the creation of the American republic was no holiday for Samson Mears. Not that he was worried about the enemy; he had written in April that Norwalk was so small that the English "have greater objects to attend to than this insignificant place. . . . I don't apprehend much danger here from the enemy." Little did he realize that on the morrow he would be in real trouble. To distract Washington and to get at his flanks, Sir Henry Clinton urged the Tory General William Tryon to attack

²⁰ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 427-28.

the villages along Long Island Sound. This Loyalist needed no second invitation.

On the 5th the English began the most devastating of their raids on the Connecticut shore. Tryon struck at New Haven, Fairfield, and other towns. On the 11th, he and his German mercenaries reached Norwalk. They burnt houses, barns, and churches, plundering where they could, exhibiting "cruel, barbarous, inhumane, and unmerciful conduct and behaviour," and destroying even "wheat in the sheaf" and "grain in store."

Mears fled Norwalk to Wilton, up the Norwalk River, and from there wrote an account of Tryon's raid.

Wilton, July 30th, 1779.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,

Dear Sir:

The 9th inst. in a great hurry I address'd a few lines to you, accompanying your leather breeches, skins, and snuff p'r Mr. Wentworth, which I hope has been safe deliv'd you.

My apprehension then of the destruction of Norwalk was realized early in the morning of the 11th. To describe the scene with all its horrors and the distress of its inhabitants require a much abler pen than mine. The 8th in the morning the approach of the savage enemy as far as Green's Farms (about five or six miles from Norwalk) threatened me with their immediate visitation, and I was fortunate enough to get the goods I sent you among some of our cloathing and removed a few miles out of the town till Wentworth could carry them further. And as the progress of the enemy was by some means stop'd, we improved the remainder of that and the next day in removing our numerous family, with what effects we could procure teams, to carry off to some small distance from the town. And altho we were closely employed till the hour of Sabbath, we were obliged (from the difficulty of procuring teams) to leave a considerable part of furniture and other valuable effects in our respective dwellings, that has to the great distress of some of our families been consumed with the houses, and is most extensively felt by Myer and Asher Myer[s] and M[oses]. Isaacs, the two former being deprived of a very considerable part of their tools.

In this reduced situation we were going from house to house

soliciting a shelter, and happy we were to get into the meanest cot. We truly realized the Anniversary Season with all its gloom that our predecesors experienced. [The anniversary of the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem was observed July 22d.]

Judge of our situation when a room of about twelve feet square cont[aine]’d between twenty and thirty persons, old and young, from Friday till Sunday morning, when the attack on the town (which was about three miles distance) was pronounced by an incessant firing of cannon and musquetry and the awful appearance of vast columns of smoak ascending from the conflagrated buildings. This scene terrified the women and children that they thought their assylem no longer safe there and precipitately set off, some on foot and some in a waggon further up the country. And what added to our distress was an incessent rain when we were so illy provided against it, not having a cloak in company, nor a shift of cloathes with us, they being scattered about the country wherever we could get a teamster to carry them. So that we were oblinded to dry them on our backs, and we continued to rove from place to place till this hospitable roof of Mr. Aaron Cardoza’s was humanely open’d to our use, with every friendly service he can contrive to render us, and we cannot reflect on his benevolence without receiving a considerable alleviation to our calamitous circumstances.

As his house is but small for the families in it at present contains, and he has turn’d out of the best apartments, we shall make our stay no longer here then to collect our scattered effects and get provided with some places more to our respective conveniences. And until we obtain that, you may direct any letters you may please to honor me with, to the place, to the care of our present hospitable host.

I am sorry to advise you that the want of sufficient number of casks to transport you[r] flaxseed has involved you in the general loss of the town. Of the number of casks I had ingaged to be made I had just collected between twenty and thirty, had not time to have them filled, and the impossibility of geting teams proved a further hinderence to my strong inclination of securing your property. The same cause exposes me to the loss of some rum in the store. In short, it is to that only that our families and many others may impute their losses. Those that had teams were so selfish as to prefer their own trivial domestick employ to the pressing calls

for the preservation of their distressed neighbours effects by refusing to come, tho' pressingly solicited with ample offers of reward.

To our unsettled situation and the separation of my books and papers from me at an other quarter, you'll be pleased to attribute your not having your accounts by this conveyance. My endeavours to effect it as soon as possible shall be employ'd in the mean time. Let the united regard of all our families be acceptable to you and yours, and with great sincerity, believe me to be

Your ever esteem'd friend and very humble servant,
 Samson Mears

P. S. By an order from our Governor, there has been an account taken of the loss of houses, barns, stores, and grain, for what purpose we know not. Your seed is given in with them. I think the loss of houses, exclusive of barns and stores, amounts to 127. Be pleased to make my best regards acceptable to my good friend, Rivera, his spouse, and the rest of his family, and let him know that I shall, when I am more settled, give my self the pleasure of addressing him. My best regard awaits [your son-in-law] Mr. Mendes and family. As also to Mr. Jacobs and his sons, and pleas to let him know his daughter and son, with all the rest of our family, are in health.²¹

* * * *

Rachel Gratz Writes to Her Dear Daddy—1779

Barnard Gratz (1738-1801), a young Silesian, journeyed to Philadelphia in 1754 by way of London and soon became a merchant. His only surviving child was his daughter Rachel. (She grew up to marry Solomon Etting of Baltimore, an important member of the notable Etting clan.) When Rachel was seven or eight years of age, "her honored farther" showed her how much he loved her. He and Uncle Michael wrote William Murray telling him that an agent was bringing out a shipment of goods to the Illinois country. Among the supplies was a small package of jewelry which Murray was to sell, the profits to go to Rachel and two other Gratz youngsters. This was Rachel's first "adventure"

²¹ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 171-74.

in business, and Murray was asked to watch the account and remit the profits separately.

As she grew up, her father lavished all his love on her. She, too, was very fond of her "dear little daddy" and missed him very much when he left on a long trip to England or crossed the mountains into the dark forests. For safety's sake, during the Revolution, Barnard sent his only child to relatives in Lancaster, in the Pennsylvania hinterland.

Although Rachel was in her teens in 1779, she was apparently getting her first formal instruction in arithmetic—rather late, to be sure—but then all sorts of things happen in wartime. But she had already learned to write, as the following letter testifies. Barnard received it from her while he was away from Lancaster. He was probably at his business, in Philadelphia, at the time.

Lancaster, August 3, 1779.

Hon[ore]'d Farther:

I cannot let slip this favorable opportunity after my long silence to let you know that I am in good health, thank God, as I hope this may find you in the same. You mention in your letter about my minding my schooling, which shall do my endeavors to learn as I know it is my dear daddy's desire. I have just begun to cipher and I am very much delighted at it. I am in averdepois weight and now can cast up anything. I should be very much obliged to my good daddy if you see a pretty fan to get it for me, as they are very dear in this place. Today I was at a French colonel's funeral who was buried with all the honors of war. The day before that he was buried but it was not regular; so they took him up again. Today was the finishing.

I must conclude, hon'd father, with wishing you every earthly felicity this world can afford.

Your ever-loving and obedient daughter,

Rachel Gratz

Aunt [Miriam Gratz?] and all the children desire their love to you. Aunt Bush desires to be remembered to you. Becky's [Richea Bush's?] compliments to you. Please remember me to Moses.

My d[ea]'r daddy, I have one favor to beg of you, not to forget

to get me a lining for my cloak and some lace. Becky begs of you the favor to get her three yards of linsey, please.²²

* * * *

Abigail Minis, Georgia Pioneer,
Decides to Leave Town—1779

Accompanied by his wife Abigail, Abraham Minis landed in Savannah, Georgia, just about five months after Colonel Oglethorpe's arrival with the first group of colonists. Abraham died in 1757, leaving his horses to his three sons, Joseph, Minis, and Philip, his cattle to his five daughters, and the rest of the estate and his business to the sturdy Abigail.

When, in September, 1779, the American troops and their French allies landed on the Georgia coast and attempted to recapture Savannah from the British, they needed supplies and provisions. Among those to whom they turned was the vigorous Abby Minis, then a woman of at least eighty, but still active in business. She did not disappoint those who turned to her, but after the disaster which overtook the allied expedition she found it difficult to remain in town. Charges were preferred against her as a Whig, and no doubt measures were also taken to confiscate her property. Under the circumstances, she found it advisable to go to Charleston. Accordingly, she and her five daughters sent the following petition, in October, 1779, to Governor Wright and the Royal Council. The governor and his cabinet approved of her request, promised not to confiscate her property, and permitted her to leave for South Carolina. Obviously, she must have had influential friends in high places.

To His Excellency Sir James Wright . . .

The humble petition of Abigail Minis of Savannah in the said province, widow, and her daughters, Leah, Hester, Judy, Hannah, and Sarah Minis, sheweth that your petitioner Abigail Minis is seized and possessed in her own right of a small plantation near

²² Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 120-21.

the town of Savannah and of a house in said town, some Negroes and other personal property. And your other petitioners are seized and possessed of some lots of land and premises in said town and personal property,

That some prosecution of late has been entered against your petitioners, [who] are desirous the same may be withdrawn, and [they] be permitted to go to Charlestown, South Carolina, to reside for some time, and carry with them their personal property,

That your petitioners desire permission to appoint one or more attorneys or attorney to rent out or otherwise manage their said real property in Georgia for their sole use and benefit.

That your petitioners hope by means of removing to Charlestown the same will not be deemed or looked upon as forfeiture of any part of their said real property.

Your petitioners therefore most humbly pray your Excellency and Your Honorable Board will be pleased to grant them the several matters stated and set forth in this their petition, and that you will be further pleased to grant or order a proper vessel to carry them and their personal property with a flag [of truce boat] by water to Charlestown.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Abigail Minis, Leah Minis, Esther Minis,
Judy Minis, Anna Minis, Sally Minis²³

* * * *

Mordecai Sheftall Petitions Congress to Pay Him What They Owe Him—1780

In 1780, Mordecai Sheftall set about straightening out his accounts with the Continental Congress. In a series of letters Mordecai begged its members to pay him what they owed. "I must entreat the Honob'e Congress to have some consideration for a man who has sacrificed every thing in the cause of his country. I want nothing but justice. . . ." The phrase "who has sacrificed every thing in the cause of his country" was no mere patriotic flourish. His capture and his inability to remain in Georgia to look after his many business interests had been severe economic blows. Senator James Gunn told Alexander Hamilton that Sheftall had lost all his property during the Revolution.

²³ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 356-57.

Mordecai pleaded earnestly that his accounts be settled. His bill for back pay and rations alone ran to \$139,800, Continental, or, in hard cash, \$2,330. Being in straitened circumstances, the Georgia exile asked for relief, but not in paper currency. The government settled with him in July for pay and subsistence, giving him \$7,682—in paper money, of course.

Nearly £1,900, sterling, was still due him for financing an expedition against the Indians, for his share in a brigantine burnt by the British, and for a hogshead of rum supplied to the troops. Here is one of the petitions he submitted after his arrival in Philadelphia, asking for relief.

To his Excellency, the President and the
Honorable Members of Congress:

The memorial of Mordecai Sheftall humbly sheweth that your memorialist was appointed Deputy Commissary General of Issues in the State of Georgia,

That his attention to the wants of the army in that quarter led him to make advances for their support at those times when no Continental money was sent by Congress for the support of the troops there,

That your memorialist had also a considerable sum due to him which in the present state of depreciation would amount on receiving the same to a literal nonpayment,

That a long and painful captivity has reduced your memorialist to very distressed circumstances which are still heighten'd by having a wife and foure children in Charles Town deprived of every means of subsisting.

Your memorialist humbly subjoynes an acco't and submits his situation to Congress, requesting they will pleas to take his case into consideration and afforde him such relief, in the whole or in part, as the wisdom and humanity of the Honorable Congress will thinke expedient, to assist him in removing his family from the miseries the[y] now labour under.

And your memorialist will every pray.

Mordecai Sheftall

Philadelphia,
Aug't 21, 1780.²⁴

* * * *

²⁴ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 364.

Samuel Jacobs and His Son, Samuel Jr.,
Problem Child—1780-1785

Samuel Jacobs had married out of the faith; his wife Marie-Josie Audet Lapoint was a French-Canadian Catholic. As far as the records indicate, Jacobs never became a member of the one Jewish congregation in Canada, nor did he make any contribution to it. Yet Jacobs was no escapist trying to assimilate and to deny his Jewish origin. On the contrary, he was very conscious of his background, even cocky about it, and ready at the drop of a hat to affirm it. Almost every time he wrote his name, he proudly proclaimed his origins by writing the word Samuel in Hebrew in the circle of the flourish with which he finished his given name. In 1778 he wrote to one of his Gentile friends: "I was disputing all last night with a German officer about religion. Tho' I am not a wandering Jew, yet I am a stirring one," by which he probably meant that he was always ready to talk about anything and to tackle everything. He was in constant correspondence with the Jews of Three Rivers, Montreal, and Quebec, but had committed himself, apparently, to rearing his children as Christians. His two girls were sent to Quebec to be educated and were put in the Ursuline school, not because it was Catholic and Christian, but because it was the best and cleanest convent school in town. As a matter of fact, the arrangements had been made, not by Jacobs, but by his Quebec correspondent, Charles Grant, a Protestant.

The story of Jacobs' relations with one of his three sons is recounted here in a series of letters. This boy, Samuel, Jr., then in Quebec, boarded with a Jew, Elias Salomon, and studied at the private school of John Reid. On November 2, 1780, Salomon billed Jacobs for the son's board and lodging. Since the boy was growing up, Salomon told Jacobs that he would have to raise his charges and suggested that Samuel's allowance be increased. Young Jacobs, then sixteen years of age, was allowed sixpence a week. Salomon and Jacobs quarreled over the bill, and, probably early in 1781, Samuel was removed from Salomon's care and placed in the hands of Reid. On December 3, 1781, however, Reid asked Jacobs to remove his son because he had committed a burglary.

In another letter sent the same day, Charles Grant, who had been keeping a watchful eye on Samuel Jr., informed Jacobs that

the boy was running wild and warned that something had to be done. The father took Grant into his confidence and, in a letter written in February of the following year, rather pathetically commended his son to Grant's care, adding a postscript for the wayward youth.

On the 29th of April, 1782, Charles Grant heard that Samuel Jacobs, Sr., his good friend, had passed away. But, as one of the following letters makes quite clear, the report was "greatly exaggerated." Jacobs did not die till 1786. In December, 1782, Jacobs informed William Grant, a friend, that the prodigal had returned home penitent and had been received into the bosom of the family. All's well that ends well—for the time being.

After almost three years, young Samuel, under the prodding of his critical father, determined to try his luck in Jamaica. The last two letters from Samuel to his father, written before his departure for the West Indies and telling of his plans, are touching. Although the boy was twenty-one by this time, he was not very grown up. To his aggressive and shrewd father the son must have been a sore disappointment.

Quebec, 2d November, 1780.

Mr. Samuel Jacobs.

Dear Sir:

You have [herewith] inclosed the account of your son, S. Jacobs, amounts to £69 2s. 8d. currency, which when examined and found right, should be obliged to you for the amount. I should have write to you sooner, but expected to have had the pleasure of seeing you in Quebec when I would have been able to explained my sentiments to you better. You'l observe, the board I charge you is much under the current prices of this place, and likewise should wish to observe that as your son is grower [growing] larger than smaller, you'l will naturally emagine I shall expect more, and also the care taking by me and my wife ought to be considered by you.

Your son, Jacob[s], is much grown; nay, indeed, almost to the size of a man. As such, I think the allowance I have hitherto allowed him of 6d. per week for pocket money is much to little, as it's naturally to be expected that a youth of his age is desirous of having a few shillings in his pocket at his own disposal. You'l

please write me what sum you think proper to be allowed him for the future.

My wife and two daughters join with me in compliments to you.
I am, dear sir,

Your most humble servant,
Elias Salomon

* * * *

Quebec, 3d December, 1781.

Sir:

It is with real concern that I am constrained to inform you of a recent circumstance in your son's conduct which obliges me to request that he may be immediately removed from my family. The dissipated turn of mind he has lately given into has prompted him to commit an action which really shocks me to mention.

On Tuesday night last, the house of Mr. Solomon, of this place, was broke open, and a watch discovered to have been stolen therefrom. In the course of a few days, the watch in question was seen in the possession of a person who declared that he had purchased of your son. Upon examining farther into the matter and desiring to know how he came by it, the boy made an ample confession, declaring that he himself was the person who broke open the house and stole the watch.

I need not, sir, aggravate your feelings by pointing out the extreme danger there is of the unhappy youth's falling a victim to public justice should he remain any longer in this place, where, notwithstanding every effort of mine to reclaim him, he has connected himself in such a chain of acquaintance as must necessarily prove his ruin.

This inclines me to request that you would come down here with all convenient speed and concert some plan for the boy's future destination, as well as to accommodate the affair with Mr. Solomon, who seems inclined to prosecute.

I have endeavoured for your sake, as well as the young man's, to keep the matter as much as possible a secret, that a chance may be still given him to reclaim. My friend, Mr. Grant, will write you by this post, and, I believe, agrees with me in judging your presence here indispensibly necessary.

I am, with much esteem, sir,
 Your most obedient, humble servant,
 J. Reid

Mr. Samuel Jacobs.

* * * *

Quebec, 3d December, 1781.

Dear Sir:

I am exceedingly sorry to have occasion to write to you on a subject which must be so disagreeable to a feeling parent. Your son Sam has contracted a set of acquaintance here which soon must prove his ruin, if not immediately removed out of the place.

Last week he committed an act of so horrid a nature that Mr. Ried came and consulted me on the point in question, which Mr. Ried at my desire wrote to you the particulars of by this day's post. I am convinced Mr. Ried paid every attention to his morals and had a watchful eye over his conduct, but, of late, it has been discovered that young Samuel got out in the night time, when the family were all at rest, and indulged his vicious inclinations amongst his idle acquaintances.

It is now so near post hours that I have only time to inform you your daughters are well, and that I remain, with great regard, dear sir,

Your sincere friend,
 Charles Grant

Mr. Samuel Jacobs.

* * * *

Worthy Sir, and the most generous of friends:

Your esteemed favour revived our drooping spirits to find their are hopes in that unhappie boy. I did my duty, left the sole management of him to Mr. Reid, and had he but once hinted that the youth inclined to bad company or frequented Mr. Solomon's, I might have prevented the thunder clap that distroys our quite [quiet], for when we come to a certain age, our joyes consistes only in laying a foundation for the welfare of those that are near and tender to us. You, my friend, knows the world. Idleness in youth is the fore runner of mischeif. Let us request on our knees your friendly protection. Manage him as you please, and receive

for thanks the prayers of a fond mother, a tender father, and his help less children. My heart is full, stops me from dictating. There is hope in relying on him [Charles Grant] to whom I and my family ever am in gratitude bound, dear sir,

Yours sincerely to command,
[Samuel Jacobs]

St. Dinnis, 15th February, 1782.

N. B. To obey my friend in saying some thing to the anhappy boy, the lines under neath are for his perusal, if you think proper. (Mr. Grant's letter sent per favour of Mr. Suiter.)

St. Dennis, 15th February, 1782.

Mr. Sam:

I was your father and did my duty. Your conduct has made it void and null. If your future behaviour merits every good man's esteem and pity, your past folly [and] repentance opens your eyes, I then with joy and tenderness will own you again as my child. Till then I am only your well wisher.

[Samuel Jacobs]

* * * *

Quebec, 29th April, 1782.

Mr. Samuel Jacobs, Merchant,
St. Denis, River Chambly.

Dear Jacobs:

With great pleasure I always received your letters, but you never wrote one to me that gave me so much satisfaction as the last of the 17th instant. A few days before I got that letter, a Mr. Hollowell, from Montreal, came down here and reported in town that poor Jacobs was no more. On hearing of this report, I immediately sent out to know the fact from himself. He returned me for answer that you dyed on Friday, the 12th of this month, that he had the accounts of it from Uriah Judah before he left Montreal.

When he geve me his authority, I began to consider how little confidence ought to be put in the author as well as the bearer of the news. Of course, I set it down as a palpable falsehood. At same time, I was not a little alarmed at the probability of the report, knowing the situation I left you in. Now you may judge how happy I was in receiving on Friday last your letter above

mentioned and an other letter from you of the 20th to Mr. [John] Blackwood, which came to hand yesterday, by which all my fears about you are removed; and I hope you will not alarm me again on like occasion and in like manner for these twenty years to come. After that you may take your departure in peace and cost no person a thought about the matter. . . .

Your children here are all well. None of them heard any thing concerning you but Samuel, on whom, I am told, the report had no small effect. Your letter to [Elias] Solomon I delivered and advised him to trouble you with no more of his letters till you come down. His claim on you [for boarding your son Samuel] I would have discharged long ago, but as my doubts about the justness of his demands are not cleared up, I will let the matter stand as it is till you enquire into the merits of it yourself.

After four weeks' confinement with bealed breasts [tumors], my wife [the former Jane Holmes] got out of her room for the first time only yesterday. She joins me in compliments, etc., and I remain always

Your sincere friend,
Charles Grant

* * * *

St. Dinnas, 18th December, 1782.

Worthey Friend:

Your favour of 8th instant was delivered me by my son Sam in an humble poster [posture], holding out your letter. . . . Nature overcame resiliation, and I took him to my arms. He is very sorrowful and seems to repent past follies. He has been neglected by Mr. Read [Reid] and [had] no person to look after him or advise him for his good tel [till] you took him under your friendly care.

I asked Sam what he intended to do now, as there was no time to be lost. He answered, if he was under your care to write [become a clerk] in your office, he was shure to learn and improve himself. His reply gave me satisfaction, and to make him the fitter, will endeavour to get a French school master here for the winter, as it seems you have no present accation [occasion] for him. But should you at any time incline to take him under your protection, where he may receive your friendly instruction, I will with pleasure send him [to] you at a moment's warning, and think my self very happy to have him plased under your eye.

Mrs. Jacobs joins in her kindest acknowledgement with him who is, dear sir,

Yours sincerely,
[Samuel Jacobs]

The Honourable Wm. Grant, Esq., at St. Helen, Montreal.

* * * *

St. Dennis, 14th September, 1785.

Honoured Sir:

As I see you have no more business for me at present, and [as] I want to be in a way of getting my livelihood, the sooner I go off the better it will be. Would be very sorry to propose this, if I thought that you, or the family, would want me. But as you proposed your self for my departure, if you think proper to procure a passage, as I believe there is vessels going off to the place where you mentioned, I should be happy to go, as I am certain I'll have friends there in a short time by my good behaviour, and shall often peruse they [the] good advise you have given me.

I am certain you will not be sorry for my departure when you'll hear of my welfair, and shall try to be in business for my o[w]n account as soon as possible. Should I tell you the reason, you would laugh at my wakeness [weakness], but still is the only recourse [?] that can make me happy. Shall say no more on the subject. I am, and shall ever be,

Your most affectionate and dutiful son till death,
Samuel Jacobs

Mr. Samuel Jacobs,
Present [in this city].

* * * *

Quebec, 30 October, 1785.

Mr. Samuel Jacobs, Merchant,
St. Denis.

Honored Father and Mother:

This is to let you know that I am to go to Jamaica as they [the] vessel is bound their [there], commanded by Captain Garnner, which he sales [sails] to day or to morrow. Mr. Fraser and Dalton agreed for my passage, which amounts to twenty guineas. I think it is a high price; I said nothing to them about it.

Mr. Fraser, he is to give me a letter, and yours to him inclosed in it, for Mr. Grant, a capital merchant, and the Chief Justice's brother of that place, which he is an intimate acquaintance of yours, as they say, and has been a merchant here. . . .

Now, my dear father, I take fare well of you and of the family, which, I hope to God, I shall see you and them again in good health, but God knows when. Let me be where I am, or in what station I shall be, you shall here of me by every opportunity and shall all ways be happy to hear of my loved parents, and I hope I shall deserve their attention, as I shall do nothing but what is becoming of a gentleman.

I hope this voyage will make a man of me. But, my dear father, do remember your dutiful son (that wishes all they happiness to you and to my dear and tender mother), which I hope shall be all ways in your good opinion. Cannot help to make my self some reproches to see that I have been such an expence and I have been so little use. The time past ca[nnot] be recalled. I hope the future it will be [better?], as I go upon a good desire, and hope there is no fear of one that wance [wants] to do well, and [h]as the fear of God before him.

You shall here more of me when I'll arrive to Jamaica, which I hope I will. My love to my sisters and brothers. Now, my dear father and mother, fare well again, and do remember

Your most effectionate and dutifull son till death,
Samuel Jacobs²⁵

* * * *

Michael Judah and Joseph DePass:
Hard Times and a Jewish Will—1780-1784

Michael Judah was a small-town merchant who left New York to settle in Norwalk, Connecticut, in all probability because the competition there was less keen. The record of a petty loan made him by Congregation Shearith Israel is still extant. It may be that the £5 the trustees of the congregation lent him in 1745 set him up in business.

Judah married out of the faith. His son David, who became the

²⁵ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 25-30, 38-39.

ancestor of General Henry Moses Judah and of Theodore Dehone Judah, the Pacific Coast railroad promoter, was a Christian. Michael Judah, however, was a loyal and observant Jew. He seems to have attempted to keep a kosher household, brought the mohel from New York to circumcise David, and struggled unsuccessfully to rear him as a Jew. In 1776, the second year of the war, David was a soldier of the Connecticut line serving in Captain Gregory's company.

In 1780, when the Revolutionary War was in full swing, Judah possessed about £1,200, the result of a lifetime's work and saving. With this tidy sum he felt assured of a modest degree of comfort in his old age; his wife, it would seem, had already died. When wartime inflation set in, he tried to protect himself by putting his money into goods. With the permission of the authorities, he brought in a load of sugar in 1777 and sold it at a profit. But he decided then to hold on to his paper money, confidently expecting that it would soon be stabilized. It was a vain hope; he lost practically everything he had. In his desperation he turned to the Newporters, Aaron Lopez and Jacob R. Rivera, and asked for a shipment of goods on credit.

In 1784 Michael Judah made out his will bequeathing the bulk of his very modest estate to Jewish charities. The Solomon Simson mentioned in the will was a well-known New York merchant and one of the founders of the Democratic Society. Captain Eliakim Raymond, the executor, was related to Michael's late wife, Martha Raymond Judah. The testament reflects the attempt of a Jew to maintain his religious loyalty in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish environment. Judah died in 1786.

Judah was not the only one of Lopez' correspondents to favor him with a recital of hard times. In 1778, Lopez heard from Joseph DePass, located at the time in Woodstock, Connecticut. A Sephardic Jew, he may have wandered in from Charleston, South Carolina, where there had been a family of this name since 1738. Finding himself unable to pay Lopez, he resorted to the brilliant idea of asking for more credit.

The two letters and the will follow:

Norwalk, November the 28th, 1780.

Gentlemen:

As I am under nesessety, I hope you will excuse my boldness in

addressing my self to you. I have done but little business this four years, and what little I have done has been done to disadvantage on account of the depreation of the money.

When these times begun I had about twelve hundred pounds, good money, that I could call my own, and as I had nothing else to depend upon but a little traffick to git a support, I laid it out in the artickel of suger, and at that time expected to advance my self greatly by it, and kept them by me some time before I disposed of them.

Soon after I dispos'd of them the money bigun to depreciate fast, and by the advice of my friends I kept the money by me for some time, I expecting it would be good in time. But to my misfortune it sunk so fast that I got but little or nuthing for the hool [whole], as low as a penny for a doller. So that I have all most sunk my hool substance so that I am not able to carry on any bussiness, and as I cannot go to New York for supplyes, and you are gentlemen that has goods on hand and willing to do all the good you can to people under misfortunes, I beg that you will befriend me, to let me have a small assortment of goods. I am so far advanc'd in years that if I don't do something, I shall soon spend what little I have left.

You may relye upon me that I will be puntual to my engagements to you, either in money or any kind of produce that you shall chuse.

Goods will sell well hear and quick if I should be so fortunate that you will let me have a supply.

I beg you will favour me with an answer from you. I do not mention the quantity, more or less, but leve it to you to let me have as much as you think proper. This, gentleman, is the truth of my hool affairs. Please to ask Mr. Ralph Jacobs [of Newport.] He is knowing to it.

No more at present but rain.

Your very humble servent,
Mical Judah

To Mr. Jacob Dilevarey [De Rivera]
and Mr. Aron Lopous.

* * * *

Woodstock, 15 August, 1781.

Honoured Sir:

By the arrival of Mr. Benj'n Jacobs

I rec'ed a verbal message from you which gave me great uneasiness to find it was not in my power to accomplish. You may depend on it that I have been very unlucky this two months, as the trade has been very dull occasion'd by the people harvesting. When that's done, mine, I hope, will commence, God willing. Have been obliged to do my endeavours to raise some small matter to settle all my debts before I go from hence which will be to my new shop next week, when and where hope that my removal will be reciprocal both to myself and creditors. And as soon I have settled Mr. Jacobs, shall return to collect my debts, of which you may depend on being the first person that I shall pay as far as I can.

I know your indulgence has been such that with shame to my self, may it be said, I did not nor could not perform my duty in my engagements, yet must crave your farther indulgence, and hope in a short time after my removal to be able to pay a part if not all what I owe. The worthy Mr. Rivera [your father-in-law] can tell in what situation my shop is now, by which you may see if I have enough to pay my just debts. I cannot in conscience ask any more favours. But you know, in order to attract custom, we are obliged to furnish a shop as much assorted as possible, tho' little of each article. Therefore, if I can crave a little farther of your help, I make no doubt it will enable me to pay you the old debt much sooner, as the place where I am going is more populous, and you are certain every body comes to a new shop thinking thereby to purchase much cheaper. Therefore if I have such things as is most vendable [saleable], will then afford me a good assortment. The things that I shall want, Mr. Jacobs has a list, and if you chuse to let me have them, shall then think myself doubly indebted to you for your favours, besides paying you well for them.

Pray, dear sir, don't take it amiss what I write. You have been so good to assist me in my first beggining, therefore beg it as a favour you'l continue it, and it shall be my chief study to forward myself by my assiduity and punctuality in paying you, all as soon as possible, for it gives me great uneasiness to think have not been able to have settled with you before, but must tell you that instead of diminishing in my shop have added to it daily, so that having good sales may then be able to finish [paying] all my old accounts.

Cannot proceed without first asking after your good family's health; hope they are all well—as these leaves me at present—to

whom you'l be pleas'd to tender my best regards in general and particular; you'l receive the same sincerely, and believe me to be, d'r sir,

Your true friend and most h[um]b[l]e serv't,
Joseph Depass

* * * *

Know all men by these presents that I, Michalel Judah, of Norwalk, in the County of Fairfield and State of Connecticut, being weak in body and sick, and caling to mind the frailty of human nature and that it is appointed for all men to die, and being sound in mind and memory, and having a desire to dispose of the little interest which it has pleased God in his providence to endow me with, do hereby make this my last will and testament, revoking all other wills heretofore by me made.

And my will is, first, that after paying my just debts and funeral charges, I give and bequeath to my son, David Judah, five pounds lawfull money as his part of portion in my estate,

And the remainder of my estate to be given, equally divided and given, the one half to the Sinagouge in Newyork, and the other half to the poor widows and orphans of my own nation, living in Newyork, to be distributed at the discretion of Mr. Solomon Simson of Newyork.

And I do hereby make, ordain, constitute, and appoint Capt. Eliakim Raymond to be my executor of this, my last will and testament.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 31th day of December, A. D. 1784, in prisents [the presence] of

Aron Abbott

Matthias Abbott

Stephen Abbott

Michel Judah

Fairfield County, in Norwalk. Personally appeared Michael Judah, signer and sealer to the above written instrument, and signed, sealed, published, and pronounced the same to be his last will and testament, before me, the day and date above written.

Elephalet Lockwood, Justice of Peace²⁶

* * * *

²⁶ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 177-80; Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 137-38.

Two Jewish Loyalists Appeal to the British—1781-1782

While Newport, Rhode Island, was held by the British (1776-79), the Loyalists were secure enough, but when the French forces commanded by the Count de Rochambeau came in 1780, many of them found it advisable to leave. Among the refugees was the widow Rachel Myers, one of whose sons, Benjamin, had been an active Tory. Taking her large brood of children with her, Mrs. Myers went to New York City, which had been under British occupation since 1776. There, without means, she appealed for aid to Sir Henry Clinton, the commander in chief of the British forces in North America. After the evacuation of New York in 1783, the widow and her family were once again forced to flee. They spent some time in Canada, and then, when the acerbities engendered by the war had been dulled by the passage of time, they returned to the United States. One of the boys, Mordecai, served as an officer in the War of 1812.

Isaac Touro, a native of Holland, was elected hazzan, or minister, of the Newport congregation about 1758. Fifteen years later the "rabbi," no longer a young man, married Reyna Hays, the sister of the Newport merchant Moses Michael Hays. At the outbreak of the Revolution, Touro refused to take the oath of loyalty to the new government, but was able to remain in the city because of the British occupation in 1776. When the royal forces left three years later, Touro went to New York City, a Tory stronghold, where he served as rabbi to a small group of Loyalists.

Because his flock could not offer him a livelihood, Touro was compelled to augment his income by going into business. Even this did not avail him, and the rabbi turned to the British authorities for aid. In December, 1782, long after the Battle of Yorktown, he realized that there was no future for him in this country and decided to go to the larger Jewish community of Kingston, Jamaica. To accomplish his purpose he petitioned Sir Guy Carleton, the commander in chief of the British forces in America, for funds to finance the trip to the West Indies.

The petition probably was granted, for Touro went to Kingston, where he died about a year later at the age of forty-six. His widow returned to her family, the Hayses, in this country.

The name Touro is remembered in American Jewish history primarily because of the benefactions of Isaac's son Judah, one of the great philanthropists of the middle nineteenth century.

The Myers and Touro petitions follow:

To His Excellency, Sir Henry Clinton, Knight of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, General and Commander in Chief, etc., etc., etc.

The petition of Rachel Myers, late of Newport, widow, humbly sheweth:

That your petitioner was for many years an inhabitant of Newport, where she supported, by her industry, a large family of children;

That from the decissive part her son, Benjamin Myers, took with the associated refugees and other loyalists at Rhode Island, she was obliged to leave that place after it was evacuated by his Majesty's troops and come to this city in a flag of truce [ship] with all her family, consisting of nine children;

That she has in the maintenance of her family struggled with many difficulties, and from the assistance she has derived from a few benevolent friends, hitherto been able to support, tho indifferently, her children. But all her industry is not now sufficient to afford them the necessaries of life, which constrains her to implore your Excellency to extend her some relief from government, by permitting her to receive for her family such rations of provisions, etc., as may be thought necessary.

And your petitioner, as in duty bound, shall ever pray.

Rachel Myers

New York, April 3, 1781.

* * * *

To His Excellency, Sir Guy Carleton, K. B. [Knight of the Bath], General and Commander in Chief, etc., etc., etc.:

The petition of Isaac Tourro, late rector of the Jewish synagogue at Rhode Island, humbly sheweth:

That from the distresses which your petitioner sufferd from persecution for his attachment to [His Majesty's] government, and coming with his Majesty's troops from Rhode Island to this city [New York], he was so reduced in his circumstances, that had it not been for the humane interference of General [William]

Tryon, General [John] Marsh, and other respectable persons, he must have sunk under the weight of his affliction and distress;

That from their kind patronage, the bounty of government has been extended to him, and he has made shift to support himself and family;

That the petitioner is now anxiously desirous of removing himself and family to the island of Jamaica, but is incompetent to defray the expences of his passage, etc.;

That the only resource he has left him is Your Excellency's humanity and benevolence, in the hope that you will grant him an advance of one twelvemonth's allowance, which would effectually enable him to accomplish his wishes.

Your petitioner therefore humbly prays that Your Excellency will be favorably pleased to order a twelve months' allowance to be paid to him, to enable him to remove with his family to the island of Jamaica.

And, as in duty bound, he will every pray, etc., etc.

Isaac Touro

New York, the 12th December, 1782.²⁷

* * * *

Yale Receives a Rabbi's Portrait—1781-1782

The Hakam or rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal (Karigal, 1733-1777), a native of Hebron in Palestine, visited Newport in 1773 and remained there for some time. Then about forty years of age, he had spent nearly half his life wandering all over the world collecting money, no doubt for the schools and the poor of Palestine and particularly for his native town. During the few months that the learned hakam lived in the city he struck up a close friendship with the Reverend Ezra Stiles, then a pastor in Newport. Stiles, a student of Hebrew and the cognate Oriental tongues, was one of the most erudite Americans of his day. He was very eager to perfect his Hebrew and to know more about rabbinic customs and literature. Years later, when he taught the sacred tongue at Yale, he told the students, who found the Hebrew language "very disagreeable" and who objected to memorizing the Hebrew Psalms, that these "would be the first we should hear sung in

²⁷ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 274, 282.

heaven, and that he would be ashamed that any one of his pupils should be entirely ignorant of that holy language.”

Though Stiles first cultivated Carigal for his knowledge of Hebrew and rabbinics, he ultimately developed a real affection for him. After the rabbi left the continent in July, 1773, the two kept in touch with each other through Hebrew, Spanish, and English letters, until the rabbi died in Barbados.

In May, 1781, just about four years after his friend's death, Ezra Stiles, then president of Yale College, wrote to Aaron Lopez, who was still living in his haven of refuge at Leicester, Massachusetts. He asked Lopez to present the College with a portrait in oil of the late rabbi; it would, he said, “be honorable to your nation as well as ornamental to this university.” Lopez gladly assented and asked the Newport artist, Samuel King, then living in Boston, to undertake the commission; this was in August, 1781. On May 28th of the following year, Lopez was drowned on a trip from Leicester to Providence. Ezra Stiles wrote a note of condolence, on September 11th, to Lopez' father-in-law, Jacob R. Rivera, and at the same time acknowledged the receipt of the Carigal portrait which Rivera and others had paid for. Rivera answered the note in which President Stiles and the Corporation of Yale College acknowledged the receipt of the Carigal portrait and expressed their sympathy on the death of Lopez.

The three letters recounting the request and the responses follow:

Yale College, May 31, 1781.

Sir:

The affectionate respect I bear to the memory of that great and eminent hocham, the Rabbi Karigal, has made me to wish that his picture might be deposited in the library of this college. I remember it was taken in crayons. This I suppose is now in Providence or Boston.

Will you give me leave, my dear sir, to propose and ask that you should be pleased to do us the honor of purchasing and presenting it as your own liberal donation to us, to be deposited with us, as a perpetual memorial of that illustrious Hebrew? You can employ Mr. [Samuel] King to copy it in oyl colours, which will be durable and much preferable to the chalk of crayons.

I could wish that this inscription might be made upon some

convenient place on the canvass . . . “Rabbi Rephael Haijm Isaack Karigal, born at Hebron, educated there and in Jerusalem, died at Barbadoes AETat . . . MDCCLXXVII,” and also such other inscription in Hebrew as you or your friends shall choose.

Let not my request be burdensome to you. If disagreeable I shall press it with no importunity, altho’ I should think it would be honorable to your nation as well as ornamental to this university.

My family unite in respectful salutations to yourself and lady and to our worthy friend, Mr. Rivera.

My compliments to them and to all who love you. Peace [Hebrew].

I am, dear sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Ezra Stiles

Mr. Aaron Lopez, at Leicester

* * * *

Most Worthy and Reverend Sir:

My long absence from home on a journey to the eastward has prevented an earlier acknowledgement of the honour I received in your much esteemed favour of the 31st May.

In due compliance to its contents I embraced the first opportunity to see and request Mr. Blodget (the possessor of our deseased friend the venerable Rabbi Karigal’s portrait) to favour me with the loan of it, that Mr. King might take off a copy at Boston, where he now resides, which Mr. Blodget kindly granted and promised me would forward from Providence to Mr. King, whom I engaged to receive it, and exert his best talent in the copy.

I did also transcribe and leave with him the inscription you was pleased to desire might be wrote on the canvas and had Mr. King’s assurance that every thing in his power would be done to gain him credit and reputation.

The affectionate commemoration you bear for that illustrious haiham . . . is fully evinced in the honour you are pleased to confer on his memory; wishing to perpetuate it and dignifie his portrait by placing it in so distinguished a seminary. It does also manifest your unbounded benevolence and most exalted sympathy with the literary world in which you make so respectable a part.

Soon as Mr. King has finished the piece I shall take proper care

that it be safely conveyed you; and if I can claim any merit in gratifying your wishes, permit me, most worthy sir, to mention that your devoted friend, Mr. Rivera, who desires me to return you his best respects, insisted on shearing one-half of it by his contributing one-half the small expence that may attend this feeble mark of our great respect, both to your commands and the memory of our deseased friend.

Mrs. Lopez and my family desire to join in best wishes and most particular respects to your amiable daughters and worthy self.

I am,

reverend sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

Aaron Lopez

Leicester, August 17th, 1781.

Reverend Doctor Ezra Stiles

* * * *

Leicester (State of Massachusetts Bay),

Dec'r 20th, 1782.

Worthy Gent'n:

Your much esteemed fav[or]. of the 11th Sept'r last did not come to my hands till two months after its date. I was happy to be by it informed that Mr. King had transmitted you in good order the portrait of the learned *Haham* Isaac Haim Carigal, the which you proposed (after framed) it should be deposited in the Publick Library of Yale College.

The honor you are pleased to pay the memory of that learned man, as well as to those that had the pleasing satisfaction of contributing to that donation, infinitely surpasses the value of so small a gift. From me, the President and Fellows of the College will please to accept my cordial thanks for the kind attention you are pleased to honor me with, and for the greatfull sence you are pleased to entertain of the late Mr. Lopez's liberality. The condolance and kind sympathy you are pleased to express on acc't of his immature death brings fresh to our idea [mind] that sad catastrophe, that deprived his disconsolate widow of the best of husbands, his numerous offspring of a tender and indulgent parent, myself of a worthy son, whoes very life and soul was closely interwoved with mine, and the community in general of a usefull

and valuable member of society, all whom beg leave to join with me in returning you our unfeigned thanks for your hearty condolence on the malencholy occassion.

Being desirous to complete and perfect that portrait before it's deposited, if you'll be so obliging as to let me know the cost of the frame you have bestow'd upon it, I will reimburse you that expence with pleasure by first safe hand that offers.

As it allways affords me and fam'y great pleasure in every event that can contribute to the happiness and welfare of the Rev'd Mr. Stiles, we should be wanting in the high esteem and veneration we bare him and his worthy family was we to omit this oppert'y to felicitate him on the happy state [of remarriage] he has lately enter'd into, on which joyfull occassion Mrs. Rivera and Mrs. Lopez with both our families beg leave to unite with me in our hearty wishes that indulgent Heaven may pour down his choicest blessings on the happy pair, and that their future days may be a series of health and prosperity, which are the most ardent wishes of him who with the highest sentiments of esteem and respects beg leave to subscribe, gent'n,

Your most obedient and very h'ble serv't,

Jacob Rodr. Rivera

To the Rev'd President and Corporation of Yale College.²⁸

* * * *

Rebecca Franks Enjoys Her Exile in New York—1781

The Loyalist David Franks, exiled from Philadelphia by the Whigs in 1780, was accompanied by his daughter Rebecca when he went to British-occupied New York. His other daughter, Abigail (Mrs. Andrew Hamilton), remained behind in Philadelphia with her family.

Rebecca kept constantly in touch with both patriot and Tory friends back home through letters. Her father's tribulations did not lessen her frivolous chatter, and her letters retailed the choicest Gotham gossip.

During the hot summer days there were parties with the British

²⁸ Lee M. Friedman, *Rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal: His Newport Sermon and His Yale Portrait* (Boston, 1940), pp. 29-31; Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 195-96.

officers. A captain's barge, she wrote, was ready down at the wharf to carry guests to General Robertson's summer home. They were always chaperoned, for in New York no unmarried girl went out without an older woman to accompany her. In Philadelphia, of course, all this was unnecessary: "We Philadelphians, knowing no harm, fear'd none." There was an ample supply of attractive officers eager to dance attendance, the handsome Captain Montague, for instance—"Such eyes!" In her more quiet moments Rebecca went to church or yearned for her sister and the familiar scenes at home, or at Woodlands, the Hamilton estate. But she could never quite keep the men out of her thoughts, and the choicest blessing she could conjure up for sister Abigail's girls back home was their choice of the wealthy titled suitors who were floating about: three Honorables, one with £26,000 a year!

One of Rebecca's long, chatty letters was sent to Abigail from the Flatbush country estate of the Van Horns. It gives us an excellent opportunity to study social life in aristocratic Tory New York during the Revolution.

Flat Bush, Saturday, 10 o'clock., August 10th, [17]81.
My dear Abby:

The night before last I receiv'd y'r letter by *Comfort* [the messenger]. I wish I had been in town to have answer'd it and sent the things out, but I fancy eer [ere] I cou'd have receiv'd y'rs, he must have left E[lizabeth]. Town. And a few days ago I got y'rs and the chicks [my nieces], all of which I thank you and them for. If I have time this morning I'll answer them and the girls' letters.

You will think I have taken up my abode for the summer at Mrs. V[an]. Horn's, but this day I return to the disagreeable hot town much against my will and the inclinations of this family, but I cannot bear papa's being so much alone; nor will he be persuaded to quit it, tho' I am sure he can have no business to keep him. Two nights he staid with us, which is all I've seen of him since I left home. I am quite angry with him.

I have wrote you several times with in these two weeks; you can have no cause to complain, with out it is of being too often troubled with my nonsense. Those [letters] you mention'd sending by P[olly]. R[edman]. have not yet come to hand. The ham is

safe; the cracker's haven't as yet made their appearance. I fear they never will tho' I heard they were safe on S[taten]. Island. I fancy the person to whose care they were sent thought them too good to part with. The *person* who sent them and the ham, I beg you'll *give* my sincere thanks to.

You ask a description of the Miss V[an]. Horn that was with me, Cornelia. She is in disposition as fine a girl as ever you saw, a great deal of good humour and good sense. Her person is too large for a beauty, in my opinion (and yet I am not partial to a *little* woman). Her complection, eyes, and teeth are very good, and a great quantity of light brown hair (*Entre nous*, the girls of New York excell us Phil[adelphi]'ans in that particular and in their form), a sweet countenance and agreeable smile. Her feet, as you desire, I'll say nothing about; they are V[an]. Horn's and what you'd call Willings. [The Willings, who evidently had big feet, were partners of Robert Morris.]. But her sister Kitty is the belle of the family, I think, tho' some give the preference to Betsy. You'll ask how many thousand there are, *only five*. Kitty's form is much in the stile of our admir'd Mrs. Gallwey [Galloway], but rather taller and larger, her complection very fine, and the finest hair I ever saw. Her teeth are beginning to decay, which is the case of most N[ew]. Y[ork]. girls after eighteen—and a great deal of elegance of manners.

By the by, few N. York ladies know how to entertain company in their own houses unless they introduce the card tables, except this family (who are remarkable for their good sense and ease). I don't know a woman or girl that can chat above half an hour, and that's on the form of a cap, the colour of a ribbon, or the set of a hoop stay or *jupon* [petticoat]. I will do our ladies, that is Phila'-ans, the justice to say they have more cleverness in the turn of an eye than the N. Y. girls have in their whole composition. With what ease, have I seen a Chew, a Penn, Oswald, Allen, and a thousand others entertain a large circle of both sexes, and the conversation without the aid of cards not flag or seem the least strain'd of [or] stupid.

Here, or more properly speaking in N. Y., you enter the room with a formal set curtesy and after the how do's, 'tis a fine or a bad day, and those trifling nothings are finish'd, [then] all's a dead calm 'till the cards are introduc'd when you see pleasure dancing in the eyes of all the matrons, and they seem to gain new life. The

misses, if they have a fav'rite swain, frequently decline playing for the pleasure of making love, for to all appearances 'tis the ladies and not the gentlemen that shew a preference now adays. 'Tis here, I fancy, allways leap year. For my part that am us'd to quite an other mode of behaviour, cannot help shewing my surprize, perhaps they call it ignorance, when I see a lady single out her *pet to* lean all most in his arms at an assembly or play house (which I give my honor I have too often seen both in married and single), and to hear a lady confess a partiality for a man who perhaps she has not seen three times. [These women say] "Well, I declare, such a gentleman is a delightfull creature, and I could love him for my husband," or "I could marry such or such a person." And scandle sais [with respect to] most who have been married, the advances have first come from the ladies side. Or she has got a male friend to introduce him and puff her off. 'Tis really the case, and with me they loose half their charms; and I fancy there wou'd be more marriage was an other mode adopted. But they've made the men so saucy that I sincerely believe the lowest ensign thinks 'tis but ask and have; a red coat and smart epaulet is sufficient to secure a female heart. . . .

And now, my d'r Abby, I am going to tell you a piece of news that you'll dislike as much as I do. What do you think of Moses [our brother in London] coming out with a cockcade [an officer's insignia]! He writes to papa and me 'tis his serious resolve, and we must not be surpriz'd if we see him this summer. The idea of ent'ring an ensign at his time of life [he was probably close to thirty] distresses [me] more then any thing I've met with since I left you. All the comfort I have is that his Uncle M[oses]. will not allow him. I have not had an oppor[tuni]ty of asking papa's opinion of it, as I receiv'd the letters since I've been here, but I am certain he must disapprove of it as much as I do. Was he ten or twelve years younger, I should not have the smallest objection, but 'tis too late for him to enter into such a life, and after the indulgence he's ever been us'd to he'll never brook being commanded from post to pillow by ev'ry brat of [or] boy who may chance to be longer in the service. Tomorrow I shall write to him and make use of ev'ry argument I am misstress of to dissuade him from so mad a project, which I hope will arrive in time to prevent it, for if he once enters I wou'd be the first to oppose his quitting it, as I ever lov'd a steady character. The danger of the war I have in

a measure reconcil'd myself to. 'Tis only his age I object to and the disagreeable idea of his being sent the L[or]'d knows where. If he does enter (which I hope to God he may not), I wish he may join the 17th, or els get into the dragoons; the latter I think he'll prefer on account of his lameness. He has not, I believe, wrote to you by this oppor[tuni]'ty; Aunt [Moses?] Franks and Aunt Richa [father's sister], I believe, have. . . .

Nanny VaHorn and self employ'd yesterday morn'g in trying to dress a rag baby [doll] in the fashion, but cou'd not succeed. It shall however go, as 'twill in some degree give you an idea of the fashion as to the jacket and pinning on of the handkerchief.

Yesterday the granadiers had a race at the Flatlands [Long Island], and in the afternoon this house swarm'd with beaus and some very smart ones. How the girls wou'd have envy'd me cou'd they have peep'd and seen how I was surrounded, and yet I shou'd have [felt] as happy if not much more to have spent the afternoon with the Thursday Party at the W[oo]'dlands. I am happy to hear you'r out there as the town must be dreadfull this hot summer. N. Y. is bad enough tho' I do not think 'tis as warm as Phil'a. . . .

Well, this is sufficiently long; love to everybody. . . .

Y[ou]'rs,
[R. F.]²⁹

* * * *

Moses M. Hays, Masonic Leader, Comforts a Bereaved Widow—1781

The chief claim to fame of Moses Michael Hays rests on his prominence in the Masonic order. Freemasonry had come from England in the 1720's. These humanitarian fraternities of cultured and broad-minded men promptly welcomed American Jews as social peers and fellow-human beings, and Jews entered them with great eagerness.

Few Masons were more active than Hays. It has been suggested with some degree of probability that he came into contact with Masonry in 1760 during a visit to England, where a number of well-known Anglo-Jewish merchants were already active in the

²⁹ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 113-17.

fraternity. As early as 1768 he had been appointed a Deputy Inspector General of the Rite of Perfection for the West Indies and North America. The authority granted him stemmed ultimately, in theory at least, from the Prussian king, Frederick the Great, Grand Master of European Masonry. Let it be noted that this monarch, two decades earlier, had promulgated for the Jews of his domains a draconic statute from which Masonic humanitarianism was completely absent. In 1781 Hays appointed Deputy Inspectors General of Masonry in eight American and West Indian colonies. All but one of his appointees were Jews.

In 1769, a year after his own appointment, he had established King David's Lodge in New York, and in 1780 he reestablished it in Newport. There exists a letter of condolence written in behalf of the Newport lodge to the widow of a recently deceased member, Robert Elliott.

New Port, Novem'r 7th, 1781.

Dear Madam:

King David's Lodge express great honor done them in the favor of your letter of yesterday's date delivered them by Brother [John] Handy; have voted it to be filed in the annals of the lodge, and have directed us in their behalf to acknowledge your polite attention.

The acts of attention and friendship we had the melancholy occasion to conferr on our worthy departed Brother Elliot arrise from the duty incumbent on us as the offsprings of the same antient parents, and more particularly enforced by the obligations we owe each other. As members of our ancient fraternity we sympathise with you in condolance on the loss of your best friend whom, we are most assured, is changed a transitory irksome existance for an immortal bliss in the heavenly kingdom where, we now trust, he is joined to the celoestial train of happiness.

We know how painfull is the task of momentary seperation, and how heavy it must labor in the breast of your tender and delicate composition, but when we reflect on the rectitude of divine dispensations, we are lead to confess the unerring hand of Heaven.

May that Great Disposer of all Events shelter you and your little brood under his divine wings of fatherly protection, and sustain your fortitude in your present state.

We are instructed by the lodge to offer you their best services

both in a conjunctive and private capacity, and to assure you that the memory of one of our so aimable members will ever cherish a lively sence of affection in their and our breast for you and your dear family, and we are, with the highest esteem and respect, dear madam,

Y'r mo. ob. h'd servant,
Moses M. Hays³⁰

Mrs. Elliot.

* * * *

Samuel Jacobs' Daughters—1781-1786

Samuel Jacobs, the St. Denis merchant, had several daughters. One of them, Marie-Geneviève, a former student at the Ursuline convent in Quebec, had left school and was staying with the family of Charles Grant. Her younger sister, Marie-Anne, was a student at the convent in 1781. In December of that year a Scotsman named Bryce M. Cumming, a friend of Jacobs but not of the nuns, wrote to Jacobs and advised him to remove Marie-Anne from the care of the religious.

In June, 1783, Jacobs received a formal letter from an officer on duty with the Brunswick German mercenaries who were fighting for the British. In his note the officer asked for the hand of Jacobs' daughter in marriage. The letter fails to state the girl's name; it referred probably to Marie-Geneviève.

About seven weeks later Jacobs received a letter from Nathaniel Day, a commissary officer and Jacobs' superior. (During the Revolution the St. Denis merchant went back to his old job as an army supplyman.) Day suggested that Jacobs come to Quebec, for his daughter needed him. Day suspected that there was a man in the offing.

Three years later another crisis occurred in the young lady's life (if it was the same daughter). In July, 1786, Polly (Marie-Geneviève) wrote a letter to her father, indicating that she was in great distress. There had obviously been a conflict between her and her father with respect to her marriage. Polly apparently wanted to marry a Captain Stanislaus Vigneau. Papa said "No," and he meant it, for his will provided that she was to be cut off with one shilling if she married this man—which, there is reason to believe, she did.

³⁰ Marcus, EAJ, I, 189-90.

Dear Jacobs:

I have a very great regard for your oldest daughter because she is like her mother, and I have still as mouch regard for your second, because she is like you. I don't think you mean to make her a nun. Therefor must beg that you would give orders to those that has the care of her to lett her come out at least once a week. She wishes it mouch herselfe. And I think it would be of services to her. The alteration is so mouch for the bettor in your oldest daughter since she went to Mrs. Grant, that I think if you once seed her, that you would never think of confining your second [daughter] amongst a parcel of d——d idle, usles [useless] b-tchs! Since her sister went out, they won't so mouch as lett her speak to any body at the grate, and I am affriad that the litle creator [creature] will break her heart.

My old woman would take it very kind if you would send orders for her to have leave to come out and stay with her for the holy days. You may depend on her being well taken care off. If you are so kind as grant this request, it will be estaimed a favour; and if you come to Quebec, I hope you will give us a call.

I am sorrey to inform you that I don't think your frind Charles Grant is in a good state of health. His close attendance at his warff all summer, and offten standing with wate [wet] feet, has not been of service to him. I hope you'll find the gentleman of the 44 [regiment] agreeable neightbours, and begs my best respects to them all, not forgetting good Mrs. Jacobs. And beleave me to be with estaime,

Your very humble servant,
Bryce M. Cumming

Quebec, 9 December, 1781.

* * * *

Sorel, June 10th, 1783.

Sir:

You will certainly find it extraordinary to be addressed by a person who has not the pleasure [of] a particular acquaintance with you, the more [so] as this letter is written upon no common subject of a very intresting nature. But a character [as] plain and honest as yours will not look upon m[ere] forms, but disregard trifles if after mature del[iberation] he finds the matter worth his attention.

For this reason, I will defer my apologie untill [a] personal

conversation gives me a better opportunity. Though not personally known to you, sir (if you except a few times I called at your house du[ring] my stay in the province), I flatter my self that my person and character [are] as well known and established as any gentleman[']s ought to be, that would make a proposal like [that] I am going to make to you, sir.

The personal accomplishments joined to the be[auty and] education of your eldest daughter have procu[red] her a general esteem, and are inducements enough to desire her person as a partner for life. If you, sir, will intrust me with her hand, I shall study to make her as happy as her many good qualitys deservent.

I do not mean, nor could I with propriety expect, a decisive answer upon such a proposal. A further acquaintance after such an explication will be necessary to decide upon a matter of such consequence. If a fair character, a respectable rang [rank] in the world, and an honest intention to make your daughter happy can have any weight with you, I will give you convincing proofs that anything less as interested views have directed my choice.

Give me leave, sir, to add a few words more. If you are yet pertial for your country, I am a countryman of yours, but equally versed in the English, French, and German languages. My present employment in the army I am tired of, and as I intend to remain in the province, I shall, either as a lawyer or as a civil officer under goverment, appear in a light you should perhaps your daughter wish to see in. I should not desire her hand if I could not give her my own in a public character.

I am not rich, but have no debts and a few thousand livres in my pocket. I love a quiet country life if my circumstances would allow, and therefore, do not care for riches myself. If you, sir, have no *particular reason* to decline any further explanation upon the subject, I wish you would only let me know what time I can have the pleasure of a personal conversation with you, should the first be the case. I trust to your hon[our] and well-known honesty, you will be pleased to remit this letter into my hands.

I am, with particular esteem, sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,
Sinet [Signed] Charles Thomas,
Judge Advocate of the Brunswick Troops

* * * *

[Answer]

St. Denis, 11 June, 17[83].

Sir:

I was favoured with your esteemed [letter] of the 10 instant. If a[ny] time your buisness lies this way, should be glad to take a cheerful glass with you *an [en] passant*. I am, with respect, sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant,
[Samuel Jacobs]

* * * *

Quebec, 31st July, 1783.

Dear Sir:

Calling Tuesday last at friend Charles Grant's, Miss Jacobs followed me to the door and told me she should be glad to see her father. Seeing her in some emotion, I asked if any person had been talking to her of marriage or [had been] rude to her. She answered No, but something else that made her uneasy, on which occation she would be glad to see her father, and I promised her to write this letter in order to apprise you of her wish. And if you thought it required your presence for the good of your child, you have my leave to come down, as I am certain you will leave things at St. Dennis in such a manner as the service cannot be hurt by your absence.

I remain, with my best compliments to Mrs. Jacobs and family, dear sir,

Your sincere friend and humble servant,
Nathaniel Day

Mr. Samuel Jacobs.

* * * *

St. Dennis, 6 July, 1786.

Dearest Father:

It would give me undoubted gratuity [gratitude] could I speak to you reather than to write, but I am in such a situation that it would be impossible for me to tell you what my heart suscribes. Let me then, with candor and truth and the help of the education you have given me, request of you the tenderness to look on your poor Polly as your child, to give your blessing, not your curse, on such

occasion as present. It is true I have acted in this affair very ill in not telling you my mind, but as I suffer by your taking all away from me, don't make me misarable by rejecting me as not your child.

Lett me with the greatest sincerity assure the [you], it is not [from] in gratitude [ingratitude], nor for want of love for you, that I marry. Be persuaded that it is the sincere love I have for him. Lett me implore your good wishes—on my knees I begs it of you—and be persuaded, if ever I am happy, it will be by your blessing. This is all I want, and was it to be refused, then I am mesarable indeed. And one thing more, is that you must think and beleive me sincere, for it comes from my heart and soul. And if I am so happy as to posses[s] what my heart wishes, that is your benediction, then you shall see your poor Polly as happy as it is possible to be in this world. I ask your pardon for all the antiety [anxiety] I have put you in since that affair. I can't say no more—my heart is too full—but this, that I am and shall for ever be

Your sincere and loving daughter till death, and

Your very humble servant,

P. Jacobs³¹

* * * *

Ezra Stiles, President of Yale,
Writes Aaron Lopez' Obituary—1782

On hearing of the death of Aaron Lopez, Ezra Stiles, President of Yale, made the following entry in his diary:

On 28th of May [1782] died that amiable, benevolent, most hospitable, and very respectable gentleman, Mr. Aaron Lopez, merchant, who retiring from Newport, Rhode Island, in these times resided from 1775 to his death at Leicester in Massachusetts. [It is more probable that Lopez left in the winter of 1776, when the British took Newport.] He was a Jew by nation, came from Spain or Portugal about 1754 [actually, 1752], and settled at Rhode Island. He was a merchant of the first eminence; for honor and extent of commerce probably surpassed by no merchant in

³¹ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 34-37.

America. He did business with the greatest ease and clearness—always carried about with him a sweetness of behavior, a calm urbanity, an agreeable and unaffected politeness of manners. Without a single enemy and the most universally beloved by an extensive acquaintance of any man I ever knew. His beneficence to his family connexions, to his nation [the Jews], and to all the world is almost without a parallel.

He was my intimate friend and acquaintance! Oh! how often have I wished that sincere, pious, and candid mind could have perceived the evidences of Christianity, perceived the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, known that Jesus was the Messiah predicted by Moses and the prophets! The amiable and excellent characters of a Lopez, of a Menasseh ben Israel [a famous Amsterdam rabbi, who died in 1657], of a Socrates, and a Gangenelli [Ganganelli, the statesman and scholar Pope Clement XIV, who died in 1774], would almost persuade us to hope that their excellency was infused by Heaven, and that the virtuous and good of all nations and religions, notwithstanding their delusions, may be brought together in Paradise on the Christian system, finding grace with the all benevolent and adorable Emmanuel [Jesus] who with his expiring breath and in his deepest agonies prayed for those who knew not what they did [Luke 23:34].

Mr. Lopez was journeying with his wife and some of his family on a visit to Newport, and within five miles of Providence at Scott's Pond, as he was watering his horse, the horse plunged beyond his depth with the sulky, when Mr. Lopez leaped into the water; and though his servant attempted to save him he was lost. His corps was carried to Newport and there interred in the Jew burying ground there—the demonstration of universal sorrow attended the funeral.³²

* * * *

The Privateer *Hetty* Receives Her Sailing Orders—1782

Like many other businessmen during the Revolution, speculatively-inclined Jews engaged in privateering. Preying on enemy

³² Franklin Bowditch Dexter (ed.), *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D.* (N.Y., 1901), III, 24-25.

commerce offered a chance to get rich in a hurry, though few, if any, actually made much money at this game. Mordecai Sheftall, almost penniless and desperate to win a stake, managed somehow to purchase a privateer, the Hetty. The expense of equipping the vessel was reduced by selling shares of the anticipated prize money; "tenths" were offered to venturesome merchants.

Sheftall's sailing orders to his captain are incorporated in the following formal note:

Philadelphia, June 5th, 1782.

Capt. Thomas Deborke,
Sir:

You will with the most convenient speed proceed to sea with the privateer schooner "Hetty," now under your command, and proceed with every necessary caution to Egg Harbour [off the coast of New Jersey], out of which port you will continue to cruise at such times and at such places as you shall thinke will be most for the benefits of all concerned. As it is impossible for me at this distance to provide or caution you againste casualtyes that may occure, I shall therefore leave the direction of your cruising ground to your self, only recommending it to you to be as cautious as possible and not run to great risques with your small bark, as you are sensible she is my all in this part of the world.

If you are so fortunate as to take a prize, I would recommend it to you to get her into the first safe port and advise me thereof by [courier] express—if no other immediate opportunity offers—that I may come and do my own business myself, provided the prize is worth the expences that will attend the express and my coming.

You will be sure to advise me of your arrival at Egg Harbour as soon after you arrive as an opportunity offers, and be sure to keep me constantly advised of your proceedings, as I shall take care to keep you advised of any thing that may offer that I shall thinke will be of advantage to the cruise.

You'll send me your shipping paper, that is, the duplicate of what you keep by you. You'll also signe the duplicate of these orders which I now send you, and send them to me by the first safe opportunity.

I shall conclude with wishing you a prosperous cruise, a safe

and happy return, and recommending prudence, caution, and vigilance, and am

Your humble serv't,
Mordecai Sheftall³³

* * * *

Philadelphia Jewry Dedicates
Its First Synagogue Building—1782

Although the Jews of Philadelphia had held services, on and off, since the 1740's, they did not succeed in building a synagogue of their own till 1782. Philadelphia at the time was one of the few seaboard towns still in American hands. Jewish Whigs, refusing to live in cities occupied by the British, had gathered together in Philadelphia, where the wealthier merchants made liberal contributions to the building fund. Haym Salomon, the bill broker, donated about one-fourth of the initial cost.

The dedication of the sanctuary on Cherry Alley took place on September 13th, and an invitation was sent to the President (the Governor) and the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania:

Memorial of the Jewish Congregation of Philadelphia, 1782:

We, the president and representatives of the Jewish congregation in this city, humbly beg leave to approach his Excellency, the President, his Honour, the Vice President, and the Honourable, the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Congregation of Mikve Israel (Israelites) in this city, having erected a place of publick worship which they intend to consecrate to the service of Almighty God, tomorrow afternoon, and as they have ever profess'd themselves liege subjects to the sovereignty of the United States of America, and have always acted agreeable thereto, they humbly crave the protection and countenance of the chief magistrates in this state to give sanction to their design, and will deem themselves highly honoured by their presence in the synagogue, whenever they judge proper to favour them.

³³ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 369.

The doors will be open'd at 3 o'clock and the service will continue 'till seven.

The uncertainty of the day of consecration was the sole cause of having delayed this matter 'till now, but earnestly hope it will not be thought too late.

With prayers to the God of Israel for the safety of the United States in general and this commonwealth in particular, we are, gentlemen, most respectfully and most devotedly, in behalf of the congregation,

Jonas Phillips, President,
Michael Gratz, Sol. Marache, etc., etc.
Philadelphia, 12th September, 1782.³⁴

* * * *

Haym Salomon, Broker to the Office of Finance—1782

By 1782, Haym Salomon was one of the outstanding bill brokers in the new United States. The preceding year he had been most helpful to Robert Morris, who, as Superintendent of Finance, had been called upon to provide the funds for the victorious campaign against the British in Virginia. It was this campaign which compelled England to recognize the independence of her rebel colonies. Salomon's business activities are reflected in the advertisement that follows:

Haym Salomons, Broker to the Office of Finance, to the Consul General of France, and to the Treasurer of the French Army, At his office in Front Street, between Market and Arch streets. BUYS and sells on commission BANK STOCK, BILLS of EXCHANGE on France, Spain, Holland, and other parts of Europe, the West-Indies, and inland bills, at the usual commissions.

He buys and sells LOAN OFFICE CERTIFICATES, CONTINENTAL and STATE MONEY, of this or any other state, paymaster and quarter-master generals notes; these, and every other kind of paper transactions (bills of exchange excepted) he will charge his employers no more than ONE HALF PER CENT, for his commission.

³⁴ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 130-31.

He procures MONEY on LOAN for a short time and gets notes and bills discounted.

Gentlemen and others, residing in this state, or any of the United States, by sending their orders to the office, may depend on having their business transacted with as much fidelity and expedition as if they were themselves present.

He receives tobacco, sugars, tea, and every other sort of goods, to sell on commission, for which purpose he has provided proper stores.

He flatters himself his assiduity, punctuality, and extensive connections in his business, as a broker, is well established in various parts of Europe, and in the United States in particular.

All persons who shall please to favour him with their business may depend upon his utmost exertion for their interest, and PART of the MONEY ADVANCED, if desired.³⁵

* * * *

We Have the World to Begin Again:
America is Independent—1783

In the following letter, the pioneer Georgia patriot, Colonel Mordecai Sheftall, informed his son Sheftall Sheftall that America had finally won her struggle for independence. It was the colonel's conviction that now a new era would open for the Jews of this land; they would be permitted to enjoy the opportunities and rights denied them by the British. "An intier new scene will open it self, and we have the world to begin againe," Mordecai wrote. This was the simple but eloquent statement of a man deeply conscious of his ancestral heritage and fully aware of the promise of American freedom.

Savannah, 13th April, 1783.

My dear Son:

Allthoe I wrote you on Friday last, yet so happy an event haveing taken place, [the declaration of suspension of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States,] as the inclosed will

³⁵ *Freeman's Journal, or North-American Intelligencer*, November 16, 1782.

communicate, since my writing, I could not help giving it to you and all my freinds by the first and earliest opp[ortunit]'y.

What my feelings are on the occassion is easier immagined than described. For it must be supposed that every real well wisher to his country must feel him self happy to have lived to see this longe and bloody contest brot to so happy an issue. More especially, as we have obtained our independence, instead of those threats of bringing us with submission to the foot of that throne whose greatest mercies to Americans has been nothing but one continued scene of cruelty, of which you as well as my self have experienced our shares.

But, thanks to the Almighty, it is now at an end. Of which happy event I sincerly congratulate you and all my freinds. As an intier new scene will open it self, and we have the world to begin againe, I would have you come home as soon after the [Passover] hollidays as possibly you can. As I shall plan a voyage for you to execute which will requier dispatch.

If you have not purchased the linen directed, don't buy more than one peice, as goods must be very low in a very short time. Let Mr. Jacobs have this news as soon as possible, as the knowledge of it for a few hours, befor 'tis published, may be of the outmost consiquence to a man in trade. And I really wish I could be a means of his and Mr. Cohen, in particular, benefitting by a knowledge of it in time.

Your mother, brothers, and sisters are all well and give theire love to you and compliments to all freinds. I am

Your affectionate father,
Mordecai Sheftall

Give my love to your Uncle Levi and family. Hetty says she fears that you have spent her money instead of buying her scisars, as there are none come to hand for her. For fear that I forgot to mention the arrival of the things you sent by George, I now inform you that they are.³⁶

* * * *

Haym Salomon Stops to Gossip—1783

For the most part, the letters copied in the still extant Haym

³⁶ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 372-73.

Salomon letter book limit themselves to the details of buying and selling. His correspondents, the men to whom he wrote and with whom he carried on trade, were found on both sides of the Atlantic, all the way from the American Piedmont eastward to England, France, and Holland. Occasionally, however, Salomon took time out to write a purely gossipy note. A fellow-member of Mikveh Israel, “Bar’t” Moses Spitzer, was on a trip to Charleston. (The Philadelphia congregational records listed Bar’t as Barendt, Barnett, Bernard.) Spitzer had been appointed a Deputy Grand Inspector of Masonry for Georgia by Moses M. Hays, but there is no evidence proving that he ever participated in the development of the fraternal order in that colony. It was a paper appointment.

Here is Salomon’s note to Spitzer:

Philadelphia, 20 June, 1783.

Mr. Bar’t M. Spitzer,
Charlestown, South Carolina.

Sir:

I am surprised after the many assurances that you gave of writing to me that you have not yet done it. However, will admit this as an excuse, that your whole time is devoted to the lady’s and can’t spare time to inform a friend of your welfare, how ever desirous he may be of hearing.

I doubt if the lady’s here have the same reason to coplain of your neglect. Am certain you would not make it long before your return, was you to know how disereous the lady’s are of your presence. And one in particular who wishes that no pecuniary vews [views] may get the better of the partiality you always entertained for her.

Time will not permit me to inlarge, but be asured that you may command any thing that is in the power of

Your obe’t servant,
[Haym Salomon]³⁷

* * * *

Haym Salomon Says No to an Importunate Uncle—1783

The impression was abroad that Reb Hayyim [“Mr. Haym”]

³⁷ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 151-52.

was a *nadib meod*, a "great philanthropist" and a man of wealth, and there is evidence of his generosity to some European suppliants. Salomon, who was no bluffer, admitted in a letter to John Strettel, a London merchant: "My bussiness is a broker, and chiefly in bills of exchange, and so very extensive that I am generally known to the mercantile part of North America." As the chief broker for Morris, as an agent for the French army and navy, for the French diplomatic representative and consuls, for the Dutch and the Spanish, he was in truth no small fry.

Salomon's earnest effort to help his family in the 1780's was something of a strategic error. His relatives, discovering his affluence, now descended upon him—at least through letters. (Jewish relatives, particularly the learned among them, do not ask for help; they demand it as a matter of right. After all, haven't all American relatives always been rich!)

The following letter, an answer to a wandering uncle in England—Joseph Elis?—shows that the importunities of his relatives were beginning to get under his skin.

Philadelphia, 10 July, 1783.

[Dear Uncle:]

I rec'd your last letter inclosing a letter for Aaron Levy [the merchant and founder of Aaronsburg]. I will now answer your several letters fully. I have ordered fifty guilders to be paid you by Mr. Gumble Samson in Amsterdam, which letter giving that order you must already have rec'd, and I now send you an order for six guinies.

Your bias of my riches are too extensive. Rich I am not, but the little I have I think it my duty to share with my poor father and mother. They are the first that are to be provided for by me, and must and shall have the preference. Whatever little more I can squeeze out I will give my relations, but I tell you plainly and truly that it is not in my power to give you or any relations yearly allowances. Don't you nor any of them expect it. Don't fill your mind with vain and idol expectations and golden dreams that never will nor can be accomplished. Besides my father and mother, my wife and children must be provided for. I have three young children, and as my wife is very young may have more, and if you and the rest of my relations will consider things with reason, they

will be sensible of this I now write. But notwithstanding this I mean to assist my relations as far as lays in my power.

I am much surprised at your intention of coming here. Your *yikes* [family and academic background] is worth very little here; nor can I emagion what you mean to do here. I think your duty calls for your going to your family, and besides these six guinies you will receive in Amsterdam fifty guinies of Mr. Gumble Samson.

You are pleased to say you have done a great deal for my family. Let my father and the *a''bd dk''k Lissa* [“rabbi of Lissa”] write me the particular services you have done to my family, and I will consider in what manner to recompense them.

I desire no relation may be sent. Have I not children, are they not relations? When I shall be fully informed of all the young people of our family and their qualifications explained, I may then perhaps advise sending one or two to this country, and I will at my leisure explain to you the nature of this country: *vinig yidishkayt* [“little Jewishness”].

I am, with true respect, dear uncle,

Your affec'te nephew,
Your very hum'e serv't,
[Haym Salomon.]³⁸

* * * *

Pennsylvania Jewry Politely Demands Political Rights—1783

When, in 1776, a new constitution was adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, section ten of the Frame of Government had the following provision: “Each member [of the House of Representatives], before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz.: ‘I do believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration.’ ” Such a declaration could be made in good conscience only by a Christian. The provision—with its affirmation of belief in

³⁸ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 153-54.

the divinity of Jesus—was a serious obstacle to Jewish citizens; it barred them from serving as members of the state legislature.

In 1783, with the war over and independence won, the leaders of the Philadelphia Jewish community pointed out clearly and courageously to the state authorities that what the constitution of 1776 did was to deprive Pennsylvania Jewry of political equality. They appealed to the Council of Censors—an official committee of the state, charged with safeguarding the rights of the people—to bear the Jews in mind when the constitution would next be revised. Actually, the constitution promulgated in 1790 completely emancipated the Jews.

The memorial of 1783 reflects almost every nuance of apologetics which the modern Jew has employed in his search for a fuller life. In touching upon the philosophic bases of freedom, in stressing the political rights to which he was entitled, and in pointing to the economic advantages which the Jew brought to every country with the wisdom to grant him the liberty he sought, the document is a classical example of its genre.

[December, 1783.]

To the honourable, the Council of Censors, assembled agreeable to the constitution of the State of Pennsylvania.

The memorial of Rabbi Ger. Seixas of the synagogue of the Jews at Philadelphia, Simon Nathan, their *parnass* or president, Asher Myers, Bernard Gratz, and Haym Salomon, the *mahamad*, or associates of their council, in behalf of themselves and their bretheren Jews, residing in Pennsylvania, most respectfully sheweth:

That by the tenth section of the Frame of Government of this commonwealth [adopted in 1776], it is ordered that each member of the general assembly of representatives of the freemen of Pennsylvania, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe a declaration which ends in these words, "I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration," to which is added an assurance that "no further or other religious test shall ever hereafter be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this state."

Your memorialists beg leave to observe that this clause seems to limit the civil rights of your citizens to one very special article

of the creed, whereas, by the second paragraph of the declaration of the rights of the inhabitants, it is asserted without any other limitation than the professing the existence of God, in plain words, "that no man who acknowledges the being of a God can be justly deprived or abridged of any civil rights as a citizen on account of his religious sentiments." But certainly this religious test deprives the Jews of the most eminent rights of freemen, solemnly ascertained to all men who are not professed atheists.

May it please your Honors: Although the Jews in Pennsylvania are but few in number, yet liberty of the people in one country, and the declaration of the government thereof, that these liberties are the rights of the people, may prove a powerful attractive to men who live under restraints in another country. Holland and England have made valuable acquisitions of men, who, for their religious sentiments, were distressed in their own countries.

And if Jews in Europe or elsewhere should incline to transport themselves to America, and would, for reason of some certain advantage of the soil, climate, or the trade of Pennsylvania, rather become inhabitants thereof, than of any other state, yet the disability of Jews to take seat among the representatives of the people, as worded by the said religious test, might determine their free choice to go to New-York, or to any other of the United States of America, where there is no such like restraint laid upon the nation and religion of the Jews, as in Pennsylvania.

Your memorialists cannot say that the Jews are particularly fond of being representatives of the people in assembly or civil officers and magistrates in the state, but with great submission they apprehend that a clause in the constitution, which disables them to be elected by their fellow citizens to represent them in assembly, as [is] a stigma upon their nation and their religion, and it is inconsonant with the second paragraph of the said bill of rights. Otherwise, Jews are as fond of liberty as other religious societies can be, and it must create in them a displeasure when they perceive that for their professed dissent to a doctrine, which is inconsistent with their religious sentiments, they should be excluded from the most important and honourable part of the rights of a free citizen.

Your memorialists beg farther leave to represent that in the religious books of the Jews, which are or may be in every man's

hands, there are no such doctrines or principles established as are inconsistent with the safety and happiness of the people of Pennsylvania, and that the conduct and behaviour of the Jews in this and the neighbouring states has always tallied with the great design of the Revolution; [they beg farther leave to represent] that the Jews of Charlestown, New-York, New-Port, and other posts occupied by the British troops, have distinguishedly suffered for their attachment to the Revolution principles; and their brethren at St. Eustatius, for the same cause, experienced the most severe resentments of the British commanders.

The Jews of Pennsylvania, in proportion to the number of their members, can count with any religious society whatsoever the Whigs [the patriots] among either of them. They have served some of them in the Continental army; some went out in the militia to fight the common enemy; all of them have cheerfully contributed to the support of the militia and of the government of this state.

They have no inconsiderable property in lands and tenements, but particularly in the way of trade, some more, some less, for which they pay taxes. They have, upon every plan formed for public utility, been forward to contribute as much as their circumstances would admit of, and as a nation or a religious society, they stand unimpeached of any matter whatsoever against the safety and happiness of the people.

And your memorialists humbly pray that if your honours, from any other consideration than the subject of this address, should think proper to call a convention for revising the constitution, you would be pleased to recommend this to the notice of that convention.³⁹

* * * *

Rabbi Gershom Seixas Considers Returning to Shearith Israel—1783

After April, 1783, when the provisional treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain was ratified by Congress, it was quite evident that the Revolutionary War was over. It was only a matter of time before the British-occupied cities would be

³⁹ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 157-59.

evacuated. The Whig Jewish merchants who had fled to Philadelphia during the Revolution began to make plans to return home. It was obvious that if they left, Congregation Mikveh Israel, whose synagogue building was heavily mortgaged, would be faced by a crisis. The rabbi, Gershom Seixas, realized the threat to his security, for the man who had guaranteed his salary, Isaac Moses, had already returned to New York. Accordingly, in November, 1783, the apprehensive minister wrote to the president and board of the Philadelphia synagogue, asking them how they were going to meet their financial obligations. He pointed out that individuals who had advanced money for current expenses and for the building fund had compensated themselves by not paying their congregational offerings, and therefore the treasury was depleted. Nor, wrote he, could he ask the new president, Simon Nathan, to guarantee his salary: Nathan was his brother-in-law.

During the following month, the New York congregation, where Seixas had officiated before the war, asked him to return. In his reply, dated December 21, 1783, he asked whether the congregation would institute certain administrative reforms and, in addition, grant him a living wage. By January, 1784, the trustees of the congregation indicated their willingness to pay him well, and Seixas, in turn, agreed to go back. He presented his resignation to the Philadelphia board in February.

The members of Mikveh Israel were indignant that their rabbi intended to leave them on such short notice, and Seixas wrote President Hayman Levy of New York, asking for permission to remain until after the Passover holidays. With the winter thaw the roads would be in bad shape. Levy politely but firmly said "No" to the Philadelphians. If Mikveh Israel wanted a man, he suggested, the congregation might get in touch with Jacob R. Cohen, who ministered in New York during the war while Seixas was in Philadelphia. (The congregation took Cohen.) Levy insisted on Seixas' return, and early in April he was back at his old post in Shearith Israel.

The following letter, that of December 21, 1783, has been chosen as the most interesting of the lot.

D'r and Worthy Sir:

The many manifestations of your friendship to me since I have

been in the office of *hazan* (both here and in New York) leaves no room to doubt of the sincerity of your professions, but as the *Kaal Sheerit Israel* is now situated must confess myself incapable to form a judgement whether or not it will be in my power to render that degree of general satisfaction which is absolutely requisite for any person who serves in that vocation.

In the first place I am unacquainted with the Spanish and Portuguese languages which have ever been used since the first establishment of the synagogue. Secondly, I am informed that many parties are form'd (and forming) to create divisions among the reputable members of the congregation, by which means a general disunion seems to prevail instead of being united to serve the Deity, consonant to our holy law. And, thirdly, as I have now a family to provide for, I can not think of giving up this place till I meet with some encouragement from you that my salary will be made equivalent to what I receive here, for unless I can obtain a sufficiency to support my family in a decent manner by being *hazan*, I must inevitably give up the calling and endeavour, with the blessing of God, to procure it by industry and an application to business.

These, sir, are the reasons why I have not been so explicit in "declaring my intention of serving the K. K. Sheerit Israel any longer" as you intimated in your letter I ought to have been.

Now, these circumstances premised—if it will be agreeable to the *Kaal* to have the same mode of carrying on public worship as we unanimously agreed to and established in this city, if some regular form of government be adopted so as to have a proper subordination in the society, and [if] the finance of the *tsedaka* [treasury] can afford to allow me a comfortable maintenance—I am very willing to return to my native city, in the spring, say by *Ros Hodes Nisan* [New Moon, March 23, 1784], and accept of my former station. If not, I must content myself to remain here till something more advantageous may offer.

You will please to observe that I answer (and write to) you as an individual and one to whom I entrust the management of the matter, in full confidence of your integrity and disinterestedness.

Your haveing accepted of the presidency of the synagogue gives me real satisfaction as it coincides with my opinion of its being your due, and knowing you to be a person capable of commanding a proper respect to the office of *parnass*, and by

your example inviting others to behave with decency and decorum in time of public service.

May you long enjoy the pleasing self-satisfaction resulting from a consciousness of haveing done your duty. I can not conclude better than by repeating what our divine master and legislator [Moses] told his immediate successor [Joshua], “Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid or dismayed.” Do that what you know to be right, that the Lord may be with thee in all thy ways.

Please to present my salutations to every branch of your family, in which my wife unites, and believe me to be, dear and worth[y] sir,

Your affec'te humble serv't,
Gershom Seixas

Philadelphia, 21st Dec'r, 1783.⁴⁰

* * * *

The New York Returning Exiles
Welcome Back the Governor—1784

On December 9, 1783, at the first official meeting of the New York congregation on its return from exile, it was decided that an address should be presented to the governor of the state, welcoming him back after the British occupation. The English troops had left on November 25th. A special committee of three was selected to make the presentation, Isaac Moses, Myer Myers, and Hayman Levy, all of them men of substance and distinguished patriots who had left the city rather than remain in New York under the enemy. In choosing the delegation, the congregation was careful not to include any of the New York Loyalists.

This is the letter which the committee read to the governor:

[New York, January, 1784.]

To His Excellency, George Clinton, Esquire, Governor, 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.

⁴⁰ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 96-98.

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 endeavour 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 Excellency's very obedient humble servants,
[Hayman Levy, Myer Myers, Isaac Moses.]⁴¹

* * * *

Manuel Josephson Petitions the Philadelphia Congregation to Build a Ritual Bathhouse—1784

Manuel Josephson (ca. 1729-1796), an emigrant from Germany, was one of the best-educated men in the Philadelphia congregation. A sometime sutler during the French and Indian War, Josephson became a merchant in New York and finally settled in Philadelphia. He was a good Hebraist and was interested in general culture; in religious matters he was a fervent traditionalist.

⁴¹ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 100-1.

In 1784 Josephson presented the following petition to the board of Mikveh Israel, asking that a ritual bathhouse (mikveh) for the women of the congregation be built. His motivation is classical in its orthodoxy: inasmuch as the American Jew had been blessed with desirable privileges, it was incumbent upon him to thank God by scrupulously observing the Divine Law. If he failed to do this, all the curses threatened in Holy Writ would descend upon the transgressor.

By 1786, the ritual bathhouse had been erected and placed under the supervision of the zealous Josephson.

It having pleased the Almighty God of Israel to appoint our lot in this country, the rulers whereof he has inspired with wisdom and a benevolent disposition toward us as a nation, whereby we enjoy every desirable privilege and great preeminence far beyond many of our brethren dispersed in different countries and governments,

And in order to manifest our gratitude for those peculiar favors and blessings, we ought, in a very sincere manner, observe a strict and close adherence to those laws and commandments ordained by Him and delivered to our master Moses, of blessed memory, which have been handed down to us in a regular succession to the present time, wherein we are told (Exodus 19:5: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people") that the Almighty has made choice of our nation in preference of all others, on condition (*ibid.*, "If ye obey my voice and keep my covenant") that we hearken unto his voice and observe his covenants; and on the other hand, if we neglect our duty, He has denounced (Leviticus 26:14, etc., etc.) severe and tremendous sentences against us, to avoid which we should endeavour with all our might to regulate our conduct in every respect conformable to His Holy Law, rectify every deviation therefrom, and supply every omission so far as in our power.

In order thereto, we, the subscribers, having taken these matters to heart and duly reflected on the many defects this congregation called Mikve Israel in Philadelphia labours under, and to our great regret and sorrow we find one in particular, which strikes us most forcibly and cannot but affect with astonishment and horror every judicious and truly religious mind. This is the want of a

proper *mikve* or bathing place, according to our Law and institution, for the purification of married women at certain periods. The necessity of having and using such place will readily appear from the text (*ibid.*, 20:18) where a transgression of this ordinance is highly criminal to both husband and wife. Nor does it rest with them only, but the very children born from so unlawful cohabitation are deemed *bene niddot* [children conceived during the menstrual period], which makes this offence the more heinous [heinous] and detestable, in as much as it effects not only the parents, but their posterity for generations to come. And should it be known in the congregations abroad that we had been thus neglectful of so important a matter, they would not only pronounce heavy anathemas against us, but interdict and avoid intermarriages with us, equal as with [a] different nation or sect, to our great shame and mortification.

Now, therefore, in full consideration of the foregoing, we have unanimously agreed that a proper *mikve* or bathing place for the sole use of our congregation be forthwith built, and that no delay may be made in accomplishing so necessary and laudable a work. We do hereby, each of us for himself, most solemnly and religiously engage and promise to pay such sum of money as is annexed to our respective names, without any hesitation or demur whatever, unto such person or persons as shall hereafter be nominated for the purpose of receiving the said subscription money and to see the said work carried on and completed. And we flatter ourselves that every married man will use the most persuasive and every other means to induce his wife to a strict compliance with that duty so incumbent upon them, that so the Almighty may look down in mercy upon us, and send the Redeemer to Zion in our days. Amen, so be it.

Philadelphia, 21st May, 1784.

Rosh Hodesh Sivan (the first of Sivan), 5544.⁴²

* * * *

Levy Solomons of Montreal Helps the Americans—1784

The Quebec Act of 1774 tended to revive the reactionary, discriminatory pre-English pattern of French Canada and au-

⁴² Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 135-36.

gured ill for the future of the Jews in the province. By implication, at least, this new act, which became operative in May, 1775, closed the door to Jewish emancipation less than two weeks after the outbreak of the revolution which these Jews sensed would bring that equality now becoming more elusive than ever in Canada! It is not strange that several Canadian Jews went along with the American rebels south of the border. It is surprising that the other Jews did not share or express the same sentiments. Among the Canadian Jews who favored the American Continentals were David Salisbury Franks and Levy Solomons.

Solomons had come to the province of Quebec at the time of the English conquest. When the American general, Richard Montgomery, marched into Montreal in 1775, he found Solomons was no unwilling instrument. After all, Solomons belonged to Albany—where his headquarters was in 1763—as much as to Montreal; moreover, his wife Rebecca was the sister of David Salisbury Franks.

Solomons served as a supply officer for the American hospitals in Montreal. His care of the personal needs of the wounded required a considerable outlay of cash, and he was expected to advance his own funds or to guarantee payment for the supplies which others provided. In addition, before the Continentals were driven out of Canada in 1776, Benedict Arnold, who succeeded Montgomery in command of the American forces, appropriated or raided the stocks of goods which Solomons had set aside for the Indian trade. Even this act—unkind, but probably a military necessity—did not change Solomons' heart. The sale of supplies was his business, and the fortunes of war were risky. Above and beyond profits or losses, however, was the fact that after the Americans had gone he still helped the sick and wounded left behind to escape. Certainly, the English looked upon him as a rebel, for Burgoyne ordered him thrown out of his house into the street with his goods . . . on July 4, 1776. He even had to leave town. Yet he returned to become the president of the synagogue in 1778 and was, until his death in 1792, a successful and highly respected Canadian merchant.

In 1784, the year after the treaty of peace was signed, Solomons addressed the following memorial to the American Congress, asking repayment for the moneys and goods he had advanced to aid the sick, the wounded, and the imprisoned.

To the United States of America in Congress assembled:

The memorial of Levy Solomons of Montreal, in the Province of Quebec, merchant, sheweth

That General Montgomery, on his arrival at Montreal in 1775, sent for your memorialist and desired him to act as purveyor to the American hospitals in Canada, for which service General Montgomery promised him two guineas p[er]. day for himself, and five shillings sterling p[er]. day for a clerk.

In consequence of which your memorialist immediately procured and furnished a large house for the accommodation of the sick, and, sometime after, two other houses for smallpox hospitals. The whole expence of fitting up and furnishing the said hospitals, as well as that of providing every thing necessary for the patients (particulars of which are exhibited in accounts marked A), was supported entirely by himself.

He likewise at the requisition of Col. Richmore, Captains Lamb, Motte, and Goeforth, furnished sundries for their men. Sundries also to General Wooster and Mr. Tucker, and to Major Nicholson sundries for the troops before Quebec, particulars of all which will appear p[er]. the accounts marked B and E.

That after the death of General Montgomery [December 31, 1775], when American affairs in Canada begun to wear an unfavorable aspect, when all the hard money your memorialist could procure was expended in the service, and his own credit (on account of the part he had taken) ruined, he applied to General Wooster, who, unable to assist, urged him to fall upon some method of still providing for the preservation of the sick. Your memorialist had at that time a large quantity of rum on commission from Mess'rs Fargues and Vialars of Quebec, with orders not to sell it for less than a dollar a gallon. Of this rum, at General Wooster's desire, and under his promise of indemnification, your memorialist sold about 4,000 gallons at four livres, five sols, by which he sustained a loss of nearly 7,000 livres.

That during the time Gen. [Benedict] Arnold was out at La-Chine, he found it necessary to appropriate sundry goods, arms, and ammunition—that your memorialist had stored there and intended for the Upper Country trade—to the use of the troops under his command, the particulars of which will appear p. account marked C.

And that after the Continental forces had retired from Montre-

al, General Arnold sent a party from Laprairie, who, without the consent or privity of your memorialist, seized and carried off from LaChine a quantity of Brazil and carrot tobacco with other Indian goods, the property of your memorialist and by him destined for Michilimackinac, for which he never obtained a receipt or any acknowledgement whatever. The particulars and amount of these articles are exhibited in the account D.

That your memorialist continued his support of and assistance to the American Army 'till the day they left Montreal, when being pressed closely by General Carleton and when the friends to government here had engaged or sent out of the way every cart and carriage in town, so that the sick, the hospital stores, and bedding, etc., must have inevitably fallen into the hands of the enemy, but for the extraordinary exertions of your memorialist,

At this conjunction, he, by sending all his own carriages and procuring others from the country, happily effected the purpose of getting them off . . . happily for the American party, but eventually of most disagreeable consequences to himself, since this last circumstance more than any other has exposed him to insults and injuries from people of every denomination in the province, of which you will allow him to mention a few instances.

On the first of July, 1776, he received an order from General Burgoyne to quit his house in four days, a house he had rented from May to May for seven years. On the fourth day he was turned into the street by an Ensign Parker of the 29th Reg't and a party of soldiers: himself, his wife, and children, destitute of everything except the cloaths on their backs, and all his goods and furniture in the house left to the management of the soldiery.

In this situation, without money, without friends, he obtained permission to shelter his family in the house of a former acquaintance who, at the end of five days, informed him he must leave her house immediately, she having been made to understand it was dangerous to harbour so notorious a rebel.

He then retreated to a small vault [room] where he continued two months in a miserable situation, almost without the means of subsistence, and being under the frowns of government, deserted by every one. At length such part of his effects as had escaped the pillage of the soldiery were thrown upon the parade and himself informed he might either leave them or take them as he thought proper, and that this even was too great indulgence to a rebel.

Notwithstanding the persecution your memorialist has suffered, he has always uniformly adhered to the American side, and as the face of his affairs have taken a more favorable turn, he has been enabled from time to time to lend his assistance to such prisoners as have been brought in here, particularly Col. Campbell from Virginia, Col. Stacey of Massachusetts Bay, Captain Wood of New York State, and others to a considerable amount, a part only of which he has been reimbursed this fall, and doubtless Capt. Wood, who stands engaged for the whole, will take an early opportunity of discharging the remainder. In this, however, should he fail, Congress will hardly think it reasonable that their memorialist shall be the sufferer.

On the retreat of the Continental Army from this province, your memorialist had upwards of \$1,400 of Continental paper money in his possession, part of which he had received on account from General Wooster, which have remained 'till this day useless in his hands, and which he herewith sends, together with the accounts above referred to, by a gentleman vested with his power of attorney, who will attend the determination of Congress thereon.

Your memorialist has only to observe, with respect to the accounts herewith exhibited A, B, and C, that they were drawn out by Mr. Benjamin Thompson (his clerk during the time of the above transactions) who will attend and, if required, authenticate them upon oath.

With respect to the loss sustained on the rum sales, your memorialist cannot pretend to speak with the same precision, having irrecoverably lost his books and most of his papers at the time he was so cruelly turned out of his house. He can, however, truly declare that this account as above stated is not in the least exaggerated.

Your memorialist can with confidence refer you to the Hon'ble Mess'rs Corral [Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Benjamin] Franklin, and Chace [Samuel Chase], the Generals, Lamb and Hazen, and every officer at that time in Canada, for an account of his conduct during the stay of the Continental Army in that province, and to almost every other gentlem[an] whom the fortune of war has brought prisoner to Montreal since, for an account of his subsequent behaviour.

Your memorialist therefore prays that the foregoing circumstances may be taken into consideration, not in the least doubting

but his real advances will be reimbursed to him with legal interest, his services and his sufferings rewarded and compensated, and that the justice and candour of Congress will oblige him to consider it his duty to pray for the prosperity of the United States of America.

Levy Solomons

Montreal, November 15th, 1784.⁴³

* * * *

Jews Set the Christians an Example—1784

The following letter by "A Protestant" appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper. The writer lamented the fact that Christians were more concerned with their worldly pursuits than with the observance of Good Friday, and pointed out that Jews, in contrast, were meticulous in celebrating the Passover, which usually occurs about the same time. It is possible that the writer (probably the Reverend Charles Crawford) had no particular group of Jews in mind, but it is more likely that he was thinking of the Jewish community of Philadelphia which clustered around its synagogue Mikveh Israel.

Though I do not pretend to such an outward shew of religion as our modern inthusiasts, yet I flatter myself I am never the worse Christian. However, I cannot help being extremely shocked, when I observe the day of our blessed Saviour's death [Good Friday], appointed by the church (as no doubt it ought to be) so strict and solemn a fast, treated, by all ranks of people, with that unchristianlike levity and concern, which casts a reproach upon our country.

That day, in my opinion, ought to be observed, if possible, more holy than the Sabbath, that we poor sinful mortals, instead of following our worldly concerns on this most sacred day, might have the opportunity of attending before and sending up our praises to God, for giving his only Son to die an ignominious death upon the cross, as an expiatorial sacrifice for our sins. Certainly one day's abstinence from the concerns of this world cannot be any injury whatsoever.

⁴³ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 256-60.

The Jews set us the example; who, at the time of their Passover, refrain from the tempting lucre of gain during the course of almost a week. Let not us Protestants be behind all other nations [religious groups] in shewing respect to the dying day of Jesus Christ. Wherefore, I think, to promote such a due observance of that day as is requisite, I humbly propose that the clergy exhort their respective congregations to attend the service of the church, and keep holy that day, which certainly would not fail to be acceptable both to God and thousands of Christians [indentured servants?], who at this present are debarred, against their inclinations, in conformity to a custom contrary to all the rules of religion and right reasoning. I have nothing more to add but my prayers that this plan may be carried into execution, and I remain in hopes,

Yours,
A Protestant⁴⁴

* * * *

The Burial of Benjamin Moses Clava—1785

According to the records, Benjamin Moses Clava, a Jewish merchant, was a business partner of Barnard Gratz in the 1750's. His death on March 15, 1785, and the burial which it necessitated, ordinarily matters of routine, created a problem for the members of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel.

Like many other peddlers and merchants who lived in obscure villages and hamlets, Clava had fallen in love with a Gentile woman, and their marriage had been solemnized by a civil official. Here was a poser for Philadelphia Jewry. Was he entitled to proper Jewish burial? Three years before his death the members had needed his help in building their synagogue. His name was not found on the list of donors, and it appears that he did not belong to the congregation.

The members decided that Clava might be buried in consecrated ground, but without shrouds or benefit of ritual cleansing. Other sources indicate that he was buried in a corner of the cemetery, and when the actual burial took place, some members disregarded the congregational decision and interred Clava with the proper rites and ceremonies.

⁴⁴ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 136-37.

Even after the members of the congregation had decided the issue some uncertainty remained. Had they done the right thing? Where could they obtain guidance for action in future cases? There was not a single qualified rabbi in all of North America at the time; all the officiating "rabbis" were readers or hazzanim who led the service. Faced with a baffling question and with no one in the vicinity to answer it, the congregation decided to refer the matter, in a Yiddish letter, to the rabbis of Amsterdam and The Hague.

The English translation of their Yiddish letter follows:

Philadelphia, Sunday, 9 Nisan, 5545 [March 20, 1785].

To the honored . . . Rabbi Saul [Loewenstamm] of the Ashkenazic Community of Amsterdam. . . .

Last Tuesday, the fifth of this month [Tuesday was the fourth: March 15, 1785], there died here a man named Benjamin Moses Clava, who left a Gentile woman whom he had married in a civil ceremony. He had with her two daughters who are also still living. He was said to be a man of great Jewish learning. After he had married the Gentile woman, he became blind and had to stay in. His Gentile wife provided for him and the Jews sometimes sent him kosher food. On Tuesday it became suddenly known that he had died and that no Jews had been with him at the time of his death. (About a year before his death he called several Jews and recited the confession of faith before them, but continued to live with the Gentile woman till his death.)

There was a lot of speculation in our congregation about his burial. The president and the leaders and a majority of the members of our congregation met to agree on the matter, and it was finally left to a religious court for a decision. The congregation appointed as a court Moses Nathan and the two undersigned with instructions to send you a copy of our decision in English. Here, for the record, is a brief resume:

The dead man shall be buried in a corner of the cemetery, without ritual washing, without shrouds, and without a ceremony, but four boys shall carry him to the grave and bury him, and the shrouds that have been prepared shall be put into the casket, but he shall not wear them. Whoever shall disregard this decision, and render any service to the dead man, shall be excluded from all religious functions until he submit to the congregation and accept

whatever punishment be imposed upon him. This decision shall be permanently enforced and applied to all transgressors who shall marry out of the faith. This is the outline of the decision.

Now the president went to the place where the body was kept to see whether there were any irresponsible people who would attend the body in disregard of our decision, and he found there several irreverent and irresponsible men, among them Mordecai. The president warned the men, in the presence of Mordecai, not to attend the body, but Mordecai paid no attention to his words, and, on the contrary, quoted rabbinic laws against him. And they washed the body and clothed it in shrouds, that is to say, the president anticipated that and cut the shrouds almost completely into pieces, but they [the malcontents] did what they wanted. The congregation will shortly decide what to do to these men.

All this goes to show the conduct of Mordecai, who is ready to destroy good ordinances that were made to meet the needs of the moment because of the great lack of discipline that prevails in our generation. Now, those unrespectful men who attended the body unlawfully claim that the decision was improper. We, therefore, request of you to answer . . . about this decision, whether it was properly made to meet the need of the hour.

May the mouths of those who speak falsehoods be closed, may they be put to shame and receive their just deserts from the Lord; and may we soon see the coming of the Redeemer, so that Israel's authority will be as of old to punish those who rebel against God and his law. Then the Lord will be One and his name will be one; and there will be reward for those who labor for the Lord and his law.

We are looking forward to your reply and are ready to observe your instructions as slaves obey their masters, and disciples their teachers. With best wishes, etc.,

Manuel Josephson
J. W. Carpeles⁴⁵

* * * *

⁴⁵ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 140-41.

Jacob Rodriguez Rivera Writes to the Captain of
One of His Slave Ships—1785

Jacob Rodriguez Rivera and his son-in-law Aaron Lopez, who died in 1782, were active in the slave trade. Ever since 1764, if not earlier, Lopez and Rivera had sent their ships to the coast of Africa to trade in human chattels. From that time, until about 1775, the partners nearly always had at least one ship engaged in the trade, and in 1772 and 1773 Lopez dispatched four slavers to Africa. Rivera may have been his partner in these ventures.

The letter printed below was sent by Rivera to Captain Nathaniel Briggs, then on the African coast, to pick up a cargo of Negroes. The captain had been working for Lopez and Rivera since at least 1765. In 1789, several years after the enactment of a Massachusetts statute against the slave trade, Briggs became the defendant in an action instituted against him for running a cargo of slaves into the West Indian island of Martinique. His flight to another state, however, put an end to the prosecution.

The letter was sent to Africa through the courtesy of Captain James Duncan (Jr.?), who was there on the same business. Its primary purpose was to warn Briggs to stay away from the French island of Saint Lucia, whose officials were confiscating vessels which had entered without proper authorization.

The postscript (in the handwriting of Moses Seixas) listed the ships that were soon to sail for the African slave coast.

Note the pious wish at the end of the letter: "God bless you."

Newport, Sept. 13th, 1785.

Capt. Nathaniel Briggs.
Sir:

We hope that when Capt. Duncan arrives on the coast, [he] will find you safe arrived and as forward in your trade as you had reason to expect from the prospect we were flattered with at your departure, and [we hope that] at the end, your voyage may in every respect answer our most sanguine expectations.

We have now the pleasure to inform you that, three days after your departure, we had the agreeable news that Capt. Sherman [Ebenezer Shearman?], in our brigantine *Betsey*, had stopt at Eustatious [West Indies] from the coast, and not having met a

market for his slaves there, had proceeded to South Carolina, where we have since received advice of his safe arrival there, and carried in 140 very good slaves for cargoe, 133 of which Mr. Russel (on whom he valued himself) had disposed and avaraged £53 sterling a head. (The remaining 7 were ruffage; their fate we have not yett heard.) But [he] was obliged, in order to obtain that price, to take bonds for the whole, one half payable in 1786, and the other 1787. And, Mr. Russel assures us, it's in safe hands and does not expects there will be any bad debts. We are daily expecting him [Sherman] home, and hope [he] will arrive before Duncan sails.

It's not very agreeable to have a vessell come home without as much as will pay her portage bill, but hope [that] when we receive the proceeds, it will leave us a very handsom proffit. As Champlin arrived there [in Africa] so much earlier in the season then [than] he [Sherman], [Champlin] was able to obtain a better price and shorter credit. Our brigantine, being already fitted with Guinea stores, and may be fitted out for the same voyage with little expence. We propose to fitt her out for the coast as soon as she arrives with all possible dispatch. By that time, we hope, you'll have left the coast with good success.

Capt. Sherman wrote us that he had called at St. Lucea to try the markets, but was informed by our friends there that several vessell[s] had been seized there and in several other islands for comming into port without first obtaining permission, and advised him immediately to goe away, to prevent his sharing the same fate. And Capt. Sherman advises us that, if we had any vessells on the [African] coast, to inform them of this, that they may act with great caution in calling at any of the West India Island[s], which we think proper to inform you for your government [guidance].

* * * *

We have nothing further at present to add, save that your family, we understand, are well, and so is all ours, who join in our kind respects to you, and are

Your friends and owners,
Jacob Rodrigues Rivera & Co.

The following vessells, it is said, are intended for the coast, but none have as yet begun to fitt [be outfitted], but make no doubt will, and sail in a month or 8 weeks:

Capt. Wolf in a brigantine belonging to Cook and Lassells.
 Capt. Benj. Hicks in a brigantine belonging to Providence, owned by Sterry & Co.
 Capt. Peleg Clark says he is determined to go. Has his rum in the stills, but no vessell yet.
 Capt. Sherman in our brigantine, *Betsey*.
 Caleb Gardner talks of sending his brigantine when she gets home from Copenhagen. No news as yet of Daniel Gardner's arrival in the West Indies.
 Col. Cook's sloop, *Borden Mart*, arrived last Saturday. The molasses all gone in the distill house. Wood is got home and brought the pay for Lassell's bill. Taggart [is] daily expected, when we are promised a few hogsheads molasses.
 We have got your [insurance] policy reduced to £675 LMY, taking in the notes you gave for the premium and gave our own on interest. The inclosed paper we forgot to give you. Don't fail writing by all opportunity and let us know how the ship proves. God bless you.⁴⁶

* * * *

Moses Hart Spends Passover in New York City—1786

In February, 1786, Aaron Hart, of Three Rivers, the richest Jew in all Canada, sent his son Moses to the United States on a business trip. To make sure that the eighteen-year-old boy would observe all the Jewish holydays, the father gave him a note on those observed in March and April. Having been well-trained by his father, Moses kept a combination itinerary and expense account which enables us to follow him on his journey from Three Rivers to New York and back. It was to be a quick trip, no dawdling, for his father expected him back early in April to spend Pesah, the Passover, at home. However, were he to be held up for any length of time, he was to spend the holidays in New York and to draw on Uncle Henry Hart for any extra money he might need. Back in the minds of his parents was the hope that he might find a wife for himself.

In New York he went to shool, made an offering, gave something to hazzan Seixas, and even remembered the beadle, David S. Hays. He bought a pair of shoes, an expensive hat, and had the

⁴⁶ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 447-48.

tailor measure him for "vescoat," coat, and breeches. While waiting to be fitted and between calls on the family, he made an excursion to Long Island (two shillings, six pence). He went to the theatre; he saw The Provoked Husband and She Stoops to Conquer, and before he left town he had time to squeeze in a third play. The barbers found him a good customer, and he did not forget to tip the maid before he left the city. If she was pretty he probably stole a kiss from her, for if coming events cast their shadows before them, he was hardly a shrinking violet where women were concerned. Indeed, the young man had already given his parents many an anxious hour on this score.

Passover, which began on the eve of the 12th of April, he observed in New York, and it was not until at least a month later that he started up the river for Montreal on the return trip, carrying with him for the voyage a liberal supply of coconuts, limes, lemons, and assorted sweetmeats.

All this was not according to schedule, but even before Moses got to New York it was evident that he would not be home for Passover, and his father and mother reiterated their instructions:

Three Rivers, 8th March, 1786.

Dear Mo:

We rec'd your letters of 2d and 5 ins[tant]. Am sorry to find that you had not warm cloths enofe with you and that the lakes are bad. Thear for I hope you will not risk in any danger if you find that you cane not be hear *Pesah*. You will acarding to my instrucktions go to New Yark and keep *Pesah*. Should you want any clothes to apper in . . . you will git a good suit made in New Yark. Shoud you be shart in money, you take up as much as you want frome my brother Harry.

I hope you are safe arrived some time before you receive this, and have settled all to my instrucktions with my brother to your satisfaction. Should you want any pints [points] consarning what is due me, he hase letters frome me which pints out every thing you will are cane [or can] want.

You will say as litle as passeble about your bussiniss to any of the Jues in New Yark nore to your Unkils to [too]. You most remain *Pesah* in a Jues house. Pray take care of your self and God bless you. Frome your

Affection'd father,
Aaron Hart

[Postscript from his mother, Dolly Judah Hart.]

Dear Moses:

This letter will be conveyed to you by Mr. Baby that lives at Jack Morris, who is going to York. I am sorry to find the lakes are dangerous, but hope before this reaches you, you will be safe at your journey's end. Your Dadda has order'd you to get made a suit of clothes at York which will be quite necessary if you are there Passovir. I am sorry you had any cause to regret leaving the round of beef. I hope you took enough with you not to want on the road.

When you arrive you will on my account say every think affectionate to my d'r Mammy and rest of my family, not forgetting what I told you. I have nothing new to add. You will go to Mr. Eleazar Levy and present my best respects to him and Mrs. Levy and to Mr. Solom'n Myers Cohen and Mrs. Cohen and family [formerly of Quebec], Mr. Hyam Myers and family.

'Tis needless to mention to you, I am sure, you will be particularly attentive to the business you are sent upon. If there should be any difficulty, advise with them who is able to give you good advise, and consider well with your self before you do any thing.

Don't forget to get me a wench. Josette is sick at the nunnery since Sunday last. We are all well here except myself. Have got a sore throat and head ach. I have no more to add, but remain, dear Moses, your

Affectionate mother,
D. Hart

Wednesday, 8th March.

[Postscript of the father, Aaron Hart.]

My com[pliment]'s to Mr. Haym Levy, all the Myers', Uriah Hendricks, all the Gomes' and Judahes, Eleaser Levy, and all my auld achventance, Manuvel and Myer Myers.

You will sett af, if noting af pertickeler bussiness keeps you, as soon as the haledayes are over, even if a sloop is going up to Albany the last day [of Passover].⁴⁷

* * * *

⁴⁷ Marcus, *EAJ*, I, 279-80.

Moses Myers Scouts Around for a Likely Business Town—1786

Isaac Moses & Company was probably the largest Jewish mercantile business in the colonies during the days of the Revolution. There were three men in the firm: Isaac Moses, Samuel Myers, and Moses Myers. The latter two were native Americans, possibly of third- or even fourth-generation stock, but they were not related despite the identity of their surnames. Isaac Moses, undoubtedly the firm's chief, looked after the American interests in Philadelphia and, later, New York; Samuel and Moses Myers, with offices in Amsterdam, were in charge of European operations. There is little positive evidence, but it seems fairly certain that the company was organized during the Revolution to run the British blockade via the Caribbean islands of St. Eustatius and St. Thomas in order to supply the colonies with the foreign manufactures they so urgently needed.

The firm, like all others, was affected by postwar economic changes; by 1785, it was insolvent, and had to be dissolved. The two Myerses distrusted Moses and broke with him. Toward the end of 1786, Samuel and Moses Myers were determined to re-enter business together. They were convinced, even during this critical period of civil unrest and economic distress, that America was destined for great things. Evidently the partners felt that the time was approaching when they could once again open their establishment. Wherever they traveled in the states they were on the lookout for a place to settle. In the following two letters to Samuel, Moses Myers weighed the different possibilities before finally deciding on Norfolk, Virginia, in the spring of 1787.

New York, June 13th, 1786.

Dear Myers:

. . . Now, my friend, for our future establishment in life. It is time we think on it very seriously on this subject. Therefore I shall give you my opinion candidly.

It has ever been my opinion we might do considerable good business in this city [New York] with care and industry, but then it requires we shou'd be together. Except we shou'd form such a connexion as wou'd be an object worthy your stay in Europe. In that case only I shou'd think it adviseable. I see no prospect of making such a concern, or do I think it would be our interest so to

do. I wou'd have you settle our affairs and fix such connexions as you can and find necessary. That done, wou'd have you embark in the spring for Maryland or Georgia where I will join you, or if you judge best, to this city.

Georgia is a young country and promises success. The exports will ever make it a place of consequence. And we know by experience that in all new countrys most money is to be made. We shall doubtless meet many friends and support from every part of the continent. Our expences together wou'd be very little more than ea[ch]. apart, an object at the year's end, and business conducted with greater facility and peace of mind.

Wou'd you prefer Philad'a, I think money is to be made there with proper attention. Goods, I am convinc'd, cou'd be vended to a large amo't, and certain proffit and many advantages arise from commissions. In this case you may have it in your power to find such a man as James Duff [the merchant of Cadiz, Spain], who'd let you ship wheat, flour, etc., and give you credit in London, Amsterdam, etc. From circumstances and things in Europe you will best be able to form your resolutions, weigh well all things, and deliberate on them before you determine to not be precipitate. But when your plan is once form'd, swerve not from it. Your experience and thorough knowledge of the trade and people of this country will enable you to form the most solid judgement of an establishment.

I wou'd in preference be alone [just the two of us], except the advantage of a connexion is great indeed. You are too well acquainted with the consequences of copartnerships to need any coment thereon. Woefull experience has taught you they are pernicious and if possible to be avoided. . . .

I am with sincere attachment, dear Myers,

Your f[rien]'d and ob't serv't,
M. Myers

* * * *

New York, Dec'r 14th, 1786.

Mr. Sam'l Myers,
Dear Myers:

. . . . I have revolv'd over in my mind the circumstances re-

specting our future establishment and think that either Ch's Ton, S. Carolina, or Norfolk in Virginia must be the place.

I always wou'd prefer a sea port town to any other. The advantages are superior and need not be pointed out to you.

I presume that you will be able (at least) to establish a credit in Amsterdam for such articles as either place wou'd require, and from whence there can arise no difficulty to make suitable returns.

Neither tobacco, rice, or indigo can possibly maintain these present prices, and the state of Virginia having rejected paper money altogether gives it a superiority over the other states and establishes a confidence unknown heretofore.

I have observed that no or very little credit must be given the planter, for thereby you frequently lay long out of your money and lose their custom. The proffits are very great, and goods suitable to the country can be vended in large quantities. Two thousand pieces of oz[nabrig]'s [coarse linen] cou'd have been dispos'd of for cash and to a considerable proffit. None was at market.

Money is certainly to be made in Ch's Ton. The trade you are no stranger to.

Georgia is a young state, and I think offers advantages to a trade with Holland. They have timber in abundance, rice, indigo, tobacco, corn for exportation, and being contiguous to the Spaniards I shou'd suppose wou'd give them great advantages.

Their emigration has been one-third of the inhabitants since the peace. This, says my informant, but really is not reasonable. Before the war they knew not what it was to raise tobacco, and the last year's exportation was three thousand h[ogs] h[ea]'ds.

It is impossible to enter minutely into the advantages or disadvantages of trade without being on the spot to collect the necessary informations. As we have both been lately in Virginia we can best judge for a certainty, and I think we can do well at Norfolk where, if you think proper, we will determine to set down in a snug business that will secure to us a sure income. We shall be enabled to get many comm[ission]'s from this [New York] and Philad'a.

As very much will depend on what can be done in Holland, I now leave you to finally determine. Let me know the place, and will repair there early in the spring and be ready to receive you.

Was it practicable to establish a credit such as I pointed out some time since, very great advantages wou'd arise from it, and money cou'd be made with care. This, however, you can best judge of being on the spot. I shall wait your reply, interim close our affairs with all speed. . . .

I am, with sincere attachment, dear Myers,

Y'r f[rien]'d and mo[st]. ob't serv't,
M. Myers⁴⁸

* * * *

A Jewish Marriage Ceremony—1787

A good description of a Jewish marriage ceremony in early America is afforded by Dr. Benjamin Rush in a letter to his wife. Rush, in his day the best-known physician in the United States, had been invited by the Jonas Phillipses to attend the ceremony uniting their daughter Rachel with a Virginian named Michael Levy. In 1792, Rachel gave birth to a son whom the couple named Uriah Phillips Levy. The child was destined to have a fabulous career. He ran away to sea at the age of ten, joined the United States Navy during the War of 1812, and, finally, in the days before the Civil War, became the "Commodore" of the American squadron in the Mediterranean. Uriah's was a stormy life, for he faced boards of inquiry twice and courts-martial six times. Much of his troubles may be ascribed to the circumstance that he was a Jew in an age when Jews were not welcome in the Navy, nor was his road made any easier by the fact that, in addition to being a successful businessman, he was nothing if not "hard-boiled." He lavished a great deal of time and energy on the effort to abolish flogging in the Navy, and his tombstone in Cypress Hill Cemetery bears the inscription: "Father of the law for the abolition of the barbarous practice of corporal punishment in the Navy of the United States." But now back to Dr. Rush.

Philadelphia, June 27, 1787.

My dear Julia,

Being called a few days ago to attend in the family of Jonas Phillips, I was honored this morning with an invitation to attend

⁴⁸ Marcus, *EAJ*, II, 207-10.

the marriage of his daughter to a young man of the name of Levy from Virginia. I accepted the invitation with great pleasure, for you know I love to be in the way of adding to my stock of ideas upon all subjects.

At one o'clock the company, consisting of sixty or forty men, assembled in Mr. Phillips' common parlor, which was accommodated with benches for the purpose. The ceremony began with prayers in the Hebrew language, which were chaunted by an old rabbi and in which he was followed by the whole company. As I did not understand a word except now and then an Amen or Hallelujah, my attention was directed to the haste with which they covered their heads with their hats as soon as the prayers began, and to the freedom with which some of them conversed with each other during the whole time of this part of their worship. As soon as these prayers were ended, which took up about twenty minutes, a small piece of parchment was produced, written in Hebrew, which contained a deed of settlement and which the groom subscribed in the presence of four witnesses. In this deed he conveyed a part of his fortune to his bride, by which she was provided for after his death in case she survived him.

This ceremony was followed by the erection of a beautiful canopy composed of white and red silk in the middle of the floor. It was supported by four young men (by means of four poles), who put on white gloves for the purpose. As soon as this canopy was fixed, the bride, accompanied with her mother, sister, and a long train of female relations, came downstairs. Her face was covered with a veil which reached halfway down her body. She was handsome at all times, but the occasion and her dress rendered her in a peculiar manner a most lovely and affecting object. I gazed with delight upon her. Innocence, modesty, fear, respect, and devotion appeared all at once in her countenance. She was led by her two bridesmaids under the canopy. Two young men led the bridegroom after her and placed him, not by her side, but directly opposite to her. The priest now began again to chaunt an Hebrew prayer, in which he was followed by part of the company. After this he gave to the groom and bride a glass full of wine, from which they each sipped about a teaspoonful. Another prayer followed this act, after which he took a ring and directed the groom to place it upon the finger of his bride in the same manner as is practised in the marriage service of the Church of England.

This ceremony was followed by handing the wine to the father of the bride and then a second time to the bride and groom. The groom after sipping the wine took the glass in his hand and threw it upon a large pewter dish which was suddenly placed at his feet. Upon its breaking into a number of small pieces, there was a general shout of joy and a declaration that the ceremony was over. The groom now saluted his bride, and kisses and congratulations became general through the room. I asked the meaning, after the ceremony was over, of the canopy and of the drinking of the wine and breaking of the glass. I was told by one of the company that in Europe they generally marry in the open air, and that the canopy was introduced to defend the bride and groom from the action of the sun and from rain. Their mutually partaking of the same glass of wine was intended to denote the mutuality of their goods, and the breaking of the glass at the conclusion of the business was designed to teach them the brittleness and uncertainty of human life and the certainty of death, and thereby to temper and moderate their present joys.

Mr. Phillips pressed me to stay and dine with the company, but business . . . forbade it. I stayed, however, to eat some wedding cake and to drink a glass of wine with the guests. Upon going into one of the rooms upstairs to ask how Mrs. Phillips did, who had fainted downstairs under the pressure of the heat (for she was weak from a previous indisposition), I discovered the bride and groom supping a bowl of broth together. Mrs. Phillips apologized for them by telling me they had eaten nothing (agreeably to the custom prescribed by their religion) since the night before.

Upon my taking leave of the company, Mrs. Phillips put a large piece of cake into my pocket for you, which she begged I would present to you with her best compliments. She says you are an old New York acquaintance of hers.

During the whole of this new and curious scene my mind was not idle. I was carried back to the ancient world and was led to contemplate the passovers, the sacrifices, the jubilees, and other ceremonies of the Jewish Church. After this, I was led forward into futurity and anticipated the time foretold by the prophets when this once-beloved race of men shall again be restored to the divine favor and when they shall unite with Christians with one heart and one voice in celebrating the praises of a common and universal Saviour. . . .

Adieu. With love to your mama, sisters, and brothers, and to our dear children, I am your affectionate husband,

B. Rush. . . .⁴⁹

* * * *

Jonas Phillips of Pennsylvania Appeals to the National Government for Equal Rights—1787

The memorial of the Jews of Philadelphia sent in 1783 to the Pennsylvania authorities to ask for political equality would bring no affirmative action till 1790, when a new constitution was adopted. Three years earlier, in 1787, the Philadelphia merchant Jonas Phillips wrote to the Federal constituent convention, asking it to amend the Pennsylvania constitution so as to grant its Jews all the rights enjoyed by other citizens. Phillips thought that the men then framing the Federal constitution would have the authority to override any disabilities contained in the organic statutes of the several states. Of course, he was wrong; in the area of local political rights each state was sovereign; his letter accomplished nothing.

Philadelphia, 24th Ellul, 5547, or Sepr. 7th 1787.
To His Excellency the President and the Honourable Members of the Convention assembled.
Sires:

With leave and submission I address myself to those in whom there is wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; they are the honourable personages appointed and made overseers of a part of the terrestrial globe of the earth, namely the 13 United States of America in convention assembled, the Lord preserve them, amen.

I, the subscriber, being one of the people called Jews of the city of Philadelphia, a people scattered and dispersed among all nations, do behold with concern that among the laws in the constitution of Pennsylvania, there is a clause, Sect 10 to viz: "I do believe in one God the Creatur and governor of the universe and rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be

⁴⁹ Marcus, *On Love, Marriage*, pp. 32-34.

given by divine inspiration.” To swear and believe that the New Testament was given by divine inspiration is absolutely against the religious principle of a Jew, and is against his conscience to take any such oath. By the above law a Jew is deprived of holding any publick office or place of government which is a contridictory to the Bill of Right, Sect 2, viz:

“That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience and understanding, and that no man ought or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship or creed or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister contrary to, or against his own free will and consent. Nor can any man who acknowledges the being of a God be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen on account of his religious sentiments or peculiar mode of religious worship. And that no authority can or ought to be vested in or assumed by any power whatever that shall in any case interfere or in any manner controul the right of conscience in the free exercise of religious worship.”

It is well known among all the citizens of the 13 United States that the Jews have been true and faithful Whigs, and during the late contest with England they have been foremost in aiding and assisting the states with their lives and fortunes. They have supported the cause, have bravely fought and bled for liberty which they can not enjoy.

Therefore if the honourable convention shall in their wisdom think fit and alter the said oath and leave out the words to viz: “And I do acknowledge the Scripture of the New Testament to be given by divine inspiration,” then the Israelites will think themself happy to live under a government where all religious societys are on an equal footing. I solicit this favour for myself, my children and posterity, and for the benefit of all the Israelites through the 13 United States of America.

My prayers is unto the Lord. May the people of this states rise up as a great and young lion. May they prevail against their enemies; may the degrees of honour of His Excellency the President of the Convention, George Washington, be exhalted and raise up. May everyone speak of his glorious exploits.

May God prolong his days among us in this land of liberty. May he lead the armies against his enemys as he has done hereuntofore. May God extend peace unto the United States. May they get

up to the highest prosperitys. May God extend peace to them and their seed after them so long as the sun and moon endureth, and may the Almighty God of our father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indue this noble assembly with wisdom, judgment, and unanimity in their counsells, and may they have the satisfaction to see that their present toil and labour for the wellfair of the United States may be approved of through all the world and particular by the United States of America, is the ardent prayer of, sires,

Your most devoted obed. servant,
Jonas Phillips⁵⁰

* * * *

The Gentiles of Philadelphia Help the Synagogue—1788

After the Revolution Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia found itself in debt to the extent of £800. Its new building had cost a considerable amount of money, and many of the Jews on whose help the congregation had counted had returned to their New York or Charleston homes.

In an effort to save the synagogue the congregation experimented with a variety of expedients, including an appeal to the non-Jews of the city. This appeal, circulated among local Gentiles, is given below. Among the subscribers who responded to it were Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse, William Bradford, Thomas McKean, William Rush, Charles Biddle, and one of the Muhlenbergs. Although the synagogue failed to raise the necessary amount on that occasion, its problem was solved in 1790 when the state authorities permitted Mikveh Israel to run a lottery.

Knowing the men whose help they sought, and having done business with them frequently, the Jews did not hesitate to solicit their subscriptions. Equally, if not more important, however, was their conviction that in an "enlightened" age Gentiles could not object to aiding men of a different faith in worshiping according to the dictates of their consciences.

To the humane, charitable, and well disposed people, the representation and sollicitation of the good people of the Hebrew soci-

⁵⁰ *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society [PAJHS]*, II (1894), 108-10.

ety [community] in the City of Philadelphia, commonly called Israelites.

Whereas, the religious order of men in this city denominated Israelites were without any synagogue or house of worship untill the year 1780 [1782], when, desirous of accommodating themselves and encouraged thereto by a number of respectable and worthy bretheren of the Hebrew society then in this place (who generously contributed to the design), they purchased a lot of ground and erected thereon the buildings necessary and proper for their religious worship;

And whereas, many of their number at the close of the late war returned to New York, Charleston, and elsewhere their homes (which they had been exiled from and obliged to leave on account of their attachment to American measures), leaving the remaining few of their religion here burthened with a considerable charge consequent from so great an undertaking;

And whereas, the present congregation, after expending all the subscriptions, loans, gifts, etc., made the society by themselves and the generous patrons of their religious intentions, to the amount of at least £2,200, were obliged to borrow money to finish the building, and contract other debts that is now not only pressingly claimed, but a judgment will actually be obtained against their house of worship, which must be sold unless they are speedily enabled to pay the sum of about £800; and which, from a variety of delicate and distressing causes, they are wholly unable to raise among themselves;

They are therefore under the necessity of earnestly soliciting from their worthy fellow-citizens of every religious denomination their benevolent aid and help, flattering themselves that their worshipping Almighty God in a way and manner different from other religious societies will never deter the enlightened citizens of Philadelphia from generously subscribing towards the preservation of a religious house of worship. The subscription paper will be enrolled in the archives of their congregation, that their posterity may know and gratefully remember the liberal supporters of their religious society.

Philadelphia, April 30th, 1788.⁵¹

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⁵¹ Marcus, *AJD*, pp. 142-43.

A Christian Seeks Conversion to Judaism—1788

The letter reprinted below is the petition of a Christian, a would-be convert to Judaism, for letters of recommendation to the Jews of Amsterdam. New York Jewry, following local traditions, had refused to convert him. In all probability, they were afraid that the Christian community would resent any conversionist activity on the part of the Jews.

June 5, 5548 [1788], New York.

Gentlemen:

I came into this city 19th of last March with a desire to take hold of God's 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 giving me such letters of recommendation as shall serve to introduce me to an acquaintance with the Jews in Amsterdam where I hope to get my desire in part fulfilled. Give me leave to make use of Ruth's reply to Naomi: "Intreat me not to leave 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 death part thee and me."

I am with all due respect, your sincer friend and intended brother,

James Foster

Genell [gentlemen] trustees of the
Congregation of Jews in
the City of New York⁵²

* * * *

The Federal Parade and the Jewish Snack Bar—1788

Most of America's Jews were probably Federalists, certainly the more successful merchants were because they wanted a strong federal state to succeed the weak union created by the Articles of Confederation. It may be assumed—the evidence is very meager—that the Jewish merchants, like other merchants, wanted a structure which would be financially viable, could col-

⁵² PAJHS, XXVII (1920), 44.

lect taxes, establish a sound currency, and further domestic and foreign trade. Like many others, they hoped and prayed that the proposed new constitution, signed on September 17, 1787, by the delegates, would be ratified by at least nine of the states. Philadelphians were particularly anxious to have Virginia, one of the greatest of the states, ratify the constitution, and when the news finally arrived that powerful Virginia had done so, the people were determined to rejoice in a great "Federal" parade on the Fourth of July, 1788. It was to be the parade to end all parades . . . and it was.

Among those present on that momentous Fourth was a very excited young Jewish lad of fifteen. He was Naphtali Phillips, the first-born son of Jonas. Like his father, Naphtali was a warm patriot and was determined not to miss this great show which was to usher in a new and, it was hoped, a better government.

Four hours after sunrise the great parade, representing the trades, manufactures, and the symbolized hopes of the masses, moved by on stately floats. The cheering throngs saw tableaux of "Independence," the "French Alliance," the "Definitive Treaty," the "Convention of the States," the "Federal Roof" supported by the thirteen states, and the Federal ship, "Union," which drew the greatest applause from the enthusiastic thousands. When the procession finally passed Union Green, James Wilson, one of Pennsylvania's delegates to the Constitutional Convention, made the speech of the day.

All of this young Naphtali Phillips saw and heard. Eighty years later, now an old man of ninety-five, he sat down and dictated his recollections of the day for one of his Philadelphia friends, the bibliophile and collector John McAllister, Jr. Phillips' amanuensis was one of his ten or fifteen grandsons. Phillips had been married twice and had a number of children from each wife. The letter is no model of coherence, but we can well afford to forgive Naphtali because of his age, and because he brings us the appetizing news that the Jews of Philadelphia celebrated the day with a kosher snack bar.

New York, October 24th, 1868

My dear friend, McAllister:

My good grandson is now at my elbow and would have been before had his business allowed him time.

When I wrote you in a former letter respecting "Bartram's Garden" [for botany, on the Schuylkill] little did I expect the pleasure received by your letter and accompanying pamphlet. Please make my respects to the present incumbent of the garden, and hope he will realize all your expectations in relation thereto.

As it respects the great Federal procession in "1788," I have been anticipated by the *Sunday Dispatch*. I shall make a few particulars in addition thereto.

First, in an open carriage, drawn by elegant horses, sat Chief Justice McKane [Thomas McKean], with other judges of the [Pennsylvania] Supreme Court, holding in his hand the new constitution in a frame. This was received by the populace with great rejoicing. I do not think I can give the procession in its particular order, but I give it to you as well as I recollect. Then came farmers with large cattle and sheep on a platform drawn by horses, all handsomely decorated. The farmers were sowing grain as they walked along. Then came an handsome ship elegantly adorned with flags in all parts of it, manned by young midshipmen and drawn by horses, on wheels, and one of the crew throwing the lead as they passed along singing out in true sailors' voice "by the deep nine, quarter less seven," and so on.

Next a printing press on a platform drawn by horses, compositors, setting types, and the press worked by journeymen distributing some printed matter as they went along.

Speaking of the press, brings to my mind the words of "Junius," as follows: "Let it be impressed on your minds, let it be instilled to your children, that the liberty of the press is a great palladium of your civil and religious rights." I do not know that I have given you the exact words, but you have the substance.

Next came blacksmiths with their forge, with a large bellows keeping up a blast to keep alive the flame of liberty. Next came shoemakers on a platform, men and boys soleing and heeltapping, others making wax ends [for sewing shoes]. Then followed three fine-looking men dressed in black velvet with large wigs on, densely powdered, representing the hairdressing society. Then the various trades followed with their appropriate insignia; young lads from different schools lead by their ministers and teachers, of which I was one of the boys.

The procession then proceeded from about Third Street near Spruce, northward towards Callowhill Street, then wheeled to-

wards Bush Hill, where there was a number of long tables loaded with all kinds of provisions, with a separate table for the Jews, who could not partake of the meats from the other tables; but they had a full supply of soused [pickled] salmon, bread and crackers, almonds, raisins, etc. This table was under the charge of an old cobbler named Isaac Moses, well known in Philadelphia at that time. There was no spirituous liquer for the company. Having doon [done] full justice to the good things provided for, the procession then retrograded. It was the last I saw of them.

I reached home late in the afternoon, fatigued and hungry; my kind, good parents having provided a good meal for me, I retired to rest and knew nothing till I saw the sun shining in my room the next morning.

Sometime after the procession, a large sign was exhibited at some public house representing the federal convention members, all being present as they sat with Gen'l Washington at their head as their president, and at the lower part of the sign were these words: "These thirty-seven great men together have agreed that better times shall soon succeed." So ends the procession.

When you see that *young* lady, Miss Ellet, make my best respects to her and invite her to accompany you to New York on your next trip, when I shall have the honor to solicit her hand at the opening of the next ball given in her honor, in dancing a minuet, as was the fashion in the olden times when we went to balls, when the city lamps were lit, and [we] were all snug at home before eleven. It was then customary to see your partner safe at home and to call next morning to inquire of her health after the fatigue of the preceeding evening. The lady was waiting for her partner, and after setting some time, if his company had been very agreeable, this led to an extensive acquaintance which sometimes ended in matrimonial copartnership.

A few days ago I entered my ninety-sixth year. Ladies and gentleman [gentlemen] came to congratulate me on the occasion with a good sprinkling of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, their ages ranging from seventy years to one week, with a fair prospect of an additional [one] in a short time.

I would have been very happy if you had been here to make one of the company, to hobnob with me in a glass of champagne or sherry. Sufficient for this letter, for I have many other matters interesting for the time when I shall again have the honor of

addressing you. My best regards to your honored father, with kind remembrance to those who may inquire after me, and believe me, my dear friend, to be your sincere friend,

Naphtali Phillips

P. S. More anon.⁵³

* * * *

Salomon Raffeld Aks Permission to Be Wed—1788

Once a young couple and their parents had come to an understanding and the dowry was fixed, they were ready to be married. In a number of early American synagogues, the contracting parties had to secure the permission of the synagogal heads before the minister, the hazzan or cantor, would be authorized to perform the ceremony. The purpose of such a regulation was to fortify Jewish tradition against breaches like intermarriage or a match between a Jewish "priest," a "Cohen," and a Jewish woman who was a divorcee or who had led an immoral life. In almost all cases, permission was automatically granted.

In 1788, Salomon Raffeld (Raphael) requested the leaders of the Philadelphia congregation to authorize Hazzan Cohen to officiate at his marriage to a daughter of Barnard Jacobs, the well-known businessman and mohel (circumciser). Raphael was at one time or another a peddler, auctioneer, shopkeeper, and coffeehouse owner in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Richmond. In the latter city, where he lived for many years, he achieved some success and was able to afford a maid in his home. Unfortunately, he had "stolen" the servant from her former master, a fellow-member of the synagogue, and he was compelled by the court to surrender her. (Congregations have been disrupted for lesser "crimes.") This was not to be his last brush with the law. Ten years later he was haled into court because he had failed to appear as a witness in a suit against some friends of his charged with gambling. His friends were solid and very successful Jewish citizens who had been caught betting at faro in the Eagle Tavern.

The puzzled reader will immediately discover that Raphael's petition to the synagogal authorities does not speak for itself.

⁵³ Naphtali Phillips, New York, to John A. McAllister, Philadelphia, October 24, 1868, Library Company of Philadelphia.

Because the English of this immigrant leaves something to be desired, it is followed by a paraphrase. Incidentally, the difficulties encountered in deciphering Raphael's "English" letter will give the reader some intimation of the problems that face the student of colonial American history.

To the anerable, the presedent, and the genthelman jauntay:

Weer as I have pramis mie selleff in matteri mony whit one gall, the dogter of Mr. Barent Jacob, in the Norderen Libberthes in Philladelphia, and I would bie werry happay that jour anerable budday would order to Mr. Jacob Kohon as gasan of the congragashis of Mikvy Israel to give mie goupa and kadousin agins Dousday. Ther for, genttelman, I pray one answer of jour shentel man to mourow . . . the 12 day of Tisri at 11 o'clock and, by soo douing, your pertisnar will eiver pray.

From your omble sarwint,
Salomon Raffeld

To Mr. Levy Phillip, President of the K. K. Mikvy Israel, Philadelphia, Sunday, the 11 day of Tisri, 5549.

To the honorable, the president and the gentlemen [of the] junta [board]:

Whereas I have promised myself in matrimony with one [a] girl, the daughter of Mr. Barent Jacob, in the Northern Liberties [section] in Philadelphia, I would be very happy if your honorable body would order Mr. Jacob Cohen, as hazzan at the congregation of Mikveh Israel, to give me huppah and kiddushin [a legal and ritually proper Jewish marriage] against [next] Tuesday.

Therefore, gentlemen, I pray one [an] answer from you gentlemen tomorrow, the 12th day of Tishri at eleven o'clock and, by so doing, your petitioner will ever pray.

From your humble servant,
Salomon Raffeld

To Mr. Levy Phillips, President of the Holy Congregation Mikveh Israel.

Philadelphia, Sunday, 11th day of Tishri, 5549 [October 13, 1788].⁵⁴

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⁵⁴ Marcus, *On Love, Marriage*, pp. 29-31.

The Emancipation of the Jew on the Federal Level—1789

The Declaration of Independence was fulfilled on a national, Federal level in 1789 when a government was established to implement the Constitution. This document and its first amendment, ratified in 1791, laid down principles which emancipated and protected all citizens, including the Jews. Church and State were separated, and men were given the right to worship as they saw fit without loss of political and civil rights.

The relevant portions of the constitution follow:

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America. . . .

Art. VI

. . . .The senators and representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ Henry Steele Commager (ed.), *Documents of American History* (8th ed., N. Y., 1968), pp. 139, 145-46.

The Lack of a Fixed Minhag in the
American Synagogue—1790

Manuel Josephson, the learned Philadelphian, was occasionally called upon to answer questions dealing with Jewish law and tradition. In the following excerpt of a letter written on February 4, 1790, to Moses Seixas, the president of the congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, Josephson discusses the lack of a fixed minhag, customary usage, in the North American synagogues.

Philadelphia, 4th February, 1790.

Mr. Moses Seixas,

Dear Sir:

. . . . With regard to ceremonial customs, these have been established in different ways in different congregations according to the fancy and opinion of the head men that were amongst them at the time of framing their several constitutions. These customs were accordingly adopted, and in process of time were considered nearly as essential, and remain in practice to this day. That this is the case may readily be proved by those who have been no farther than England and Holland, provided they made it a point to take notice. The minhag in the Portugaise synagogue at Amsterdam differs from that at London in many respects. The several Ashkenazim, (Dutch [German]) synagogues in London differ even from each other, and so do those at Amsterdam, without mentioning the several large and numerous congregations in other parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

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 the members from one place to another. And, as from their first establishment they had no fixed and permanent rules to go by, so they have continually remained in a state of fluctuation. And every new comer introduced 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 averr 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 and patched up a system of ceremonies of his own, which will 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 those matters or indeed how should he, seeing he never was out of America, etc., etc. I say such arrogant language is common among the unpolished Europeans, more especially among *our people*, who suppose it next to impossible any knowledge can be obtained [except] out of Europe. Whereupon the rulers, who mostly are men of yesterday, strangers to the Portugaise minhag, and as much so to the Dutch minhag altho bred to it, because having been of little consequence in their own country, of course not in the way to know or in fact to trouble themselves about matters of that sort. Or should it even happen that some of the rulers and members are Portugaises, the same observation may hold good with them as the others, and both descriptions, being Europeans, will most probable unanimously subscribe to the opinions of the new hazan and adopt them, as doubtless he must know better than the late one.

Now this circumstance does not, nor can not find place in the large and old established congregations abroad, as they have their customs and ceremonies, even the most minute, reduced to a regular system, from which they do not deviate on any account; and if a hazan, either a travelling or established one, should perform publick service, he must conform to the rules and customs of the congregation, not they to the new fangled rules and whims of the hazan. . . .⁵⁶

* * * *

⁵⁶ Manuel Josephson, Philadelphia, to Moses Seixas, Newport, Feb. 4, 1790, Lyons Collection, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.

Newport Jewry Welcomes George Washington—1790

When President Washington visited Newport in August, 1790, Moses Seixas, the parnas of the local Jewish congregation, read an address or letter to the distinguished visitor. This was on August 18th. Some time later, Washington wrote a formal answer. Both letters, reprinted below, emphasize the grant of liberties and rights to Jews.

To the President of the United States of America,
Sir:

Permit the children of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merits and to join with our fellow-citizens in welcoming you to New Port.

With pleasure we reflect on those days—those days of difficulty and danger—when the God of Israel who delivered David from the peril of the sword shielded your head in the day of battle. And we rejoice to think that the same Spirit, who rested in the bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel, enabling him to preside over the provinces of the Babylonish Empire, rests, and ever will rest upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these states.

Deprived as we have hitherto been of the invaluable rights of free citizens, we now, with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of all events, behold a government, erected by the majesty of the people, a government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance, but generously affording to all liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship, deeming every one, of whatever nation, tongue, or language, equal parts of the great governmental machine. This so ample and extensive federal union whose basis is philanthropy, mutual confidence, and public virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, doing whatsoever seemeth him good.

For all the blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal and benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Antient of Days, the great Preserver of Men, beseeching him that the angel who conducted our forefathers

through the wilderness into the promised land may graciously conduct you through all the dangers and difficulties of this mortal life. And when like Joshua, full of days and full of honor, you are gathered to your fathers, may you be admitted into the heavenly paradise to partake of the water of life and the tree of immortality.

Done and signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in New Port, Rhode Island, August 17th, 1790.

Moses Seixas, Warden

* * * *

To the Hebrew Congregation in New Port, Rhode Island,

Gentlemen:

While I receive with much satisfaction your address replete with expressions of affection and esteem, I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to New Port from all classes of citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good government, to become a great and a happy people.

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy, a policy worthy of imitation.

All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. 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. For happily 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 useful here, and, in his own due time and way, everlastingly happy.

G. Washington⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Facsimile in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, XII, opposite p. 348; Washington Papers, Letter Books, pp. 19-20, Library of Congress, Division of Manuscripts.