

**ENELOW
HYMAN
GERSON**

THE ALLIED COUNTRIES
AND THE JEWS

Hyman Enelow
The Allied Countries and the Jews

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The Allied Countries and the Jews:

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Hyman Gerson Enelow

The Allied Countries and the Jews

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations."

– Deuteronomy.

"The dense web of the fortunes of man is woven without a void."

– Lord Acton.

"They, hearing History speak, of what men were, And have become, are wise."

– George Meredith.

PREFACE

The addresses collected in this little book were delivered at the Sabbath morning Services of Temple Emanu-El during the autumn and early winter of 1917-18. I tried to give a bird's eye view of the relation of the Jews to the several countries with which America is now associated in the War for the defense of democracy. Also, I tried to point out how intimately the advance of democracy has been connected with the improvement of the lot of the Jew. Forming part of Divine Services, the addresses had to be short, but I hope they contained enough to illumine the subject and to stimulate thought, if not further study, as well as patriotic action.

In the present form, the substance is offered of the spoken addresses. The address on Russia may seem more hopeful than the situation today would warrant. Right now, unfortunately, chaos reigns in Russia, and the Jews are said to suffer terribly. Though Trotzky is reported to have renounced all affiliation with the Jews, or any particular interest in them, his changes of fortune are likely to react upon the people from which he sprang. None the less, we must not despair. In the end, Democracy must win in Russia, and find a way of living together and working together for the numerous racial and religious groups which form her vast population.

I wish to express my thanks to the Board of Trustees

of Temple Emanu-El for their kindness in publishing these addresses and for generously providing a special number of copies for distribution among Jewish men in our Army and Navy.

H.G.E.

Washington's Birthday, 1918.

I

FRANCE AND THE JEWS

Every American is now more than ever interested in Europe, and especially in those countries with which we are associated in the War. France, in particular, claims our attention. It is for this reason that as Jews we cannot help being interested in the relation of France to the Jewish people. Many of our sons soon will find themselves on French soil to take part in the liberation of France, which now means part of the defense of our own Republic. Not a few of our women, also, will be there – are there already, engaged in work of relief and restoration. It is but proper that we should recall what connection has existed between the Jew and France.

France has played an important part in Jewish history. There have been Jews in France from earliest times, perhaps from the very beginning of the Christian era. About the middle of the fifth century we know definitely that there was a considerable number of Jews in France and that they lived on terms of friendship with the rest of the population. When Hilary, bishop of Arles, died in the year 449, Jews as well as Christians wept at his funeral, the Jews chanting Psalms in Hebrew. From that early age on, France has been a most important factor in Jewish history.

The conditions of life for the Jew have not been the same there always. There is the usual story of vacillation and misfortune.

France also has had her periods of persecution and expulsion for the Jews – particularly when she consisted of small provinces and factions. There was the usual story of malign charges and disputations, and Hebrew books now and then were confiscated and burnt as containing attacks on Christianity. The public burning of the Talmud at Paris, in the year 1242, the several expulsions during the fourteenth century, culminating in the expulsion of 1394 – just about a century before the expulsion from Spain – are among the tragic incidents of medieval Jewish history. France did not escape the religious fanaticism which formed one of the dark features of the middle ages.

But all in all, the Jews have had a glorious history in France, crowned by the fact that she was the first country in Europe to give full civil and political rights to the Jews, as she did during the Revolution, on September 28th, 1791. France thus inaugurated a new era in Jewish history. Indeed, she thus brought about the modern rebirth of the Jew – the Jew's full entry into modern life. Therefore, when it is said that every man has two countries – his own and France, we may justly apply it in particular to the modern Jew.

Nor was the leadership of France in the modern emancipation of the Jew an accident. It was part of the liberal spirit which has found varied expression in France, and which could not ignore the Jew and the maltreatment that was meted out to him all over Europe.

When Montesquieu wrote his great work, *The Spirit of the*

Laws, in the year 1748, he did not forget all the services that the Jews had rendered to civilization, nor did he fail to deplore the outrageous way the Jews were dealt with. The Christians, he affirmed, were treating their Jewish neighbors in a more inhuman way than the Japanese of those days treated the Christians. Readers of Montesquieu could not help remembering that remonstrance, and it is quite likely that Louis XVI was inspired by it to the abolition of the Jewish poll-tax, as well as to the appointment of a special commission, under the presidency of Malesherbes, for the study of Jewish conditions, with a view to their improvement.

But it is not commonly known that about forty years before Montesquieu issued his book, there appeared in France an epoch-making work, of which the leading Jewish historian, Graetz, has well said that it rendered an incalculable service to Judaism.

This work was the *History of the Religion of the Jews*, by Jacques Basnage de Beauval, a celebrated scholar and writer, published in the years 1707-11. It marked the first attempt to write a complete history of the Jews from the time of Christ to modern times, and was designed by the author as a continuation of the historical work of Josephus.

It was particularly noteworthy coming from a Christian theologian, seeing that the conventional Christian view was (and often still is) that the Jewish religion really ceased with the coming of Jesus. Christianity was supposed to have abolished

and eliminated Judaism. Yet Basnage realized that the contrary was true. Judaism was not dead. The Jews were still alive.

For five years he gave himself to the task of collecting material, and he produced a work which, whatever its shortcomings, was remarkable as the first of its kind, aside from the enormous amount of scholarship that went into its composition. But there was more than scholarship in the work; behind it was a realization of the marvel of Jewish history and resentment of the brutality with which the Jew was treated. Let no one wonder, said the author, if we denounce certain charges made against the Jew. "In the course of the centuries people have developed a spirit of cruelty and barbarism toward the Jews. They have been accused of being the cause of all calamities and charged with all kinds of crimes which never entered their minds. Everywhere they have been mobbed and massacred. Nevertheless, by a miracle of Providence, they still exist today everywhere. The bush of Moses, encircled by flames, has always burnt without being consumed."

The liberal spirit of Montesquieu and Basnage found new expression, and, we may say its culmination, in the men of the Revolution. Mirabeau, who in Berlin came in contact with Mendelssohn and got to know Dohm's famous work on the Civil Improvement of the Jews, issued in 1781, wrote a warm plea for the emancipation of the Jews, under the title of *Mendelssohn and the Political Improvement of the Jews*. His plea was supported by Gregoire, a priest, and Duport, a Jacobin member of the National

Assembly, and it finally resulted in the Assembly's abrogation of Jewish disabilities, and the invitation to the Jews to take the oath of citizenship.

Thus, on September 28th, 1791, the Jews of France were liberated, and the Jews of the world celebrated the beginning of a new era of freedom and of the opportunities that are bound up with freedom.

In the spiritual history of the Jew, also, France has played an illustrious part. In the middle ages there was no country where there was so large a number of brilliant and erudite scholars, and so energetic an activity, as in the numerous Jewish communities of France. North and South rivaled each other. Some of the most influential Jewish teachers of all times came from these French schools.

Think, for instance, of R. Gershom, called the Light of the Exile, in the eleventh century, who, though he founded a school at Mayence, came from Metz, and continued to draw disciples from many parts of France. He was one of the chief organizers of medieval Jewish life. He was the first to prohibit polygamy among Western Jews.

Then think of Rashi – the greatest of biblical exegetes and commentators.

At Vitry, on the Marne, was produced the most important work on the Jewish liturgy, known as *Mahzor Vitry*. R. Moses of Coucy compiled the most popular work on religious ordinances, the *Sepher Mitzwoth ha-gadol*.

Thus, we might go on and name the illustrious talmudists, and commentators, and philosophers of the Jews in France. Though each possessed his own characteristics and merits, we may justly say that the rabbis of France as a class were distinguished for that clarity of thought, directness of expression, and simple piety which we associate with France.

The Provence, too, was the centre of the great translators, who turned the classics of Arabic Jewish learning into Hebrew, and thus made them accessible to those parts of Europe unfamiliar with Arabic. Indeed, to this day, thanks to these achievements, the spiritual life of Israel the world over is, consciously or no, under the influence of France.

When we think of this record, we shall not wonder that the Jews of France are devoted to their country and prominent in its affairs. It was this very prominence of the Jews that led some base people to embrace anti-Semitism, and resulted in the Dreyfus scandal some years ago. But nothing shows the character of France so clearly as her readiness to right a wrong. In the Dreyfus case, too, she made *amende honorable*, and today Captain Dreyfus, the martyr of Devils Island, Major Dreyfus, as he is now, is actively working for the salvation of his country.

One good result of the War has been the cessation of anti-Semitism in France. This is demonstrated by such a book as M. Maurice Barrès's *Les diverses familles spirituelles la France*. Formerly, M. Barrès, president of the League of Patriots, as well as one of the most brilliant writers of France, was an anti-Semite.

But now that is all over. One of his most sympathetic chapters is on the Jews – on their loyalty and devotion, and he dwells with admiration on the famous incident of Rabbi Bloch of Lyons, who, in the early days of the War, died on the battlefield while offering a crucifix to a dying Catholic soldier, being struck by an enemy's shell. "Here," he says, "fraternity finds its perfect expression. The aged rabbi offering to the dying soldier the immortal sign of Christ on the cross, this is a picture which will not perish." Nor will it perish!

A long history – full of heroism and honor – links the Jew with France. Let us hope that the future may add to this splendor, and that France will ever remain the exemplar of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and that she will continue to play an important part in the spiritual as well as the secular life of Israel!

II

ENGLAND AND THE JEWS

Among the allied countries none is more influential than England. It is perfectly natural, therefore, that the name of England should be on everybody's lips, and that as Jews we should be particularly interested in the relation that has existed between England and the Jews.

For years there has been no country in the world whose Jewish population had enjoyed a position of such great power and prosperity, and such perfect recognition, as Great Britain. Ever since the middle of the nineteenth century has this been the case. The Jews of England have occupied positions of honor in their own country and its colonies, and time and again their influence has made it possible for them to come to the rescue of their fellow-Jews in other parts of the world, as happened, for instance, at the time of the blood accusation in Damascus, in 1840, when Moses Montefiore, with the support of the English government, saved not only the Jewish community of that far-off city, but also the honor of Israel the world over.

For over half a century the Jews have enjoyed such a condition of confidence and happiness in England. Only the other day I ran across in a German-Jewish journal of the year 1866 – Samson Raphael Hirsch's *Jeshurun*— a glowing account of the

induction of a Jew into the office of Lord Mayor of London. It referred to Benjamin Philips, who was the second Jew to attain that honor. The writer was greatly impressed with the marvelous pomp and grandeur of the occasion, but what struck him above all was this: that though the newspapers for days had discussed the event, not one of them singled out the fact that the new Lord Mayor was a Jew. Such perfect naturalization of the Jew obtained already in the year 1865, though it was only five years after the complete removal of Jewish disabilities in England. So much more a surprise might it be to learn by what a slow and laborious process the Jew won his recognition in England, how many centuries the struggle for his emancipation consumed, and that there was a time when the Jews of England suffered humiliation and persecution unsurpassed in any other part of the world.

As we take a bird's eye view of Israel's history in England, we see at once that it falls into three distinct periods.

There is the first period, lasting from the arrival of the first Jewish settlers who followed William the Conqueror from the Continent, to the expulsion. Who would believe today that there was a time when England expelled all her Jews? Yet, this is what happened in the year 1290. Moreover, when it did happen it came as a release and a blessing, seeing that for more than a century before the expulsion the life of the Jew in England was one drawn-out story of persecution and every form of misery. It was a century during which the Jews of England suffered the worst

consequences of feudalism, when they formed the prey and the sport of kings and priests alike, and when they added to history some of the most tragic chapters of martyrdom for the sake of faith. It was a century which began, after a period of comparative security and happiness, with the attack upon the Jews of London and the provinces, at the time of the Coronation of Richard I, because the archbishop took umbrage at the temerity of some Jewish delegates to the ceremony who ventured within the purlieu of the cathedral or the palace; and with the self-immolation, in the year 1190, of the whole community of York in the tower of that city – one of the most heroic incidents in all history. The expulsion thus closed mercifully the first period of Jewish history in England.

Then follows the period of the re-admission, in the middle of the seventeenth century, under the leadership of Cromwell and Menasseh ben Israel, though one is not to believe that in the interval there were no Jews in England, for there surely were, as recent research has shown.

Finally, we have the third period, which began with the gradual removal of Jewish disabilities in the nineteenth century. During this period we witness the Jews of England taking full part in the life of their country and reaching that present-day position which opportunity and complete recognition and integration in the national life have put within their power.

If today the Jews of England form so integral a part of their country, and if they are so whole-heartedly and single-mindedly

devoted to its welfare, it is not merely because they feel that they have wrought and fought enough for their patrimony, but also because they are conscious of their long association with England and her civilization, and of the fact that their beginnings on English soil go back to earliest times, to the very time that the Normans came to their shores and William the Conqueror invited the Jew to follow him to his new domain.

Yet it would be an error to suppose that the emancipation and the attainments of the Jews in England were due to mere accident. Rather have they been due to certain characteristics of the English people, and to those tendencies and qualities of English civilization which have made it so distinguished and potent in the world. The rise of the Jew in England may have been slow, but it has been sure, and it came because it was inevitable under the conditions that have served to make England herself great and strong and free. It is these facts we must consider if we would understand the ascendancy of the Jew in England.

First of all, there is the fact of England's democracy. It has often been observed that in no country is democracy more widespread and secure than in England. One thing is certainly true, namely, that England has led in the democratization of the world.

And nothing is more potent a lesson of history than that the Jew has always been benefited by true democracy. There have been autocrats who have been kind to the Jews, and there have been times when democracy has betrayed the Jew; but

these are exceptions. As a rule, the cause of Israel in the world has gone hand in hand with the progress of democracy – of true democracy. Democracy has been an invariable aid to the Jew, and not because (as practical politicians assume sometimes) its government depends on votes, and Jews might command votes; not at all, but rather because under the protection and in the atmosphere of democracy it is easiest for principles to be promulgated and for ideals to penetrate. When we fight for the cause of democracy, when our sons are preparing to shed their blood for it, when we are asking for the support of it with our wealth and our work, let us remember that we are fighting also for the cause of Israel in the world.

That is why the great movement for democratic freedom and justice in England was bound to make for the recognition and liberation of the Jewish soul. That is why Cromwell became a champion of the re-admission of the Jews to England, and namely, of their re-admission on the most honorable terms, and not, as some of his associates would have it, surreptitiously and half-heartedly. Nay, that is why, some forty years before Cromwell's effort, in the year 1614, when Leonard Busher wrote his noteworthy tract on "*Liberty of Conscience*", he demanded that such liberty be extended to all alike, including the Jews. That is why, two centuries later, Thomas B. Macauley could not help pleading for the removal of the disabilities of the Jews, as he did in 1830 and 1834 supporting the noble efforts of Lord Holland and Robert Grant. That is why Gladstone, at first opposed to

Jewish emancipation, could not help coming over to the more liberal view. It was impossible for the democratic conscience to affirm itself and for the democratic consciousness to grow in England, without freedom being granted, and justice being done, to the Jew, seeing it is for freedom and justice that democracy stands.

Another fact is England's interest in commerce. It is well known that commerce has helped make England great. Now, the Jew throughout the ages of his history in Europe has been one of the most important factors in commerce. Everybody knows what historic conditions served to bring about this result. The fact is that the Jew became perhaps the most important commercial factor of Europe, which was responsible both for his prosperity and persecution.

England has seldom failed to recognize this side of the Jew's importance. This is why he was first asked to come to England. This is why he was so often traded about by the feudal kings. This is why they hated to see him go even when they mocked and mobbed him. This is chiefly why Cromwell wanted him to return, and it is fear of his commercial power that often arrayed against him his opponents. Often short-sighted Englishmen were afraid that by giving equality and rights to the Jews, they would make it possible for the latter, by their commercial talent, to overwhelm the rest of the population and to absorb all the wealth of Britain. It was even feared that the Jews would buy up St. Paul's Cathedral and turn it into a synagogue! "You say they are the meanest

and most despised of all people," exclaimed Cromwell, at the Conference on the Re-admission of the Jews. "So be it! But in that case what becomes of your fears? Can you really be afraid that this contemptible and despised people should be able to prevail in trade and credit over the merchants of England, the noblest and most esteemed merchants of the whole world?"

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