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Changing Notions of Identity: Transformations in Jewish Self-Identification Before, During, and After the American Civil War

Heather Byrum

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Changing Notions of Identity: Transformations in Jewish Self-Identification Before, During, and
After the American Civil War

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History from
The College of William and Mary

by

Heather L. Byrum

High Honors

Accepted for _____
(Honors, High Honors, Highest
Honors)

Carol Sheriff

Carol Sheriff, Director

Jay Watkins III

Jay Watkins III

Maggie Fraser Kirsh

Maggie Fraser-Kirsh

Williamsburg, VA
May 5, 2020

**Changing Notions of Identity: Transformations in Jewish Self-Identification Before,
During, and After the American Civil War**

Heather L. Byrum

Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Honors Thesis Project

Lyon G. Tyler History Department

College of William and Mary

Williamsburg, VA

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter I	10
“Jewish Self-Identification to 1860”	
Chapter II	34
“The War Years: Changing Jewish Identity between 1860-1866– Service, Patriotism, and Americanization”	
Chapter III	62
“From Reconstruction to Ellis Island: Major Changes in the American Jewish Population”	
Conclusion.....	83
Bibliography.....	86
Acknowledgements.....	96

Introduction

When the American Civil War broke out in the 1860s, the American Jewish population was as split as the broader American society. Although they only numbered about 150,000 persons overall, American Jewry had developed distinct regional ties that threatened to tear the group apart.

The focal point of this thesis revolves around how transformations in how Jewish Americans viewed themselves in relation to the coming of the Civil War and the impact that this shift in identification had on the population after the war ended. The shift from viewing themselves as Jews living in America to Americans who happened to be Jewish occurred during this time. They had to characterize themselves as patriots and appeal to patriotic nationalism to convince other Americans that their patriotism was genuine and stake their claim in the United States.

Judaism arrived on the shores of America in 1654 when Jewish refugees fled the Portuguese Inquisition after the conquest of Dutch Brazil. As these Jews found their niche in America, they spread throughout the country, founding communities along the Eastern seaboard in both the North and the South. As their numbers grew, however, so did the number of anti-Jewish protestors. Eventually, Jewish people living in America felt as if they were not wanted or welcome and therefore distanced themselves from identifying as Americans. As the numbers of the Jewish population swelled in the 1850s with the massive immigration of German Jews, the community found itself becoming more involved in American institutions than it had before. With tensions across the country heightening as people became more polarized regarding the issues of slavery and the direction the country needed to take, the Jewish community found itself under intense scrutiny as groups scurried to prove their patriotism.

The Civil War provided the opportunities that the Jewish people needed to prove their patriotism and they took advantage of them: men joined the Army and Navy, women organized relief societies and served as nurses, and Jewish families struggled as the realities of war set in. Soldiers, especially those who were recent immigrants to the United States, found that serving in the army helped integrate them into American culture. Even as they were serving, however, the American Jewish community found itself struggling against an onslaught of anti-Jewishness at unprecedented levels. Using their actions and their words, American Jewry staked its claim to belong in the land of the free during and immediately following the Civil War.

The dramatic shift in identity for American Jews— from a people living in a place to identifying with that place itself— had dramatic ramifications during Reconstruction and leading into the twentieth century. Seeking to understand the realities of war and the destruction and death it had brought about, some radical Christians lobbied for more “Christianization” of America: creating strict Sunday laws that would prevent Jewish businesses from operating on that day and advocating for an amendment to the Constitution that firmly established that Christianity would be the religion of the United States. Adding fuel to their fire, Jewish entrepreneurs largely fared the war-time economy well. Benefitting from their economic niche in dealing with cotton during the Antebellum period positioned Jewish businesses into a place where they could rely on their cash reserves and ethnic networks in Europe and across the United States to get them through the economic downturns. Undoubtedly, some Jewish businesses did suffer during the depression and Reconstruction, but a large portion of them managed to stay afloat. In order to combat the waves of anti-Semitism, American Jews utilized the democratic systems their citizenship afforded them— the ballot box. The period after the war saw Jewish voters turning out in huge droves— a stark difference from their hands-off approach to American

politics and democratic institutions that had been commonplace through the Antebellum period. As Jewish immigration from Europe took off, peaking at the beginning of the twentieth century, the American Jewish community would look completely different than it had before the war.

American Jewish history and historiography has been a popular field in academia since the late-twentieth century. Most of the scholarship, however, has focused mainly on American Judaism as it existed after the immigration boom that peaked between 1910-1920. Many of the books that deal with a broad survey of the history of American Jews gloss over the Civil War or at most have two small pages dedicated to the topic. The scholarship is split into two distinct fields: American Judaism and the Civil War. In relatively recent years, however, the field of American Judaism during the Civil War has emerged as an area of interest. Much of the scholarship that exists cites one monumental text in this specific area: Bertram Korn's 1961 *American Jewry and the Civil War*.¹ Korn, himself a Rabbi and historian, felt that no substantial scholarship existed on this important, yet widely ignored, subject. The book delves into all realms of life that was affected by the Civil War by both Northern and Southern populations of American Jews: military service and life in the Armed Forces, life on the home front, and the increasing antisemitism that plagued both sides of the conflict. Korn's book was the foundation upon which most of conversation regarding American Jewry and the Civil War has been based.

Korn's work remained the pioneer—for the most part—until the early 2000s, when the conversation began to intensify. There are two important works, however, that emerged during the period between when Korn published his book and when the new conversation began. The first of these works is Mel Young's *Where They Lie: The story of the Jewish Soldiers of the North and South Whose Deaths—Killed, Mortally Wounded or Died of Disease or Other*

¹ Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961).

*Causes—Occurred During the Civil War, 1861-1865.*² Young built upon Simon Wolf's 1895 work, *The American Jews as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen*, but unlike Wolf, Young provides more anecdotal evidence instead of extensive lists and facts. Young's work, although more of a popular history than an academic one, seeks to encourage current Americans, Jews and Gentile alike, not to forget the sacrifices that these men made for both sides of the conflict. Young's extensive research seeks to provide an evidentiary cache that scholars can use to aid further research.

The second of the works aforementioned is Abraham Peck's article, "That Other 'Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South."³ Peck argues that antisemitism emerged in full force after the Civil War because the South needed a scapegoat: they needed to have fought for something. In part due to their occupation as money lenders, business owners, and sutlers, Jews in the South were depicted as taking advantage of the struggling white populations during the War as a means of padding their own pockets. The Jews, Southerners argued, had forsaken the society that had taken them in, taught them their ways, and allowed them to flourish. Peck further argues that Jews who lived in the South during the nineteenth century had almost no choice but to assimilate into the myth of Southern superiority and the "Good Ole Boy" culture that they actively constructed as means of gaining and then keeping political and social power. Because the topic of identity is influenced profoundly by outside forces, this article helps describe a particular aspect of those forces and will be useful in

² Mel Young, *Where They Lie: The story of the Jewish Soldiers of the North and South Whose Deaths—Killed, Mortally Wounded or Died of Disease or Other Causes—Occurred During the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991).

³ Abraham Peck, "That Other 'Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South" *Modern Judaism* 7, no. 1 (1987), 99-114.

describing the implications that antisemitism had on Jewish identity in the South in the Nineteenth century.

Beginning in 2000, the field of 19th Century American Judaism scholarship seemingly ripped open due to the presence of more historians interested in the topic, better evidence, and more collaboration between scholars. The first important work to emerge did so in 2000: Robert Rosen's *The Jewish Confederates*.⁴ Rosen looked at different Jewish communities as they existed across the South during the Civil War. Directly written in response to Korn's earlier work, Rosen focuses his monograph on a people to whom he believed Korn did disservice to: The Jews who lived in the Confederate States of America. Rosen's work includes great evidence and anecdotes, but fails to balance itself against the larger body of work, as he completely disregards the Northern Jewish populations and the connectivity that the different Jewish communities displayed. Furthermore, Rosen fails to take into account *why* it was that Jews in the South felt comfortable being a part of, and serving under, a government that systematically denied a group of people their human rights. Although Rosen's work lacks substantial analysis on the larger motivations behind the actions of Southern Jews, his work on the contribution of Southern Jews to the war effort cannot be overlooked.

In 2005, Patrick Mason published his dissertation "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence Against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910."⁵ Mason argues that although Jews enjoyed a relatively "ambivalent position," they still were prone to acts of violence and antisemitism that were motivated in large part by "xenophobia, nativism, and economic downturns."⁶ Mason's dissertation looks at religious violence against many religious

⁴ Robert Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2000).

⁵ Patrick Mason, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence Against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910," PhD diss., (University of Notre Dame, 2005).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 191-192.

minorities in the South: African Americans, Jews, and Mormons. Furthermore, this dissertation is one of the most comprehensive, if not the most, pieces of work that looks at cases of violent anti-Semitism across the South.

After a six year gap of relatively little progress, in 2012, two very important works were published: Jonathan D. Sarna's *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* and Stephen D. Corrsin's *Jews in America: From New Amsterdam to the Yiddish Stage*.⁷ Corrsin's book is hailed as being one of the most comprehensive works on American Judaism from the time Judaism arrived until approximately the 1920s. Corrsin's work, however, still fails to delve deeply into the topic of Jewish identity during the Civil War Era. Sarna's monograph details the motivations of General Grant's General Orders No. 11, which expelled Jews *as a class* from Tennessee during the Civil War, and the fallout associated with the order. Drawing upon rich primary sources, Sarna argues that although Grant's order legitimized anti-Semites platform during the period, Grant worked to ameliorate his mistake when he became President. More recent publications including Gary Zola's *We Called him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry, a Documentary History* have stressed and explored further the ways that Americans (other than Jews) and circumstances influenced the fluid Jewish identity during the nineteenth century.⁸

While the sources have become more accessible as records have become digitized, they are still limited because of their very nature. Many records and sources from the Civil War were either burned or destroyed during the War and as such, the number of surviving sources, especially those from Jewish Americans or describing the collective and individual experiences of American Jewry are extremely rare. Those that do exist are further complicated by

⁷ Stephen D. Corrsin, *Jews in America: From New Amsterdam to the Yiddish Stage* (New York: New York Public Library, 2012).

⁸ Gary Zola, *We Called him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry, a Documentary History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014).

occasionally being written in foreign languages such as German or Russian, which while being able to be translated, still pose a problem since the majority of them remain untranslated.

Furthermore, the majority of the American populous was uneducated and illiterate– which resulted in a skewed source basis that largely reflected the opinions and writings of the educated upper class.

While other scholars have looked at outside influences on Jewish identity during this period, there has not been a comprehensive study of how Jewish Americans themselves were identifying in terms of external and internal pressures and circumstances. There is a broader trend of the Jewish community moving away from identifying as Jews living in America (temporarily) to Americans themselves during the nineteenth century with the observation of this shift mainly occurring between the years of 1860-1880.

Chapter I

Jewish Self-Identification to 1860

The Jews Make Landfall in America

In 1654, twenty three Jewish passengers arrived in New Amsterdam on the *St. Catherine* from Recife, Brazil. They were refugees fleeing from the newly-established Portuguese Inquisition that had been enacted when Portugal conquered the Dutch colony of Brazil. They originally tried to dock in the Spanish colonies of Jamaica and Cuba, but were not allowed to remain there. Instead, they trudged along the eastern coastline of the United States until landing in New Amsterdam, modern-day Lower Manhattan. Arriving, these twenty-three Jews probably viewed this new land as one that would welcome them and allow them to practice their religion freely, but they were not welcomed with open arms in America.

The Governor of New Amsterdam, Peter Stuyvesant, attempted to encourage these Jewish refugees to leave, writing to the Amsterdam Chamber⁹ that he “deemed it useful to require them [The Jews] in a friendly way to depart.”¹⁰ His request was denied, with the Chamber replying that “this would be somewhat unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by this nation [Israelites], with others, in the taking of Brazil, as also because of the large amount of capital which they still have invested in the shares of this company.”¹¹ The eminent scholar of American Jewish history, Jacob Rader Marcus, argues that

⁹ The Amsterdam Chamber, the Amsterdam Company, and the Dutch East Indies Company are all referring to the same entity and will be used interchangeably in this analysis.

¹⁰ Translation of a letter written from Peter Stuyvesant to the Amsterdam Chamber, dated Manhattan, September 22, 1654 as found in Samuel Oppenheimer, “The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654-1664. Some New Matter on the Subject,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 18 (1909): 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43057824>.

¹¹ Stuyvesant to Chamber, September 22, 1654, found in Oppenheimer’s “The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654-1664. Some New Matter on the Subject,” 8.

the only reason why these Jewish refugees were allowed to stay in the Dutch colony is because the joint stock company was partially financed by Jewish merchants from Amsterdam. The Amsterdam Company, being profit-conscious, begrudgingly tolerated the new arrivals.¹²

In spite of Stuyvesant's attempt to 'gently' push the Jewish immigrants out of New Amsterdam, they were nonetheless granted the rights to travel and trade by the Amsterdam Company, which likely angered Stuyvesant since there is evidence that he viewed them as economic competitors.¹³ The Jews, although they had been granted rights to trade, were consequently restricted on practicing their religion freely. The Amsterdam Company, in a correspondence with Stuyvesant from March 13, 1656, espoused the view that

The consent given to the Jews to go to New Netherland and there to enjoy the same liberty that is granted them in this country was extended with respect to civil and political liberties, without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to a license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gatherings. So long, therefore, as no request is presented to you to allow such a free exercise of religion, any consideration relative thereto is too premature, and when later something shall be presented about it you will be doing well to refer the matter to us in order to await thereon the necessary order.¹⁴

Because the Jews were viewed as only having economic purpose by the majority of colonial authorities, those that arrived in New Amsterdam were actively denied expressing their full identity. Disappointed by the revelation that they would not be allowed to practice their religion freely, many of the original Jewish immigrants left America for Europe. The original twenty-three had dwindled down to approximately four by the time the British gained control over the area in 1664. Marcus writes that it was a combination of the religious restrictions, the area not

¹² Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585-1990: A History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1995): 15.

¹³ Lee J. Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), 60-61.

¹⁴ Amsterdam Company to Stuyvesant, March 13, 1656, found in Oppenheimer's "The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654-1664. Some New Matter on the Subject," 21.

being agriculturally viable, the perceived threat from Native Americans, and the autocratic government that drove many to leave.¹⁵ Thus, the notion of transience for Jews living in America was present from the beginning of the community. In search of a better opportunity or a more stable environment in which they could exist, Jewish people internalized the notion that ties to the physical land were less important than the opportunity to practice their religion freely.

Of the four who remained, Asser Levy has historically been the person credited with having the most positive impact on how the Jews were viewed during the early colonial period. Levy was impoverished when the British gained control of the colony, but later became a wealthy merchant. Levy seems to have had different notions about his permanence in relation to what would become America, as evidenced by him being the first Jew to buy a home in North America. In 1661, Levy bought real estate in Fort Orange (modern day Albany) and continued to acquire real estate in the area until his death.¹⁶ Levy's legacy and prominence in New York helped reform the light in which Jewish people were viewed in the early colonial period. He was documented to have close friendships with Christians living in the area: he was named as the executor in at least two wills of Christian men living in the area in addition to loaning the Lutheran community a large sum of money with which they used to build their house of worship.¹⁷ His rapport with Christians as both a philanthropist (for both Jewish and non-Jewish causes) and a friend likely paved the way for toleration of the larger Jewish community on the continent.

¹⁵ Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585-1990: A History*: 16.

¹⁶ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 60, 133-134.

¹⁷ Leon Hühner, "Asser Levy: A Noted Jewish Burgher of New Amsterdam," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 8 (1900): 19-20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43057561>.

Jewish Life and Identity in the Early Republic

Levy and the first Jewish immigrants in America were Sephardic Jews, as opposed to Ashkenazi Jews. Sephardic Jews hail mainly from Spain (“Sepharad” as translated from Hebrew) and Portugal. The difference between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews is primarily their historical origins, but the context in which the groups developed has resulted in divergences of practice. Sephardic Jews are traditionally more Orthodox-leaning while Ashkenazi Jews tend to be more diverse in this regard. In addition, Sephardic Jews have historically been more integrated into the local non-Jewish culture than their Ashkenazi counterparts. These Sephardic Jews multiplied and eventually spread out across the country, in communities located in both the North and South.

Although, retrospectively, we know that American Jewry has thrived and become one of the most important broader communities in the history of Judaism, it is almost surprising that the establishment of a permanent Jewish presence in America happened at all, especially as early as it did. America was viewed as a wilderness, and likely resembled one. In a time before any significant number of European people were living on the North American continent, the land was starkly different from that of the European nations. Marcus argues that

there was no good reason why Jews should have come to America in those years. With the exception of those in Eastern Europe, they [Jews] were living in lands of expanding and advancing culture. Like the Pilgrims, the Jews never forgot when they set out for America that they were ‘leaving their native country and all that was dear to them there, transporting themselves over the vast ocean into this remote waste wilderness, and therein willingly conflicting with dangers, losses, hardships, and distresses sore and not a few.’¹⁸

¹⁸ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492-1776* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970): 254.

Furthermore, the North American colonies were known for their desire to further the agenda of Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity. Jewish people, as viewed by Christians, had forsaken the savior of the Christian religion, Jesus of Nazareth, and thus were characterized as infidels and as the prime subjects that were in need of receiving the ‘truth’ that Christianity advocated to contain. As correspondences and detailed accounts of the pressures and difficulties the Jewish communities faced in America reached other communities across the world, combined with the religious and physical pressures that existed in the New World, many Jews choose to stay in, or seek out, Europe instead of North America.

Nonetheless, Jews did settle along the eastern coast, especially in the British colonies that littered the landscape. Most prominent, the Jewish community located in New York City has historically had one of the largest population of Jewish citizens, and subsequently has been one of the largest cultural centers for Judaism in America. The founding immigrants tried to petition for the creation of a synagogue soon after they had arrived, only to be denied by the Amsterdam Company. They were, however, successful in securing a plot of land to build a Jewish cemetery. Having their own cemetery was seen as a necessity in the Jewish religion for a two-fold reason: to follow the example set out by Abraham in the Tanakh and to set themselves, and their dead, apart from the other part of the population. There is evidence that the New Amsterdam community had succeeded in establishing a cemetery by 1655, and sometime after had established their place of worship, the synagogue.¹⁹ After the English had taken over the colony from the Dutch, they allowed for the establishment of the Jewish synagogues. Both the cemetery and the synagogue had significant meaning and power in the communal structures constructed by these early Jews, serving as distinct entities where Jews were cut off from the rest of the

¹⁹ Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585-1990: A history*, 26-27.

population. There is no substantial evidence that clearly states why the cemetery was viewed as having less religious power and meaning to the religion by the colonial authorities, but it is likely that they were allowed to exist as a means of appeasing the local community since they had taken a large role in the shipping and mercantile trades of the colonies.²⁰ By placating the community, colonial authorities likely thought that they could entice them to stay, allowing the ruling entities to extract money and services from the Jews as subjects of their respective crowns.

Spreading out from New York, Jews emigrated to the community of Newport, Rhode Island as early as 1677. Newport was established in 1639 and became known as a haven of religious tolerance in the otherwise religiously-intolerant colonies of the Northeast. By 1677, Jewish citizens had bought a plot of land in Newport to establish a separate cemetery- their first order of business when they established a new community.²¹ The acquisition of the cemetery suggests that a somewhat sizeable amount of Jewish people were living in Newport at the time, and subsequently cohabitating in at least tolerable conditions with the Christians. The Newport Jews attempted to live both within their own, separate sphere while simultaneously living in a sphere that constantly forced them to interact with Christians in a positive light. The Jewish community in Newport did not last for long, however. Not even ten years later, the community had deteriorated. New York Jews re-established the community in the 1740s, when they founded the Touro synagogue near the same plot of land where the Touro cemetery had been established some sixty years before.

While the Northern communities were the earliest, by the Mid-Eighteenth century two more had come to prominence in the southern colonies, specifically in South Carolina and

²⁰ Touro Synagogue National Historic Site, "Touro Synagogue History," <https://www.tourosynagogue.org/history-learning/synagogue-history> (accessed December 2, 2019).

²¹ Max Kohler, "The Jews of Newport," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 6 (1897): 68.

Georgia. The city of Charleston was established in 1670 as an English colony, originally Charles Town, with its location being strategically chosen due to its location on the coast and promising potential as a port. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, the collection of founding documents for the colony, mentions that “Jews, heathens, and other dissenters” would be welcomed into the colony as a way to potentially “be won ever to embrace and unfeignedly receive the truth,” and the Charleston Jewish community certainly took advantage of this reality.²² Not even a hundred years later, the total number of Jews had increased to an unprecedented number. A Jewish newspaper from 1843 recounts that

in the year 1791, the congregation having increased to fifty-three families, numbering upwards of 400 souls, were desirous of procuring an act of incorporation, and to secure this object the following petition was presented to the legislature: The petition of the wardens and elders of the Jewish Congregation in Charleston, called בית אלהים (or house of God) on behalf of the said congregation, humbly showeth: That the said congregation conceive that it will be conducive to the decent and regular exercise of their religion and public worship of the Almighty God, Ruler of the universe, to the proper maintenance of the poor, and to the support and education of the orphans of their society, as well as to other pious purposes, to have the said congregation legally incorporated, and with privileges and powers similar to those which have been heretofore granted to other religious sects.²³

The Jewish community was clearly asserting the need for religious tolerance between Jews and Christians based on the fact that they had such a large congregation. Indeed, Charleston quickly became home to the largest Jewish population by the year 1800, numbering some 800 Jewish citizens (exceeding New York’s population). Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna argues that the Revolutionary War resulted in the community in Charleston emerging “with larger and better organized Jewish communities than they had never known before” because it was spared the

²² "The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina : March 1, 1669" The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp (accessed November 18, 2019).

²³ N.L., “The Jewish Congregation of Charleston,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, November 1, 1843, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document (accessed November 6, 2019).

destruction caused by the War, where as other communities such as Savannah were utterly destroyed.²⁴ Charleston reigned supreme as the largest community until approximately the 1820s, after which it would begin its decline as new Ashkenazi immigrants flocked to the old Southwest– Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and east Texas.²⁵ The arrival of the new population profoundly shaped the religious landscape of Judaism as it existed in America because of the emergence of reform Judaism. The Jewish population of Charleston would come to play a huge role as the community to whom the larger community looked to for guidance during the coming of the War.

Savannah, Georgia was also home to an influential Jewish community in the South. James Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony, welcomed their arrival on July 11, 1733, even though the colony’s trustees did not. He defended himself on the grounds that the Georgia charter excluded only Catholics and enslaved workers, not Jews.²⁶ After a rocky start in which the community dwindled and then revived, the cemetery and synagogue, Mickve Israel, were firmly established in 1774.²⁷ Savannah provided the perfect geographical location for a port, and as a result, a vast network of mercantile connections and trade emerged that connected Savannah with ports across Europe and the Caribbean. Savannah’s mercantile reach and import business spread the influx of goods across the colonies, rendering Savannah as one of the most important cities in the New world on the verge of the building War for Independence.

The Revolutionary War created new opportunities for Jewish citizens to try to showcase their patriotism and commitment to living both within the spheres of America and Judaism.

²⁴ Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Impact of the American Revolution on the American Jews,” in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (New York City: Holmes and Meier, 1997), 20.

²⁵ Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585-1990: A history*, 53.

²⁶ “Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities – Savannah, Georgia,” Institute of Southern Jewish Life, <https://www.isjl.org/georgia-savannah-encyclopedia.html> (accessed December 17, 2019).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

These opportunities manifested themselves in both the political and military realms. Jewish men participated in the conflict from the beginning, eager to showcase their patriotism. Both as soldiers and financiers, Jews tried to prove their willingness to serve in the conflict. Most notably, Haym Solomon of Philadelphia contributed large sums of money to the cause and acted as a spy for the Revolutionary Army for at least part of his time in captivity, having being captured in 1776 by the British.²⁸ In addition, the Southern half of the colonies also contributed soldiers to the cause. At least four citizens, all from the Sheftall family, from Savannah were employed in the Continental Army during the conflict.²⁹ Writing a year after the colonies secured their independence to George Washington, Jewish citizen Jonas Phillips appealed to the Jewish service in the War in order to convince the government that these Jewish soldiers deserved their veteran benefits. In his letter to Washington on September 7, 1787, Phillips wrote;

It is well Known among all the Citizens of the 13 United States that the Jews have been true and faithfull [*sic*] whigs; and during the late contest with England they have been foremost in aiding and assisting the states with their lifes [*sic*] and fortunes, they have supported the cause, have bravely fought and bleed for Liberty which they can not [*sic*] Enjoy.³⁰

That Phillips would have to write to Washington in order to argue that Jewish people deserved rights indicates that they were still being viewed as outsiders. Not only were they still viewed as outsiders, they were still being denied the equality they thought they deserved, even after shedding their blood for the cause. Conclusively, Jewish men from across the colonies provided their service as soldiers in the fight for American Independence.

²⁸ Lee J. Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States*, 121.

²⁹ "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities – Savannah, Georgia," Institute of Southern Jewish Life, <https://www.isjl.org/georgia-savannah-encyclopedia.html> (accessed December 17, 2019).

³⁰ Jonas Phillips to George Washington, September 7, 1787, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-05-02-0291>.

On the political side, Jews were beginning to enter into elected and civil offices. In 1775, Francis Salvador became the first Jewish person to hold office in the United States when he was elected to a committee during the first South Carolina Provincial Congress.³¹ Salvador's assignments on the committee included a multitude of important tasks: drawing up the declaration of the purpose of the congress to the people; obtaining ammunition; assessing the safety of the frontier, and working on the new state constitution.³² That Salvador would be trusted with matters of such pressing consequence indicates that he was viewed as a patriot working for the good of the newly forming nation. Salvador's example would inspire Jews across the colonies to insert themselves into a realm they had typically been barred from entering.

The ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788 was supposed to ensure the opportunity for full citizenship- especially for Jewish citizens- but changing the minds of their gentile neighbors would prove to be more difficult. The Jews thought that they would finally be equal to their neighbors- and in legal terms, they were. Attitudes and the way that people thought about the Jews, however, were heavily predicated on the stereotypes that existed in the Old World. These ideas were brought over from Europe as immigrants arrived and continued to be propagated throughout the generations. Many white Euro-Christians indeed commented on their surprise at when meeting a Jewish person for the first time, that they seemed as normal as their neighbors. However, since the percentage of Jewish communities in America was extremely small, many people never experienced this revelation-which contributed to their anti-Semitic attitudes existing for as long and widespread as they did.

³¹ *Journal of the Provincial Congress of South Carolina*, February 1- April 11, 1776, Charles Town [sic], SC.

³² William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654-1800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 124.

As Jewish citizens' participation in the Revolutionary War was recognized in the years immediately following the War, they gained more prestige. An exemplary example is the case of Gershom Mendes Seixas. He was the prayer leader of New York's Shearith Israel congregation and was invited to attend George Washington's inauguration in 1789.³³ The invitation was a notable shock to both the Christian and Jewish communities of the day, owing to the religious (Christian) notions that underpinned the newly formed government. Washington continued his commitment to treating the Jewish populations fairly during his tenure as President. When the Rhode Island Jewish community wrote to Washington congratulating him on his inauguration and applauding the new nation's commitment to religious liberty, they also brought up the fact that they had experienced past persecutions as a group. Washington famously replied that the United States government "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."³⁴ Consequently, after the Revolutionary War, Jews tried to become more 'American' and integrated into the broader society, but continuing anti-Jewish ideas and practices stunted this process of integration. The failure of their assimilation helps explain why the spheres of separateness that had marginally existed before the War of Independence emerged in full force after its conclusion.

Even twenty years after the ratification of the Constitution, Jews were subject to anti-Jewish practices. One such example was Jacob Henry of North Carolina: a representative of Carteret County in both 1808 and 1809. During his second term, his incumbency came under scrutiny after it was found out that he was Jewish. North Carolina's state Constitution of 1776 required

³³ Library of Congress, "From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America," online exhibition, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/timeline/haven-timeline_index.html (accessed on September 29, 2019).

³⁴ George Washington to Moses Seixas, 1790, letter, From Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-haven.html#obj4> (accessed November 19, 2019).

That no person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion, or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit, in the civil department, within this State.³⁵

Henry managed to defend his seat on the grounds that Jews would be allowed to hold legislative office, but not civil office.³⁶ Obviously, Henry's career as a representative was not called into question because he was an ineffective representative— he had been re-elected by his constituency— but because of the anti-Jewish ideas that people in and around Carteret County held. Even though the United States' Constitution espoused freedom of religion, it played out differently on the ground and required religious minorities to find loopholes in the document in order to practice their religions.

First Wave of Jewish Immigration to America: Western Europe Arrives

The first large wave of Jewish immigration to America occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These immigrants were largely from Western Europe, especially Spain, Britain, and the Netherlands. The religious practices of the American Jews were originally under the guidance of the rabbis. These rabbis were imported from Europe and brought their European customs with them when they arrived. The practices translated from Europe to America, developing in the European context, further contributed to the view that Jews were outsiders by the rest of American society.

In Europe, belonging to the Jewish *kehilla* (community) provided the basis for Jewish life; The *kehilla* provided rabbis, education, and other basic sorts of social services such as support for the elderly and the sick. This notion of community helps explain why Jews largely

³⁵ “North Carolina Const.,” art. 32, published December 18, 1786, <http://www.nhinet.org/ccs/docs/nc-1776.htm> (accessed November 20, 2019).

³⁶ Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585-1990: A history*, 48.

settled in urban centers, since they needed to be able to interact with the community on an almost daily basis. The *kehilla*, however, did not translate directly into American life. Instead, as Historian Marc Lee Raphael argues, the synagogue became “the sole institution in which nearly all communal functions took place to an entity focused primarily on worship and on children’s education.”³⁷ Since they were mostly Torah observant, the synagogue provided the means to carry out religious observance and because their community was so small, became the center of Jewish social life. Thus, everything one could need was provided *internally*, limiting the exposure to outside influences and ideas. Education was even carried out within the confines of the community. Male students were educated in both religious and secular subjects whereas Jewish female youths were expected and delegated to learning about the domestic sphere exclusively. Scholar Paula Hyman believes that because women were confined to the domestic scene, they would later have a harder time accessing education and participation in the public realm of economy and life.³⁸ There are cases that defied this norm: Rebecca Gratz established the first Jewish Sunday school in 1838 in Philadelphia to educate girls as well as boys in the hopes that Jews could become respected by the Christian majority if they were well-educated.³⁹ These separate, Jewish schools focused on the maintenance of the Hebrew language and Jewish history while concurrently instructing their pupils in subjects such as the English language and composition. Although these separate schools would effectively be wiped out by the end of the Civil War Era as Jewish citizens increasingly turned to public schools to educate their youth, they originally served as a way to form one’s own identity in the melting-pot of America.

³⁷ Marc Lee Raphael, *The Synagogue in America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 3.

³⁸ Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 18-19.

³⁹ Dianne Ashton, "Rebecca Gratz." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (February 2009): 27, <<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/gratz-rebecca>>.

The first large wave of Jewish immigration resulted in several new, prominent communities springing up across the country: Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. Cincinnati recorded its first documented Jewish citizen in 1817: one Joseph Jonas.⁴⁰ Jones was apparently received with a curious welcome, as most of the Gentile population of Cincinnati had never met a Jew. Jonas himself wrote that “from the experience which we [Jews] have derived by being the first settlers...we arrive at the conclusion that the Almighty will give His people favor in the eyes of all the nations if they will only conduct themselves as good citizens in a *moral and religious point of view*” [emphasis added].⁴¹ Thus, Jews could flourish in America on the condition that they would be religiously observant. Even so, Jews who were moving into the Ohio River Valley region, as argued by Amy Hill Shevitz, were in a unique role: the first Jewish settlers in the American West.⁴² Cincinnati’s Jewish congregation would be the example that other settler-communities would look to in the West as the population expanded both in number and geographically.

New Orleans’s story of its Jewish communities’ founding was similar to that of other Southern towns. Arriving in 1757 from Curacao, two Sephardic Jews, Isaac Monsanto and Manuel de Britto were outcasts from the beginning. According to the *Code Noire*, promulgated in 1724, Jews were excluded from the French territory of Louisiana, although many colonial subjects recognized the Jews’ usefulness in providing outlets for commerce.⁴³ Although Monsanto and de Britto enjoyed a brief period of flourishing in New Orleans, the advent of a new colonial governor resulted in their expulsion from New Orleans. The Jewish community in

⁴⁰ Amy Hill Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River: A history* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 25.

⁴¹ Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775– 1865* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), 1:208.

⁴² Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River: A history*, 7.

⁴³ “Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - New Orleans, Louisiana,” Institute of Southern Jewish Life, <https://www.isjl.org/louisiana-new-orleans-encyclopedia.html>. (accessed November 10, 2019).

New Orleans would not become cemented until the mid-Nineteenth Century when the second influx of Jews from Europe would settle *en masse* in the old Southwest. New Orleans's Jewish community would become home to one of the largest commercial hubs— specifically in dealing with cotton— which would later contribute to the charge from many Union supporters that the Southern Jewish community was responsible for the cotton speculation that was taking place.

Philadelphia also became home to a large community of Jewish immigrants, being populated heavily by the first wave of migrants from Western Europe. Permanent Jewish settlement began in the mid 1700s when Nathan and Isaac Levy, David Franks, and Bernard and Michael Gratz settled in the City of Brotherly Love. Only two years after his arrival, Nathan Levy obtained a plot of land for which he intended to establish a Jewish cemetery- the first indication of a communal, Jewish life in Philadelphia.⁴⁴ According to the Mikveh Israel Synagogue's website, Philadelphia would become a place of refuge during the American Revolution as Jews from other communities such as Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah fled from the British.⁴⁵ The aspects of the religious would become solidified when Gershom Mendes Seixas, the leader of New York's Shearith Israel congregation, fled and became the leader of the Mikveh Israel congregation in Philadelphia. Mikveh Israel is cited as being the oldest, continuous synagogue in America and continues to practice in the "form[s] of prayer and organizational structure in the Spanish-Portuguese tradition" that Seixas was instrumental in creating.⁴⁶ The population of Jews seems to have been large enough in the 1840s that Christian groups were actively financing missionaries in Philadelphia for the sole purpose of converting

⁴⁴ Toni Pitock, "Commerce and Connection: Jewish merchants, Philadelphia, and the Atlantic world, 1736-1822," PhD diss. (University of Delaware, 2016), 142.

⁴⁵ "Our History," Congregation Mikveh Israel, http://www.mikvehisrael.org/e2 cms _display.php?p=past_our_history (accessed November 29, 2019).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Jews to Christianity. An 1846 newspaper article from the *Episcopal Reader* describes that subscriptions to a certain newspaper funded by the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews pay for this missionary activity and puts a call out for more people to subscribe- albeit more conversion potential.⁴⁷ Consequently, the first wave of Jewish immigration established how the Jews were viewed by the larger community around them. The second wave of Jewish immigration that began during the 1820s would challenge this scantily-evidenced view of the Jewish communities in America and further alienate the communities from the rest of society.

Second Wave of Jewish Immigration: The Advent of the Germans

The Jewish presence in America was beginning to take shape during the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, but came to the fore during the mid-Nineteenth century with the second mass immigration of European Jews. This second wave of immigrants was fleeing economic and political conditions in Germany specifically. The Jews from Germany identified as Ashkenazi Jews- creating tension with the Sephardic Jews that had lived in America for two or three generations at this point in time.

Germany had a history of viewing its sizeable Jewish community as outsiders long before America became a prime destination for emigrating German Jews. The political turmoil and economic restrictions, however, that existed in Germany during the late 1830s/early 1840s encouraged many of these emigrating Jews to espouse the freedoms that America seemingly offered. Laws in Germany dictated what professions Jews could work in and usually delegated them to occupations that were seen as beneath Christian citizens: money-lenders and peddlers

⁴⁷ "The Jews in Philadelphia," *Episcopal Reader*, September 5, 1846.

predominantly.⁴⁸ America seemed to offer freedoms that German Jews had never had access to and could never hope to if they continued to stay in their mother country. Although America did offer these freedoms and the chance for a new life, the act of leaving Germany was bittersweet.

An account of a mass exodus from a small German town dated June 16, 1839 recounts that

Today was a day of the most heartfelt sadness, of the bitterest pain for the local Israelite congregation. Six fathers of families with wives and children, altogether 44 individuals of the Mosaic faith, left home to find a new fatherland in far-off America. Not an eye remained without tears, not a soul unmoved, as the bitter hour of parting struck.⁴⁹

The leaving of these forty-four individuals likely decimated the community in this German town— especially since many of the communities in Europe, especially in rural settings, were extremely small. Ultimately, America was the culmination of many peoples’ dreams, but also a source of heartbreak for those who were left behind.

Since the majority of immigrating Jews were Ashkenazi as opposed to Sephardic, the makeup of the population in America quickly shifted towards Ashkenazim, which angered the generations of Jews that had been in America for two or three generations at this point because they threatened their autocratic control.⁵⁰ The new immigrants also contributed to more negative stereotypes about the entire Jewish community being formed— charges that they did not know English and that they were determined to maintain their separate lives and not assimilate into

⁴⁸ Catholic law condoned the practice of Usury (money lending while charging interest) between other believers. The Jewish faith, likewise, condoned the practice of usury between other Jews, but Gentiles were fair-game. The relatively low-risk and high-profit potential that resulted from moneylending encouraged Jews to engage in moneylending on larger scales. See Sascha O. Becker and Luigi Pascali, “Religion, Division of Labor, and Conflict: Anti-Semitism in Germany over 600 Years,” *American Economic Review* 109, no. 5 (2019): 1764-1804, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20170279>.

⁴⁹ Liebman Levi authored this report, dated June 16, 1839 as quoted in Stefan Rohrbacher, “From Württemberg to America,” in *The American Jewish Experience*, 47.

⁵⁰ Marcus, *The American Jew: A history*, 53-55.

American culture.⁵¹ The split within the Jewish community was reflected in the emerging shift towards regional identity that would partially come to characterize American Judaism during the late nineteenth century. The influx of new immigrants spread out and enriched many of the communities aforementioned, in both the North and the South. Concurrently, regional identity took precedence over a wider, national, identity. National identity did not quite exist, it was beginning to coalesce. There were some efforts to protect and help the wider Jewish community, however. Rebecca Gratz established the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1819- right at the beginning of when appreciable numbers of German Jews were arriving- which expressed in its 1837 report its purpose; “To [help] the Jews, who have no country, and whose brethren come from every clime, it is incumbent wherever a few are collected together in a community, to form societies for the relief of the wayfarer, the poor, and the stranger; for in all their borders God has blessed them.”⁵²

Jewish Identity on the Brink of War

As the Antebellum Period in American history was ending, American Jewish identity looked quite distinct from how it would be constructed on the brink of the Civil War. Owing to their own tumultuous history, many Jewish people across the world were beginning to talk about the possibility of returning to their ancestral homeland- Israel. Although political Zionism had not fully developed, Jews, especially those from Europe, were talking about the need for a separate Jewish state- whether that be in Europe, South America, or the Near East. Zionism did not emerge as a distinct entity until the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, but historian Walter Laqueur argues that “the term Zionism, appeared only in the 1890s, but the cause, the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jewish Women's Archive, "Excerpt from Gratz's 1837 report on the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society," <https://jwa.org/media/excerpt-from-gratz-s-1837-report-on-female-hebrew-benevolent-society> (accessed November 30, 2019).

concept of Zion, had been present throughout Jewish history.”⁵³ Zionism, in conjunction with the persistence and increase in anti-Semitic practices and ideas (especially after the second wave of Jewish immigration began), created different notions about the permanence of the Jews in America— would it be a temporary home, or a permanent one? Consequently, Jewish identity began to be defined in opposition to these specific circumstances in the American context.

In addition, many Jews viewed America as being an exclusively Christian country. The Jewish newspaper, *The Occident*, describes this sentiment well: “[That] this is a Christian Country’ is so boldly asserted by all sects of Christians, that most Jews even admit is as an undoubted fact - as something which cannot be disputed.”⁵⁴ As a result, many came to view America as a place that did not want its Jewish population, but only begrudgingly tolerated their presence. Speaking to its audience, *The Occident* reminded the American Jews that “we would caution the minority in all instances not to rely upon the integrity of the judiciary to shield them against the operation of unjust laws,” further evidencing the fact that Jews, as a religious group, could never expect the same protections in reality (not in legal terms since the Constitution technically guaranteed them equality under the law) and citizen status as their Christian counterparts.⁵⁵

With both the notions that America was not necessarily a permanent home, and that the country would never want Jews because it was firmly established as a Christian-dominated society, Jews began to voice the opinion that they, as a large group, should not get involved in

⁵³ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 40.

⁵⁴ “Sunday Laws in Pennsylvania,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, March 1, 1856 (accessed October 11, 2019), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

⁵⁵ “Sunday Laws in Pennsylvania,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, March 1, 1856 (accessed October 11, 2019), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

the politics of a place where they would never been seen as equals. Although there were cases in which Jews had historically run, and won, political offices, influential Jewish leaders, such as Rabbi Isaac Leeser, called on his fellow brethren to stay out of American politics. In an article he wrote for *The Occident*, Lesser implores his readers to consider Jews who are involved in politics as outside of the religion, and as such, the community:

“Would the revilers of American institutions, the traitors to our high principles of government, deserve the title of Americans? Certainly not; but as little would the Israelites that could take the necessary oath to become members of Parliament. No, gentlemen, indeed no; they are any thing [*sic*] but Jews, who disregard the duties which should stamp them as sons of Israel; they are our greatest enemies; their acts are a reflection of our people; our nation may mourn over their delinquency, but cannot claim them as members.”⁵⁶

Although some Jews would ignore Lesser’s exposé, there is scarce evidence that indicates Jews were involved in politics on a large scale, a usual hallmark of citizenship and assimilation.

There was an exceptional case of a Jew identifying himself as American prior to the Civil War, however. August Belmont, Jewish immigrant and later chairmen of the Democratic National Convention, described himself as early as 1853 as an American citizen. He described himself as an American, and even though he had not been born in America, considered the United States his home.⁵⁷ Closer to the beginning of the war, he chided Southerners because they had

been able to bring a large number of patriotic men of the South to the belief that Lincoln’s election is a convincing proof of an overwhelming anti-slavery feeling

⁵⁶ “What Constitutes a Jew?,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, January 1, 1856 (accessed October 9, 2019), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

⁵⁷ August Belmont, “Mr. Belmont to Merchants of New York ,” August 12, 1853, <https://archive.org/details/lettersspeechesa00belm/page/4/mode/2up/search/Mr+belmont+to+merchants+of+new+york> (accessed November 20, 2019).

in the North; but this is by no means the case, and it is evident that the unfortunate result of the late election was mainly owing to other causes.”⁵⁸

Belmont was likely the exception because of his high-ranking status in the government. He had fared well since coming to America, making friends in high places and working his way up through the political landscape of nineteenth century America. For the most part, however, Jews in America would have scoffed at the idea of identifying as Americans before the Civil War changed the world as they knew it.

As a result of the aforementioned views and beliefs, in accordance with the customs at the time, American Judaism did not technically exist on the brink of war. Judaism itself, and those who practiced it, existed, but for American Judaism to exist, a national identity would have to exist. Since the idea of an “American” was largely a rhetoric device used by politicians in the tense political climate leading up to the secession movement by the states that would eventually form the Confederate States of America, people, Jews included, typically demonstrated regional ties instead of a national identity.⁵⁹ As such, the Jewish people were not immune to the issues that plagued the nation leading up to the conflict- especially the issue of slavery. Southern Jews largely accepted the institution of slavery and their whiteness afforded them the freedom from Southern *racist* attitudes (anti-Jewishness was still a fact of life for Jews living in the South). As the traveling journalist I.J. Benjamin noted in 1859, the white inhabitants of the South “felt themselves united with, and closer to, other whites- as opposed to the Negros. Since the Israelite

⁵⁸ August Belmont, “Mr. Belmont to John Forsythe,” November 22, 1860, <https://archive.org/details/lettersspeechesa00belm/page/22/mode/2up/search/mr+belmont+to+secretary> (accessed November 19, 2019).

⁵⁹ See Marshall L DeRosa, ed., *The Politics of Dissolution: The Quest for a National Identity & the American Civil War* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998). DeRosa argues that the fundamental differences between how the states viewed the Union, with the North viewing the State as an economic empire which was indissoluble, and the South viewing the State as a confederation of sovereign states that *consented* to the establishment of a national government, is a large motivating factor behind why the sectional issues intensified and ultimately led to war.

there did not do the humbler kinds of work which the Negro did, he was quickly received among the upper classes...”⁶⁰ Furthermore, the fact that many Jewish people were seen as only filling certain economic roles in America, such as creditors, shopkeepers, and peddlers, contributed to the acceptance of Jews in Southern society. Michael Cohen describes this phenomenon in his book, *Cotton Capitalists*, and partially explains why Jews were an integral part of Southern society; “Many of these Jews became peddlers, a role that was familiar to them from their days in Europe and that also integrated them back into the American economy. Jews would place packs on their backs, travel to rural interior areas where there was little competition, and bring goods to far-flung places.”⁶¹ Both their whiteness and economic niche helped Jews feel welcome in the Southern states, which consequently motivated the development of regional ties to the area.

Since the majority of Jews found themselves in the North, they had different experiences from their Southern counterparts. They nonetheless developed the same regional ties, albeit to the North instead of the South, that would become characteristic of the Antebellum period. The Jews of the North expressed the same struggles as other Northerners did about slavery. These contentious issues affected Jewish religious leaders too. Because rabbis had tremendous power in the lives of their congregations and accordingly exercised that principle, they, just like their Christian equivalents, published treatises on their own opinions and implored their congregations to think the same, usually using religious texts to justify their claims. That rabbis would have such autonomy and power during the nineteenth century would later create problems for their

⁶⁰ I.L. Benjamin, *Three Years in America, 1859-1862*, Vol. I, ed. Oscar Handlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956) as cited in Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 31.

⁶¹ Michael R. Cohen, *The Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 35.

congregations as contentious issues that divided the nation were brought into the places of worship. Some leaders, such as Rabbi David Einhorn, were fierce abolitionists. Einhorn implored his fellow Jews to speak out strongly against slavery. Writing in the German-Jewish newspaper *Sinai: Ein Organ für Erkenntniss und Veredlung des Judenthums* in February, 1856, Einhorn described his feelings astutely:

Does the Negro have less ability to think, to feel, to will? Does he have less of a desire to happiness? Was he born not to be entitled to all these? Does the Negro have an iron neck that does not feel a burdensome yoke? Does he have a stiffer heart that does not bleed when . . . his beloved child is torn away from him?⁶²

Other Northern Jews, such as Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall, argued that the Hebrew Bible, and therefore God, endorsed slavery and therefore the institution was above reproach since it was divinely inspired.⁶³ As Marcus describes it, “Jews were fervid regionalists.”⁶⁴

Consequently, Jews who lived in both the North and South on the eve of the Civil War exhibited strong regional ties that would come to play a huge role in how they viewed and responded to the impending crisis of the Civil War.

They exhibited different identities other than regionalist ones, such as different religious identities, different socio-economic identities, and different gender identities. There were varying levels of observance for the Jews trying to live harmoniously in America—varying tremendously on most aspects of the religion: scripture, dietary laws, and education. Upper, middle, and lower classes of Jewish citizens attended the same congregations and were expected to uphold the same awareness of observation. Men and women had different roles both within

⁶² David Einhorn, *Sinai: Ein Organ für Erkenntniss und Veredlung des*, February 1856, cited in Isaac M. Fein, “Baltimore Rabbis during the Civil War,” in Adam Mendelsohn and Jonathan D. Sarna, ed. *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 188.

⁶³ See “The Rev. Dr. Raphael [*sic*], Rabbi” *New York Daily Herald*, January 5, 1861 (accessed December 2, 2019), https://www.newspapers.com/clip/31499819/new_york_daily_herald/.

⁶⁴ Marcus, *The American Jew: A history*, 83.

the family and the community. As these different identities melded together in addition to the regional identities that they were expected to adhere to, the Jews did not always wear one hat of identity exclusively. They, like everyone else, had to construct their own identities in a complex process of give and take.

Conclusion

Jewish identity, up until the advent of the American Civil War, was largely one of separation. Knowing their peoples' history and following the example of their forefathers, the Jews in America tried to live a life that straddled a fine line: maintaining a distinct, Jewish identity while trying to live freely in America. From their arrival on the shores of New York in 1654, Jewish people had not been welcome in what Francis Scott Key would later dub "the land of the free and the home of the brave." They kept to themselves, relying on the *kehilla* for as many of their needs as they could. Education and religious observation were the means to which Jews could aspire to please God. American Judaism did not exist on a broad scale. Therefore, the way in which Jews living in America consciously constructed their own identity was largely in relation not only to their religion, but also to their state. Jews originally supported both sides of the War, North and South. Jews were not American, they were Virginian, for example. However, the Civil War effectively changed how Jews viewed themselves and their relationship to the State. Instead of maintaining their spheres of separateness, Jews quickly adopted the language of patriotism and began calling themselves *Americans*.

Chapter II

The War Years: Changing Jewish Identity between 1860-1866: Service, Patriotism, and Americanization

When the shots rang out on Fort Sumter in the Charleston Harbor in the first days of January of 1861, the United States of America was fundamentally altered. The war affected every level of society, pitting men who had never picked up a gun against men who had learned to shoot as a young boy: Jews were no exception. The Civil War fundamentally transformed the way that Jewish people living in America conceived of themselves: they went from Jews living in America to Americans who were Jewish. Ultimately, through their participation in the conflict, Jewish Americans asserted their claim to not only living in America but *belonging* in the land of the free.

A Divided Jewish Population

The Jewish population living in America was approximately 150,000 at the beginning of the 1860s. The massive influx of German immigrants during the 1850s had swelled the numbers of Jews in the United States. Over 160 identifiable communities existed across the continental United States, each with its own synagogue and community structures. Many of these congregations were concentrated in urban areas, but they existed outside of major metropolises too. In both the North and South, major Jewish congregations influenced opinions not only about religious matters but social issues as well; rabbis published treatises in newspapers and independently defending slavery or advocating for its abolition slavery in the same spaces in which they espoused opinions on different passages in the Torah. Slavery was the major issue that divided the rabbinate, but Jews also struggled with maintaining a distinct Jewish identity in

the rapidly assimilating American population and defending themselves against anti-Jewish attacks.

Slavery divided the entire country, leading to the schismatic split that led to the outbreak of war. The nature of the institution had been unstable since the arrival of the first Africans in Virginia in 1619. Defenders and opponents of the institution had been vying for their various positions leading up to the 1850s when the acquisition of new Western territory provided the much-needed land that the slavery-based, cash-crop economy required. The land in the areas of Virginia and North Carolina had been stripped after centuries of harboring harsh, depleting crops like cotton and tobacco. Once the land became less profitable, the need for new land to plant crops, especially cotton, became a high priority for white men who made their fortunes exploiting the labor of enslaved workers. When it became evident that a compromise would never fully protect the expansion of slavery combined with the fear that Lincoln and the “Black Republicans” would not want compromise, but instead would extinguish slavery across the United States, secession soon followed by what would become the Confederate States of America.

Jewish Americans too were divided along theological lines concerning the issue of slavery. Prominent Rabbis— Southerner Morris Raphall (Alabama), Northerner Isaac Mayer Wise (New York), and Northerner David Einhorn (Maryland)— all espoused different views regarding their interpretation of the morality of the institution. Not only did they publish opinion pieces, but they also influenced their congregations with their sermons. Raphall’s infamous sermon entitled "The Bible View of Slavery" would become one of the hallmarks that were frequently cited by pro-slavery defenders, especially those who tried to assert the pervasiveness

of their ideology.⁶⁵ Seemingly having the support of a religious minority such as the Jews further supported the agenda of pro-slavery advocates. David Einhorn directly opposed Raphall, but ultimately concluded that to avoid a civil war, a compromise would have to be made in which the North would recognize the legality of the institution (and consequently view it as not sinful) while the South would adopt a true "biblical" version of slavery— one that advocated for the recognition of the enslaved workers as humans and thus deserving the benevolence of their masters.⁶⁶ Wise took more of a middle ground: opposing the westward expansion of the institution, he nonetheless made the case for accepting slavery in those states where it already existed. The various positions these rabbis took highlighted the distinct regionalism that characterized the American political experience on the brink of the American Civil War, with their opinions reflecting the areas where they lived.

Jewish Men's Patriotism— Serving in the Union and Confederate Armed Forces

When the war started, the demands and expectations of Jewish people living in America quickly changed from how they had existed in the antebellum period. Jewish men enlisted in their respective sides' militaries, Jewish women banded together to create a vast array of relief organizations, and Jewish men were elevated into some of the most high-ranking political offices in both the Union and the Confederacy. The general public not only expected but demanded that the Jews they had tried so hard to keep separated from the rest of the populous become embroiled in the conflict just like their Christian counterparts.

⁶⁵ Morris J. Raphall, *Bible View of Slavery: A Discourse, Delivered at the Jewish synagogue, "Bnai Jeshurum," New York, on the day of the National Fast, January 4, 1861* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1861), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000624836>.

⁶⁶ Robert F. Southard, "The Debate on Slavery: David Einhorn and the Jewish Political Turn" (unpublished manuscript, October 31, 2007), http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2012_64_01_00_southard.pdf.

In the South, Jewish men served in the Confederate Army and Navy. Robert N. Rosen in his work *The Jewish Confederates* estimates that there were about two thousand Jewish men employed in the Confederate Armed Services, with most of them serving in the infantry.⁶⁷ Because the development of a distinct regional identity had taken place before the shots rang out on Fort Sumter in 1861, it is no surprise that Jewish men served the Confederate States in this way.

Many of the prominent Jewish communities that existed in the South, namely in Savannah, Charleston, and Richmond, were cores for Jewish servicemen, especially for officers. Of course, class dynamics contributed to the skew towards upper-class men's service with wealthy families buying their prestige through higher-ranking positions than the poorer classes of mainly immigrants, but this should not take away from these wealthy men's service. Their identities as Southerners first, and Jews second, was apparent by their service records and actions on the battlefield. Lt. Simon Mayer, in a letter sent to his brother urging him to join the effort, argued that he could "no longer... remain passive to the scenes that are daily enacted in the grand drama" so that he must join "with light heart & strong arms, backed by a determination to do or die... to come out & meet his would be masters, and subjugators."⁶⁸ Furthermore, many of the officers had previous experience as soldiers and, as Rosen argues, were not subject to the bombardment of anti-Semitic claims like their less highly-ranking and socioeconomic-status holding compatriots. There were certainly some cases of anti-Semitic remarks and bias happening in the Confederate ranks, but for the most part these officers' status shielded them

⁶⁷ Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 162.

⁶⁸ Lt. Simon Mayer to "My dear Parents, Bros & Sisters," April 17, 1864, as cited in Rosen's *The Jewish Confederates*, 89.

from much of the scrutiny and snide remarks that the average Jewish soldier would have been subject to in the ranks.

Significantly less is known about many of the “average” Jewish soldiers that populated the ranks due to two significant reasons– they were largely single immigrants, and many of the Confederate records were lost during the Reconstruction Era. Single, immigrant men did not have family to leave letters to in the States, which resulted in an absence of their correspondences. These single men conversely had not learned enough English at this point in their American lives to write to many of the public newspapers or forums. And when Richmond was burned, many of the records and documents that were housed there were destroyed.

For many of the men who immigrated to the South before or during the war, military service was one of the only jobs available to them. The South was still agrarian-based, with the labor force being the enslaved black population. The reliance on enslaved labor largely prevented these immigrants from being employed in the prevailing economic system in the Southern states which further pushed them into areas that had typically been reserved for outsiders. Their entrance into realms that had been generally reserved for Southern gentility, such as parties and upper echelon political and social events, however, resulted in their integration into the population. By showcasing their dedication to preserving the systems of inequality and inequity that elevated the white population in the South (of which they were considered a part of), Southern Jews were able to earn the respect of their Southern brethren, as evidenced by their entrance into Southern, elite circles and society. Indeed, many of these Southern Jews agreed with the majority of Southerners that God was punishing the South for her sins, especially when the war began to turn against the rebels; Samuel Levy, an officer, penned a poem in which he wrote

We know our sins are manifold, oh Lord
 And that thy wrath against us is but right
 For we have wandered wildly from thy word
 And things committed wrongful in thy sight.⁶⁹

However, in the same poem, he would later call on the lord to “smite the armies of the cruel North.”⁷⁰ While Levy may have believed that the South had committed sins, he concurrently believed that the war was a divinely-backed one, with the South being God’s chosen people—much like the Israelites believed themselves to be. Colonel William Mallory Levy wrote to his wife that “the cause is a righteous one and God is on our side and will watch over us.”⁷¹ Ironically, Levy would later serve as a Senator from Louisiana— as many others would— for the very country that he had fought so hard to keep separate.

Much of the anti-Semitism that Southern Jews experienced revolved around the role of Judah P. Benjamin in the Confederate States’ government, serving as Attorney General, Secretary of War, and Secretary of State during its brief existence. Southern Jewish historian Eli N. Evans writes that “Benjamin himself avoided his Jewishness throughout his public career, though his enemies in the Southern press and in the halls of the Confederate Congress never let the South forget it.”⁷² Even though Benjamin would try to forget his label as a Jew, it was precisely his identity as one that begot his downfall. When the South began to struggle and Benjamin was Secretary of War, he became the obvious choice for someone to blame; a letter written to the *Richmond Enquirer* denounced Benjamin’s position in the government as

⁶⁹ Samuel Yates Levy, “Prayer for Peace,” November 1863, *American Jewish Archives X*, no. 2 (October 1958), http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1958_10_02_00.pdf. This journal edition is the first time that the full text has been published, with the original poem in Levy’s manuscript commonplace book which is housed at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, OH.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ William Mallory Levy to wife, April 23, 1862, as cited in Rosen’s *The Jewish Confederates*, 105.

⁷² Eli N. Evans, “The War Between Jewish Brothers in America,” in Adam Mendelsohn and Jonathan D. Sarna, ed. *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 38.

“blasphemous” and claimed that the prayers of the Southern people would be more effective if Benjamin was not in his position.⁷³ Although Benjamin himself did not identify as a Jew, his prominence negatively affected the stereotypes of Jewish people across the divided country. Thus, even though they had made great strides in terms of acceptance into the general populous, Jewish people were still at the mercy of their neighbors— who, amidst war, were looking for someone to blame.

Even though the majority of American Jewry resided above the Mason-Dixon line, that did not prevent Southern Jewish patriots from fighting for what they perceived as their duty. The source material that exists, although severely lacking, points to this group of people having as much patriotism and feelings of duty as their Northern counterparts did. Military service propagated Southern Jews into arenas they could only have dreamed about (with few exceptions) in the antebellum period and helped to bring them into the spheres of Southern society instead of remaining on the perimeter due to their minority and outsider statuses.

It is no surprise that since the geographic concentration of Jewish communities was in the North, the number of Jewish men who enlisted in the Union Army outnumbered those who joined the Confederate Army, with an estimated 6000 men serving.⁷⁴ Serving largely in the capacity as both enlisted men and doctors, Northern Jews from New York to Michigan signed up in droves, eager to showcase their patriotism in addition to the economic pressures that the Civil War had brought about. That is not to say that they were excited to go to war, but time and time again the letters and diaries of these men reflect their fear, call to duty, patriotism, and

⁷³ Ibid. There is no date given for when this accusation was made, but it was likely between 1861-1862 based on other chronological information given.

⁷⁴ John Simon has estimated that approximately 10,000 soldiers served on both sides. See John Simon, “That Obnoxious Order,” in Mendelssohn and Sarna’s *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, 356.

homesickness— the same themes reflected across the swath of Civil War primary sources and literature.⁷⁵

One of the most remarkable examples of Jewish service during the war was that of Marcus Spiegel. Spiegel, at the time of his death, was one of the highest-ranking Jewish officers in the United States Army, obtaining the rank of Colonel on March 20, 1863. He documented his time away from his family extensively, writing to his wife and children, whom he affectionally termed "my dear & much-beloved Wife and children," at least one letter a day in most cases.⁷⁶ Spiegel cited patriotism and financial security as his motivating factors in joining the Union Army, writing that "As I have taken it upon me to be a bold Soldier boy I must feel resigned and I feel it my dear Cary that I will come ere soon and neither you nor any of my friends will feel sorry or ashamed that I have enlisted in my Countrys cause."⁷⁷ Spiegel's mentioning of the potential shame that could be brought upon his family if he did not enlist indicates that men, including Jewish men, were under immense scrutiny to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations. He writes succinctly about his motivations, saying that "[he] will come out of this [the War] with honor and money."⁷⁸ Money became a huge focus for Marcus as the conflict began. He had been born in Germany and immigrated to Chicago where he had worked as a peddler—largely in the state of Ohio. With his is wife coming from an affluent family with deep roots in Sussex County, Virginia, Spiegel felt it his duty to provide the comforts of life that she had grown accustomed to.⁷⁹ The Army was one of the most stable

⁷⁵ James M. McPherson has written one of the most extensive works on the motivations that Civil War soldiers espoused. See James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁷⁶ Marcus M. Spiegel, *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, ed. Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 20.

⁷⁷ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 20.

⁷⁸ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 35.

⁷⁹ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 5-9.

occupations available to men in the North and South before the industrialization boom of the post-war economy, although it would later prove to be less-than-reliable in terms of actually providing a stable economic basis for families.

Spiegel's status as an immigrant, a Jewish immigrant to be more specific, should have seemingly pushed Spiegel away from holding any sentiments of patriotism—immigrants were looked down upon by the general population because they were seen as outsiders. Historians have argued that immigrants joined the armies during the Civil War in order to prove their patriotism for their adopted country, to fight for the right to economic freedom, and yet some because they were conscripted into service.⁸⁰ Spiegel, however, seems to take his immigration status into his own hands, drawing upon his patriotism for what he would later call his “beloved country” to take the focus off of his immigrant status and instead portray himself as an American first, and an immigrant second.⁸¹ Especially since his wife's family had deep roots in Sussex County, Virginia, he was seen as the black sheep of the family since he was from Germany. However, he was actively engaged with the politics of the country, speaking on the secession crisis: “I am satisfied that you [his wife] would feel secession is awful and must be subdued.”⁸² Although Spiegel was very much anti-secessionist, he felt that the war was only worth fighting for in terms of protecting the Union. He wrote to his wife in March of 1862 that

I am more strongly confirmed in my old faith that for the Constitution, the Union and the Flag of my country I will fight to the last; I am ever ready to punish and to

⁸⁰ Economic freedom here refers to the opportunity to work for wages, especially in areas of the South. The enslavement of Africans and African Americans took away the possibility of working in the areas where slavery existed. The expansion of slavery into the Western territories would further limit immigrants' economic opportunities, especially in the West where it seemed the possibility to strike it rich were unlimited. See John Radzilowski and James Ciment, *American Immigration: An Encyclopedia of Political, Social, and Cultural Change*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2014, 156-159, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,url,shib&db=nlebk&AN=790573&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed April 19, 2020).

⁸¹ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 147.

⁸² Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 65.

shoot traitors; but it is not necessary to fight for the darkies, nor are they worth fighting for.⁸³

Spiegel characterizes himself as having an “old faith” in the Constitution, yet he had only been in the United States for close to twelve years. He quickly adopted America as his motherland, even to the point of risking his life to do what he thought was right by it. This old faith would change as Spiegel became battle-worn as he served throughout the conflict. Spiegel would drastically change his position regarding the institution of slavery, expressing the opinion by the end of the conflict, “Now understand me when I say I am a strong abolitionist, I mean that I am not so for party purposes but for humanity sake only, out of my own conviction, for the best Interest of the white man in the south and the black man anywhere.”⁸⁴ Spiegel himself certainly believed his patriotism was genuine—serving in the army and dying for the cause—and in the end, he succeeded in being a “good citizen doing duty to [his] God, [his] family, [his] Country, and [himself].”⁸⁵

Spiegel's life was arguably more exemplary than most but was not the exception. The 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment was one of only two regiments in the entire Union Army that contained a company of Jews.⁸⁶ The letters from the regiment document the harsh realities of life as a Jew and as a soldier. One letter described the difficulties of eating kosher once the regiment was on the move:

We paused 20 minutes for breakfast at the Burlington Station, where everyone could have the pleasure of quickly eating a meal of bread, coffee, and ham for the inexpensive sum of 50 cents cash. In Springfield we ate in a Russian (Irish) boardinghouse at noon (boiled cabbage, bacon, and cold water).⁸⁷

⁸³ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 62.

⁸⁴ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 321.

⁸⁵ Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 316.

⁸⁶ Joseph R. Reinhart, *Yankee Dutchmen Under Fire: Civil War Letters from the 82nd Illinois Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2013), 2.

⁸⁷ F.S. to the editor of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, August 25, 1862, in Reinhart's *Yankee Dutchmen under Fire*, 27.

There were scarce options for food anyway, but kosher food was certainly almost unheard of—mainly because the army did not have the facilities in the field to prepare kosher food for Jewish soldiers. This put observant Jews in the ranks in a peculiar position: one where they wanted to serve their country but also wanted to hold tight to the tenants of their faith. Many soldiers dealt with these severe restrictions because they thought that serving their country was a divinely supported cause—although some, for sure, continued only because of the monetary opportunity. Already having to navigate their identity in relation to the limitations that life in the ranks posed, they also had to deal with fellow soldiers’ prejudice and opinions. Accordingly, the presence of Jewish soldiers within this regiment caused at least one person to espouse the need to “disassociate [themselves] from anything with a trace of... Jerusalem.”⁸⁸ He went on to characterize Jewish people as being “clever, smart, and as sly as they are, rejoice so little about the beauties of nature.”⁸⁹ Jewish soldiers not only had to worry about keeping up with religious observance and feeling as if they are going against their religious beliefs, but also their family back home, and their own lives and surviving. Additionally, they were now worried that their presence was not welcome by the very men they were expecting to fight alongside—making them feel as if they were not safe not only on the battlefield but also in the camps among their fellow company men.

In addition to not having access to kosher food most of the time, Jewish soldiers were unable to easily access religious services for their faith. Although some soldiers, such as Marcus Spiegel, were able to attend synagogue services on an occasional basis, other soldiers

⁸⁸ Rudolph Müller to Colonel Broughton, August 13, 1864, in Reinhart’s *Yankee Dutchmen under Fire*, 148.

⁸⁹ Rudolph Müller to Colonel Broughton, August 13, 1864, in Reinhart’s *Yankee Dutchmen under Fire*.

such as those mentioned in a letter from Robert E Lee were not allowed to leave the battlefield to “participate in the approaching holy services of the Synagogue.”⁹⁰ What is surprising about the letter from Lee to a Rabbi in Richmond is that Lee seems to be genuinely apologetic that he cannot comply with the request; instead, his reasoning for declining the request was that “the necessities of war admit of no relaxation of the efforts requisite for its success, nor can it be known on what day the presence of every man is required.”⁹¹ He then goes on to say that, in regards to the Jewish soldiers under his command, “should any be deprived of the opportunity of offering up their prayers according to the rites of their Church, I trust their penitence may nevertheless be accepted by the Most High, and their petitions answered.”⁹² Lee frames his letter around the patriotism of the Jewish soldiers which then limits the degree to which Rabbi Michelbacher can refute it– the Rabbi would be a bad American if he was selfish enough to pull away troops from the conflict just to attend his services. By using patriotic language to address the Rabbi, Lee highlights that Jews were beginning to be seen as “true” Americans and thus were integrating and assimilating into the local populations at a much higher rate than they had done so before.

Life in the general populous of the army assisted soldiers in their integration by fast-tracking their command of the English language, their knowledge about American society and culture, and, for the most part, by forming close friendships with non-Jewish comrades in their

⁹⁰ Robert E. Lee to Rabbi M.J. Michelbacher, August 29, 1861, in Mel Young's *Where They Lie: The Story of the Jewish soldiers of the North and South whose deaths--killed, mortally wounded, or died of disease or other causes--occurred during the Civil War, 1861-1865: Someone should say Kaddish* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 171-172. Marcus Spiegel mentions in a letter to his wife that he “spent this forenoon (Shabbath) by being in Dr. Wise's School and hearing a very good Sermon by the Doctor. I think I was a devout Israelite; a beauty full service, good singing and good service and fine Sermon.” In all of the letters written over his four years, this is the only letter that mentions his attending of a service. His mentioning of himself being “a devout Israelite” could indicate that he felt guilty for not being able to attend service more often.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Lee to Michelbacher, August 29, 1861, in Young's *Where They Lie*, 171-172.

mixed companies of Jews and non-Jews. These Jewish soldiers experienced the stress of the battlefields and the losses of their friends. Ellis Strouss, a soldier in the Union Army, was conscious of his mother's worry. He wrote home to his mother, updating her on his status. He told her that while his army was "confident of victory...[he] [hopes] this Battle will end the war so that [he] may return home."⁹³ After the Battle of Gettysburg, he once again wrote to her, saying that "The Loss in the Regt is (as far as I know) Killed 10 Wounded 53 Missing 68...."⁹⁴ Strouss was concerned not only with his safety and well-being but was affected by the loss of the men in his company—likely, many of them he was intimately friendly with. He wrote that he "cannot tell yet with any certainty the loss in our Co" and that he hoped that unlike those who were lost, that "god spares [his] life."⁹⁵ Strouss's concern for his company is an example of the relationships that serving in mixed companies helped to form. For the first time, people who had never seen and/or had interactions with "Israelites" were cohabitating with and alongside them. Serving alongside Jewish men helped counteract the notions that had swirled around in popular folklore that Jewish people were insular, strange, and "scavengers" and built strong relationships between men serving in the same units.

Jewish soldiers served not only in the Army but also in the Navy, though in much smaller numbers. Jewish men, largely immigrants, enrolled in both voluntary and conscripted roles. The infamous Battle of the Ironclads that took place off the coast of Hampton Roads, Virginia, in which the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia reached a stalemate, was fought with the help of a

⁹³ Ellis C. Strouss to mother, July 4, 1863, <https://www.shapell.org/manuscript/union-soldier-gettysburg-july-4-1863/#transcripts>.

⁹⁴ Ellis C. Strouss to mother, July 6, 1863, <https://www.shapell.org/manuscript/jewish-civil-war-soldier-gettysburg-battlefield-1863-lee/>.

⁹⁵ Ellis C. Strouss to mother, July 4, 1863.

Jewish sailor.⁹⁶ Wilhelm Durst immigrated from Austria to America in November of 1861 and joined the Navy in February of 1862, intending to serve for a term of three years.⁹⁷ Durst would ultimately desert in November of 1862 but then re-enlist under a different alias, "Walter David", in February 1863. Durst claimed that he "deserted" because he became sick while on a fifteen-day approved leave from the USS Monitor, and was unable to let the Navy know that he was ill.⁹⁸ In a later court case against Durst, one of his fellow shipmates claimed that he knew Durst was Jewish and that he had "never seen a Jew work like it"—an example that counteracted the trope that Jewish men were lazy and did not serve during the war.⁹⁹ The friend would also note in the same deposition that Jews were rare on mans-of-war ships during the Civil War, a fact that makes Durst's service even more exceptional.

As highlighted thus far, Jewish men serving in both the United States Army and Navy joined for many of the same reasons that other men joined the service: to display their patriotism, to provide for their families, and to prove their manliness. Their small but impactful presence in these areas helps combat the view that some anti-Semites espoused, saying that they "cannot remember meeting one Jew in uniform, or hearing of any Jewish soldier."¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, that they wrote with such articulate feelings about their service indicates that they were as much a part of the conflict as other Americans. Jews had been an outsider group residing in America

⁹⁶ The case of Durst is the most documented case of Jewish service in the Union navy. Scholars such as Bertram Korn have claimed that a small handful served, but the evidence that gives exact names and statistics is scarce.

⁹⁷ USS Monitor Center, "Monitor Crew," The Mariners' Museum and Park, <https://www.monitorcenter.org/the-monitors-crew/>.

⁹⁸ Deposition A, Case of Wilhelm Durst/Walter Davis, testimony of Wilhelm Durst, July 5, 1895, The Mariners' Museum and Park Collection, <https://catalogs.marinersmuseum.org/object/ARI124807>.

⁹⁹ Deposition B, Case of Wilhelm Durst/Walter Davis, testimony of John McCafferty, October 5, 1895, The Mariners' Museum and Park Collection, <https://catalogs.marinersmuseum.org/object/ARI124810>.

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous, "Jewish Soldiers in the Union Army," *North American Review*, December 1891, as cited in Simon Wolfe's *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company Publishers, 1895), Project Gutenberg E-book, 23.

before the war began, but their service during, especially their military service, propelled them into the diverse mix of people who were identified by, and identified with, being Americans.

Lincoln and the Jews

Lincoln had a contentious relationship with Jewish people living in America throughout his ascension to, and duration as, President. Lincoln's closest political advisor, Abraham Jonas—a Jew himself—identified the Jewish people as a key group for Lincoln and the Republican party to target during the Presidential election; he proposed a plan “preparatory to the fight of 1860” to elicit the votes of “the liberal and freethinking Germans” and “the Israelites.”¹⁰¹ By identifying Jews as one of the main demographics that Lincoln should target, Jonas effectively brought the people into the forefront of Lincoln's thoughts. Lincoln, by targeting the Jewish people, and by eliciting their votes, brought them into the fold of the American political system. This was a direct change from how Jewish Americans had largely participated in the political system. In 1856, *The Occident* newspaper wrote that

“Still we would caution the minority in all instances not to rely upon the integrity of the judiciary to shield them against the operation of unjust laws....The only remedy all, especially minorities, have to preserve freedom intact, is to do all in their power to watch the sources of legislation, and never give a vote by which a man of one-sided views should be elected to a representative assembly or the executive chair, by which means obnoxious laws might be fastened upon the people. We know well enough that the Jews are a helpless minority in all the world; nor do we counsel that they should organize in any manner whatever, or for any imaginable purpose, as a special political party.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Abraham Jonas to Lyman Trumbull, December 26, 1858, as cited in Jonathan D. Sarna and Benjamin Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015).

¹⁰² “Sunday Laws in Pennsylvania,” *The Occident and Jewish Advocate*, March 1, 1856, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document (accessed December 12, 2019).

Not even a decade later, Jewish Americans had moved past their viewing of Congress as one-sided. As Jewish Americans became more involved in the political institutions, Lincoln's association with this religious minority became more involved.

By 1862, Jewish people used their connection with the President to bring light to what the Jewish communities perceived as injustices against itself. Lincoln became aware at some point in 1862 that “he had not yet appointed a Hebrew” to a military position.¹⁰³ As a result, he appointed C.M. Levy— the son-in-law of the prominent New York Rabbi Morris Raphall— to the position of Captain. It may have seemed a task of little importance to Lincoln, but it was the fact that Lincoln had once again remembered the Hebrew people that was so extraordinary.¹⁰⁴ Although the position of captain was relatively low-ranking, it was a huge accomplishment for the Jewish people, especially because only a small percentage of all captains in both the Union and Confederate armies were Jewish. We have to remember that the overall population of Jewish Americans during the Civil War Era was extremely small: one that did not necessarily warrant such attention from such an important figure, especially the President of the United States. While scholars are not completely certain of Lincoln's motivations surrounding his favorable treatment of the Jewish people, he nonetheless helped improve their standing in America.¹⁰⁵

The combination of military service in both the Union and Confederate armed forces and President Lincoln's relationship with the Jewish population resulted in the shift from an ideology of separateness where Jewish people lived in America but were not Americans— where they

¹⁰³ Abraham Lincoln to Edwin Stanton, November 4, 1862, <https://www.shapell.org/manuscript/abraham-lincoln-appointed-a-hebrew-jewish-appointment/>.

¹⁰⁴ Lincoln's nominating Levy to this position seems to be for a two-fold reason: political fodder and genuine concern that was not treating the Hebrew people equally with Christians. See Sarna and Shapell's *Lincoln and the Jews: A History*, 97-101.

¹⁰⁵ Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, 118.

resided in a geographical area but were not privy to enjoying or participating in the culture of that place. Lincoln's recognition and subsequent righting of wrongs against the Jewish people brought those who were on the outskirts into the full fold of being an American, not just living in America.

Jewish Women's Involvement and Patriotism

While men had the military and political realms to help them become more integrated, women were systematically excluded from these areas—pushed into life on the margins of society. The war, however, opened up a new area for women to exercise political and societal influence. The emergence of relief societies that were organized, run, and funded by women evidenced that Jewish women were determined to contribute to the war effort, just like Jewish men. The war affected the home front as strongly as it did the battlefield, and women were the ones at home who had to learn how to pick up the pieces and fill the void left by their men—husbands, fathers, brothers—after they answered the call and subsequently left. Jewish-only benevolent societies sprung up in the areas where large Jewish communities existed. These benevolent societies were responsible for raising support and distributing supplies for whichever army they supported—Union or Confederate. The first Jewish society was established by Rebecca Gratz in Philadelphia in 1819. Even though this society had existed for almost forty years before the war began, it was still an important factor during the Civil War. Again in Philadelphia, as the war broke out, a group of Jewish women formed the Ladies Hebrew Association for the Relief of Sick and Wounded Union Soldiers, determined to treat soldiers irrespective of religious creed.¹⁰⁶ These societies usually worked alongside the United States

¹⁰⁶ See *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 26, 1863 in Bertram Korn's *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961), 101.

Sanitary Commission (USSC): *The Occident* newspaper describes a case in which, after a call from the Women's branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a "delegate to represent the Hebrew women in that body [the USSC]" was needed.¹⁰⁷ On December 9, 1863, one of these relief societies in Pittsburgh organized a fair for the benefit of the USSC, and according to a news reporter from the *Jewish Reporter*, the tables "literally groaned beneath the weight of the luxuries."¹⁰⁸ Bertram Korn argues that Sanitary Fairs were popular because "the great Sanitary Fairs offered an unequalled opportunity for Jewish participation on a large scale."¹⁰⁹ Even though these benevolent societies supplied bandages and held fairs to raise funds to buy other supplies that soldiers needed, some women desired a way to become more involved in the war effort.

As injuries increased, there was an acute need for hospital workers to take care of soldiers. Women thought themselves the workforce to take on the task of tending the wounded. Americans—including Jewish Americans—believed that women were innately designated for the role of nurse, given they had experience taking care of sick relatives. However, while white women were recognized as logical answers to the problem, customary ideas of femininity and virtue served as barriers that women had to overcome throughout the course of the war. Both Southern and Northern women dealt with the prevailing notions that their status as "ladies" would be threatened by interacting with strange and sickly men.¹¹⁰ The indecencies of war did not bode well in keeping with gendered notions of "appropriate" work. Historian Melissa Strong

¹⁰⁷ "News Items," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, June 1, 1863 (Accessed February 8, 2020), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

¹⁰⁸ *Jewish Record*, January 8, 1864 in Korn's *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 102.

¹⁰⁹ Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 103.

¹¹⁰ Historian Edward Campbell argues in *A Woman's War* that the popular opinion at the time was that "caring for men's bodies seemed demeaning and indelicate" for ladies of refinement. See Edward Campbell et. All, *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 5.

asserts that women were dedicated to “depicting hospital work as equivalent to military service” in order to equate their service to that of soldiers.¹¹¹ After Jewish communities began to band together and form hospitals where medical services could be provided for injured and sick soldiers from the frontlines, women fought hard to enter into these areas where they were so desperately needed. Jewish women drew upon the tenets of their religion to justify their entrance into this realm: charity, love, and the potential to spread their religion.

The most famous example of a Jewish woman operating as a nurse during the Civil War is that of Phoebe Yates Levy Pember. Born into the prestigious Levy’s of Charleston, Pember was widowed at an early age near the beginning of the war. Working her way up from simple nursing tasks, she ended up as the matron of Chimborazo Military Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. Chimborazo was the largest military hospital in the world at the time, and that a woman, no less a Jewish woman, was in charge of this enterprise was unprecedented. Eli Evans wrote that “it was a remarkable achievement for a Southern woman, especially one from the aristocracy, for this [Chimborazo] was the largest hospital in the world at that time, at its height with 150 wards and over the course of the war serving 76,000 patients.”¹¹² Pember wrote about the criticism that she faced from her community: Southern men feared that “her nature would become deteriorated and her sensibilities blunted.”¹¹³ Women equated their services with military service and legitimized their actions in the language of patriotism. However, Pember recounts that she and her colleagues “encountered considerable opposition when [they] entered into what at the time was regarded as a domain reserved for males.”¹¹⁴ Pember’s experience as a

¹¹¹ Melissa Strong, “The Finest Kind of Lady”: Hegemonic Femininity in American Women’s Civil War Narratives,” *Women’s Studies* 46, no. 1 (2017): 1-21, doi:10.1080/00497878.2017.1252560. See also Libra Rose Hilde, *Worth a Dozen Men: Women and Nursing in the Civil War South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 2.

¹¹² Eli N. Evans, “The War between Jewish Brothers in America,” 33.

¹¹³ Phoebe Yates Pember, *A Southern Woman’s Story: Life in Confederate Richmond* (Jackson: McCowat-Mercer, 1959), 25.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

Jewish woman did not affect her treatment as a matron or nurse, likely because of her reputation as a Levy and as an upper-class Southern socialite.¹¹⁵ In fact, Pember famously wrote:

The feelings here against the Yankees exceeds anything I could imagine, particularly among the good Christians. I spent an evening among a particularly pious set. One lady said she had a pile of Yankee bones lying around her pump so that the first glance on evening her eyes would rest upon them. Another begged me to get her a Yankee Skull to keep her toilet trinkets in. All had something of the kind to say— at last I lifted my voice and congratulated myself at being born of a nation, and religious that did enjoin forgiveness on its enemies, that enjoyed the blessed privilege of praying for an eye for an eye, and a life for a life, and was not one of those for whom Christ died in vain, considering the present state of feelings. I proposed that till the war was over they should all join the Jewish Church, let forgiveness and peace and good will alone and put their trust in the sword of the Lord and Gideon. It was a very agreeable evening, and all was taken in good part. I certainly had the best of the argument, and the gentlemen seconded me ably.¹¹⁶

As women maintained their patriotic fervor throughout the war, their service was more readily accepted. As wartime conditions forced contact between women, dissenters, and soldiers, public opinion in favor of extending the female sphere of influence shifted in women's favor. Civil War nurses set into motion the rethinking of notions of appropriate work for the genders and defied restrictions placed on them by society at the time. Women's patriotism, especially that of Phoebe Yates Pember, not only legitimized women's current roles as nurses but would later help permanently expand the woman's sphere outside of the home.¹¹⁷

Dissenting women were as important to the war as nurses. Before the outbreak of the conflict, most classes of women were expected to keep their political opinions to themselves—

¹¹⁵ Throughout Pember's diary describing her service in Richmond, she describes the suffering of those who were under her care, and writes about the mental and emotional toll watching so many Southern men die took on her. She never mentions, however, that she regretted her service.

¹¹⁶ Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story*, 168.

¹¹⁷ Historian Mark Greenberg has argued that after the War, women used the notions and roles ascribed to "ladies" to "fashion an expanded social sphere" couched in language that extended their duties as mothers which resulted in an expansion of their sphere instead of redefinition. See Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia 1830-1880," Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997: 232.

with the elitist class of women sometimes being allowed to share what their opinions in the company of other Southern elites. With the absence of men who typically policed the social scene— dictating what women could say and do— women realized they were able to share their opinions much more freely.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, they were freer from the repercussions of breaking traditional cultural norms, although repercussions did still exist. Eugenia Levy Phillips, a Jewish woman from a prominent Jewish family, was a fiery and outspoken Confederate supporter from Charleston. An outspoken Union dissenter, she is most famously known for her imprisonment in a Union prison after criticizing a Union Soldier within earshot of General Benjamin Butler. She wrote in her diary that upon entering her New Orleans home one day, in 1862, “He [Butler] screamed: ‘You are seen laughing and mocking at the remains of a Federal officer. I do not call you a common woman of the town, but an uncommonly vulgar one, and I sentence you to Ship Island for the War.’”¹¹⁹ She was taken to Ship’s Island— a notorious, isolated prison site infested with mosquitoes and the threat of disease sixty five miles from New Orleans— for her imprisonment, and she described her commitment to the cause as such: “I wept unseen, and my heart gave them that quiet homage which the *Cause*, not the *individual*, determined to consecrate in her sacred memory and honor by a dignified submission to a tyrant's abuse.”¹²⁰ Phillips portrayed herself as a patriot, one who was taking a stand against the tyrannical United States Government that was embodied by General Butler. Scholars have argued that “although others harbored strong feelings, Eugenia Phillips’s act of defiance was atypical.”¹²¹ Phillips’ example

¹¹⁸ Confederate Nurse Kate Cummings wrote in her diary towards the beginning of the war that “men nowadays seem to think that we women have no right to leave our homes.” See Kate Cummings, *The Journal of a Confederate Nurse*, Ed. Richard Barksdale Harwell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 51.

¹¹⁹ Eugenia Levy Phillips, “Journal of Mrs. Eugenia Levy Phillips, 1861-1862,” in Jacob Rader Marcus’s *Memoirs of American Jews, 1776-1865*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Historical Society, 1955), 161.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Eugenia Levy Phillips, “Journal of Mrs. Eugenia Levy Phillips, 1861-1862” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1776-1865*, 161.

should not be excused or overlooked, as she seems to have been committed for reasons other than loneliness and the hardships of war, which scholars have suggested were reasons for the commitment of most Southern women.¹²² Phillip's defiance and refusal to follow traditional social norms resulted in men in powerful positions recognizing that women were determined to help the cause like their male counterparts.

Jewish women displayed the same patriotism as their male counterparts and actively translated their thoughts and beliefs into action. That patriotism permeated even into the women's circles and levels of society truly evidences the shift that occurred during the war years in terms of how Jewish Americans were self-identifying. Moving from an insular view to one where they became integrated and identified—and subsequently acted in accordance with—the larger American populace. This group of immigrants that had been in the country before its actual creation had finally come into their own—they conceived and truly believed that America was *their* country. They served that country in a variety of ways: as suppliers, as nurses, and as dissenters. These Jewish women were inventive and found ways to extend their spheres of influence outside of their typical arenas—which proved their resourcefulness and ingenuity to those around them and did so in the name of serving their country.

Anti-Jewish Sentiment during the Civil War Era

At the same time as they were fighting to prove their patriotism, there were people who were fighting to tear them down solely based on the notion that they were Jewish. Historian John Higham argues that this occurred because “the anti-Catholic, anti-radical, and Anglo-Saxon traditions had opened channels through which a large part of the xenophobia of the late

¹²² “The Home Front,” Mendelssohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, 266.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries would flow.”¹²³ American Jews were the antithesis of everything that nativists believed in: they were largely immigrants from places such as Germany and Russia, they were not Protestants, and as the nativists saw it, never able to be assimilated into the population. Higham also writes that Jewish citizens were targeted because of their association with commerce which opponents linked with profiteering from the war.¹²⁴ The physical grouping of Jewish communities in an urban setting and the language barrier that typically presented itself further isolated the Jewish people—portraying them as fundamentally different from the “typical” American.

These anti-Semitic feelings manifested themselves in a variety of ways, the first of which was known as the “Chaplaincy Controversy.” Up until 1862, Army chaplains serving in the United States Armed Forces had to be professed Christians—both Protestants and a small number of Catholics.¹²⁵ In a letter to a Rabbi who complained about the unfairness of the order, Simon Cameron, the Union Secretary of War, reminded the rabbi that chaplains “must be a regular ordained minister of some Christian denomination.”¹²⁶ Abraham Lincoln later changed the language of the order to include Jewish chaplains and subsequently appointed Jacob Frankel to be the first Jewish military chaplain after the Jewish people appealed to him to change the law.¹²⁷ The *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* reported Lincoln’s reversal extensively— it

¹²³ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 12.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²⁵ Catholic chaplains were generally at odds with the Protestant chaplains that had been a military tradition since the Revolutionary War. The nativist leanings of the country included an anti-Catholic tradition, which prevented the full integration of Catholic chaplains into the chaplaincy.

¹²⁶ Simon Cameron to Rev. A. Fischel, October 31, 1861, in Myer S. Isaacs, “A Jewish Army Chaplain,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 12 (1904): 128.

¹²⁷ The actual text is as follows: “That so much of Section 9 of the act approved July 22, 1861, and of Section 7 of the Act providing...approved August 3d, 1861, as defines the qualifications of Chaplains in the army and volunteers, shall hereafter be construed to read as follows: That no person shall be appointed a chaplain in the United States Army who is not a regularly ordained minister of some religious denomination.” See Myer S. Isaacs’s “A Jewish Army Chaplain,” 135.

reported astutely that “the appointment of one among us as chaplain, besides its being the first good result of the altered law of the last Congress, illustrates happily the beneficial effects of union.”¹²⁸ The impact of this decision on the Jewish soldiers was unmistakable. Soldier Jacob Winans wrote to his father about his witnessing an execution of five soldiers– one of whom was Jewish– who had been found deserting the Union Army:

We were out to witness the execution of five deserters belonging to the 1st Div of this corps. They were substitutes and deserted while on the way to the Division. The corps was drawn out in line of column by divisions. The men were marched along the line between the Divisions, then to the graves, seated upon their coffins [*sic*]. There was a Catholic Priest and Jewish Rabbi who prayed with them.¹²⁹

The comfort of having a fellow believer by ones side when one was dying was one of the biggest tasks with which Army Chaplains were used for and the introduction of Jewish chaplains certainly allayed the fears that many of the dying Jewish soldiers felt. Winning this battle was monumental for the Jewish population of America; the allowing of Jewish chaplains solidified once and for all that the government would at least grant its Jewish citizens the same opportunities that it did to its Christian citizens– which in turn contributed to the rise in patriotism that Jewish citizens felt and subsequently portrayed.

Simultaneously, anti-Semitism was at work, even by those in the ranks. The most infamous case of anti-Semitism during the war was General Grant’s General Orders No. 11 which he issued during the winter of 1862. The order read:

The Jews, as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also Department orders, are hereby expelled from the Department. Within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order by Post Commanders, they will see that all of this class of people are furnished with

¹²⁸ “News Items,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, October 1, 1862 (accessed February 10, 2020), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

¹²⁹ Jacob S. Winans to Isaac Winans, August 29, 1863, <https://www.shapell.org/manuscript/1026-vivid-eyewitness-description-of-execution-of-deserters-at-beverly-ford-mentions-the-presence-of-a-rabbi-praying-with-one-of-the-condemned-men/#transcripts>.

passes and required to leave, and any one returning after such notification, will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners unless furnished with permits from these Head Quarters. No permits will be given these people to visit Head Quarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade permits.¹³⁰

The department of which Grant spoke included portions of the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky, and while it only affected a small number of Jewish Americans, it nonetheless drew an immense amount of public attention across the nation— and in some cases, scrutiny.¹³¹ Grant would defend his order because he believed a black-market in Southern cotton was being run "mostly by Jews and other unprincipled traders."¹³² Indeed, many Americans seemed to have shared similar opinions regarding Jewish citizens and their explicit association with wartime profiteering. Jonathan Sarna astutely argues that this "implication, echoing a perennial anti-Semitic canard, was that Jews preferred to benefit from war rather than fight in it."¹³³ Other evidence points to Grant's father actually being the one involved in the black market, but Grant nonetheless implicated that the Jewish populations living in the areas underneath his control were responsible for the illegal economic activity. Perhaps because Grant was drawing upon his own Christian bias and had long believed that the Jewish people were "financially unscrupulous," he issued the order which reflected his belief that Jews were a *class* of people, not just a religious people.¹³⁴ Abraham Lincoln would have the order overturned only three weeks later after Cesar Kaskel, a Jew and a friend of Lincoln, telegraphed him about the

¹³⁰ "General Order No.11," *War Department of the United States*, December 17, 1862, as cited in John Simon's "That Obnoxious Order," in Sarna and Mendelssohn's *Jews and the Civil War: A reader*, 353.

¹³¹ Jonathan Sarna argues in his book, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, that only about one-hundred Jews were affected by the order. See Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 2012), 17.

¹³² Ulysses S. Grant to C.P. Wolcott, December 17, 1862, as cited in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 56.

¹³³ Sarna, *When General Grants Expelled the Jews*, 30.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

injustice and that the wider American Jewish community was in an uproar over the order.¹³⁵ What is important to note is that Kaskel couched his telegram to Lincoln in patriotic language, writing that the Jews were “good and loyal citizens of the United States,’ and pronounced themselves- as Americans- ‘greatly insulted and outraged by this inhumane order, the carrying out of which would be the grossest violation of the Constitution, and our rights as good citizens under it.’”¹³⁶ Grant’s General Order No. 11 contributed to the growing anti-Semitism that was especially brought on by the wartime stress and trials, and that it came from someone as highly respected as General Grant seemed to legitimize the growing tide of backlash that the American Jewish population was experiencing. Ironically, as Jewish people were identifying more and more as Americans, they simultaneously were facing more anti-Semitism as nativists and others who believed the stereotypes surrounding Jewish Americans feared they were losing “their” America.

Newspapers played a huge role in the cultural revolution that occurred simultaneously with the war. They were one of the main means of communication across the vast physical landscape of the United States that was worn-torn and ravaged. These newspapers, however, were the perfect place for the budding anti-Semitic beliefs of some Americans to be aired; *Harper’s Weekly* from August 1, 1863, is a perfect example. In the paper, the unnamed contributor astutely lays out how he feels:

You [The Jews] have no native, no political, no religious sympathy with this country. You are here solely to make money, and your only wish is to make money as fast as possible. You neither know our history nor understand our Government; but, believing

¹³⁵ See “Resolutions on General Grants Order,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, February 1, 1863, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document for information regarding the community’s response.

¹³⁶ Cesar Kaskel to Abraham Lincoln, telegram, December 17, 1862, as cited in Sarna’s *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, 11.

that all men are selfish and mean, nothing is absurder [*sic*] to your mind than the American doctrine of popular government based upon equal rights.¹³⁷

The author attacks Jewish people on the grounds that they have nothing tying them to the ground, drawing upon the pre-war notions of Jewish identity that seemed typical of all Jewish Americans. Time and time again the Jewish population proved that they were committed to making sure that America knew they were here to stay— and that this was as much their country as it was a Christian’s country.

The newspapers denigrated the Jews because they believed that Jewish behavior was unbecoming, but “what else could be expected from a Jew but money-getting....Since the time they were driven out of the Temple until now, for them money has been country....”¹³⁸ The *American Israelite* reported that Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts claimed that currency devaluation during the war was due to a contest between the “Jew-brokers, the money lenders... and the productive toling [*sic*] men of the country.”¹³⁹ In response to an article published by the *Patterson Press* in 1864 that claimed that “the great majority of those engaged in gold speculation are of the Jewish race,” the *Jewish Messenger* countered by saying that only about 5 percent were involved in the speculation.¹⁴⁰ All of these instances only reinforced and spread the anti-Semitic claims that were clearly not true and driven more by fear than by facts.

Discrimination against Jewish people was not a new phenomenon during the Civil War, but the uptick in the frequency was alarming, especially to American Jewry since they had largely immigrated from areas where anti-Semitism was prevalent. It was confusing: America

¹³⁷ “An Open Letter,” *Harper’s Weekly*, August 1, 1863, <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/august/new-york-riot.htm>.

¹³⁸ *Southern Illustrated News*, Vol. II, 1863, as cited in Louise Mayo’s “The Ambivalent Image: The Perception of the Jew in Nineteenth Century America,” Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 1977: 307.

¹³⁹ *American Israelite*, March 22, 1861, as cited in Mayo’s “The Ambivalent Image,” 308.

¹⁴⁰ *Jewish Messenger*, February 12, 1864, as cited in Mayo's "The Ambivalent Image," 309.

was supposed to be a religious haven, yet the prejudice still existed. Nor could the issue be attributed to a particular region— the North and the South were home to individuals who held these beliefs. Anti-Semitism during the war years resulted in the strengthening of Jewish Americans' identity instead of weakening it. They began to define themselves in opposition to the anti-Semitism which only strengthened their ties to their home country. America was their home and it would continue to be— they had as much claim to the American identity as any other person who lived in the country. Jewish men served in the Armed Forces, Jewish women toiled on the home front in the absence of their men, and throughout the United States, whether they lived in the Union or the Confederacy, Jewish Americans tried to make sense of the world around them in their own terms. The gruesome nature of war and the devastating toll it took on the country as a broken whole affected its Jewish population as much as its Christian population.

Conclusion

As the war began to wind down and the country began the long process of healing, Jewish identity looked markedly different than it had during the antebellum years. Jews across the nation, on the battlefield and on the home front, made sacrifices and suffered alongside and along with the rest of the American population. Jewish identity morphed from one of isolation and separateness to one of integration and patriotism. Inasmuch as they tried to prove their patriotic leanings were genuine, the anti-Semitic attitudes that came to the fore during the conflict and the pressures of the process of Reconstruction would feed into the furthering of the American Jewish stereotype. These stereotypes would complicate the lived experiences of American Jewry beginning in 1865 up until the early twentieth century.

Chapter III

From Reconstruction to Ellis Island: Major Changes in the American Jewish Population

Reconstruction would test the newly reunited nation's strength and would leave many grappling with the war's realities: the death, destruction, and emotional turmoil. The war had brought about a new wave of religious fervor as Americans turned to religion, especially Protestant Christianity, to explain the chaotic world around them. Many believed that the Civil War had been divine punishment from God for the sins of the people. One of these sins was directly put on the Jewish people— by refusing to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Messiah, they were directly to blame for at least a portion of God's wrath.¹⁴¹ This further fueled the anti-Jewish sentiments and attacks levied against American Jewry during the War and in the postbellum years. The opinions formed about American Jews during these years created issues for the mass influx of Jews who would arrive on the shores of America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. American Jews, however, still characterized themselves as patriots, although this identity would be complicated by and cause tensions between Jews who had lived in America prior to 1880 and Eastern European Jews who arrived during massive waves of immigration at the beginning of the early twentieth century.

Jewish Entrepreneurship during Reconstruction

Jewish entrepreneurship, specifically in dealing with the cotton market, before, during, and after the war was one of the most galvanizing aspects of attack for anti-Semites. Many of the immigrants coming from Europe in the Antebellum years were already engaged in economic

¹⁴¹ See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," in Jacob Rader Marcus, ed. *The American Jewish Experience*, 2nd edition (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1997): 20-28.

pursuits that involved store-owning and trade. They created their own ethnic networks in Europe due to credit-lending practices that existed there. And as a result, as historian Michael R. Cohen has argued, they “[leveraged] these ethnic networks” once they had arrived in America, to “[create] a niche economy in the nation’s most important industry – cotton.”¹⁴² In the Antebellum period, this niche had helped Jewish men integrate into the towns in which they were living. As a result, they supported philanthropic projects that revolved around their community’s broader causes.¹⁴³ Previous to their integration, Jews and Gentiles living in the same spaces were operating in almost completely isolated social spheres. Once Jewish merchants became engaged in the cotton trade, particularly, they were brought into the fold of their local societies. Especially in the South where cotton was king, Jewish entrepreneurs who were new to the area became part of these insular, integrated societies. Bringing Jews into local social circles contributed to the regional ties that they developed on the brink of the war.

The war, however, changed the relationship between Jewish merchants and local people. Because these Jewish merchants had fared relatively well during the war compared to other (Christian) people, they were envied.¹⁴⁴ As a result, these merchants became the subject of many attacks that they had been unpatriotic during the war, choosing to profit from the country’s misfortunes instead of contributing to the war effort. After the cotton crop of 1866 failed drastically due to flooding, farmers and merchants were desperate to make a profit during the 1867 season. They were once again disappointed, with the Mississippi flooding its banks during the spring. W.G. Shafer noted in his diary that the river was high in Bayou Sara and that the

¹⁴² Michael R. Cohen, *The Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 1.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Jewish merchants fared relatively well in comparison to Christian merchants due to their extensive network of ethnic relationships with people in both Europe and the North (which fared much better than the South).

“water in Town [is] increasing fast in Ditches.”¹⁴⁵ The disastrous years of 1866 and 1867 left farmers in debt and turning to those who had credit available to bail them out— which happened to include Jewish creditors. These companies had to rely on their pre-Reconstruction cash reserves to get them through the downturn of 1866-1867; some Jewish-owned businesses would survive, and others would not. If merchants were able to survive this small depression, their prospects soon brightened. Cotton prices doubled between late 1867 and summer of 1868 and the increased production brought about a period of prosperity that would last until the fall of 1873.¹⁴⁶ Jewish merchants would particularly benefit during this time of economic upturn because of their working with freedmen in terms of providing credit so freedmen could purchase supplies for things such as sharecropping. Michael Cohen argues that “needing to start from scratch in order to grow crops as tenant farmers or sharecroppers, freedmen, whose emancipation was far from complete, did have the autonomy to work with merchants of their choosing during this era.”¹⁴⁷ Merchants took a big risk of financing these freedmen since they were just beginning to work of their own accord, but the possibility of a good return on their investment was too great for them to refuse. Towns across the South particularly housed firms such as Picard & Weil that were reported to “trade principally with negroes” and worked with “small

¹⁴⁵ Diary of W.G. Shafer, March 21, 1866, as cited in Cohen’s *The Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era*, 95; The height of the upturn in the cotton market did not occur right away in 1868. The *Southern Cultivator* newspaper reported that in November of 1868 the land was still producing ten percent less cotton than typically average. See “Cotton Crop Prices &C.,” *Southern Cultivator* 26, no. 11 (Nov. 1868): 335. https://search-proquest-com.proxy.wm.edu/docview/137862985?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo.

¹⁴⁶ Cohen, *The Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era*, 102. Even though they had experienced a brief period of prosperity, the *Southern Cultivator* chided its readers that the depression was in part due to Southern farmers living outside of their means. See “Prices of Cotton,” *Southern Cultivator* 31, no. 11 (November 1873): 443.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

farmers.”¹⁴⁸ Working with freedmen provided further evidence, in some anti-Semites’ opinions, that the Jews had never been true patriots.

With both the history of their history of working as sutlers during the war and their seemingly prosperous time during Reconstruction, American Jewish Entrepreneurs faced backlash for things beyond their control— they were simply in the right place at the right time. Other white entrepreneurs termed these Jewish business owners as “carpetbaggers” and “scalawags” just as white Southerners characterized all opportunistic entrepreneurs who flocked to the South during Reconstruction or whom were seen as undesirables. The fact that some Jewish merchants had profited in recent times only bolstered anti-Semitic feelings that had heightened during the war years.

In addition to acting as cotton brokers, many Jews established stores, some of which grew into large department stores during the twentieth century. Stores sprung up across the nation, especially in the South. Julius Garfinkel who would later found Garfinkel’s based in Washington, D.C., was born to Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States from Prussia in 1854.¹⁴⁹ Following in his peddler father’s footsteps, Garfinkel established his business in 1899 and by the 1920s the business had grown into a multi-million dollar enterprise. In New Orleans, Leon Godchaux opened up a store on Canal Street. Godchaux, a Jewish immigrant from the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, got his start in the 1840s as most Jewish immigrants did— by becoming a peddler. He sold needles, thread, and other dry goods up and down the

¹⁴⁸ Louisiana, 22:244, 255, 247, R.G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library, HBS, as cited in Cohen’s *The Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era*, 109.

¹⁴⁹ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C., *Card index to naturalizations in Louisiana (P2087)*, Microfilm Serial: P2087, Microfilm Roll: 6, https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=bZK13&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=CmPPBuLzjsgNj99LgPJ%2BLg%3D%3D&gss=angsg&new=1&rank=1&gsfn=Harris%20&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Garfinkel&gsln_x=0&msbdy=1835&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=apb&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=5266629&dbid=1629&indiv=1&queryId=0cc3d7cf44f3cca058b4334ee6f9487f&ml_rpos=1 (accessed April 10, 2020).

Mississippi River, but probably could not have imagined that his store would expand into the massive “skyscraper-style” store at the corner of Canal and Chartres Streets.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, William Thalhimer, a German Jewish immigrant to Richmond, Virginia, found his niche operating a store with his grandson, William B. Thalhimer, in 1842.¹⁵¹ Thalhimer’s managed to survive the war and thrived across the Southeast until 1992.

The most enduring Jewish business that emerged following the Civil War is Macy’s Department Store. Isidor Straus, a Jewish immigrant, along with his brother Nathan, bought W.H. Macy and Co. from the managing partners in 1895. Although they had been a part of the business for some while, operating their own business in Macy’s, 1895 saw them acquire W.H. Macy and subsequently merge their business, L. Straus and Sons, into one entity. Straus became known for his stance on low tariffs, arguing that since American glass and pottery were backed by a strong, capitalist, economy that the need for protective tariffs was pointless.¹⁵² While he quickly rose to prominence in both financial and political arenas, Straus never forgot his fellow Jews, especially those who were newly arrived in America. In 1889, he helped found what was initially called the Hebrew Education Alliance along with several other prominent Jewish men including Myer S. Isaacs.¹⁵³ When Straus died fatefully when the *Titanic* sank, he was heralded by newspapers as a man that had “lived a saint and died a hero.”¹⁵⁴ Macy’s grew from a small storefront to a multi-story, million dollar business under the Jewish leadership of Isidor Straus

¹⁵⁰ See Godchaux's, 527-537 Canal Street, black and white photo, Charles L. Franck Studio Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1920, <http://hnoc.minisisinc.com/thnoc/catalog/1/56683>.

¹⁵¹ See Thalhimer Family Papers Collection, Virginia Holocaust Museum, <https://vaholocaust.pastperfectonline.com/archive/94BBF2AD-6F72-47B3-B2AF-881607209370>.

¹⁵² Straus managed to garner a petition of 250 individuals that represented importers and dealers in the United States. See L. Straus & Sons, *Report of the Tariff Commission*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), 2291-2.

¹⁵³ “A History of Education Alliance,” *Education Alliance*, 2018, <https://edalliance.org/about-us/history/timeline/>.

¹⁵⁴ “A True and Noble Man,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1912, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1912/04/30/100531885.html?pageNumber=3>.

and having a Jewish man in such a visible, high-ranking position allowed him to use his money and power to act charitably towards other American Jews, especially those who were newly arrived in America. Jewish stores started in the nineteenth century established roots that lasted well into the twentieth century and proved that Jewish businessmen could hold their own amidst a white, Christian man's world.

Women were largely excluded from economic ventures after the war, even after they had proved their patriotism and resourcefulness during the period. Across the country, many women returned to "keeping house". Although many white men had seen how useful women could be in the workplace, they were not ready to allow for drastic changes such as women leaving the domestic sphere to occur. In keeping with the Jewish custom of *Shalom Bayit* (harmony in the home) and traditional Jewish beliefs regarding gender roles, Jewish women returned to their expected roles as mothers, wives, and home tenders.¹⁵⁵ According to scholar Mark I. Greenberg, Jewish women took in boarders, such as single Jewish men and women who required living accommodations, in order to increase both their family's cash flow, and to exercise power within their dictated parameters.¹⁵⁶ Greenberg also argues, in reference to Southern Jewish women, that

¹⁵⁵ An example is found in the the 1870 Census. It lists Fannie Levy and Martha Levy of Savannah, GA's (of the famous Savannah Levy's) occupations as "keeping house." See 1870 U.S. census, population schedules. NARA microfilm publication M593, 1,761 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d., https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=bZK15&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=aM1m8g61mJdwkpVed%2BA5Dw%3D%3D&gss=angsg&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsln=Levy&gsln_x=0&msypn__ftp=Savannah,%20Chatham,%20Georgia,%20USA&msypn=18029&msbdy=1845&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=apb&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=2832504&dbid=7163&indiv=1&queryId=95833380e74e400f4ab17697b4fc1948&ml_rpos=1.

¹⁵⁶ Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia 1830-1880," Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997, <https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/304351126?accountid=15053>, 137.; For example, the Chicago based newspaper *The Reform Advocate* makes several mentions of a boarding house operated by Mrs. E. Schubach. The advertisement continuously makes it clear that "transients [are] accommodated." See "Boarding House," *The Reform Advocate*, June 2, 1894, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document. The same newspaper also makes mention of the sale of a Jewish boarding house in Chicago, which made a profit of "\$60 weekly." See "For Sale," *The Reform Advocate*, May 7, 1892,

“in their roles as Jewish, middle-class, and Southern mothers and housewives, they acted as a cultural mediator between the family’s national and religious heritage and its desire for comfort and acceptance, into local Christian society.¹⁵⁷ Acting as managers of these boarding houses, these Jewish women provided a necessary service and fostered ethnic networks which helped ease the transition into American customs and culture by providing an example through which they could become acculturated to American life. Although they were kept out of economic spheres in occupations traditionally seen as masculine, women nonetheless found and negotiated ways to exercise both economic and social power in their “spheres of domesticity.”

Jewish Patriotism during Reconstruction

Continuing the tradition of characterizing themselves as patriots that emerged during the war, Jewish Americans once again clung to patriotic language and actions in order to combat attacks of anti-Semitism and anti-patriotism. The issue of Jewish loyalty, as historian Gary L. Bunker has identified, was still being hotly debated even thirty years after the Civil War had ended.¹⁵⁸ The American Jewish population, however, was committed to ensuring they were viewed as patriots due to their service during the war. The patriotism American Jewry would display during Reconstruction, however, was directly displayed and enacted using the ballot box, a right they had earned.

When Rabbi Isaac Leeser, founder of *The Occident* newspaper and outspoken critic of anti-Semitic rhetoric and actions, passed away in 1868, he was heralded as a Jew, an American, and a Southerner.¹⁵⁹ The newspaper put it astutely: writing that “although only an adopted

http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ See Gary L. Bunker, “‘Shoddy,’ Anti-Semitism and the Civil War,” (1994), 71.

¹⁵⁹ “Resolutions on the Death of Reverend Isaac Leeser,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, March 1, 1868,

citizen of this once great and happy land, he was, in thought and in act, thoroughly American.”¹⁶⁰ Congregations from New York to Charleston lamented the loss of Leeser, indicating that his popularity transcended the regionalism that had in part led to the Civil War. That Leeser’s death was widely publicized evidences his influence across the country, especially in Jewish communities. This influence, in large part, helped convince Jewish citizens living in America to begin identifying as Jewish Americans.

While Jewish communities were still mourning one of its beloved leaders, when the election of 1868 pitted General Grant as the Republican nominee against the Democratic candidate, New York Governor Horatio Seymour, the question of Jewish loyalty and patriotism was brought to the forefront of the American political scene. Democrats, after losing a large portion of its Southern electorate, made sure to stimulate discussion regarding the Jewish vote. After all, the Jewish population in America had swelled to upwards of 300,000 people and the Democratic Party thought that if it could turn the Jewish vote against Grant that they could easily secure the election. The *New York Herald*, a known Democratic journal, claimed that “this thing is at least certain, that against General Grant every influence of money and votes that can be controlled by the Hebrew race in the United States will be put forth with acrimonious activity; and their power is by no means to be despised.”¹⁶¹ In the same issue, the *Herald* reported that they did not believe that the “Hebrews” would forgive General Grant following his infamous General Order No. 11 in 1862, especially because Grant had used the pejorative term “Jew” instead of the more socially acceptable “Hebrew” or “Israelite.”¹⁶² The *New York World*, another

http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ *New York Herald*, as quoted in Jewish Chronicle (London), January 28, 1868, as cited in Joakim Isaacs, “Candidate Grant and the Jews,” in Sarna’s “Jews and the Civil War: A Reader,” 400.

¹⁶² *New York Herald*, as quoted in Jewish Chronicle (London), January 28, 1868, as cited in Joakim Isaacs, “Candidate Grant and the Jews,” in Sarna’s “Jews and the Civil War: A Reader,” 400. See also “Double Dealing of

Democratic publication, spoke of Grant's order "as the brutal order which expelled hundreds of inoffensive Jewish citizens who were peacefully attending to their own affairs miles away from the scene of conflict."¹⁶³ Furthermore, the Jewish newspaper *Zion's Herald* published an article in which the author recounted he had heard from several different sources that Grant's candidacy was a surprise because he did not seem ambitious enough.¹⁶⁴ By recognizing the potential and playing to the strength-in-numbers of the American Jewish vote, the Democratic Party hoped to use Grant's spotted past with American Jewry to its advantage.

Within the American Jewish population, there were different responses to Grant's campaign. One faction believed that they had to respond to political issues as Jews first and foremost. Isaac M. Wise, the leader of the American Reform movement and rabbi, for example, argued:

Worse than General Grant none in this nineteenth century in civilized countries has abused and outraged the Jew. . . . If there are any among us who lick the feet that kick them about and like dogs run after him who has whipped them, if there are persons small enough to receive indecencies and outrages without resentment. . . we hope their number is small!¹⁶⁵

Not all Jews, however, agreed with Wise's belief regarding Grant. Scholar Joakim Isaacs has argued:

Others favored excusing Grant because of the difficult circumstances facing him at the time the Order was given; they called for the "Yom Kippur" spirit of forgiveness to permeate the air. Still another group took the position that, regardless of what Grant had done against the Jews, the Republicans should be supported as the party of Lincoln and human freedom.¹⁶⁶

General Grant," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 18, 1868, https://www.newspapers.com/image/26848874/?clipping_id=19556917.

¹⁶³ *New York World*, July 18, 1868, as cited in Joakim Isaacs, "Candidate Grant and the Jews," in Sarna's "Jews and the Civil War: A Reader," 400.

¹⁶⁴ "Various Opinions about General Grant," *Zion's Herald* 45, no. 37, September 10, 1868, <https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.wm.edu/docview/127285424?accountid=15053>.

¹⁶⁵ *The Israelite*, February 28, 1868 as cited Joakim Isaacs, "Candidate Grant and the Jews," in Sarna's "Jews and the Civil War: A Reader," 403.

¹⁶⁶ Joakim Isaacs, "Candidate Grant and the Jews," in Sarna's "Jews and the Civil War: A Reader," 404.

The competing factions highlighted the diverging opinions that existed within the religious group and showcased that American Jewry was not a cohesive, united group, but instead one that was highly individualized. The Democratic Party's plan to target the group relied on targeting it as a cohesive, unitary group, but failed to take into account that American Jewry was fragmented like American Protestantism. One Jewish citizen perhaps put it best regarding his identity as a Jewish person and an American:

I am a Jew, when Saturday, the seventh day, comes; I am one on my holidays; in the selection and treatment of my food; it was always written on my doorposts; it is always to be spoken in my prayers; and it always is to be seen in my reverence for my Bible, that I am a Jew. . . . But it is different when I . . . take a ballot in order to exercise my rights as a citizen. Then I am not a Jew, but I feel and vote as a citizen of the republic, I do not ask what pleases the Israelites. I consult the welfare of the country. If that party in whose hands I believe the welfare of the country, so far as the advancement of human rights was concerned, was the safest, were to place a Haman at the helm of state, and if the opposite party, whose nonexistence I believe would be better for humanity and my country, were to place Messiah at their head, make Moses the Chief Justice, and call the Patriarchs to the Cabinet, I should say, "Prosper under Haman, my fatherland, and here you have my vote, even if all the Jew in me mourns."¹⁶⁷

Despite the Democrats' best efforts, Grant beat Horatio Seymour in the election of 1868. Grant, whether trying to make up for the animosity that had stained his reputation during the war or because he genuinely thought citizens who just happened to be Jewish were the best for the job, proved to be an ally to the Jewish people during his Presidency, and, according to Joakim Isaacs, appointed many of them to posts at home and abroad. Isaacs further argues that

despite the circumstantial evidence against Grant, it would seem that he was a product of his time— filled with the common images of the Jew as a Christ-killer, usurer, and shrewd businessman. This stereotyped picture probably made Grant easily susceptible to the belief that the chief offenders in the cotton trade were the Jews and that, through the deviousness of their character, they were able to succeed to a greater degree than the more "righteous" Gentiles.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, July 30, 1868, as reprinted from the *Illinois Staatszeitung*, July 18, 1868, as cited in Joakim Isaacs, "Candidate Grant and the Jews," in Sarna's "Jews and the Civil War: A Reader," 404.

¹⁶⁸ Isaacs, "Candidate Grant and the Jews," in Sarna's "Jews and the Civil War: A Reader," 408.

Consequently, it is not surprising that Grant described himself as a friend to the Jewish people despite General Order No. 11. The controversy surrounding how American Jewry should respond to Grant's campaign further illustrated how determined the Jewish population was to prove their patriotism while simultaneously not drawing attention and criticism to themselves.

The Christian Agenda

The post-War years posed the biggest threat to American Jewry. There was a movement in the country to sever the separation of Church and State.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, these Christian crusaders broadened their resolve to reform not only the national government but also the state constitutions.¹⁷⁰ Those who were seeking to make up for their sins that had caused the War thought that America needed to firmly be established and codified as a Christian country so that there was no doubt they were a God-fearing people. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust argues that that this occurred due to the challenging of their traditional systems of belief based on new discoveries in science and biblical interpretation in the Antebellum Period.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, she believes that death during the Civil War violated “prevailing assumptions about life’s proper end—about who should die, when and where, and under what circumstances.”¹⁷² The transformations in death were due in large part to the presence of evangelical Christianity— by believing that death would result in their immortal soul uniting with God, death allowed soldiers to risk annihilation.¹⁷³ Thus, that the country was determined to become more Christian after the conflict as a way of making up for its wavering beliefs pre-war and the carnage during the War is

¹⁶⁹ The Bill of Rights does not explicitly mention the concept of the separation of church and state, but does prohibit Congress from making laws against or prohibiting the free exercise of religions. See U.S. Constitution, Article 1, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript> (accessed February 19, 2020).

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan D. Sarna, *The American Jewish Experience* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1997), 86.

¹⁷¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 172.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 175.

not surprising. The white South saw itself as the crucified messiah and the North believed itself to be steadfast anchor of the faith. Even the many Protestant denominations seemed to agree that it was high time the country decidedly announce that it would only tolerate one overarching religion in both practice and as a defining requirement for citizenship. This meant that that Jewish Americans would be forced to shed their newfound identities as Americans and return to their identities as Jews who were living in America.

The militant groups of Christians that were calling for an amendment to the Constitution did not go unnoticed by Jewish groups. Jewish leaders heard these cries, and informed those under their influence of the potential dangers. Initially, leaders such as Isaac Leeser warned his readers as early as 1865 to be aware that “The Constitution, which guaranteed this [religious] equality still exists on paper; but we grieve to record that there are men, even among our own personal Christian acquaintances, now at work to destroy the liberty of conscious...”¹⁷⁴ He continues:

It is humiliating to behold men of influence, and of more than average mortal powers, acting as pioneers in the work of digging the grave of religious liberty and social equality; but it is after all a return to the first principles of the dominant religion on this continent, “that who is not for us is against us,” and we are neither surprised nor terrified at this daring attempt to make Protestantism do in America what Romanism has failed to accomplish in the Old World, to wit: to introduce a uniformity of belief, and afterwards of practice, in accordance with what may be deemed by the *conquering* party of the doctrines of Christianity.¹⁷⁵

Although Leeser was not surprised himself that this movement was gaining traction in America, he did feel that it was an injustice to American Jewry, especially after the community had proved its patriotism beyond a doubt during the Civil War. He was obviously concerned about the issue

¹⁷⁴ “Rishuth,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, January 1, 1865 (accessed February 21, 2020), http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

enough to dedicate a substantial amount of space in this issue of *The Occident* to it, but ultimately told his readers that the way to combat this growing militant Christianity was by “[contributing] their silent, yet energetic action through the ballet, and by pen and speech, to rebuke the sacriligious [*sic*] attack which ambitious sectarians even now aim at the Constitution...”¹⁷⁶ Leeser’s solution indicates that American Jews not only knew the protections afforded to them under the Constitution but also that they were familiar with, and likely often participated in, voting. Leeser himself had come a long way in how he viewed the American democratic system. He originally encouraged Jews to not become involved to saying that the only way to halt the onslaught of religious tyranny would be to make their voices heard through voting.¹⁷⁷ The war had radically changed Leeser’s relationship to America, and he subsequently influenced his readers.

After many years of unsuccessful attempts to amend the Constitution, those who had advocated for a more Christianized America blamed their failure on the presence of Jewish Americans. The National Convention to Secure the Religious Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, the committee that was largely in charge of pushing the amendment through Congress, wrote about their campaign in 1872 that “the enemies of our movement naturally draw into their ranks all infidels, Jews, Jesuits, and all opposers of Him who is Lord over all, our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁷⁸ The Jews were once again “responsible” for the misfortunes of the people because they did not believe in the Messiah like their Christian counterparts did. The reformers were somewhat successful in their efforts. They had firmly established the so-called “Sunday

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Refer to Chapter 1 of this thesis for Leeser’s complete argument regarding Jews not participating in the American political system. Essentially, he thought that there was no point participating in the system because it was rigged in the Christians’ favor.

¹⁷⁸ *Proceedings of the National Convention to Secure the Religious Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, Held in Cincinnati, January 31 and February 1, 1872 with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the Movement* (Philadelphia: Jas. B Rodgers Co., 1872), 46.

Laws.” These laws were designed to protect the traditional Sabbath day as the Christian faith practiced it. Sunday, however, was a regular day of business for many of the Jewish-owned businesses that existed in the United States— places such as general stores and the like. The Jewish faith took its day of rest on Saturday, instead of Sunday, which further angered the religious zealots. The laws, thus, were cloaked in religious terms, but had real economic consequences for Jewish livelihood and businesses.

Cases of Jewish citizens being fined or arrested for breaking the Sabbath Laws were commonplace after the end of the war. In 1867, a case between a Mr. Frolickstein and the Mayor of Mobile, Alabama, came about after Frolickstein was accused of violating the Sunday rules in place by selling goods on a Sunday.¹⁷⁹ Frolickstein claimed that he and the other Jews of Mobile thought it their duty to work the days other than the Sabbath, which they observed on Saturday instead of Sunday.¹⁸⁰ The fine was \$25, a hefty price in 1867, which indicates the severity and the degree to which Christians in power were concerned with the breaking of the law. In Shreveport, Louisiana, L.A. Levy was fined for breaking the law by keeping his store open after 9 a.m. on Sunday.¹⁸¹ There is no mention as to the amount of the fine, but one can assume that it also would have been hefty so as to set an example for the rest of the Jewish community. *The Occident* reports that the Sunday Laws had an effect on the Jewish community in Wilmington, NC, in 1868; reporting that “the minister of the congregation... pointed out to them [congregation] the ridiculous position in which they had placed themselves by forming a

¹⁷⁹ Albert M. Friedenberg, “The Jews and the American Sunday Laws,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 11 (1903): 108. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43057639>.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Freidenberg, *The Jews and the American Sunday Laws*,” 109.

congregation and not keeping the Sabbath.”¹⁸² Furthermore, Reverend E.M. Myers made the congregation pledge to keep their sabbath day saying that keeping the sabbath was a way to avoid “[disrespecting] our fellow-citizens.”¹⁸³ To the Jewish community’s good fortune, the court ruled

Before the constitution Jews and Gentiles are equal; by the law they must be treated alike, and the ordinance of a City Council which gives to one sect a privilege which it denies to another, violates both the constitution and the law, and is therefore null and void.¹⁸⁴

What began with only fines would eventually reach such heights that in the 1880s, Jews were regularly being arrested and jailed for keeping their shops open on Sundays. In 1882, the New York Police Force threatened to arrest Jews who did not comply with the law. The court gave its opinion and announced

Is it not obvious that by reason of keeping a store open for business on Sunday a temptation is presented to those who have no regard for Saturday as holy time to violate the law? If a Hebrew merchant hired only Hebrew clerks, and sold only to Hebrew customers, there probably would be but little inducement for him to keep open on Sunday.¹⁸⁵

The courts involvement subsequently indicates that Jewish Americans used the courts to their advantage and believed that the courts were fair enough to decide their cases impartially.

In addition to voting, some Jews became highly entangled in the political system of the nation. August Belmont, a German-born Jewish immigrant who later served as the chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) during the 1860s, was the embodiment of a Jewish

¹⁸² “News Items,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, January 1, 1868, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=occ&_ga=2.67862548.480142029.1570132164-1652782448.1570132164#panel=document (accessed March 13, 2020).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Friedenber, “The Jews and the American Sunday Laws,” 109.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

citizen becoming involved in the political side of the country. In 1876, he encouraged not only Jews, but all Americans, to protect and use their votes responsibly.¹⁸⁶ He came to view the Civil War and the success of the Union as something that brought blessings to the nation. He wrote in 1884:

When, twenty-four years ago, the hand of our misguided brethren of the South was raised in fratricidal strife against the integrity of our Government, Republicans and Democrats alike rushed to the defense of our flag, and hundreds of thousands sealed with their lives their devotion to their country. The inheritance of the fathers of the Republic has been made sacred by the blood of those martyrs, and this great and glorious Union, with all its untold blessings, is to stand for ages to come. The first and foremost of all these blessings is a free and honest ballot...¹⁸⁷

Belmont's position as a highly-ranking official in the DNC likely influenced the intensity with which he believed in the democratic institutions of the nation, but his identity as a Jewish immigrant did not affect his relationship to his country; he was a patriot through and through.¹⁸⁸

Belmont and average American Jews, by using their rights to vote and using the courts, publicly announced that they understood their status to be American citizens, and as such, would expect to be treated as such. Just as they had faith in using the political process of voting to protect themselves, American Jews used the full benefits of their citizenship to protect themselves against the Christian agenda that many were trying to press onto the Jews.

Major Changes to the American Jewish Population

¹⁸⁶ August Belmont, "Speech at the Manhattan Club, October 30, 1876, in *Letters, Speeches, and Addresses of August Belmont*, Privately published: 1890, <https://archive.org/details/lettersspeechesa00belm/page/212/mode/2up> (accessed June 12, 2019).

¹⁸⁷ August Belmont "Speech at New-York Academy of Music, in Celebration of the Election of Cleveland, November 9, 1884, in *Letters, Speeches, and Addresses of August Belmont*, Privately published: 1890, <https://archive.org/details/lettersspeechesa00belm/page/230/mode/2up> (accessed June 13, 2019). cs

¹⁸⁸ Belmont dedicated a large amount of his early letters, speeches, and addresses to describing himself as an American citizen and patriot. As early as 1853, he wrote that "teaching them [his children] that their richest inheritance will be their share in the honor and grandeur of the country of their birth, and the noblest title they can ever win is that of American freedman." See Belmont, "Mr. Belmont to Merchants of New York August 12, 1853."

Jewish population numbers peaked during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a large percentage of Eastern and Central European Jewish immigrants entered the country. In the heightened anti-Semitic climate of the post-war period, American Jews, as Jonathan Sarna has argued, were worried that the new influx of Jews would undermine the American community and the relative stability they had enjoyed.¹⁸⁹ The aftermath of the war had resulted in the Jewish community growing in wealth and power. Sarna reports that “the seating capacity of America’s synagogues more than doubled between 1860 and 1870, according to census figures, and the total dollar value of the community’s synagogues increased by an astonishing 354 percent.”¹⁹⁰ The widespread immigration into the American Jewish population coincided with events in Eastern Europe such as the continued restriction on the Russian Jewish population and the increasing tensions in Europe. Immigration records from Ellis Island evidence that many Jewish immigrants left from the port of Bremen, Germany when they were on their journey to America.¹⁹¹ As compared to the characteristics that had defined the first mass exodus from Europe, scholar Deborah Dwork has characterized this exodus as “a movement of families.” Between 1886 and 1896, an average of 50% of immigrants coming through the port of New York were women and 35% were children under the age of 16.¹⁹² Historian Eric L. Goldstein argues that the presence of families immigrating together— sometimes three or four generations— “indicates that that even those already well rooted in eastern European Jewish

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 67.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁹¹ *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897*, Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls, NAI: 6256867, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36, National Archives at Washington, D.C., https://search.ancestry.com/cgibin/sse.dll?_phsrc=bZK8&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&indiv=1&dbid=7488&_83004002=Jew&msrpn__ftp=Russia&msady=1870&new=1&rank=1&uidh=y3t&redir=false&gss=angsd&pcat=40&fh=30&h=16534686&recoff=&fsk=MDsxOTsyMA-61--61&bsk=&pgoff=&ml_rpos=31&queryId=03faf0c3b44c6d08250456e2637450c5 (accessed April 12, 2020).

¹⁹² Deborah Dwork, “Immigrant Jews on the Lower East Side of New York: 1880-1914” in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (New York City: Holmes and Meier, 1997), 120.

society found the mounting social and economic crisis unbearable.”¹⁹³ The massive changes to the Jewish community in America transformed communal and individual identities. The community shifted from that of a largely middle-class, acculturated, and (mostly) religiously observant one to a community defined as being working-class, Yiddish-speaking (not acculturated), and politically as well as socially diverse. Whereas the Civil War and to an extent Reconstruction had provided the conditions under which rapid acculturation and assimilation could take place for the Jewish immigrants who had arrived on the Shores of America before 1877, those who arrived afterwards did not have those conditions under which they could begin their process of Americanization.

Those drawn to America had heard stories of the prosperity and stability that the established population had experienced. Harry Fischel, an immigrant from Lithuania, originally heard about the opportunities in America from letters sent back to his hometown. Fischel wrote that the letters “told of fabulous earnings to be made, of a prosperity and freedom wholly foreign to [our] little town, and of a mode of living that could only be regarded as luxurious, compared with anything that [we] had known before.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Mary Antin, a Jewish immigrant from Belorussia and later an American author, had heard that in the land of the free, “education would be ours for the asking, and economic independence also, as soon as we were prepared.”¹⁹⁵ The stories, however, were less dazzling than the promises and stories that they had been told. The conditions which many immigrant families were forced to endure once they arrived were far from prosperous, and instead they provided the perfect breeding ground for diseases to spread in

¹⁹³ Eric L. Goldstein, “The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880–1924,” in *The Columbia history of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 72.

¹⁹⁴ Harry Fischel, *Forty Years of Struggle for a Principle*, ed. Herbert S. Goldstein (New York: Block Publishing Co., 1928), 6.

¹⁹⁵ Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 148.

the tightly-packed tenement buildings. These factors only increased the attention and stress on the Jewish community at large which would prove to be a point of contention between the “established” populations and the newly-arrived populations. Goldstein argues that

While Jews remained highly regarded in many quarters and most native-born Americans were ambivalent, rather than wholly negative, about them, the increased pressure on the Jewish establishment was enough to make them worry that the foreign appearance and distinctive social and religious behavior of the new immigrants would further soil their reputation among non-Jews.¹⁹⁶

As a result, two seemingly different populations of Jews in America emerged: the Germans and the Russians. These established Jews sought to distance themselves from these immigrants likely because they did not want to seem as “un-American.” American Jewry had spent years, especially during the Civil War and Reconstruction, proving that they were as American as the next (white) person, and that they could lose their precarious status as Americans was their worst fear come true.

The new influx of Jews created an unprecedented community. This new community was characterized by pluralism and diversity on a level that had never been experienced in America. The geographical places from which people were coming resulted in heightened tensions within the community itself— for example the rivalry between Lithuanian and Galician Jews.¹⁹⁷

Goldstein argues that

Like many aspects of American culture, pluralism had both positive and negative implications for Jewish life. On the one hand, it represented the democratic promise of America, where each individual was free to determine his or her own beliefs and priorities and to balance individual and collective identities in whatever way seen fit....On the other hand, the lack of unity among American Jews

¹⁹⁶ Goldstein, “The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880–1924,” in Raphael’s *The Columbia history of Jews and Judaism in America*, 82.

¹⁹⁷ These tensions are discussed in B.M. to editor, 1906, in *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward*, ed. Isaac Metzker (New York: Schocken, 1990), 58-59.

could some- times become debilitating, preventing them from effectively addressing challenges and problems of mutual concern.¹⁹⁸

Although the coming of World War I would bring the community partially together, the level of cohesiveness and unity that the community had experienced before the beginning of the Civil War would never occur again.

Jewish communities at the turn of the century looked completely different than they had forty years earlier. Instead of a community made up of several generations born in America, the majority of Jews were recent (within 50 years) immigrants. Consequently, they were also families instead of single, young men who had immigrated due to political and social persecution. As the population numbers swelled, especially in urban areas such as New York, Jews found themselves relying on each other to navigate new challenges that they faced in America.

Conclusion

The post-war years up until the turn of the twentieth century were marked by rapid change for the American Jewish community. In order to reckon with the travesties and massive amount of death that the country had experienced during the conflict, Christian Americans became more committed than ever to “Christianize” those who ascribed to a faith different than their own, or to no faith at all. Many Americans believed that their sins had caused the war and in order to prevent another punishment of the same intensity, they needed to do something for the heavenly kingdom. In addition to dealing with attacks on their religion, the Jewish people were accused of profiting from the misfortunes of the country, and specifically the Southern people, while the country was being torn apart from the inside out. The presence of a small

¹⁹⁸ Goldstein, “The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880–1924,” in Raphael’s *The Columbia history of Jews and Judaism in America*, 86.

percentage of Jewish entrepreneurs who were financially secure provided a convenient scapegoat for the worries and stresses of other white, Christian, Americans. What most scholars have failed to recognize, however, is that in order to counteract these anti-Semitic claims, Jewish Americans once again used the institutions available to them to prove their patriotism. They used their right to vote to demonstrate that they were invested in the American political system and even helped elect Ulysses S. Grant to the Presidency. Grant, however, was the same man who had issued the infamous anti-Semitic order that expelled Jews “as a class” from the territories under his control during the war. American Jewry would have to deal with immense changes to its own composition at the same time as it was having to prove itself to be truly “American.” Massive immigration from the areas of Eastern Europe upset the relative stability the community had enjoyed up until this point. The plurality of religious variations as well as political ones meant that the community had to adapt to the new circumstances. The effect on Jewish identity cannot be understated. Jewish Americans had to try harder than ever to prove they were citizens amidst a growing tide of anti-Semitic and Nativist views. Although they would not be allowed to fully participate into the institutions of American life for another two to three decades, the strides the American Jewish population made in the half century after the American Civil War set the community up for how it would navigate American life for decades to come.

Conclusion

Judaism in America has been an evolving religion since the first Jewish immigrants set foot in New York in 1653. Different waves of immigration have changed the flavor of Judaism practiced in the United States, but Jews have always been present in the country. They have dealt with anti-Semitism for what seems all of time, and have managed to stay resilient and survive each onslaught of hatred and discrimination. Immigrating from places such as Spain and Portugal during the first wave, Jews spread out geographically across the continental United States.

Although the majority of Jews remained in the North in concentrated urban centers similar to the areas they had lived in while in Europe, some found the humidity and the hierarchical social strata of the Southern half of the country inviting. Those who moved to the South were generally accepted into Southern social circles because they generally accepted the institution of slavery. Although they were a minority due to their religion, their status as white men and women in a place where skin color dictated every aspect of their daily lives afforded them a life of relative ease (as compared to the black enslaved population that made up the work force of the South).

The American Civil War disrupted American life as it had existed up until 1861. The war was fought over the expansion of slavery— whether it would be allowed to expand into the Western territories, or whether it would continue to exist at all. With the call from both the Union and the Confederacy, men and women across the country felt compelled and wanted to contribute to the war effort. Jewish men fought in both the Union and the Confederacy, and women did their part on the home front by working as nurses and by forming relief societies to

raise funds and provide supplies for their men fighting on the battle field. Jewish citizens began to identify as Americans and legitimized their service in patriotic terms.

The transformation in self-identification for Jewish Americans during the Civil War has long been overlooked by scholars of both American Judaism and the Civil War because of its seemingly small impact overall. The shift, however, drastically changed how Jews related to America and as a result, other Americans. Instead of remaining indefinitely as an immigrant group that was largely insular, they became integrated into local communities, participated in democratic institutions, and loved America as their country.

At the same time, however, they were increasingly subject to more anti-Semitic rhetoric and accusations. Some claimed that Jews were not serving in the armed forces, others that they were to blame for things such as cotton speculation. The most famous example of anti-Semitism was General Order No. 11, issued by General Ulysses S. Grant. The Order was so visible that the Jewish community contacted Abraham Lincoln in order to remedy the situation. While Lincoln revoked only three days later, the damage had been done. The seemingly ironic nature of the uptick in anti-Semitism at the same time that Jews were adamant about their identities as Americans highlights the complexity of the issue and the time period.

The period of time beginning during Reconstruction and lasting into the early twentieth century was another massive period of change for the American Jewish community. They were once again subject to anti-Jewishness. They were accused of profiting from the war even though the evidence that they did in reality is slim. They did, however, establish businesses that lasted well into the twentieth century and were extremely successful— businesses such as Macy's, Thalheimer's, and Godchaux's. At the same time, the community itself was undergoing massive changes. Jewish immigrants poured into America beginning in the 1880s and peaking in the

1910s. These newly arrived immigrants had to become acculturated to life in America and to how Judaism was practiced in the United States. Luckily for them, they had the perfect example to turn to.

The transformation in Jewish self-identification that occurred at the same time of the American Civil War has lasting effects that are still visible today. Jewish Americans are as much a part of the melting pot of America as a Baptist from Alabama. By recognizing the shift that occurred, scholars and average Americans alike can finally understand the complexity of maintaining identities that are odds, and the process through which one must negotiate different parts of oneself.

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