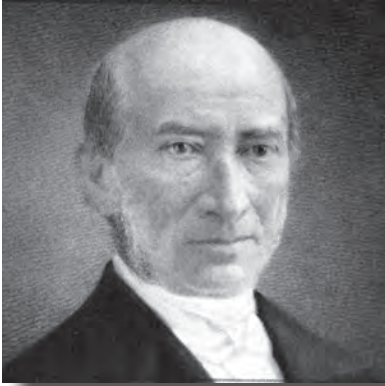


## Upheaval, Innovation, and Transformation: New York City Jews and the Civil War



*Rabbi Samuel Adler*  
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



*Rev. Morris Raphall*  
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

*Howard B. Rock*

In late April of 1863, with Lee poised to invade the North toward Gettysburg, there seemed no end to a war that had already taken the lives of thousands of young men. President Lincoln called for a national Fast Day and, as they had on previous occasions, most of New York's twenty-seven synagogues opened for prayers and psalms. The *Jewish Messenger*, the city's Jewish weekly, noted that attendance had declined considerably from previous such occasions, and that there was "less respect ... for the recommendation of the Executive"—likely a reference to the Emancipation Proclamation. At B'nai Jeshurun, the city's most well-known synagogue, Rev. Morris Raphall spoke. An erudite leader with many publications, Raphall emigrated from Britain to take the pulpit in 1849, becoming the most prominent Jewish clergyman in New York and appearing at nearly every significant occasion in the Jewish community.<sup>1</sup>

In his Fast Day sermon, Raphall preached that the conflict, the result of "demagogues, fanatics and a party Press" of both North and South, had mired the

United States "in the third year of a destructive but needless sectional war which has armed brother against brother and consigned hundreds of thousands to an untimely grave." While Raphall found "consolation" that the "cause of the union is the worthiest in the field," he never mentioned slavery or the Emancipation Proclamation or searched for any larger meaning to the conflict. The nation must find its way back to the days of peace and prosperity that preceded the

war, albeit without acceding to unacceptable Southern demands for dividing the Union. His words conveyed the disillusionment prevalent in both the general and Jewish communities of New York City—a city that had never supported Lincoln or the Republican Party and its causes. The lavish Purim balls held that year along with other social events, including festive Saturday afternoon strolls down “Judenstrasse” (Broadway from Canal to Union Square), were evidence of the community’s determination to “turn from the horrible realities of war to the gay and festive, the charitable and intellectual.”<sup>2</sup>

A year and a half later, another rabbi delivered a Thanksgiving sermon at Temple Emanu-El, the city’s Reform synagogue that had grown within a decade to become one of the wealthiest and most prestigious congregations in the city. The preacher was Rabbi Samuel Adler, a German immigrant who arrived in 1858 with a doctorate and a radical religious and political ideology. (His brother spent time in prison during the European Revolutions of 1848.) The difference between his understanding of the American conflict and that of Raphall was striking. At the core of Adler’s address was the assertion that the war was not a tragic breakdown of the Constitution but an opportunity to fashion a great transformation, to purge the nation of its greatest sin: slavery. His sermon compared the nation to a sick patient. America, he said, must avoid the cures of “political quacks.” Is a physician’s job to treat symptoms with temporary remedies or to “discover the root of our national malady, and having found it, tear it from the body?” That root was clear: “its name is Slavery. Remove that thoroughly, and the fever will lose its power, its nourishment, and this unholy rebellion be crushed beyond all possibility of resuscitation.” The responsibility of American Jews was to advocate “the eternal immutable principles of liberty and the inalienable right of man.”<sup>3</sup>

A few months after Raphall’s remarks, the *New York Times* published its annual report of Rosh Hashanah observances. After explaining the meaning of the sacred day and its rituals, the *Times* commented that this year’s ceremonies “will be observed with peculiar formality and impressiveness” because of the “rapid changes going on in Jewish society,” brought about by the war. This was an insightful comment. The Civil War fundamentally altered New York’s Jewish community. The question of transformation, however, was complex. Did the long and bloody war alter New York Jewry in a manner compatible with Raphall’s views or in a manner more in line with the outlook of Adler?<sup>4</sup>

## The City in 1860

New York in 1860 was home to 813,669 men, women, and children, the majority of whom were immigrants, chiefly from Ireland and Germany. The Jewish population was approximately forty thousand, or 5 percent of the city’s population. It, too, was mainly immigrant, half from Germany, the rest largely from Russia and Poland. This figure confirmed an era of explosive growth. In



*Purim Ball*  
(Courtesy Library of Congress)

1825 only five hundred Jews lived in the city, making up just 0.3 percent of the population. By 1860 New York's Jews had established a network of benevolent, fraternal, and literary societies and had built twenty-seven synagogues, including some of the most elegant religious sanctuaries in the city. These Jewish New Yorkers encompassed a wealthy bourgeoisie. In 1857 the fifty leading Jewish firms averaged 278 employees each. Most manufactured textiles, while a few centered on foreign imports. Two shirt-making firms each employed eight hundred workers, and one clothing manufacturer listed fifteen hundred men and women on its payroll.<sup>5</sup>

The New York in which these firms were located was the dominant American metropolis for the foreign and domestic import and export trade and was a national hub for manufacturing, finance, communication, and transportation. But it was not just Wall Street or the port's connection to the Erie Canal and western states that made New York unique. Of all the Northern cities, New York was far and away the metropolis most closely tied to the South. The garment industry, the city's largest business and the trade that employed the highest number of Jews, produced 40 percent of the nation's attire by 1860; it provided clothing to both Southern whites and slaves. The city's economy pivoted on the cotton trade. New York's merchants held "a virtual stranglehold on regularly scheduled ships shuttling between northern, southern and European ports." A city merchant's warning to an abolitionist illustrates the value of the trade: "Slavery is a great evil, a great wrong," he conceded,

But a great portion of the property of the Southerners is invested under its sanction; and the business of the North ... has become adjusted to it. There are millions upon millions of dollars due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and the South.

“We cannot afford, sir” he concluded, “to let you and your associates endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principles with us. It is a business necessity.” The well-regarded publication *Debow’s Review* remarked that without slavery, ships would rot in New York’s harbor, grass would grow on Wall Street, and the city would suffer the fate of Babylon and Rome. The *Evening Post* asserted that “the City of New York belongs as much to the South as to the North.”<sup>6</sup>

The structure of New York’s economy was a key factor in the political dominance of the Democratic Party, with its platform of states’ rights, unrestricted immigration, noninterference with slavery, and hostility to reform. Democrats held the allegiance of the working classes—immigrant working classes, particularly German and Irish newcomers—and merchants with ties to the South.<sup>7</sup> The opposition Whigs, who championed federally funded internal improvements, a national banking system, and protective tariffs, also advocated “order, morals and religion”; they attracted the votes (though far fewer than the Democrats) of bankers and merchants with no Southern business, master artisans, and, during economic downturns, of some workers seeking government aid. The Republicans, who replaced the Whigs as the major opposition party in the mid-1850s, were even less popular than the Whigs because of their unyielding stand against the extension of slavery in the territories. While they drew the backing of the city’s antislavery bloc, including editor/poet William Cullen Bryant, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, and a number of former Whigs, the party managed to attract only one-fourth of the vote in 1856. In the 1859 mayoral race that elected pro-Southern politico Fernando Wood, the Republican challenger gathered but 27 percent of the vote.<sup>8</sup>

## Slavery and New York’s Jewish Leadership

Slavery dominated the politics of the antebellum era; by the 1850s it had polarized the nation. That decade witnessed the Compromise of 1850, a piecemeal congressional agreement that temporarily settled the question of slavery in territory wrested from Mexico in part by putting into practice a more potent Fugitive Slave Act; the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which replaced the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (no slavery north of the 36° 30” parallel) with popular sovereignty through referendum; the Dred Scott decision of 1857, which declared blacks noncitizens, thus allowing slavery in all territories; and John Brown’s failed guerilla strike on the Harper’s Ferry federal armory in 1859, which culminated in seven deaths. The debate between Northern defenders of the South and its critics became increasingly strident. Violence against abolitionist meetings, homes, and stores was not uncommon.

The city’s most eminent Jewish leaders, reflecting New York’s Southern attachments, were unified in their hostility to abolition and, to varying degrees, supported slavery. Emmanuel Hart rose from captain of a volunteer fire brigade to ward leader for the central committee of Tammany Hall, the Democratic

Party's political association. In 1850 he won election to U.S. Congress. A member of Shearith Israel, Hart was a leader of the conservative "hunker" wing of the Democrats, a faction that strongly opposed any agitation on slavery and focused its energies in support of the interests of the slave-holding states.<sup>9</sup>

Mordecai M. Noah was, in the eyes of the Christian world, the "most important Jew in America." The grandson of a well-known merchant and community leader in New York and Philadelphia, Noah first received attention as a highly regarded playwright. In 1813 he secured a presidential appointment as the American consul to Tunis. Upon his return, Noah became a prominent journalist in the Madisonian wing of the Democratic Party. During this stage of his life, Noah, under the influence of Jeffersonian liberalism, advocated debtor reform and female education. He declared slavery a "domestic evil" and the slave trade a "cursed" profession, its practitioners deserving "solitary confinement." He also acknowledged "repeated instances that the intellect of the blacks is capable of high cultivation." By the 1840s, however, as an ardent Jacksonian and then conservative Whig, and as a prominent editor, sheriff, and judge—as well as president of the Hebrew Benevolent Society, New York's leading philanthropic Jewish organization—his position on the South and slavery had changed dramatically.<sup>10</sup>

From 1833 to 1840, while editor of the *New York Evening Star*, "one of the most influential papers in the country," Noah emerged as a strong Southern defender. With the *Star* as his voice, he encouraged closer bonds between Southerners and New York's mercantile community. His days of criticizing slavery were far in the past. Blacks, he wrote, were "anatomically and mentally inferior a race to the whites, and incapable, therefore, of ever reaching the same point of civilization, or have their energies roused to as high a degree of enterprise and productive industry." They could only find contentment in servile labor. A field slave achieved fulfillment in his cottage, with a wife, children, and a patch of "corn and potatoes." The house servant of a "kind master" delighted in his master's fine apparel.<sup>11</sup>

Blacks filled Noah with dread. Nat Turner's Revolt in 1831, a bloody insurgence led by a literate, messianic Virginia slave, horrified him. While Noah was editor, the *Star's* editorial page ran three columns daily depicting the mayhem of an 1839 slave rebellion in Santo Domingo. Noah approved the notorious "gag rule" that forbade the House of Representatives from debating slavery. He supported the move to make publication of antislavery literature a punishable offense. In 1843, while serving as a judge, he instructed a grand jury to indict members of the American Anti-Slavery Convention, then meeting in New York, who debated any "project embracing a dissolution of our happy form of government." Emancipation would put the security of the nation at risk, Noah claimed. Abolitionists were treacherous. They strained relations between New York's merchants and Southern traders. They were a threat to the Union.<sup>12</sup>



Robert Lyon, editor of the *Asmonean*, the most prominent Jewish weekly until his death in 1858, also owned the *New York Mercantile Journal*, a paper that carried “great influence over the minds of many commercial men.” His newspapers were influential with local and national audiences. Lyon, a religious progressive, opened the *Asmonean* to advocates of Reform Judaism, appointing Isaac Mayer Wise as literary editor.<sup>13</sup>

Lyon was a committed Democrat. Though the *Asmonean* did not endorse candidates in 1852—even commenting that Jews split their votes between Whigs and Democrats—in 1856, with the Republicans now the Democrats’ adversary, Lyon endorsed two Democrats known for their political ties with the South: James Buchanan for president and Fernando Wood for governor of New York. The *Asmonean* explained that it positioned these men at the top of the masthead with “impartiality.” For Lyon, “impartiality” meant that the endorsement resulted from consulting “the wishes and desires of the majority of our supporters.” The “Hebrews of America” could back neither the candidacy of Know-Nothing Millard Fillmore nor that of Republican John C. Fremont, “whose chief aid will be from the bigoted and persecuting New England states.” The *Asmonean* made this unprecedented endorsement because the election was “of such vital importance to the future of the Union.” Contradicting his earlier statements, Lyon declared that Israelites had always been “Democrats, and as Buchananites are ‘democrats of the right stamp.’” Buchanan’s principles were “progressionist” and Israelites were “progressionists,” despising “papacy and priestcraft.” Given Lyon’s detailed awareness of the financial world, his political leanings likely reflected those of the Jewish business community. (Fearing that Republican policies would destroy its Southern trade, New York’s mercantile community, formerly known for Whig loyalties, favored Buchanan in 1856.)<sup>14</sup>

Like Noah, Lyon held abolitionists in contempt. In 1850 he published a speech delivered by Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan warning of the “fearful consequences” that would follow the emancipation of 3.5 million slaves “living in the midst of another and superior caste.” The following year he counseled Americans of the dangers posed by the “foul Fiend which stalks among us.” Abolitionist “traitors” —including British radicals, “Frederick Douglass, the nigger,” and a “heterogeneous stew of fanatics and imposters”—agitated to grant the “sons of Africa” the suffrage that “our fathers fought and died for.” Calling the abolitionist movement the most “preposterous idea” ever, Noah conjured portraits of Jamaican and Haitian plantations that had gone to ruin following emancipation and slave revolts, respectively. The question at hand was “the relative value of civilization and barbarism,” and Lyon urged Americans to “resolve this day to put down abolitionism in whatever shape or form it may present itself . . . and to crush out for once and forever the attempt to plunder our Southern citizens of their property.”<sup>15</sup>

Lyon supported enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Bill, a statute that required police to turn over an alleged fugitive solely on the master's affidavit, denying the escapee the right to speak in court. The bill was "the law of the land." In 1851 physician Sigismund Waterman contended in the *Asmonean* that the Union was at the heart of this controversy. If the "bond of the states" sundered, commerce would collapse into paralysis. Centuries of "gloom, despair and servitude" would replace the "happiness and bliss of the present and the past." For Jews, the Bible settled the dispute: "Thou shalt return the slave to his owner." Slavery was a part of God's wisdom in revealing "the natural law of the superior and the inferior." Jews had once been slaves and so could "appreciate the sorrow of the man of servitude—but there are many conditions of things, we cannot alter nor change." While they might purchase a slave's freedom, they could not endanger "national and even international peace by gaining his freedom through violence." Jews owed their renewed virility and secure position to America; they must "stand by the constitution, now and forever."<sup>16</sup>

Joining Hart, Noah, and Lyon as prominent pro-Southern Jewish leaders was Morris Raphall of B'nai Jeshurun. In January 1861, with the Union in peril, he addressed his congregants on the issue of the Bible and slavery. While no "friend to slavery in the abstract" and even less "to the practical working of slavery," his personal feelings, he declared, were not germane. Invoking the story of Noah and his son Ham, he argued that, aside from family ties, slavery was the oldest form of social relationship. For observing his father's nakedness, Ham and his descendants, the black race, were condemned to slavery. God condoned slavery, Raphall said, in commanding at Sinai that an owner give Sabbath rest to "thy male slave and thy female slave." Raphall affirmed that the Bible differentiated between Hebrew slaves—whose servitude was limited and who were to be cared for as any other Hebrew—and non-Hebrew slaves and their progeny, who were to remain enslaved during the lives of their master, his children, and his children's children. While Hebrew slaves could not be compared to Southern slaves, non-Hebrew slaves could. Hebraic law allowed masters to discipline their slaves short of murder or disfigurement and required that a slave absconding from South Carolina to New York must be restored to his or her owner as would a slave who fled from Dan to Beersheba. The law that forbade Hebrews from returning an escaped slave only referred to slaves fleeing from foreign lands.

Responding to Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's assertion that the Bible opposed slavery, Raphall proclaimed, "How dare you, in the face and sanction and protection afforded to slave property in the Ten Commandments, how dare you denounce slaveholding as a sin?" To those who would compare a citizen of the South to a murderer, Raphall demanded to know what right they had "to insult and exasperate thousands of God-fearing, law-abiding citizens?" While he cautioned Southerners not to expose their slaves to sexual aggression, hunger,

and excess demands on their labor, Raphall emphatically contended that the Bible sanctioned slave property.<sup>17</sup>

Raphall's words created a sensation. Two weeks later, he gave his sermon as a speech before members of the Democratic Party and the pro-South American Society for Promotion of National Unity. In attendance were advocates of national reconciliation in harmony with Southern demands, including banker August Belmont and prominent Jews from Richmond, Montgomery, and New Orleans. Artist/inventor Samuel B. Morse presided. At the speech's conclusion, merchant Hiram Ketcham collected funds to disseminate Raphall's message. Southern sympathizers dispersed the discourse throughout the nation. Dr. Bernard Illwoy of Baltimore, highly respected for his biblical expertise, endorsed Raphall. Three New York newspapers printed the complete text, and the *New York Times* published lengthy excerpts. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* termed Raphall's talk, "the most powerful arguments delivered," while Rabbi Simon Tuska of Mobile stated that Raphall's sermon contained "the most forceful arguments in justification of the slavery of the African race."<sup>18</sup>

Raphall's words were not, however, in harmony with most of his Christian peers. In 1856 a poll of twenty-five "prominent clergy" in New York found that twenty-three backed Fremont, the Republican candidate for president. If Raphall's remarks were exemplary, this was largely among Jewish spiritual leaders.<sup>19</sup>

## Jews and Antislavery

Raphall's sermon did not go unanswered. David Einhorn of Baltimore, one of the most prominent leaders of the Reform movement, issued a lengthy rebuttal. Isaac Mayer Wise, while no friend to either Republicans or abolitionists, found fault with Raphall's biblical exegesis. Rev. Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia disagreed with the contention that the black race descended from Ham. Michael Heilprin of Brooklyn, a Jewish Polish Hungarian revolutionary refugee, penned the most powerful response. A highly learned figure, well versed in modern biblical criticism, Heilprin originally exposed his political allegiance when he spoke at an antislavery Democratic rally in Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup>

Writing for the abolitionist-leaning *Tribune*, Heilprin expressed regret that Raphall's "sacrilegious" ideas had not vanished among the "scum." The morals of slavery's defenders were "depraved," and the minds of their "mammon-worshipping followers" were "debauched." Fearing that Raphall's speech might persuade the uninformed that the Hebrew Bible condoned slavery, he ruthlessly attacked Raphall's reasoning, citing eminent German Jewish scholars. Heilprin, in effect, challenged the literalist, ahistorical Orthodox approach to Jewish texts. He contended that Raphall misconstrued the biblical word for servant. The word Raphall translated as "slave" also designated "court officers" and "royal ambassadors." He ridiculed the fallacious use of the story of Noah and his son:



Noah, awakening from his drunkenness, curses, in punishment of an insult, a son of the offender, and a race is to be “doomed for all times!” Doomed by whom, “preacher in Israel?” Doomed by the God whom you teach our people to worship, the God of Mercy.

Heilprin argued that Ham’s descendants included the Babylonians, Philistines, and Egyptians. He rejected Raphall’s contention that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had slaves; they were “peaceable unwarlike nomadic patriarchs” wending their way through unfriendly lands. Those who allied with the patriarchs were “voluntary followers.” Raphall’s understanding of the text led to divine approval of bigamy, polygamy, and “traffic in Semitic flesh.” Finally, Heilprin asserted that Raphall overlooked Moses’s words to the Israelites: “Forget not that ye have been slaves in Egypt.” Pandering to Southern admirers, Raphall cruelly misread the Bible.<sup>21</sup>

Rev. Samuel Isaacs, spiritual leader of Shaaray Tefilah, the prominent English synagogue, was editor of the *Jewish Messenger*, a newspaper formed to give an Orthodox response to the *Asmonean*. Isaacs knew Professor Calvin Stowe, husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and backed Republican Fremont in 1856. He refused, however, to permit political discussion in the *Messenger* until war was declared. The paper carried not a word regarding the historic events of 1860 and early 1861. When the election of 1860 concluded, Isaacs allowed a short notice that with “THE ELECTION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN as President of the United States . . . having been decided on Tuesday,” quiet again reigned; the “‘long agony’ was over.” Nothing more. He refused to publish essays on Raphall’s notorious sermon other than urging Jews not to use the Bible either to defend or to assail slavery.<sup>22</sup>



*Temple Emanu-El on Twelfth Street in New York City, 1854–1866, Centenary Celebration of Congregation Emanu-El, 1845–1945*  
[New York: Comet Press, 1945]  
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

There was also a cadre of Jewish New York Republicans whose membership signaled an antislavery position. These included a number of members of Temple Emanu-El, the city’s Reform congregation, including prosperous Republican merchants Joseph and James Seligman and attorney Abram

J. Dittenhoefer. Dittenhoefer, son of a prominent merchant, abandoned the Democratic Party at nineteen because of its position on slavery, serving as an elector for Lincoln in 1860. Also an elector that year was German immigrant attorney Sigismund Kaufman, a veteran of the Revolution of 1848. Assistant Attorney General Philip Joachimsen, whose prosecutions made him a “terror” to illegal slave traders operating out of New York, was a member of Shearith Israel. Reform Judaism’s historical reinterpretation of the Mosaic Code attracted Jews of liberal political temperament, though, as Joachimsen’s membership reveals, Republicans were known to affiliate with other synagogues. Kaufman belonged to a secular organization, serving as the first president of the Turnverein, a German fraternal society.<sup>23</sup>

New York’s most well-known Jewish abolitionist, Ernestine Rose, was a Polish expatriate raised by an Orthodox rabbi. Rose escaped to England to become a follower of Robert Owen and then immigrated to New York. Ignoring political strategy that maintained the loyalty of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, she called the Emancipation Proclamation document “a mockery” as it only liberated “slaves we cannot reach.” First, she demanded, “free the slaves that are under the flag of the Union. If that flag is the symbol of freedom, let it wave over free men only. The slaves must be freed in the Border States.” A friend of abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, Rose invoked her birth as the daughter of a “down trodden and persecuted people” to bolster her appeal on the part of the oppressed and was known as an Israelite, even though she did not participate in the life of the Jewish community.<sup>24</sup>

### Where Did New York Jews Stand?

According to the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, American Jews showed a lack of courage by refusing to take a stand on the issue of slavery:

Jews of the United States have never taken any steps whatever with regard to the Slavery question. As citizens, they deem it their policy “to have everyone choose whichever side he may deem best to promote his own interests and the welfare of his country.”

The organization judged this lamentable, as Jews were frequently “the objects of so much mean prejudice and unrighteous oppression.” The society’s impression was correct on a national level. Jews did not join the many reform movements of the antebellum era, in part because they were Protestant movements, and Jews both feared and held in contempt the many Protestant missionary efforts to convert Jews. It is also true that Jews throughout the nation, including New York, tried to make their presence inconspicuous by not voting in blocs as some, such as the Irish, did. Jews feared triggering traditional Christian suspicions that could lead to European-style antisemitism. The *Jewish Messenger’s* decision not to publish a single political article as the Union increasingly became in peril

in 1860 and 1861, despite the editor's Republican leanings, exemplified this approach. When Raphall delivered his proslavery speech, his board objected to "the impropriety of intermeddling with politics, as we firmly believe such a course to be entirely inconsistent with the Jewish clerical character, calculated to be of serious injury to the Jews in general and to our congregation in particular."<sup>25</sup>

However, the refusal of the board of B'nai Jeshurun, whose members constituted leading members of the city's Jewish community, to specifically condemn Raphall's spirited defense of slavery speaks volumes. The political silence of editor Isaacs was to conceal a position unpopular in New York. Other leaders of New York Jewry, however, who represented the majority opinion in Gotham, were willing to violate the Jewish tradition of political noninvolvement and in a loud public voice defend the Democratic Party, the South, and slavery. The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society's statement was incorrect if applied to New York's Jewish leadership. The problem was not that they were silent, but that they took a strong position at odds with that organization.

The question of whether the rank and file supported Hart, Noah, Lyon and Raphall can be determined by examining election results. In 1860 Lincoln received only 35 percent of the city's ballots. German immigrant wards where most Jews lived voted two to one against Lincoln. Jews, whose record of voting Democratic began under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, an opponent to slavery, continued into the 1850s, when that party stood full square for the continuation and spread of American slavery.<sup>26</sup>

The reminiscences of Abram J. Dittenhoefer give powerful testimony to the strength and loyalty of the Jewish community to the Democratic Party. Dittenhoefer recalled that when he was a young law student, his father advised him to become a Democrat. Any hope for public office as a Republican "would be impossible in the City of New York." Dittenhoefer recollected that "one can hardly appreciate to-day what it meant to me, a young man beginning his career in New York, to ally myself with the Republican Party. By doing so, not only did I cast aside all apparent hope of public preferment, but I also subjected myself to obloquy from and ostracism by acquaintances, my clients, and even members of my own family." In sum, prominent Jewish leaders who advocated for the status quo by supporting slavery reflected mainstream Jewish political leanings.<sup>27</sup>

By following the lead of Hart, Noah, Lyon, and especially Raphall, the majority of New York's Jews, other than adherents to the Reform movement, rejected any parallel between Southern slavery and their ancient Egyptian captivity. Annual Passover essays in the Jewish press never equated the two. In April 1861, with war imminent, the *Messenger's* Passover remarks extolled "the perpetual commemoration by His chosen people of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage"—without a single mention of American slavery. Ancestral Jews and black slaves had nothing in common. This was despite the observation

of a German visitor that “female slaves” regularly attended synagogue services. By “slaves,” he clearly referred to African-American Jewish household servants who were once in bondage and who, upon receiving their freedom, “chose to remain with their now endeared masters and assumed their religion.” They prayed with “true devotion” but also with “the Black’s characteristic exaggerations.” The *Messenger* also chose not to comment on the Emancipation Proclamation when it went into effect in January, 1863.

By 1860 many New York Jews had gained middle-class standing as proprietors of small retail shops, garment designers and manufacturers, importers, physicians, and lawyers. Those who worked in commerce—wholesalers, retailers, and garment workers—regarded the Southern trade as their lifeblood. Southern planters and merchants owed New York firms \$200,000,000 in 1860; war would mean that debt would never be repaid. New York’s mercantile elite desperately sought compromise, dispatching delegations to Washington to find a way to save the Union. One New York delegation included Emmanuel Hart. On 29 January 1860, a chartered train pulled into Union Station bearing the city’s leading merchants and a petition signed by forty thousand stating that the “perpetuity of the union” was far more essential than a dispute over territories. Many signatories would have been Jewish entrepreneurs facing a loss of trade and the panic of bankruptcy. Horace Greeley’s *Tribune* unsympathetically remarked that “rich Jews and other money lenders” together with “great dry goods and other commercial houses” dreaded Lincoln and supported his opponents.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to financial concerns, midcentury New York Jews were also concerned with acceptance into American society. Raphall, the first Jewish spiritual leader chosen to give a congressional benediction, delivered patriotic sermons and toasts in the 1850s that were not inconsistent with his stand on slavery. An advocate of Manifest Destiny—one of the hallmarks of the Democratic Party—he predicted, following American victories in the Mexican War, that the United States would soon hold “a leading rank among the nations of the earth,” while Europe remained convulsed in “a mighty struggle,” seeking “Liberty, Civil and Religious.” Unpopular positions, on the contrary, did not win friends; Ernestine Rose was no heroine within the Jewish population. As well, the pervasive racism in the North infiltrated the Jewish community. Finally, the possible disintegration of the Union threatened both political and financial security. The Constitution of the United States provided protection for Jews found in few other nations. What would happen to that safeguard if the Constitution collapsed with the Union? For much of the Jewish community, these were persuasive factors.<sup>29</sup>

## The War Begins

On 12 April 1861, Confederate forces turned their cannons on ships sent by President Lincoln to resupply Fort Sumter, the Union’s last Southern out-

post. The Confederate response transformed New York's sentiment overnight. The news, New Yorker Walt Whitman declared, "ran through the land, as if by electric nerves." Business on Wall Street ceased as people rushed into bars and hotels to hear the latest intelligence. Patriotic fervor gripped the city; American flags flew over department stores, brownstones, and the spire of Trinity Church. Broadway was "almost hidden in a cloud of flaggery." Young men eagerly enlisted in the army. The zeal of the Jewish community is nowhere better reflected than in the lead editorial of the *Jewish Messenger*, "Stand by the Flag." Isaacs, reversing his apolitical stance, declared that the *Messenger* joined the "hearty and spontaneous shout ascending from the entire American people, to stand by the stars and stripes!" Could former brethren be allowed to destroy a Union "reared by the noble patriots of the revolution"? The time for forbearance was past. Isaacs lauded Jewish volunteers willing to risk their lives in "the cause of law and order." He bade them a speedy return but, if they were to fall, "what death can be so glorious than that of the patriot?"<sup>30</sup>

Nearly every synagogue in New York flew the Stars and Stripes. Inside the sanctuaries, sermons echoed the militant patriotic spirit. Notably, Raphall's defense of the South yielded to a passionate loyalty to the Union as he declared that Jews would uphold the flag "at the peril of life and limb." Not native born, not "to the manor born," Jews understood the "difference between *elsewhere* and *here*." Having enjoyed days of prosperity, "we flinch not from our hour of peril." Raphall blamed the "foul stimulants of selfish, ambitious leaders" who deceived common Southern citizens. Northerners were under attack from their brothers. In response, "hundreds of thousands of conservative men of the North, the East and the West take up arms." While slaveholding might not be a wrong, "we do find in the Bible abundant warrant for denouncing rebellion as a sin before God." Raphall warned Southerners that resistance was hopeless. Outnumbered and overpowered, they would be known as Benedict Arnolds for flying the "black flag of treason." Praising the "brave defenders of the union," he beseeched "the Lord of Hosts to bless their righteous efforts."<sup>31</sup>

New York in early 1861 was a harrowing place. The economy sank quickly as Southern deposits disappeared. While the war economy revived many businesses, life remained turbulent. Alexander Dupréé, a non-Jewish German immigrant, wrote that "New York looks like an army camp. There are armed men everywhere, everyone carries a revolver, and we're living in an absolute torrent of commotion." Thousands of soldiers paraded through the city on their way South, many never to return. Another immigrant, Julius Wesslau, lamented, "Most of them are in what you know as the militia, and you can well imagine what it's like when out of 800–1000 riflemen, only half are left, the effect that has on their families and the city."<sup>32</sup>

The onset of the war initiated four transformative years that would have profound impact on American Jewish history. Initially this was not the

radical makeover of politics and society Rabbi Adler had envisioned. Rather, it was a major step toward the fulfillment of the quest of New York's Jewry for unqualified acceptance into the mainstream of Christian society, a pursuit that began in the struggles for rights in New Amsterdam and moved forward under the egalitarian ideology of 1776 and the efforts of thousands of Jewish immigrants. Despite accomplishments in business and the professions, despite magnificent sanctuaries, New York Jewry still sought signs of acceptance, revealing an insecurity caused by their European heritage and by the lingering presence of antisemitism. The Civil War afforded Jews many opportunities for the acceptance they craved.

### Rights and Recognition

Young Jewish New Yorkers responded to the martial spirit that swept through the city during the spring of 1861. Simon Wolf lists 1,996 known Jewish soldiers from New York State, the vast majority of whom came from New York City. This was more than double the number of Jews from any other state, as the city housed a quarter of the nation's Jewish population. Five members of one New York Jewish family served in the army; in another, three sons fought with their father; and in a third, three brothers enlisted. Individual tales of courage and sacrifice were plentiful. Charles Breslauer fell at Bull Run in 1861 when Union forces attempted to take Richmond. Isidor Cohen died at Gettysburg in 1863 as the Union halted Lee's invasion of the North. Lieutenant Joseph Abrahams was killed in battle at Cold Harbor in 1864 after Grant ordered a direct assault on Lee's forces. Columbia-educated and native-born Leopold Newman, an attorney who wrote poetry and short stories, joined New York's Thirty-First Regiment, one of the North's most valiant fighting outfits, and saw action at battles from Bull Run and Antietam. Promoted to lieutenant colonel, Newman had completed his term of service and was in New York when the Department of War requested his return to duty. While leading a charge at Fredericksburg, grapeshot struck his leg. He was removed to Washington, where he died shortly after surgeons amputated his leg. Before he died, President Lincoln visited his bedside and promoted him to brigadier general.<sup>33</sup>

The *Messenger* published the names of Jewish officers joining the army. It printed accounts of the war by a Jewish soldier on duty in Washington, depicting thousands of soldiers and tons of military equipment, with wagons in constant motion. The soldier gave an optimistic description of General George McClellan's creation of a well-disciplined army and of the composure of Lincoln amid the turmoil of war. The young enlistee trusted that the war would purify the nation and fulfill the promise of the Revolution. Another account chronicled Jews' role in the army, how they kept the Sabbath, and how one soldier both fasted and fought on Yom Kippur. Though some Jewish soldiers feared that they would become the object of venomous taunts, he reported no antisemitic slurs.



In the summer of 1862 a letter from another Jewish volunteer described a large number of Jewish New Yorkers in the field in Mississippi. These soldiers sensed that they were participating in a great historic event, even as they complained of loneliness, boredom, and days passing slowly so far from home. Military service was foremost in New York Jewry's quest for full partnership. Jews fought and died along with their Christian brethren. They were equal cohorts in the effort to save the Union.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to fighting on the battlefield, there was a second kind of recognition that Jews were seeking within the military service. This was a campaign, led by New York Jews, to reverse a congressional act that restricted military chaplains to clergy of "some Christian denomination." When Rabbi Arnold Fischel of New York's Shearith Israel, responding to a request by Jewish officers, petitioned to be made a chaplain, Secretary of War Simon Cameron declined the request because of the proviso. The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, an association begun by Isaacs in 1859 to unite American congregations, appointed Fischel as unofficial chaplain with the duty of "supervising the spiritual welfare of our . . . co-religionists" and lobbied for a change in the law. Fischel gained access to Lincoln, presenting him a memorial protesting the "oppressive" chaplaincy statute. Lincoln responded favorably and a new bill passed in March of 1862, reinterpreting the phrase "Christian denomination" to mean "religious denomination." In 1862 Rabbi Jacob Frankel of Philadelphia, a Bavarian immigrant, became the first Jewish chaplain in the American military.<sup>35</sup>

The Civil War mobilized Jewish women. They served in hospitals, gathered in synagogues to produce army provisions, and participated in sanitary fairs, which were large expositions that sold wares, particularly those made by women, and donated proceeds to the Union cause. With Jewish assistance, an 1864 fair raised \$1 million. These fairs not only combined Jewish and Christian women in a common cause and helped integrate them socially; they also brought women of both faiths closer to the marketplace and public square, which in the nineteenth century were not generally open to women.<sup>36</sup>

Another milestone in the Jewish community's consolidation into New York society was the conversion of part of Jews' Hospital into a military hospital. The hospital, founded in 1855 after years of planning and disappointment, was the community's signal accomplishment. An elegant, three-story building, it was a monument to the collective commitment of New York Jewry to the welfare of their fellow Jews. By 1862, the hospital had admitted and was covering the expenses of 117 soldiers. The hospital board for the first time appointed constituents from the Jewish Reform movement to leadership roles, an act likely the result of significant bequests from members of Temple Emanu-El. A visitor commented that most soldiers came from New England and that their isolation was eased by the "considerate attentions of visitors of the fair sex," as Jewish women comforted patients on a regular basis. The hospital provided New

York Jewry with a prominent forum to “manifest their sympathy for a noble cause.” During the Draft Riots of 1863, the hospital, located in the midst of the mayhem on Twenty-Eighth Street, admitted victims of the violence. In 1864 the hospital accepted fifty more soldiers. One of its staff physicians, Dr. Israel Moses, served in the army as a lieutenant colonel until the end of the conflict. After the war the hospital altered its policy and opened as a public hospital, serving the entire community, and renamed itself Mount Sinai.<sup>37</sup>

Finance was another major contribution that Jews made to the war effort. Many New York Jews played an important role in funding the war, none more than Joseph Seligman, a German immigrant who entered the city in 1846. With his brothers, he ascended from country peddler to the helm of New York’s most prominent Jewish firm, Seligman & Co. A strong supporter of the Union cause, he was elected vice president of a large public meeting in support of the Union cause on the day of the firing on Fort Sumter. When war was declared, the Seligmans won a contract to outfit New York’s Seventh Regiment. More important, they were central players in gaining financial backing for a government whose capital was at risk following the withdrawal of Southern deposits. During the war Joseph established Washington connections, acquiring additional contracts to supply military uniforms. When U.S. Treasury funds seemed in question, he lamented that he might have “no alternative but the suspension of our house, which will drag down 10 other houses, and throw 400 operatives out of employ.” Fortunately, he received nearly \$1.5 million by July, 1862. That summer, joined by brothers Isaac and Henry, he sold \$200 million in war bonds in Germany. Seligman (along with his brother) was one of the few Jews who was asked to join the prestigious Union Club, formed in 1863 to allow conservative businessmen to support the Republicans and play a greater role in New York’s politics. Both the invitation to the Union Club and his highly visible efforts for the Union were noteworthy steps toward integration into New York society at the highest levels.<sup>38</sup>

This acceleration of Jewish integration would have pleased Rev. Raphael immensely. But what of the more radical changes envisioned by his Reform colleague and adversary, Rabbi Adler. Movement toward changing the Jewish social and political outlook was far more difficult and far less straightforward. As noted earlier, by the third and fourth years of fighting, war weariness had overtaken New York, including the Jewish community. New York remained a Democratic town, and Lincoln remained an unpopular leader. In addition, Jewish alienation from Republican ideals was exacerbated by wartime antisemitism.

### **Antisemitism and the Draft Riots**

The Civil War triggered “the worst period of anti-Semitism in the United States to date.” The most significant incident, a national event that electrified New York’s Jewish community, was the notorious General Orders No. 11,

“the most sweeping anti-Jewish regulation in all of American history.” On 17 December 1862 General Ulysses S. Grant, terming the Jews “a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department,” ordered their immediate expulsion from his military department, an area encompassing northern Mississippi and parts of Kentucky and Tennessee. When Lincoln learned of the act he moved to have it rescinded; the notorious order was revoked on 4 January. But this was too late; the order had already produced fear and rage among Jews throughout the nation, especially in New York. Upon learning of the edict, the *Messenger* indignantly commented, “Why single out as the especial objects of his wrath, the *Israelites* residing within his lines? Why inflict upon a general body a penalty due to individual offenders?” Sullying “the Jewish name” because of the crimes of a few could lead to enormous and limitless troubles. In the next issue of the *Messenger*, there was telling evidence of the regulation’s impact. Observing the “exceedingly bitter” mood within the community, the newspaper implored Jews not to let their fury cause them to support politicians whose objects were “very, very far from the Jewish heart” or give credence to the “wild, insincere suggestion that ‘Government in Washington is bigoted, intolerant and unfriendly to Jews.’” Grant’s order created immense disaffection in a community never at ease with the Republican Party, especially with support faltering for a seemingly endless conflict.<sup>39</sup>

The *New York Times* reported that when a “committee of Jews” in the city took it upon themselves to commend Lincoln for “annulling the odious order,” most of the city’s Jews repudiated the committee, declaring that “they have no thanks for an act of simple and imperative justice—but grounds for deep and just complaint against the Government.” Grant should have been summarily dismissed, they said. The *Times* commented that even on “selfish” grounds, the order ought not to have been issued, given the high political positions Jews held in Europe—the power of the Rothschilds “to raise or destroy the credit of any nation.” But even more fundamental issues were at stake. Men “cannot be punished as a class, without gross violence to our free institutions.” The rights of American Jews were “as sacred under the Constitution as those of any other sect, class or race.” The *Times* article, along with the *Messenger*’s warnings, reveals the angry discord that Grant’s order fomented within the Jewish community.<sup>40</sup>

The war also generated a spike in traditional antisemitism. Significant antisemitic incidents took place in New York during the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. This coincided with the entry of thousands of immigrants into the city from central Europe and the growing visibility and wealth of the Jewish community. The Civil War made the matter worse. On the one hand, Jews were denounced for backing the South, and with burning Southern cities; on the other they were accused of traitorous speculation on the Gold Exchange, where “hook-nosed wretches speculate on disasters.” Jews were censured for avoiding military service and for making excessive profits by providing shoddy goods

for soldiers. Banker August Belmont, although he supported the Union, was termed the “Jew banker of New York,”—an agent of the Rothschilds out to provide funds in a conspiracy to aid the Confederacy.<sup>41</sup>

Adding to Jewish distress were the Draft Riots of 1863. When the Union found that volunteers would not supply the needed number of troops, it instituted conscription. In New York the draft became an object of fear and hatred among the Irish and some German workers. No longer subscribing to the goals and ideals of Lincoln and angered by the ability of the wealthy to purchase a substitute for three hundred dollars, they took to the streets to prevent the lottery. They blocked streets with barricades; fired on police and soldiers; attacked the buildings of the wealthy and Horace Greeley’s *Tribune*, a Republican newspaper; burned down the Colored Orphan Asylum; and lynched African Americans. Before troops, only a few days removed from the Battle of Gettysburg, restored order, more than one hundred men and women lay dead. Many businesses were destroyed, including Jewish garment stores. While no Jews were known to have participated, the collapse of order in the city undoubtedly increased discontent in the Jewish community.<sup>42</sup>

The impact of growing disaffection with the war, of antisemitism in general and Orders No. 11 in particular, and of the Draft Riots was reflected in wartime elections. New York served as headquarters for Peace Democrats, who advocated acceding to Southern concerns in order to bring hostilities to a quick end. Democrat Horatio Seymour, campaigning on an anti-Lincoln platform, won the governor’s seat in the fall of 1862. Democrats carried every ward and elected all six congressional candidates. In 1863 New Yorkers chose German American C. Godfrey Gunther as their mayor. Gunther belonged to the Democratic faction that upheld the “supremacy of the white race.” He received strong support in Little Germany, or Kleindeutschland, New York’s home to many Germans, both Jewish and Christian.<sup>43</sup>

Prior to the election of 1864, Myer Isaacs, son of Rev. Isaacs and coeditor of the *Messenger*, wrote Lincoln that though there was no “Jewish vote,” there was “a large number of faithful Union supporters among our prominent coreligionists—but there are also supporters of the opposition.” Jews were neither “distinctly Union or Democratic.” Isaacs did report that at a recent mass meeting of the German Union Society, the chair of the executive committee, two principal speakers, and others on the platform were Jews. Abram Dittenhoefer served as candidate for an elector for Lincoln, while on the Democratic side Jacob Seebacher was the Democratic nominee for the assembly. The loyalties of the Jews of New York were clearly divided in 1864, but what was the nature of that division?<sup>44</sup>

Despite spectacular Union victories, most notably the fall of Atlanta, an event that foretold a speedy and victorious end of the war, Lincoln carried only 33 percent of the city’s vote. How did New York’s Jews vote? By 1864 nearly

all major Jewish manufacturers and merchants had come over to the Union side. After a difficult initial year, the city's commerce prospered. The copper manufactory founded by Harmon Hendricks, one of the city's wealthiest Jews, operated at full capacity while garment manufacturers labored to meet the army's seemingly endless needs. The city raised millions of dollars for the war effort. Republicans and industrialists formed a common economic bond. However, the working classes, especially independent artisans and unskilled laborers, did not thrive as did the bourgeoisie. While wages increased, inflation eroded living standards. The price of coal tripled, sugar doubled, and flour rose by a third. For these workers, even if war disaffection eased and antisemitism decreased with the coming of military success, the Republican Party remained unfriendly territory. The working-class vote created a sizable Democratic majority.<sup>45</sup>

Kleindeutschland was sympathetic to the German Democratic Club's argument that the Republican war, inflation, taxes, and draft produced harsh economic consequences for the working classes. Horatio Seymour stated in 1861 that the Germans were the "true conservatives of the Democratic Party." In 1863 they had supported white supremacist Gunther for mayor. Although German immigrants were friendlier than the Irish to the Union cause, German wards in Kleindeutschland gave Lincoln's adversary, General McClellan, 69 percent of its votes in 1864. German Jews mingled freely and identified with non-Jewish Germans. Indeed, as they were "bound together in an organic unity that lasted for generations," it is unlikely that they voted differently from their German neighbors. Isaacs was correct that Jews voted on both sides; however, it is likely that they voted against Lincoln at close to the two-to-one proportion that other Germans did.<sup>46</sup>

## The Death of Lincoln

The assassination of Lincoln on 14 April 1865 shocked an entire nation. News of the president's death reached New York on the Sabbath; synagogues quickly filled to capacity, the exterior of each draped in black. At Shaaray Tefilah Rev. Isaacs lamented an "appalling calamity" at a moment when the nation was jubilant with news of "peace and reunion." In the *Messenger* he declared that this "kind good hearted man, the steadfast, conscientious President" would rank second only to Washington in the nation's history. A Sephardic prayer for the dead was recited for the first time ever for a non-Jew at Shearith Israel, where the lectern, pillars, and gallery were covered in black. At Temple Emanu-El the entire congregation stood and recited the kaddish, the traditional prayer for the dead. Rabbi Adler was so overcome with grief he could not speak, though a few weeks later he likened Lincoln to Moses, both emancipators of slaves. Learning from nature allowed Lincoln to "fully extirpate slavery," restoring "the land of the free to true freedom," preserving the Union and teaching the world of the stability of republican government.<sup>47</sup>

When Lincoln's body arrived in New York it was taken to city hall to lie in state. Fifteen hundred members of B'nai B'rith, bearing the banners of the various lodges, marched in the fourth division of the funeral pageant. After the funeral train resumed its journey, New Yorkers filled Union Square. Members of six synagogues, together with representatives of Jewish benevolent societies, paraded to the gathering from the sanctuary of Shearith Israel. Rev. Raphall and five other Jewish leaders sat on the speakers' platform. Speaking for the Jewish community, Rev. Isaacs prayed that God would both remove Lincoln's soul "to the spot reserved for martyred saints" and "soothe our pains and calm our griefs."<sup>48</sup>

German immigrant Marie Wesslau described the scene in New York after Lincoln's assassination:

It was terribly sad to walk through the streets with all the flags on the public buildings at half mast and almost all the buildings draped in black and white with all sorts of inspirational inscriptions.... I don't believe the death of any monarch has ever been as deeply mourned as Pres. Linkol."

A city that had rejected his leadership by a two-to-one margin only six months earlier was now in the deepest sorrow at his death. So powerful was the death and martyrdom of Lincoln that it ensured that the Civil War would be even more than an opportunity for the Jewish community to fuse more solidly into the life of the metropolis. As Lincoln, like President Kennedy in our own time, became a martyred president, the outburst of emotion and grief demanded a greater meaning for the conflict, a watershed in the life of the nation, a watershed in the life of New York Jewry.<sup>49</sup>

The essay began by contrasting the two outlooks of Rev. Raphall and Rabbi Adler: one that argued that the war was caused by demagogues who disrupted a peaceful and prosperous nation and whose goal was a return to normalcy, and another that argued that the war was a chance to cleanse the nation of a deadly cancer—slavery—so that republican government might everywhere prevail. Lincoln's assassination and the electric reaction that went through a city that only a few months before had rejected him decisively at the polls was the turning point. Profound, nearly unendurable patriotism and sorrow gave Adler's words of radical change a prophetic ring, pointing toward a more fitting result of the conflict than the mere restoration of the Union that Raphall had advocated. The sacrifices of the battlefield seemed not just heroic but earth-shaking.

Lincoln's profound impact is apparent at the conclusion of an article written in 1904 by Myer Isaacs, at that date an officer of the American Jewish Historical Society:



This paper will be read on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, the birthday of Lincoln. Profane hands, even now, touch the ark which holds sacred the memory of the beloved and martyred President. We of the Jewish Historical Society reverently place our tribute of gratitude by the side of the myriad chaplets in honor of the American who was too great to be sectarian, whose motto was “Malice towards none—charity for all,” “doing the right as God gave him to see the right,” whose idea of atonement was the Jewish inspiration, “let the oppressed go free.”<sup>50</sup>

In the 1850s, many of New York’s Jewish leaders—including Hart, Noah, Lyon, and Raphall—openly supported the Southern cause, disdained the black race, justified slavery, and despised the Republican Party. By the turn of the century, the shepherds of the Jewish community uniformly mourned Lincoln, championing the “Great Emancipator.” The Civil War was a transformative moment in the Jewish community’s confidence that they had an increasingly secure place in the growing republic. History would prove, as Jews became leaders of civil liberties and civil rights, and as they placed their political allegiance with those who advocated these values, that it was also a transformative moment for their understanding of American democracy. One sign of the beginning of this transition was that the nation’s most prominent Jew shifted from a New Yorker who was a Democrat to one who was a Republican—August Belmont to financier Joseph Seligman, respectively. It may have taken a long, dreadful war and the death of a beloved president, but in 1865 New York’s Jews began to join Adler in articulating a common bond between their Egyptian bondage and the plight of African-American slaves. As the quote from Myer Isaacs indicates, Jews retained the egalitarian commitment of Adler and Lincoln into the next century.<sup>51</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Raphall spoke at synagogues throughout the country. Prior to coming to America he edited the *Hebrew Review and Magazine of Rabbinical Literature* and had translated the Mishnah into English. While at B'nai Jeshurun he published lectures on "the Poetry of the Hebrews" and the "Post-Biblical History of the Jews." Unlike earlier leaders, Raphall and his counterparts gave sermons on holidays and other special occasions. This added gravity to the services and attracted the attention of Christian audiences. In New York the term for Jewish spiritual leaders varied. "Rabbi" was used, though often rabbis such as Raphall were not ordained in Europe by either a yeshiva or the state. In New York there was a gradual transformation from "hazan" to "reverend," both of which applied to Gershom Seixas and Morris Raphall. Jewish spiritual leaders before the Civil War were referred to as "reverend," "doctor," and "rabbi." "Doctor" would particularly apply to German spiritual leaders, as the German state required all Jewish clergy to have secular doctorates. Israel Goldstein, *A Century of Judaism in New York: B'nai Jeshurun, 1825–1925* (New York: Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, 1930), 110–114, 119–124; Hyman Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946), 91–92; Israel Feinstein, *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times: Studies in Diversity, 1840–1914* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1999), 168–195.

<sup>2</sup>*New York Times*, 1 May 1863; *Jewish Messenger*, 20 October 1863; 5 February 1864; 1 April 1864; 3 March 1865; 17 March 1865; 24 March 1865; Philip Goodman, "The Purim Association of the City of New York, 1862–1902," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (hereafter *PAJHS*) 40 (1950–1951): 134–144.

<sup>3</sup>Gershom Greenberg, "The Dimensions of Samuel Adler's Religious View of the World," *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1975): 377–412; Benny Kraut, *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979), ch. 1; *New York Times*, 27 November 1864.

<sup>4</sup>*New York Times*, 14 September 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community*, 469; *Asmonean*, 30 October 1857; Rudolf Glanz, "German Jews In New York City in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century" in his *Studies in Judaica Americana* (New York: Ktav, 1970), 128–131; Egal Feldman, "Jews in the Early Growth of the New York City Men's Clothing Trade," *American Jewish Archives* 13 (1960): 7–14; Vincent Carosso, "A Financial Elite: New York's German-Jewish Investment bankers," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (hereafter *AJHQ*) 66 (1977): 66–74; Stephen Birmingham, *"Our Crowd": The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), chs. 2–9; *The New York City Directory, 1856–1857* (New York, 1857), available on ancestry.com. Edmund Clarence Stedman, ed., *The New York Stock Exchange*, vol. 1 (New York: Stock Exchange Historical Company, 1905), 106–108. By 1855 one-fourth of the city's top ten thousand taxpayers were immigrants. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 739.

<sup>6</sup>Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 664, 860, and chs. 27, 28; Howard B. Rock, *Haven of Liberty: New York Jews in the New World, 1654–1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), ch. 8; Philip Foner, *Business & Slavery: The New York Merchants & the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 4, 14; Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12; Ernest A. McKay, *The Civil War and New York City*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 18.

<sup>7</sup>An excellent survey of New York antebellum politics and society is Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840–1857* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup>Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 621–625, 858–863.

<sup>9</sup>Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1901), 166–167; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 29; Sandy L. Maisel, ed., *Jews in American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 351.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Schuldiner and Daniel J. Kleinfeld, eds., *The Selected Writings of Mordecai Noah* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 87–89, 100–104. Noah died in 1851. However, his writings in the 1830s and 1840s were very influential. Later leaders continued in his footsteps.

<sup>11</sup>Jonathan Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 109–113, 119; *New York Evening Star*, 18 February 1834; 15 September 1835; taken from Leonard I. Gappenberg, “M.M. Noah and the *Evening Star*: Whig Journalism, 1833–1840,” doctoral dissertation (Yeshiva University, 1970), 157–158, 167; *Asmonean*, 30 October 1857.

<sup>12</sup>Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 111–112; *Evening Star*, 9 November 1839, in Gappenberg, “M.M. Noah and the *Evening Star*,” 184–185.

<sup>13</sup>*Asmonean*, 12 March 1858.

<sup>14</sup>*Asmonean*, 25 July 1856; 15 August 1856; 5 September 1856; 30 October, 1857; Foner, *Business & Slavery*, 138.

<sup>15</sup>*Asmonean*, 4 July 1851.

<sup>16</sup>*Asmonean*, 26 October 1850; 10 January 1851; 5 June 1851. In its 10 January 1851 issue, Lyon quoted from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to explain how the biblical literature can be misused and how the texts supported the law.

<sup>17</sup>“Bible View of Slavery, Discourse of Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall at B’nai Jeshurun, January 4, 1861,” in Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews of the United States, 1654–1865* (New York: Schocken Books, 1950), 405–418. Max J. Kohler, “The Jews and the American Anti-Slavery Movement,” *PAJHS* 5 (1897): 154–155.

<sup>18</sup>Schappes, *Documentary History*, 405–406, 686; Jayme Sokolow, “Revolution and Reform: The Antebellum Jewish Abolitionists,” in *Jews and the Civil War*, ed. Jonathan Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 187–189. Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society 1951), 16–19. Kohler, “Jews and the Anti-Slavery Movement,” 154–155.

<sup>19</sup>*New York Times*, 2 October 1856.

<sup>20</sup>Sokolow, “Revolution and Reform,” 180, 188–189; Gustav Pollak, *Michael Heilprin and His Sons* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1912), 3–12; Schappes, *Documentary History*, 419.

<sup>21</sup>Schappes, *Documentary History*, 418–428. See also Benjamin Braude, “The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 103–142.

<sup>22</sup>Sokolow, “Revolution and Reform,” 183; Robert R. Swerienga, “Samuel Meyer Isaacs: the Dutch Rabbi of New York City,” *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 607–621. *Jewish Messenger*, 9 November 1860; 4 January 1861; 18 January 1861; 25 January 1861. Korn believed that the *Messenger*’s refusal to take a political position before the war was taken out of fear. Korn, *American Jewry*, 249.

<sup>23</sup>Myer Stern, *The Rise and Progress of Reform Judaism: Temple Emanu-El of New York* (New York: Myer Stern, 1895), 40, 55–57. Sokolow, “Revolution and Reform,” 183–185; Kohler, “Jews and the Anti-Slavery Movement,” 147–149, 152 ; Korn, *American Jewry*, 161; Fuchs, *Political Behavior*, 36; Isaac Markens, *The Hebrews in America* (New York: Isaac Markens, 1888), 209; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 2 (New York: J. T. White, 1892), 413.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Stanley R. Brav, “The Jewish Woman, 1861–1865,” *American Jewish Archives* 17 (1965): 62; Max Kohler notes that a German Jew, perhaps a New Yorker, Mr. Lazar, was active at the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society meeting in New York in 1853. Kohler, “Jews and the Anti-Slavery Movement,” 144.

<sup>25</sup>Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 129–135; Sokolow, “Revolution and Reform,” 125; Fuchs, *Political Behavior*, 26–30; Ira Forman, “The Politics of Minority Consciousness,” in Maisel, *Jews in American Politics*, 141–147.

<sup>26</sup>Kenneth Jackson and Fred Kameny, eds., *The Almanac of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 367–368; Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion and Class in New York City, 1845–1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 136.

<sup>27</sup>Abram J. Dittenhoefer, *How We Elected Lincoln* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1916), 2–6.

<sup>28</sup>Foner, *Business and Slavery*, 251. Stedman, *New York Stock Exchange*, vol. 1, 128. A recent book generally confirms Foner's findings while noting that manufacturers at times had different interests from merchants, notably in seeking tariff protection. Beckert finds that Republicans, while a small minority of New York's middle class, were most likely to be merchants involved in the western trade and manufacturers. Manufacturers were four times more likely to be Republican than merchants. However, the bulk of Jewish manufacturers were in the garment trade, a trade deeply attached to the Southern trade. Beckert, *Monied Metropolis*, ch. 3. Indeed, after the election New York endured a severe, if short-term, depression. The *New York Herald* reported that in December 1860, ten thousand workers were unemployed. Bankruptcies doubled. The dry-goods and garment trades, prominent Jewish mercantile occupations, were hit especially hard. Basil Leo Lee, *Discontent in New York City, 1861–1865* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1943), 8–13; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 864.

<sup>29</sup>*Asmonean*, 15 November 1850; 5 December 1851.

<sup>30</sup>Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 177, 188. The quote on Broadway is from the *New York Herald*, 19–21 April 1861. *Jewish Messenger*, 26 April 1861. Replying to this editorial, the Jews of Shreveport, Louisiana, canceled their subscription and published the resolves of their congregation, stating their intent “as law abiding citizens ... to stand by and honor the flag ... of the Southern Confederacy with all that is dear to us.” They scorned the *Messenger*, a “black republican paper,” and derided editor Isaacs, whom they compared to Brutus, plunging a dagger into Caesar's heart while kissing him. *Jewish Messenger*, 7 June 1861.

<sup>31</sup>*Jewish Messenger*, 26 April 1861; 24 May 1861; other sermons may be found in the 24 May issue.

<sup>32</sup>Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 44, 61.

<sup>33</sup>Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company, 1895), 111, 236–301. Schappes, *Documentary History*, 689–690. Jacob R. Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, vol. 3 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 39–41. See also Sylvan Morris Dubow, “Identifying the Jewish Servicemen in the Civil War: A Reappraisal of Simon Wolf's *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*,” *AJHQ* 59 (1969): 357–369.

<sup>34</sup>*Jewish Messenger*, 3 May 1861; 17 May 1861; 7 June 1861; 21 June 1861; 9 August 1861; 17 January 1862; 24 January 1862; 31 January 1862; 7 February 1862; 14 February 1862; 21 February 1862; 11 July 1862; 27 August 1862.

<sup>35</sup>Korn, *American Jewry*, 56–80; Myer S. Isaacs, “A Jewish Army Chaplain,” *PAJHS* 10 (1904): 128–133; Marcus, *United States Jewry*, vol. 3, 3, 43–45; *Jewish Messenger*, 31 January 1862; 5 May 1862. The Reform movement did not recognize the Board of Delegate's claim to represent all of American Jewry, as they were composed only of Orthodox synagogues. After the board sent its protest to Washington, six Reform leaders, including Rabbis Wise, Lilienthal, and Adler, publicly protested that while they supported the legislation, it was their “duty” to dispute the Board of Delegates' assumption that they represented American Jewry. *Jewish Messenger*, 11 July 1862.

<sup>36</sup>Korn, *American Jewry*, 100–104.

<sup>37</sup>*Jewish Messenger*, 20 June 1862; 18 July 1862; Joseph Hirsh and Beka Doherty, *The Mount Sinai Hospital of New York, 1852–1952* (New York: Random House, 1952), 4–13; 42–44. Grinstein, *The Jewish Community of New York*, 155–157.

<sup>38</sup>Korn, *American Jewry*, 161; George S. Hellman, "Joseph Seligman, American Jew," *PAJHS* 41 (1951–1952): 27, 34–35; Elliott Ashkenazi, "Jewish Commercial Interests Between North and South: The Case of the Lehmans and the Seligmans," *American Jewish Archives* 17 (1965): 25–29; Thomas K. McGraw, "Immigrant Entrepreneurs in U.S. Financial History, 1775–1914," *Capitalism and Society* 5 (2010):14–15; Ross L. Muir and Carl J. White, *Over the Long Term: The Story of J. & W. Seligman & Co.* (New York: J. & W. Seligman, 1964), 24–30, 44–48; Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan. An American Banking Dynasty and the Rise of Finance* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 13; Beckert, *Monied Metropolis*, 112; Marcus, *United States Jewry*, vol. 3, 53–54. There is debate about the success of Joseph Seligman as a bond seller in Germany. The records that led an early biographer to make this claim are no longer extant.

<sup>39</sup>Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 30; Korn, *American Jewry*, ch. 6; Schappes, *Documentary History*, 472–476; 702–704; Marcus, *United States Jewry*, vol. 3, 48–50; *Jewish Messenger*, 9 January 1863; 16 January 1863; 23 January 1863.

<sup>40</sup>*New York Times*, 8 January 1863; see also 19 December 1862; 5 January 1863; 7 January 1863; 8 February 1863.

<sup>41</sup>Korn, *American Jewry*, 158–164, 173; *New York World*, 16 April 1861. *New York Tribune*, 13 March 1863; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 21 March 1863, in Gary L. Bunker and John J. Appel, "'Shoddy,' Antisemitism and the Civil War," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 20. *Jewish Messenger*, 21 November 1862; 19 December 1862; 20 June 1863; *New York Times*, 11 January 1861; 2 April 1862; 7 April 1862; 28 September 1862; 19 December 1862; 8 February 1863; 2 April 1863; 27 July 1863; 28 February 1864; 2 November 1864. See also Rock, *Haven of Liberty*, ch. 11.

<sup>42</sup>Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 887–901; Korn, *American Jewry*, 162–163; Wolf, *The American Jew*, 284; Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 34; *Jewish Messenger*, 26 July 1863; 28 August 1863; 4 September 1863. After the first day most Germans abandoned violence, and some joined the authorities. In *The Great Riots of New York* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1873), Joel Headley argues that the German population "had no sympathy with the rioters" (246).

<sup>43</sup>Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 886; Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860–1865* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 89–91,167; Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 286.

<sup>44</sup>Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 903. *Jewish Messenger*, 26 October 1864; 4 November 1864; Bertram W. Korn, "The Jews of the Union," *American Jewish Archives* 13 (1961): 221–224; McKay, *The Civil War*, 148.

<sup>45</sup>Beckert, *Monied Metropolis*, 135, 137; Muir and White, *Over the Long Term*, 46; Lee, *Discontent in New York*, 175–177; 180–181; 204–205. McKay, *The Civil War*, 116, 140, 216–224, 285–286. A number of trades staged wartime strikes. On the plight of women working sixteen-hour days, ravaged by inflation, see *New York Times*, 2 April 1864.

<sup>46</sup>Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 58; Spann, *Gotham at War*, 109–112,172; Kamphoefner and Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War*, 64–65, 67, 70; Stanley Nadel, "Jewish Race and German Soul in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Jewish History* 77 (1987): 8; Bernstein, *Draft Riots*, 223–224; 286. For ward-by-ward election results see *New York Times*, 9 November 1864. Bertram Korn, the prominent historian of American Jewry during the Civil War, wrote that "New York Jewry was solidly behind Lincoln" but provides no evidence for that claim. Because Jews did not live in enclaves separate from non-Jews, it is impossible to determine their precise voting patterns.

<sup>47</sup>*Jewish Messenger*, 21 April 1865; 9 June 1865; Brav, "The Jewish Woman," 64.

<sup>48</sup>Korn, "The Jews of the Union," 239–243; *Jewish Messenger*, 28 April 1865.

<sup>49</sup>Kamphoefner and Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War*, 71.

<sup>50</sup>Isaacs, "A Jewish Army Chaplain," 137.

<sup>51</sup>Fuchs, *Political Behavior*, 42, 49–50; Fuchs points out that New York remained a Democratic stronghold but that a number of important Jewish Democrats refused to align themselves with Tammany Hall. The progressive views of the nineteenth-century Republican Party were no longer the formidable barriers that they were before the war. Emmanuel Hertz, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of the Synagogue* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1927), collects a number of the addresses by New York (and other American) rabbis. Few discuss slavery in the short excerpts, but there is a sense of common identity with Lincoln and the nation. Unfortunately, the strongest antislavery speaker, Samuel Adler, is represented with only a few passages. Morris Raphall, while expressing shock and sadness, again demonstrated that he had not been a Lincoln supporter. He included in his remarks the offenses Lincoln committed by wrongly imprisoning people, his early military failures, and his carelessness in being seen in the open so readily. The most passionate speaker for Lincoln as the “Great Emancipator” is Rabbi Max Lilienthal, a major Jewish presence in New York from 1844 to 1855. In 1865, some rabbis more than others were willing to represent a common identity with bondage; that would change in the years to come. Fuchs’s book includes many later addresses that are not reluctant to make these comparisons. The book provides important insight into the immense change that the war brought to the Jewish community.



The American Civil War (also known by other names) was a civil war in the United States from 1861 to 1865, fought between the northern United States (loyal to the Union) and the southern United States (that had seceded from the Union and formed the Confederacy). The civil war began primarily as a result of the long-standing controversy over the enslavement of black people. War broke out in April 1861 when secessionist forces attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina shortly after Abraham Lincoln had been sworn in. Claiming the lives of over 100 people and leaving a city shaken and torn, the New York City draft riots became the most devastating example of civil upheaval, bested only by the Civil War itself. We take a closer look at this historical event. For many, particularly for white, pro-slavery Democrats in cities like New York, the Emancipation Proclamation delivered in September of 1862 was not well-received. The first day or two went largely without incident, however on July 13th public sentiment against emancipation, and the idea of fighting in a war for something they vehemently opposed erupted into violence. Men, women and even children took to the streets armed with bricks, bats, and clubs. State surveillance was nothing new. The war on terror in the aughts had already ushered in new invasive profiling practices. But the pervasive, hyper-individualized, corporate-based collection and aggregation of personal data in partnership with government marked a new frontier in surveillance. He resumed deportation of undocumented immigrants brought here as children. He won a huge tax cut for corporations and the wealthiest Americans, and he reversed or weakened dozens of Obama era rules designed to regulate the financial industry, reduce greenhouse gases, clean up the air and water, and expand civil rights. Even as Trump cozied up to the U.S.'s longtime rival Russia and undermined free trade with punishing tariffs, the vast majority of Republicans stuck with him.