

Leaders in the Jewish South and their Memories and Attitudes Towards
their Involvement in the American Civil War

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Introduction

When it comes to the study of the American Civil War, there are a myriad of topics one can cover. From the Battle of Gettysburg to General Stonewall Jackson, it is easy to find a specialized topic on this significant period in U.S history. However, one area that may not come to mind in the general American population is the Jewish experience during the Civil War. This is understandable considering Jews in America only numbered around 150,000 in 1860 before the Civil War started.¹ This made up .005% of the entire U.S population of over 31,000,000 people.² Many Jews came to America in search of religious freedom and toleration like other immigrant groups who helped settle the United States. That is why the topic for this paper brings up several questions regarding Jews during this time period. Specifically, the focus of this topic is on Southern Jews and their leaders' memories and attitudes towards their involvement during and after the Civil War.

Jewish history is rooted in surviving persecution. Ever since the Romans destroyed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and exiled the Jewish people from ancient Israel, Jews have faced persecution during the Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, and pogroms for nearly two thousand years. Wherever Jews traveled, they had to be wary about their surrounding communities and how they would be treated. America provided an opportunity for Jews to escape the hardships of their experiences in Europe. That is why it is peculiar that many of these Jewish immigrants chose to come to the Southern United States where oppressive slavery was an integral part of the

¹ Sandee Brawarsky, "The War that made the Jews American," *New York Jewish Week* (New York, NY), March 8, 2013.

² Jennie Cohen, "Civil War Deadlier Than Previously Thought?" *History*, June 6, 2011, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://www.history.com/news/civil-war-deadlier-than-previously-thought>.

regions society and economy. Despite this, Jews have a long history in the South.

Some of the earliest congregations in the country were founded in the South. Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia and K.K. Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina were founded in 1733 and 1750 respectively.³ By 1860, there were around 25,000 Jews in the South and anywhere between 2,000-3000 who served in the Confederate forces.⁴ While still only a tiny portion of the rest of the Confederate population, it shows that the Southern Jewish community supported their society's fight against the Union. This raises the question of how as Jewish people, who celebrate the holiday of Passover which focuses on the story of the Israelites freedom from slavery in Egypt, could live in a society where they could see the oppression of another enslaved people.

Several Jewish historians have studied this question and have come to the conclusion that these people were just as much Southerners as they were Jews. Robert Rosen, who wrote the in-depth analysis of this question in *The Jewish Confederates*, concluded, "the Jews of the South lived in a slaveholding society, and they accepted the institution as part of everyday life...Jews adopted the Southern way of life, including the code of honor, dueling, slavery, and the Southern notions about states' rights."⁵ Rabbi Bertram Wallace Korn, who was one of the first historians to write about this topic in *American Jewry and the Civil War*, also points out that three-fourths of Jews in major cities like Richmond and Savannah owned slaves.⁶ They were treated no differently than how other non-Jewish slave owners treated their slaves. While it may seem

³ "Historic Charleston and Savannah Honored Among 14 Oldest at Tercentenary Rites," *Southern Israelite* (Atlanta, GA), November 19, 1954.

⁴ Robert Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 31, 162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶ Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York: Atheneum, 1951), xxvi.

ironic to think about slaves serving the meal at a Passover Seder as Jewish families retell the story of Moses delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, it most likely was not viewed this way. Rabbi and Jewish historian Lance J. Sussman explained, “originally, Passover was theological. It’s about redemption and the power of God. It’s not really about setting human beings free in a universal way. The text says that God frees the Hebrew slaves because God loves the Hebrews. God doesn’t free all slaves for all of humanity or send Moses out to become the William Lloyd Garrison of the ancient free world.” Rabbi Sussman added that the focus on Passover as an abolitionist story did not happen until the Civil Right era in the 1950s.⁷ It is important to point out, however, that the Jews in the North did not hold the same views as their Southern brethren.

Northern Jews fought for the Union and opposed the South’s reasons for secession. Northern Rabbis like David Einhorn vehemently opposed slavery. He gave sermons in his synagogue in Baltimore calling it a moral evil. However, Baltimore had a lot of Southern sympathizers and he was run out of town after being threatened by a mob who wanted to tar and feather the rabbi. He fled to Philadelphia where he continued to oppose slavery.⁸ Despite the risk, Rabbi Einhorn spoke out against what he and many other Northern Jews believed to be an oppressive institution. Northern Jews were proud to fight for the Union and Southern Jews were proud to represent the South. While these Jews viewed themselves as Southerners, the white Christian majority did not always agree.

While the scale of anti-Semitism was not close compared to what many Jews endured in Europe, the Christian majority did blame many Jews for the financial struggles of the

⁷ Sue Eisenfeld, “Passover in the Confederacy,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), April 17, 2014.

⁸ Cyrus Adler and Kohler Kaufman, “David Einhorn,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906): 79.

Confederacy during the war. They accused Jewish traders of using unethical business practices to raise the price of goods needed during the war effort. This along with the sentiment that Jews were not loyal to any country perpetuated centuries old stereotypes that Jews could not be trusted.⁹ However, after the war ended, the degree of anti-Semitism lessened to a certain extent. As author of the book *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* Anton Hieke explained,

They were seen as racially and religiously different from the ruling white Christian majority—if the term can be applied to a region where blacks sometimes were in the majority over whites, as in South Carolina. During Reconstruction, southern Jews were subjected to a welcoming public philo-Semitism coupled with a non-public anti-Semitism, i.e., anti-Semitism that is present not only in the private sphere, but also in the undisclosed sphere of private, political and business correspondence.¹⁰

Jews were seen as integrated outsiders during Reconstruction. Union forces were trying to ensure freed slaves gained their civil liberties to help prevent white Southerners from holding political power. White Christian Southerners needed Jewish Southerners to be on their side to push back against Reconstruction policies, even if they privately harbored anti-Semitic feelings towards Jews. More public anti-Semitism would not return until after the Reconstruction era ended, as Southern Christians were able to implement Jim Crow laws against African Americans. This leads into the primary questions of this topic.

As the years passed since the Civil War ended into the Reconstruction Era and period of reconciliation, did Southern Jews remember their involvement with pride, or did they remove themselves into their identity as Jews that understood what it meant to be persecuted? Did their attitudes about supporting the South change over time, or were they still proud of what they

⁹ Korn, *American Jewry*, 179-181.

¹⁰ Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2013), 108.

stood for? Could they continue to reconcile their Jewish identities with their Southern identities? While many Southern Jews had differing opinions on slavery and how to view the North after the war, the majority continued to boast about their Southern pride. Many of them helped promote the Lost Cause mentality that worked to preserve the ideas that the South fought for state rights and not slavery, Confederate soldiers were honorable and courageous men, and that slavery was not a horrible institution. They also remembered Reconstruction as a period of Northern aggression that oppressed the victimized people of the South. For those who were seen as leaders in the South but did not necessarily live there, it is also apparent that they continued to look out for the wellbeing of Southern communities as they rebuilt from the destruction of the Civil War. These answers come from looking at the writings of rabbis and the men and women who were leaders in their Jewish communities. It is important to note that the only people considered for answering the questions of this paper were those who not only lived through the Civil War and were involved in Southern society, but those who were also involved in the Jewish community and believed in the Jewish faith. This factor is crucial since the purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between Jewish and Southern identity in the context of evolving memories and attitudes of the Civil War.

I. Rabbis Leading in the South

In the Jewish community, rabbis are the foremost leaders not only on Jewish law but also on any issue or concern involving moral dilemmas. Along with bringing their congregation closer to G-d, their followers look to them for guidance in regard to how to approach events in the current affairs of the community. Such was the case during and after the Civil War. Towns and cities were destroyed, families lost loved ones in battle, and the divide between the North and South did not subside even with the end of the war. How to respond to the wounds of war was a pressing question that many rabbis did not shy away from addressing. While every rabbi had a different approach in discussing the issues, there were two primary responses that represent the attitudes and memories of most of the rabbis who were leaders in the South. While most supported the South's desire to secede from the Union, they still wished for a unified nation so that the Jewish community as a whole in America would not be divided against each other. Some preached about maintaining unity since the start of the war while others changed their opinions on secession in the years following the Confederate surrender at the Appomattox Court House. One rabbi who shared his opinions at length was Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise.

Rabbi Wise was born in Steingrub, Bohemia and immigrated to the United States in 1846. After an eight-year stint in Albany, he became the head Rabbi at the B'nai Yeshurun congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio where he would reside until his death in 1900. He became famous across the United States for being one of the main leaders of the American Jewish Reform movement in which he established the Hebrew Union College, the oldest existing Rabbinical seminary in the United States.¹¹ He was a profound orator who had strong opinions

¹¹ Seymour Brody, *Jewish Heroes and Heroines in America* (Hollywood: Lifetime Books Inc., 1996), 54.

on both Jewish and current affairs in the United States. He expressed his views in his newspaper *The Israelite* which he established in 1854. The paper served the purpose of uniting Jewish families in more isolated communities in the United States, and helped to bring them closer to their Jewish faith. This strategy of targeting geographically dispersed communities attracted a large readership among Midwestern and Southern Jews who lived in smaller communities than those in the Northeast.¹² In fact, nearly half of his subscribers lived in the South.¹³ Along with discussing questions regarding Jewish law and teachings, Rabbi Wise also wrote about how Jewish communities should approach issues and events occurring nationally in the United States. This was especially true during and after the Civil War.

Wise shows his dedication to the idea of unity in his first address on the outbreak of the Civil War. In *The Israelite*, he wrote in an article published on April 19th, 1861 that the Jewish people should not take sides because, "we abhor war, but also because we have dear friends and near relatives, beloved brethren and kinsmen in either section of the country that our heart bleeds in thinking of their distress, of the misery that might befall them."¹⁴ However, asking for public portrayal of neutrality did not fully represent how he truly felt. A little over a month after Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, Wise wrote that, "either the Republican party must be killed off forever by constitutional guarantees to the South, to make an end forever to this vexing slavery question, or the Union must be dissolved."¹⁵ While he

¹² Leo Wise, "The American Israelite," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906).

¹³ Bertram Wallace Korn, "Isaac Mayer Wise on the Civil War," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 20, (2007): 650.

¹⁴ Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), April 19, 1861.

¹⁵ Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), December 28, 1860.

preferred that the country remain whole, he felt that Union abolitionists were the primary catalysts for pushing the South towards secession. Rabbi Wise knew the South was not going to dismantle the institution of slavery. He felt both sides would have to reach compromises on other issues in order to keep the country together. While Rabbi Wise did not completely support slavery in the South, he still felt that it was more important to preserve the Union at any cost.¹⁶ Since Union abolitionists refused to back down from pushing the issue over slavery, Rabbi Wise blamed them for starting the war and called them, "a set of fanatics...blind in their zeal to do wrong."¹⁷ While it may seem strange that a rabbi from a state that abolished slavery opposed the movement to end the practice in the United States, it was not uncommon for people in Ohio to have this viewpoint.

Even though Ohio was part of the Union during the war, many Southern Ohioans empathized with the South and opposed the war and called for the Union to reach an immediate peace agreement with the Confederacy. Southern Ohio consisted of populations that included settlers who originally came from the South since they were a military district of Virginia before becoming a state. Many had family and business ties to people in the South and wanted to maintain those relationships. These people would be known as Peace Democrats or Copperheads. They sympathized with the Southern states' frustrations and preferred for Lincoln to reach a compromise with the seceding states rather than fight a war.¹⁸ This included Rabbi Wise who was even nominated for State Senate in 1863 at the Democratic Party Convention in Cincinnati. While he was honored to receive the nomination, he turned it down in order to maintain his role

¹⁶ Korn, "Isaac Mayer Wise," 637.

¹⁷ Stanley Chyet, "Ohio Valley Jewry During the Civil War," *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, 21, No. 3 (1963): 184.

¹⁸ "Peace Democrats," *Ohio History Central*, accessed October 25, 2017, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/2w/Peace_Democrats.

as a rabbi.¹⁹ While Wise had similar views about the war with Democrats in Ohio, his negative attitude towards the actions of the Union stem primarily from his worries about his newspaper and the entire Jewish community in America.

The Israelite struggled to profit since its inception. The paper lost \$600 in its first year. Despite the fact Wise paid his publisher Charles Schmidt back in full of his own money, he was still dropped as a client. Rabbi Wise then went to his brother-in-law Edward Bloch to publish the newspaper through the Bloch Publishing Company. Unfortunately, when the Panic of 1857 hurt the U.S economy, most of Wise's subscribers simply did not pay for the paper. Bloch would go on several trips in the eastern United States in order to find more advertisers and subscribers to keep the paper from going bankrupt. This helped with the growing pains of the paper and *The Israelite* stayed in business.²⁰ However, as it became evident that war with the South was imminent after the election of Lincoln, Wise's concerns grew. He was worried that he would not be able to reach his large subscription base in the South since the Union would place major restrictions on what goods can cross enemy lines. Rabbi Wise spent many years building relationships with Southern congregations and their community leaders. He was adamant about ensuring that his paper succeeded in reaching as many isolated Jewish communities as possible in order to spread his message of a growing movement in Reform Judaism. That is why he was angry when the Postmaster General ceased the transfer of all mails sent to the Confederate states and Wise called the act unconstitutional.²¹ Despite the setback of losing his Southern subscribers, anytime communications were smuggled across Union lines, Rabbi Wise would print about what

¹⁹ Korn, "Isaac Mayer Wise," 636-637.

²⁰ Robert Singerman, "Bloch & Company: Pioneer Jewish Publishing House," *Jewish Book Annual* 52, (1994-1995): 112-114.

²¹ Korn, "Issac Mayer Wise," 650-651.

was happening in Southern Jewish communities and even wrote an advertisement to help a Charleston rabbi garner attention for his reform congregation in 1862.²² While it was clear Rabbi Wise supported the right to defend the Confederacy, his viewpoints on slavery were more complicated.

During the Civil War, many rabbis that supported slavery referred to the Old Testament's slave codes in order to justify the practice. Rabbi Wise responded to this narrative when he wrote, "Among all the nonsense imposed on the Bible, the greatest is to suppose the Negroes are the descendants of Ham, and the curse of Noah is applicable to them ... Canaanites are never mentioned in the Bible as men of color ... Besides we cannot see how the curse of Noah could take effect on the unborn generations of Canaan."²³ Rabbi Wise referred to Genesis in which Noah, who was trying to sober up after getting drunk, put a curse on his son Ham for looking at his own father naked. He cursed his son by saying that his descendants will be servants to his brother's descendants.²⁴ Rabbi Wise claimed that the rabbis who used scripture to support slavery falsely relied on this passage in order to claim African slaves were descendants of Ham and to justify that there is a higher reason for why slavery exists. Their interpretations deviated too drastically from what the text actually says since there is no mention of skin color in that passage. Wise expanded on his views on slavery in 1864.

Throughout 1864, the Thirteenth Amendment calling for the abolition of slavery in the United States became a pressing issue for the Union. The Senate passed the amendment in April of 1864. After Lincoln won re-election in November of that year, he pushed for Congress to

²² Ibid.

²³ Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH) January 18, 1861.

²⁴ Gen. 9:20-27 CJB

pass the amendment in order to ensure that slavery would be abolished following the conclusion of the war.²⁵ Rabbi Wise knew that this amendment was a contentious issue that would spark further conversation on the merits of slavery and continue to divide his Jewish readers. That is why he felt compelled to state his opinions in a December 23rd, 1864 article on Mosaic Code and Slavery. Rabbi Wise started by saying,

It is evident that Moses was opposed to slavery from the facts: 1. He prohibited to enslave a Hebrew, male or female, adult or child. 2. He legislated to a people just emerging from bondage and slavery. 3. He legislated for an agricultural community with whom labor was honorable. 4. He legislated not only to humanize the condition of the alien laborers, but to render the acquisition and the retention of bondmen contrary to their will a matter of impossibility.²⁶

Once again Rabbi Wise tried to dispel the idea that the Mosaic Slave Code is in anyway relatable to slavery in the South. The majority of the article expands on Wise's four facts on how slaves had to be treated fairly and that there were many restrictions on how an Israelite could keep a slave for life. However, this seemingly clear message becomes more complicated.

After his initial statements on the morality of owning people under Mosaic Slave Code, Rabbi Wise turned his attention back to Southern slavery by saying,

We are not prepared, nobody is, to maintain it is absolutely unjust to purchase savages, or rather their labor, place them under the protection of law and secure them the benefit of civilized society...Man in a savage state is not free; the alien servant under the Mosaic law was a free man, excepting only the fruits of his labor. The abstract idea of liberty is more applicable to the alien labor of the Mosaic system than to the savage, and savages only will sell themselves or their offspring.²⁷

While Rabbi Wise was clear on his feelings towards the Southern institution of slavery, he

²⁵ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005) 686-687.

²⁶ Isaac Mayer Wise, "On the Provisional Portion of the Mosaic Code, with Special Reference to Polygamy and Slavery," *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH) December 23, 1864.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

complicated his message by referring to black slaves as savages. He explained by saying,

Negro slavery, if it could have been brought under the control of the Mosaic or similar laws, must have tended to the blessing of the negro race by frequent emigration of civilized negroes back to the interior of Africa; and even now that race might reap the benefit of its enslaved members, if the latter or the best instructed among them were sent back to the interior of Africa.²⁸

Wise explained his belief to his Jewish readers that a system of slavery that followed the tenets of the law Moses delivered to the Israelites could be a justifiable practice in the United States. He saw a system in which Americans and Africans worked to send over certain members of their communities to work in the United States and then return to Africa after learning how to become civilized according to American standards. Rabbi Wise saw this as a cycle that might have benefited the United States in slave labor and Africa in receiving their people in a more refined state. While Wise understood that it was far too late for this to happen in the United States, he drew these parallels between slavery under Mosaic law and how it could have been applied in America to show his readers that slavery in itself is not necessarily a negative system. This is why his view on slavery was not completely straightforward. The way the South practiced slavery was wrong but he still suggested that specific types of slavery, especially those under Mosaic Slave Code are justifiable.

Southerners already saw slaves as uncivilized people who needed to be indoctrinated with western values.²⁹ Rabbi Wise's characterization of Mosaic slavery fits the attitudes that most southerners including Southern Jews had towards slaves. That is why in the decades following the Civil War, Wise was questioned on what he truly believed about slavery. In 1897, *The Jewish*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ J. Albert Harrill, "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Criticism and Christian Moral Debate," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10, no. 2 (2000): 168.

Chronicle in London criticized Wise for supporting slavery. He responded by stating that he denies believing, “that slavery was a divine institution, sanctioned by the Old Testament Scriptures, or that there is on record one paragraph to show that the said Isaac M. Wise ever was a proslavery man or favored the institution of slavery at any time.”³⁰ Wise always maintained that his views were based on his desire for a unified United States and Jewish community. This is evident after the Confederacy surrendered to the Union.

Rabbi Wise’s happiness was on full display in his April 14th, 1865 publication in which he states,

We hope the reader will this time, excuse us if our paper is not as well as usual gotten up. We labor under the most intense excitement. The rebellion is over. Peace, golden peace comes. Liberty triumphs. Since the day when Lord Cornwallis surrendered, none was so important, influential, decisive and glorious as this. We cannot write under this excitement...This means union, freedom, glory forever.³¹

It is clear how enthralled Rabbi Wise was by the fact that the war ended considering he was too ecstatic to write a full article about the surrender. In his paper that came out the following week, he published the sermon he gave at Shabbat services on Friday the 14th to his congregation. In what appears to be a break from his previous stances, he refers to the former Confederacy negatively when he says, “This mighty tempest... embellished with flames of fire the fire of destruction to traitors, the burning and consuming fire of the patriot’s wrath against the enemy of his country, the wrath of the free-born son against the enemy of liberty.”³² While he was against secession to begin with, Rabbi Wise initially directed more of his anger of a dissolved union at the abolitionists who wanted to change the southern way of life. This reference to the

³⁰ Isaac Mayer Wise, “A Denial,” *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), June 24, 1897.

³¹ Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), April 14, 1865.

³² Isaac Mayer Wise, “In Explanation,” *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), April 21, 1865.

Confederacy as an enemy of the United States and liberty as a whole shows a shift in his opinions in that he is now holding the Confederacy mostly responsible for the prolonged break up of a united America. He went on to attack slavery as a reproachable institution that is removed from “the brow of liberty.”³³ While the abolitionist cause played a part in the South seceding, Rabbi Wise began to realize towards the end of the war that slavery was on the wrong side of history and would be the true inhibitor of reunification. Wise even eulogized Abraham Lincoln after his assassination saying he was, “the generous, genial and honest man, who stood at the head of our people in this unprecedented struggle for national existence and popular liberty.”³⁴ This was in stark contrast to how negatively Rabbi Wise viewed Lincoln during the Civil War in which he called him a coward.³⁵ At this point in time, it appeared as if Wise completely changed his mind in truly supporting the Confederacy. However, Rabbi Wise’s ill feelings toward the South subdued over time.

In a Thanksgiving sermon on December 7th, 1865, Rabbi Wise thanked G-d that the war meant the end of destruction and the beginning of the road to peace. He claimed that the North and the South both had crucial misconceptions of one another such as the North thinking the US needed to be a “mercantile community” while the South wanted to remain “agricultural people”. His attitude toward the South was also a lot more understanding compared to his attitude right after the war ended. He explained that,

The men in arms for the defunct Confederacy were not our worst enemies... They fought, risked their lives upon the field of battle, and as they supposed for the sake of principles and rights which they considered sacred... They fought under the banner of liberty,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Isaac Mayer Wise, “President Lincoln’s Obsequies in the Synagogues of Cincinnati,” *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), April 28, 1865.

³⁵ Korn, “Issac Mayer Wise,” 647.

however they may have defined this term; the multitudes there were led to believe that we in the loyal state lived under the yoke of oppression and tyranny.³⁶

This shows that Rabbi Wise wanted to use this holiday sermon as an opportunity to spread the message of healing. Although he believed it was wrong for the South to treat slaves as less than human, he also thought it was wrong for the North to be completely dismissive of the southern way of life in its entirety. That is why he stressed to his congregation and his readers the importance of seeing beyond one's preconceptions and to move forward as one people in rebuilding the nation. Since he wanted to see the nation rebuild, this meant he continued to sympathize with the South during the Reconstruction era.

Rabbi Wise was worried for the welfare of Southerners. In 1867, he printed a sermon delivered by fellow rabbi Max Lilienthal who scolded those who wanted to make Southerners suffer for fighting against the Union. Rabbi Lilienthal discussed that it was wrong to allow any man, woman, or child to starve as a result of the destruction in the South.³⁷ After visiting Richmond, Virginia in June of 1867, Wise was angered by what he saw. He felt that the U.S forces was treating former confederates as second-class citizens in favor of the recently freed slaves. He exclaimed how, "As inevitable as fate, the eleven Southern states are to belong to the negroes. The enfranchisement of the negro and the disenfranchisement of so many white men, places those States entirely in the hands of the negro." Wise continued to complain and say how these Reconstruction policies will force white Southerners to move north and immigration from Africa to the United States would increase.³⁸ Wise also expanded upon his racist rhetoric by saying how it was a mistake for the U.S government to help lift the status of former slaves in

³⁶ Isaac Mayer Wise, "Thanksgiving Sermon," *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), December 15, 1865.

³⁷ Isaac Mayer Wise, "Relief for the South," *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), April 12, 1867.

³⁸ Isaac Mayer Wise, "On to Richmond," *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), June 28, 1867.

society since they have the minds of six year olds.³⁹ This viewpoint is consistent with his belief from 1864 that slaves in the south were savages. He continued to vocalize his opposition to Reconstruction in the 1870s saying, "As long as the South is interfered with, any way molested, or denied any rights or privileges which others enjoy anywhere, we will be found to stand with the South." He referred to Southerners as, "dear friends and near relations, beloved brethren and kinsmen."⁴⁰ Once again Wise blamed the North for preventing and delaying a truly unified United States.

While Rabbi Wise's attitudes towards secession and slavery changed over the course of his life, the one true constant was his commitment to the ideals of unity. Wise was willing to be fine with the South keeping the institution of slavery if it meant that the Union stayed whole. However, as the war dragged on, Wise started to see slavery as the primary inhibitor to reunification and criticized the South for being traitors. Although, once Reconstruction began, Wise saw those policies as the new obstacle for the nation to heal together and criticized the government and freedmen for prolonging the suffering and devastation in the South. While Rabbi Wise preached about the Civil War and its aftermath from Union territory, rabbis like James K. Gutheim preached from the position of living within the borders of the Confederacy.

James K. Gutheim was a rabbi born in Westphalia, Germany who initially moved to New York in 1843 and then became the rabbi at B'nai Yeshurun in 1846. This is the same congregation Rabbi Wise took over in 1854. He moved to New Orleans in 1850 where he would remain for the majority of his life in America and started off as the rabbi for Congregation

³⁹ Isaac Mayer Wise, "Sunday Laws," *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), July 19, 1867.

⁴⁰ Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), February 21, 1873.

Shangarai Chasset.⁴¹ Like Rabbi Wise, Gutheim initially felt that religious leaders should refrain from giving political speeches. He told his congregation in a Thanksgiving sermon in 1860 that it is not, “the province of the pulpit, to discuss the political questions of the day and to point out the course, which should be pursued.” He also advised his congregants that, “whatever the cause or result of the present agitation may be, every good citizen ought...with moderation and wisdom espouse the cause of right and justice, be ready for all sacrifices and, disregarding all prejudice and self-interest, exhibit a true and pure patriotism.”⁴² Gutheim wanted to stress the idea that people should think rationally before calling for war and realize all the risks that comes with it. However, once the Civil War broke out, he started to vocalize his true feelings.

One of the earliest indicators that Rabbi Gutheim supported the Confederate cause was when he canceled his subscription to the *Jewish Messenger*. This newspaper was based in New York and run by Rabbi S.M. Isaacs who supported the Union. Gutheim canceled his subscription after reading Isaacs’ article “Stand by the Flag.” The article, which came out two weeks after the start of the Civil War, was a rallying cry for people to support the Union and mentioned opposition to slavery.⁴³ Gutheim convinced many members of his congregation to stop supporting the newspaper as well.⁴⁴ After the Union Army took control of New Orleans in April of 1862, they made the citizens of the city either say an oath of allegiance to the Union, or be exiled to Confederate territory. When Rabbi Gutheim was asked to take the oath in May of 1863,

⁴¹ *History of the Jews of Louisiana* (Louisiana: Jewish Historical Publishing Company of Louisiana, 1903), 29.

⁴² Korn, *American Jewry*, 47.

⁴³ S.M. Isaacs, “Stand for the Flag,” *Jewish Messenger* (New York, NY), April 26, 1861.

⁴⁴ Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 26.

he refused and swore his allegiance to the Confederacy. He wrote to his friend and colleague Rabbi Isaac Leiser of Philadelphia saying,

My Dear Friend, Day after tomorrow I shall leave . . . by order of the military authorities. All those who have refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Dictator of Washington are ordered beyond the lines – that is, into Dixie. I am of that number. Nearly the whole of my congregation are similarly situated. We can now realize what a [deportation] means. Nothing for my wearing apparel and provisions for ten days are permitted. My heart feels sick. Amidst the general distress I forget my own. I am so far lucky, that I have an asylum for my wife and child – at LaGrange, Geo. Where the family of Mr. Jones [Mrs. Gutheim's father] now resides. What shall I do in the future, I cannot say. I trust to God, to guide my steps. If possible I shall write you from the Confederacy.⁴⁵

If it was not clear before the war, then it was definitely clear after the Union captured New Orleans that Rabbi Gutheim was a full supporter of the Confederate cause. Not only did he see President Lincoln as a dictator, but he preferred to uproot his whole family than stay and give his allegiance to the Union. Gutheim eventually relocated to Montgomery, Alabama and served the Kahl Montgomery Congregation as well as B'nai Israel every sixth Sabbath in Columbus, Georgia.⁴⁶ While in Montgomery, he delivered a sermon in which he said,

Regard, O Father, in Thine abundant favor and benevolence, our beloved country, the Confederate States of America. May our young Republic increase in strength, prosperity and renown; may the helm of state be piloted with judgment; may wisdom resound in the halls of legislation, and harmony, obedience to the law, fortitude in trials and a self-sacrificing devotion prevail among the people. Behold, O God, and judge between us and our enemies, who have forced upon us this unholy and unnatural war – who hurl against us their poisoned arrows steeped in ambition and revenge. May they soon discover the error of their ways, relinquish their cruel designs of subjugation, their lust of gain and dominion, and yield a ready and willing ear to the dictates of humanity, of justice and of right. Bless, O Father, our efforts in a cause which we conceive to be just; the defense of our liberties and rights and independence, under just and equitable laws. And we pray, Thee, O God, to bless and protect the armed hosts, that now stand forth in the defense of our sacred cause. Vain are the exertions of man without Thy aid.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Korn, *American Jewry*, 48.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

This sermon exemplifies many of the ideas that would later make up the Lost Cause mentality. Gutheim saw the North as aggressors who wanted to impose their will upon the South by ending what the South believed to be their freedoms as states. While his prayers were never answered in terms of the Confederacy winning the war, he was able to return to New Orleans in July of 1865.⁴⁸ However, he did not stay long since he accepted a position as the leading rabbi for Temple Emanu-El in New York in 1868.

Even though Rabbi Gutheim was an advocate for the Confederacy, he was also a Reform rabbi that believed this movement was the best way to keep Judaism relevant in America. Despite only facing minimal pushback at Shangarai Chasset, Gutheim felt he could have a bigger impact in New York since Temple Emanu-El was already one of the leading reform congregations in the United States.⁴⁹ However, his stint in New York was also short lived. Gutheims involvement in spreading Reform Judaism helped the New Orleans community establish its first Reform Synagogue, Temple Sinai and they wanted Rabbi Gutheim to lead the congregation. He returned to New Orleans in 1872 and remained there for the rest of his life. Upon his return, Rabbi Gutheim fought against Reconstruction policies.

Before he left for New York, Gutheim was one of the founders of the Hebrew Educational Society. They created a Jewish day school soon after organizing. While this appeared to have nothing to do with Reconstruction, the new school was used to fight against integration with freed slaves. At the cornerstone ceremony for the school in 1868, items such as a coin inscribed with the phrase, “Mind Your Own Business” and the last edition before the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Scott M. Langston, “James K. Gutheim as Southern Reform Rabbi, Community Leader, and Symbol,” *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 5, (2002): 73.

Confederate surrender of the Mississippi paper the *Daily Citizen* were placed inside the stone. This symbolic gesture was in response to the 14th Amendment, Civil Right Act of 1866, and the new Louisiana State Constitution of 1868 that required desegregation.⁵⁰ Since the citizens of Louisiana had no control over the Reconstruction Acts that forced the former Confederate states to accept these new policies regarding freed slaves, Gutheim saw this school as a way to resist. He used the school to ensure Jewish students in New Orleans did not have to learn with black students. After Reconstruction ended in 1877, Rabbi Gutheim was voted as vice-president of the New Orleans public school board in which he voted to keep segregation in public schools. He was an active member of the Southern Historical Society which is known for solidifying the Lost Cause memory mentality in the South.⁵¹ Gutheim noticed the criticisms the society received for promoting Lost Cause memories as historical truths. That is why at their conference in 1882, he gave a speech defending their printing choices.

Gutheim acknowledged the criticisms by asking rhetorical questions such as, “what is the aim of this Southern Historical Society? Is it not a sectional institution? Why foster creations that have a tendency to perpetuate a sectional spirit?”⁵² He started to answer this by giving an anecdote about how the ancient Israelite tribes of Rueben, Gad, and Manasseh built an altar after settling in the Holy Land. The other tribes in Shiloh thought they built the altar as a replacement for G-d, which is against their laws. When the delegation from Shiloh confronted the three tribes about the altar, they explained that it was not built for the purpose of praying to another G-d and leaving the Israelites. It was built to serve as a reminder to future generations that all the tribes

⁵⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁵¹ Korn, *American Jewry*, 50.

⁵² James K. Gutheim, “Address of Rabbi J.K. Gutheim,” *Southern Historical Society papers* 10, (1882): 249.

had to stay united. It was a monument to ensure all Israelites remember that they reached the Holy Land as a united people. Gutheim then explained that the Southern Historical Society was like the three misunderstood tribes in that,

The Southern Historical Society is anxious to set up a monument in the collection and preservation of all authentic documents, both official and unofficial, that bear on the fortunes and issues of that tremendous struggle by which "a house was divided against itself," in order to furnish valuable materials to the impartial historian who may address himself to the task of writing a history "in which nothing is extenuated and naught set down in malice." It is a monument which bears evidence to the strength of the Union.⁵³

This shows that Rabbi Gutheim believed that those who criticized this historical society were misinformed. He argued that Union depictions of the Civil War do not give a complete picture. The accounts of former Confederates are not being compiled to rewrite the history of the war, but rather to ensure anyone who studies the topic understands how both sides experienced the war. Gutheim believed the Southern Historical Society served the purpose of ensuring historians remain objective when they research this period in American history. He wanted to guarantee that the Southern memory of the war would be seen as a legitimate perspective. This makes sense considering his sermon from Montgomery in 1863 echoes many of the viewpoints that make up the Lost Cause mentality. While the main purpose of his speech was to support this organization, he also showed how his attitudes towards the North changed over the years since the war ended.

He started his speech saying that he understood there was still anger between the North and South immediately following the Confederate surrender. However, he adds that,

As the billows of the sea rise mountain high when lashed by the tempest, and after the war of elements has ceased, slowly, gradually, recede, until the mighty deep reassumes its wonted placid calm, thus it is with the passions of man. And our civil war forms no exception. These passions once so deep and intense, have gradually been softened by the mellowing influences of time, a better feeling and a better mutual understanding is daily

⁵³ Ibid., 250.

spreading, and North and South can this day join hands and hearts as citizens of a united republic, who glory in the preservation of the Union.⁵⁴

As Gutheim explained, time allows for anger to subside. Despite the fact he was an ardent supporter of the Confederacy and fought against reconstruction, the passage of time allowed for Gutheim to see that America is stronger as a unified nation. He furthered this view when he said, “Let us hope and trust that henceforward no imaginary geographical line again be drawn to indicate a division of political sentiment; let us hope and trust that henceforward the only contention between the States be which shall excel the other in loyalty to the Constitution, attachment to the Union, and the zeal for establishing the fundamental rights of liberty.”⁵⁵ It is clear to see that Rabbi Gutheim’s attitude towards the North was no longer filled with contempt. He went from refusing to pledge allegiance to the Union to advocating for loyalty to the United States Constitution. As a leading rabbi in the Reform movement, Gutheim worked to unify other Jewish leaders and helped establish the Conference of Rabbis of Southern Congregations in 1885. This organization aimed to spread Reform Judaism and aligned with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Hebrew Union College, both of which were led by Rabbi Wise in Cincinnati.⁵⁶ This alliance with Reform organizations based in the North show that despite maintaining Southern pride, Rabbi Gutheim realized it was more important to let go of the past and support reconciliation between the two sides of the country. Fellow rabbi Bernard Illowy had similar feelings during and after the war.

Rabbi Bernard Illowy came to the United States in 1853 where he served several congregations in New York, Philadelphia, Syracuse, St Louis, and Baltimore.⁵⁷ His connection

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Langston, “James K. Gutheim,” 74-75.

⁵⁷ Shmeul Singer, “Rabbi of the Rebels,” *The Jewish Observer* 11, no. 7 (1976): 19.

with the South began when he spoke at the Lloyd Street Synagogue in Baltimore, Maryland. In the middle of his sermon, Illoy said,

But who, for example, can blame our brethren of the South for their being inclined to secede from a society, under whose government those ends cannot be attained, and whose union is kept together, not by the good sense and good feelings of the great masses of the people, but by an ill-regulated balance of power and heavy iron ties of violence and arbitrary force? Who can blame our brethren of the South for seceding from a society whose government cannot, or will not, protect the property rights and privileges of a great portion of the Union against the encroachments of a majority misguided by some influential, ambitious aspirants and selfish politicians who, under the color of religion and the disguise of philanthropy, have thrown the country into a general state of confusion, and millions into want and poverty?⁵⁸

Despite never living in a state that joined the Confederacy, Illoy sympathized with the Southern cause. He believed that the North was the true transgressor in the conflict and wanted to subdue the South both politically and economically. His line about property rights shows the Illoy supported the South's desire to keep the institution of slavery. His sermon became so popular amongst Southern Jews, that Shangarai Chasset in New Orleans asked him to become their rabbi. Illoy accepted and stayed as their rabbi for the duration of the Civil War. While in New Orleans, Illoy became friends with Union General N.P. Banks who was in charge of the Department of Louisiana when the Union occupied New Orleans. Illoy used this friendship with Banks and other high officials in order to help his congregants live more comfortably under Union authority.⁵⁹ However, his relationship with his congregation changed towards the end of the war.

Rabbi Illoy was Orthodox and fought hard to maintain Orthodox traditions in a growing Reform community. He was stubborn and refused to incorporate many Reform traditions in his

⁵⁸ Bernard Illoy, "Fast Day Sermon," *Jewish American History Foundation*, accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.jewish-history.com/Illoyway/sermon.html>.

⁵⁹ Chuck Jackson, "Rabbi Bernard Illoy," *Jewish Genealogical Society of St. Louis* 10, no 4. (2004): 7.

services such as using a mixed choir for the High Holidays. His congregation decided to elect new members for the board of trustees, which consisted of congregants who wanted to bring Reform ideas into the Synagogue.⁶⁰ Illoy decided to resign as he felt it was best to leave since, “in a country where Rabbis dare to declare oysters kosher for Jews, while they themselves eat pastries from non-Jewish bakers, while here nothing is prepared without pork fat, . . . here ancient Talmudic principles are no longer observed.”⁶¹ Although, before he left, Illoy decided to speak freely when giving a eulogy for President Lincoln.

In his eulogy, Illoy called Lincoln, “the dearly beloved father of our country” who was like the biblical patriarch of the Jewish people, Abraham. He continued to admire Lincoln saying, “with paternal and brave and courageous heart . . . walk[ed] before [the] people, to save their honor, to guard their rights and restore harmony to their gates.” Illoy also believed that Lincoln ensured the people of New Orleans were not, “trodden down with rigor” under Union occupation and that Lincoln was so successful since his former enemies, “now bow down with deference and sincere repentance before our glorious banner of liberty and equality.”⁶² While his congregants most likely did not believe in what he was saying, Illoy did not back down from showing a complete change in attitude toward the Union compared to what he said in his sermon from 1861. He went from claiming the North infringed upon the South’s rights to praising the Union for promoting liberty and equality in a way the South never did. Illoy never truly integrated with Southerners and their ideology. He started off in New York and Philadelphia when he came to the United States, and both St. Louis and Baltimore had a mix of Southern

⁶⁰ Irwin Lachoff, “Rabbi Bernard Illoy: Counter Reformer,” *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 5, (2002): 53-60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶² Gary Phillip Zola, *We Called Him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry, a Documentary History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 145.

sympathizers and Union loyalist. His initial exposure to America was not Southern society.⁶³

While he did initially sympathize with the South, he never truly immersed himself in their culture. He was friends with Union high officials and was constantly at odds with his congregants who were not as religious as he was. He left for Cincinnati in 1865 to be the Rabbi at their new Orthodox Congregation where he remained until his death in 1871.⁶⁴ While Rabbi Illowy was more of a wanderer in his rabbinical career, Rabbi Max Michelbacher represented those who remained in the South their entire lives.

Michelbacher came to Richmond, Virginia in May of 1846 to become the rabbi at Congregation Beth Ahabah where he would remain until his death in 1879.⁶⁵ From the beginning he was a vocal supporter of the Confederacy and slavery. In a sermon, he gave to his congregation on May 27th, 1863, he started by comparing the Union to the enemies of ancient Israel and preached,

the undaunted Nehemiah, in calling upon the Jews, to defend the unstopped breaches of the walls of Jerusalem against Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabians and Ammonites and the Ashdodites said unto the nobles and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, “Be not afraid of them: think on the Lord, the great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses.”⁶⁶

Michelbacher tried to convey the message that not only was the Union an enemy to Southerners, but to Jews as well. The Confederacy was Jerusalem and the Jewish people in the South had to protect their families by fighting for the Confederate forces. He continued his rallying cry by saying, “Arise then, all ye people of the South, doubly armed with your trust in God, and the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Singer, “Rabbi of the Rebels,” 21.

⁶⁵ Gaston Lichtenstein, *History of the Jews of Richmond* (Chicago: Bloch and Newman, 1913), 7.

⁶⁶ Max Michelbacher, *A Sermon Delivered on the Day of Prayer Recommended by the President of the C. S. of A., the 27th of March 1863, at the German Hebrew Synagogue "Bayth Ahabah"* (Richmond: Macfahlane & Fergusson, 1863), 3.

remembrance of your sufferings, and the wrongs done unto you...and let the shout of your confidence in G-d go forth to the discomfiture of the enemy, while the thunder of your guns, the flash of your swords, and the gleam of your bayonets, shall give the seal of the blood of the invaders”⁶⁷ Michelbacher goes on to accuse the “treacherous” North of trying to brainwash slaves and, “beguile them from the path of duty, that they may waylay their masters, to assassinate and to slay the men, women and children of the people.” Michelbacher believed that G-d appointed Southerners as instructors for African slaves.⁶⁸ He worried that slaves could be easily manipulated into rising up and ruthlessly killing their owners and their owner’s families. This viewpoint reflected the consensus in the South that slaves were savages that had to be civilized through labor. Lastly, he prayed that G-d would help the Confederacy win its independence with honor and, “give counsel and wisdom to Thy servant, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, and grant speedy success to his endeavours to free our country from the presence of its foes.”⁶⁹ While Rabbi Michelbacher wanted to spread his message to his congregation, he also wanted to personally help the Jewish soldiers on the frontlines.

Michelbacher started his efforts in aiding soldiers by first writing a one page prayer that was distributed to Jewish soldiers on Confederate bases. He prayed to G-d to, “Give unto the officers of the Army and of the Navy of the Confederate States, enterprise, fortitude and undaunted courage; teach them the ways of war and the winning of victory. Guard and preserve, O Lord, the President of the Confederate States and all officers, who have the welfare of the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 16.

country truly at heart.”⁷⁰ He also went on trips to Confederate infirmaries to comfort Jewish wounded soldiers and wrote to General Robert E. Lee requesting furloughs for Jewish soldiers so that they could be with their families on the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. While General Lee wished to accommodate Rabbi Michelbacher’s request, Lee said that this unfortunately could not be done because, “the necessities of war admit of no relaxation of the efforts requisite for its success...I feel assured that neither you or any member of the Jewish congregation would wish to jeopardize a cause you have so much at heart by the withdrawal even for a season of a portion of its defenders.”⁷¹ Despite his ardent support for the Confederacy and all of his negative feelings towards the Union, Michelbacher characterized the assassination of Lincoln as, “a most horrible crime” and was relieved his murder did not take place in Richmond.⁷² Unfortunately, not much else is known about his memories and attitudes after the Civil War. He suffered a stroke in 1865 and soon after had to retire as the leading rabbi of Beth Ahabah. He became a teacher at the congregation’s school until his death in 1879.⁷³ However, it is evident that Rabbi Michelbacher’s anger towards the Union was subdued since he denounced the assassination of Lincoln. He was an emphatic orator who did not hide his opinions. Characterizing Lincoln’s death as a horrible crime shows that Michelbacher was willing to let go of some of his hatred for the Union.

While these four rabbis do not speak for every rabbi in the South, it is evident that there is a trend among them. They began by sympathizing with or fully supporting the Southern cause

⁷⁰ Korn, *American Jewry*, 89.

⁷¹ Lichtenstein, *Jews of Richmond*, 7-8.

⁷² Isaac Markens, “Lincoln and the Jews,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 17 (1909): 149.

⁷³ This information was provided by an administrative assistant at the Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives. They did not have any further information on Michelbacher’s opinions regarding the Civil War after his stroke.

and later spread messages of unity and reconciliation in the years after the war. Rabbi Wise changed his opinions multiple times, but always preferred unity while still supporting the wellbeing of Jewish Southerners. Rabbi Gutheim made a significant sacrifice by refusing to pledge loyalty to the Union and fought against Reconstruction upon his return to New Orleans. But even though he always maintained his southern pride, he preached that unity was better for the country and that the angry memories of the Civil War wane over time. Even though Rabbi Illowy was a journeyman in America, his initial support for secession made him a leader in the Jewish South and he only changed his attitude towards the Union once it became clear his religious values were not aligned with the New Orleans Jewish community. Rabbi Michelbacher was a proud resident of Richmond and never held back when praying for Confederate victory. But even he showed sympathy to the North by condemning Lincoln's assassination. For each of these rabbis, their main concern was the growth of the Jewish people in America. They believed the Jewish people could not grow if they remained divided as enemies.

II. Southern Jews as Soldiers, Politicians, and Community Leaders

As was stated in the introduction, there were around 25,000 Jews in the South before the start of the Civil War with an estimate of 3,000 serving in the Confederate military. Between the battlefield and the home front, Southern Jewish communities experienced the Civil War and its aftermath firsthand in a multitude of ways. Many of the men in these communities went on to help their communities rebuild by assuming public office to fight reconstruction and others tried to lead normal lives in a rebuilding South. Through personal memoirs, letters, and speeches, it is evident that these men maintained pride in their Southern identity, wished for a better future during Reconstruction, and wanted to ensure that the memory of their fight lived on after they were gone. Such is the case with Henry Hyams.

Hyams served as the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana during the war.⁷⁴ After the Confederacy surrendered, he lost three plantations and over 200 slaves. He tried to live a normal life after the war by setting up a law practice in New Orleans. However, Reconstruction laws took a great deal of power away from the former leaders and he vented his frustrations to a family member in 1868. He complained that, “as Israelites we are passing through another captivity which relives and reenacts all the troubles so pathetically poured forth by the inspired Jeremiah. Let us hope with him that the days of bondage will have a permanent end that freedom will reign in our unhappy land.” This reference to the prophet Jeremiah is Hyams’ way of comparing the Union authority in the Reconstruction South to the Jewish exile in Babylonia after they conquered the Israelites. Hyams wished for life to return to the way it was before the war began. Reconstruction made him feel like a stranger in his own community just as the Israelites felt when they were exiled to Babylonia. He further wished, “that we will live long enough to see

⁷⁴ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 25.

the end of our personal and political suffering. So far there is scarcely any ray of light ahead.” Unfortunately, Hyams died in 1875 before Reconstruction ended.⁷⁵ This letter conveys the pain many Southern Jews felt after losing to the Union. Sadly, Hyams did not live long enough to see the end of Reconstruction and further develop his memories of the Civil War. However, when looking at the recollections of those who lived through both the Civil War and Reconstruction era, it is evident that their love for the South never wavered. This is best exemplified by Raphael J. Moses.

Raphael J. Moses was a lawyer and plantation owner who pioneered the process for growing peaches on a commercial level. He was born in Charleston in 1812 and eventually settled in Columbus, Georgia where he spent the majority of his adult life. Moses also has the unique distinction of carrying out the last official orders of the Confederacy while serving as the Chief Commissary Officer for Generals Robert Toombs and James Longstreet.⁷⁶ In 1890, Moses’s children requested that he write a memoir about his life. He completed his final entry in 1893 a few months before he died. The memoir documents his life growing up in the South, serving in the Confederate Army, and holding public office during Reconstruction. His entries provide an in-depth look at how a Southern Jew remembered the Civil War and Reconstruction.

After describing his early life, Moses informed his children he became interested in politics in 1850 and that he was, “decidedly in favor of seceding when the admission of California destroyed the balance of power as provided in the Constitution, it was the entering

⁷⁵ Ibid., 333-334.

⁷⁶ Lewis Regestein, “Raphael Moses (1812-1893),” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, December 16, 2004, accessed January 30, 2018, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/raphael-moses-1812-1893>.

wedge of sectionalism.”⁷⁷ He talked openly in public forums about the benefits of secession. However, he did not run for public office at this time. His support comes as no surprise considering Moses owned 47 slaves at the start of the war. He talked about the issue of California’s admittance as a non-slave state and how it led to increased tensions between the North and South. Southerners who were pro-Union eventually changed their minds and supported secession.⁷⁸ As Chief Commissary Officer in Georgia, he was tasked with ensuring food and other supplies reached Confederate units on the frontlines. He met regularly with General Lee and remembered him as, “a plain splendid looking courteous gentleman, with such wonderful self-control that no one ever knew he was overwhelmed with anxiety, in victory and defeat the same unruffled exterior, kind to his men and kind to animals.”⁷⁹ Like many Southerners, Moses continued to hold General Lee in high regard decades after the war ended. Moses was also with General Lee during the battle of Gettysburg.

Despite the Confederate loss, Moses remembered that he had, “a splendid view of the grand and disastrous battle, the thunder of the artillery was officially grand, the charge of Pickett driven right up along the hill in the face of the federal cannon was not exceeded in valor by the charge of the 600.”⁸⁰ Despite the fact Gettysburg and Pickett’s Charge is considered the turning point in the war and the greatest error General Lee made in battle, Moses chose to depict the battle as an example of the courageousness Confederate soldiers had as they fought with honor against a formidable foe. This tactic to reshape the memory of one the Confederacy’s greatest

⁷⁷ Typescript of memoir *Autobiography of Raphael J. Moses* by Raphael J. Moses, September 19, 1936, Mss 83, Box 1, Folder 1, Raphael Moses Papers, The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

blunders is common theme that was used to shape the Lost Cause mentality.⁸¹ After the Confederacy surrendered, Moses was tasked with taking \$40,000 in gold to buy 250,000 rations for returning Confederate soldiers in Augusta, Georgia. He took the gold by train and promised to guard the gold from thieves by any means necessary, even if that meant giving his own life.⁸² He was successful in delivering the gold to buy rations and concluded the last orders ever given by the Confederacy. He took a significant hit financially when his slaves were freed after the war, so he turned his attention to public office.

Since Moses never held public office, he was allowed to run and won a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives. He was then made Chair of the Judiciary Committee where he fought to secure funding for a Confederate orphan's home and push back against Reconstruction policies.⁸³ Moses heavily opposed Reconstruction and felt that he was, "surrounded by spies, carpet baggers...men without character, who came from the North in herds seeking whom they might devour." That is why he served on the council of lawyers for the dozen Columbus natives who were arrested by Union authorities for killing Radical Republican George W. Ashburn in 1868. Moses accused Ashburn of being a scalawag who urged freed slaves in the area to be active in demanding for their social and political rights for equality. Moses then stated that a group of masked men going to tar and feather Ashburn acted in self-defense after Ashburn started shooting his gun into the crowd. He also accused Union officers of arresting two black men who supposedly witnessed the murder and beating them in an attempt to get them to say the dozen men on trial committed the murder of Ashburn. Despite the officers placing them in front

⁸¹ Thomas A. Desjardin, *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* (Boston: De Capo Press, 2003): 124-125.

⁸²Autobiography by Raphael J. Moses, 69.

⁸³ Ibid., 78.

of a cannon and threatening to blow off their heads, the two black men refused to lie. Moses applauded them since they, “behaved better than two or three white radical republican natives of Columbus who voluntarily perjured themselves.” Moses then claimed the defendants were acquitted because they were able to prove the white Republican witnesses were lying about their whereabouts on the night of the murder.⁸⁴ However, the truth behind this case is that it was a premeditated plan most likely committed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. The only reason the case never finished was because the Klan made a deal with Union General George Meade who was in charge of overseeing Georgia in the Third Military District. The deal stipulated that Georgia would ratify the 14th Amendment if Meade dropped all the charges.⁸⁵ Moses’s omission of these facts shows he tried to paint a more favorable picture for Ashburn’s murderers. He deliberately made Ashburn look like the aggressor, and made sure to include an anecdote that depicted Union officials as brutal interrogators willing to abuse their power. This is yet another example of feeding into the Lost Cause mentality in that the North continued to abuse their power over a beaten South.

Towards the end of his memoir, Moses asked his children, “when I die if any announcement is made, do let it be, ‘Major R.J. Moses...entered the army at the beginning of the war comparatively rich and left it at is close decidedly poor...he opposed no citizen, neglected no soldiers just claim and received the commendation of his superior officers General Lee and Longstreet for having faithfully performed his duties.’”⁸⁶ Above anything else, Raphael Moses wanted to be remembered as a loyal soldier of the Confederacy. He was proud of his duties and

⁸⁴ Ibid., 81-82.

⁸⁵ William Harris Brag, “Reconstruction in Georgia,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, October 21, 2005, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/reconstruction-georgia>.

⁸⁶ Autobiography by Raphael J. Moses, 84.

the recognition he received for supporting the Confederate cause. Apart from running for public office to fight Reconstruction, Moses ran because he,

wanted to go to congress as a Jew and because I was a Jew and believed that I might elevate our people by my public course. I am not a conformist but I am proud of being a Jew and would have liked in a public position to confront and do my part towards breaking down the prejudice...I feel it an honor to be of a race whom persecution cannot crush, whom prejudice has in vain endeavored to subdue.⁸⁷

Raphael J. Moses understood that even though he was admired by his community, there was still anti-Semitism in the South. Another politician from Lagrange, Georgia, William O. Tuggle, criticized Moses for being Jewish. Moses responded with an open letter saying he was proud to be a Jew and would not be deterred by Tuggle's bigotry.⁸⁸ Raphael Moses wanted to help pave the way for his people to be seen as both proud Southerners and Jews. Moses was not alone in this regard. Benjamin Franklin Jonas of Louisiana had a long career in politics after the Civil War.

B.F. Jonas moved to New Orleans from Illinois when he was 19. He became a lawyer and became one of the founders of the Jewish Orphans Home. He joined the Confederate Army in 1862 and rose to the rank of First Lieutenant by the time the war ended.⁸⁹ He began his career in 1866 in the Louisiana State House of Representatives and eventually worked his way up to becoming a United States Senator in 1879. He was very outspoken about Reconstruction and even helped organize a crowd of armed citizens to remove Republicans from State Supreme Court and replace them with Democratic Justices in 1878.⁹⁰ While in the United States Senate on

⁸⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 151.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 346.

May 20th, 1879, he spoke on the Senate floor about how he felt his Northern Republican colleagues were purposely insulting the South during an appropriations debate.

He accused his colleagues of allowing Federal election supervisors to fix elections in the North. He compared this to Reconstruction when Union troops intimidated people during elections by freely pointing their guns at Southern voters in an effort to prevent them from voting for Democrats.⁹¹ Jonas believed Republicans were trying to fix elections in the North because they could no longer do so in the South. Jonas claimed, “our people, white and colored are nearly solid...in their support of the Democratic Party and they will continue to be as long as the Democratic Party is antagonized merely by the issues of the war.”⁹² He believed that his colleagues were misinformed about his constituents in that there was, “no man in the South to complain of the loss of property, no man to complain of the manumission of his slaves, no man to complain of the misfortunes which war brought upon him...Those things were acts of war. Our people accepted its responsibilities.”⁹³ Jonas depicted a Southern society in which the people have come to terms with losing the war and that it was the North who wrongly continued to perpetuate the idea that the South was still trying to fight against reunification. However, Jonas also wrongly characterized Southern society when he said black and white people were mostly unified. This was a period in which Jim Crow laws were passed throughout the South in order to segregate black people and inhibit their ability to vote. This was his attempt to convince his colleagues that the North abused the idea of having the moral high ground from the Civil War to push their agenda further in government. While it is clear that Jonas’s attitude toward the North

⁹¹ “Speech of Honorable Benjamin F. Jonas...,” May 20, 1879, 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

was filled with contempt in 1879, the way he talked about Civil War memory seven years later shows a complete change in tone.

On February 22nd, 1886, Benjamin F. Jonas was asked to speak at the cornerstone ceremony for the Confederate monument being built in Baton Rouge. The monument was being constructed to honor the Confederate soldiers who died in battle. Jonas started the speech by saying, “Ladies and Gentlemen, we are assembled here today on no sorrowful occasion, for no ceremony of mourning...The ground furrowed and torn by battle is smooth and grass grown and freed from scars...The dead are no longer a grief, but a sad and glorious memory.”⁹⁴ Right away Jonas delivered the message that his speech is about honoring the memory of fallen Confederates and not focusing on the scorn the South felt towards the Union after the war ended. He makes it clear that, “the monument of which you lay the corner-stone today will be built in commemoration of no particular chieftain or hero...but in memory of a class whose patriotism, self-sacrificing devotion and heroism command the admiration and respect of the people whose bosom they went forth, as in time to come they will command the respect and reverence of all Americans.”⁹⁵ This passage shows Jonas’s belief that as time passes, the American people as whole will stop viewing Confederate soldiers as traitors, but rather as valiant men who fought for what they believed to be their rights and liberties. In other words, Jonas hoped that the monument would help in framing people’s mindsets to accepting the Lost Cause as a legitimate perspective in Civil War history.

⁹⁴ Benjamin F. Jonas, *Address of Hon. B.F. Jonas at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the Monument to the Memory of the Confederate Dead at Baton Rouge February 22d, 1886* (New Orleans: Hopkins Printing Office, 1886) 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

The next section of the speech is filled with examples of how nations like England and France had civil wars of their own and how their people overcame their differences as time passed. Jonas then states he believed that, “in our own country, the time has arrived when the hateful memories of the war can no longer be evoked to excite political prejudice and passion.” This shows a change in attitude from the speech he gave in the Senate seven years prior to this event. He used the memories of Union soldiers intimidating Southern voters during Reconstruction as a political tactic to criticize Northern legislators. Now in 1886, he preached for an end to such rhetoric. However, he started to contradict himself when he said,

The history of the war has not yet been written and probably will not be until the grass has grown over the graves of all who participated in it. The passions and prejudices of the actors in politics or war, the autobiographies and controversial papers of the chieftains, military and political, on either side are worthless as history, and will be sparingly used as material by the future historian, who, without prejudice or passion and guided by patriotic love of country and admiration for its gallant and devoted soldiers of both sections, will do justice to both, and while giving all glory and honor to the conquerors, from whose crown of victory no Confederate soldier would wish to pluck one leaf will at the same time vindicate the motives and attest the patriotism of the soldiers of the Lost Cause, who sacrificed all but honor in its defense, and who sought to preserve that honor alone from the dark wreck and ruin which followed their defeat.⁹⁶

This statement is a contradiction in that Jonas expected historians to remain objective by ignoring partisan accounts of the war and not feed into the Lost Cause mentality. But he pointed out earlier in his speech that the purpose of the monument was to sway people’s opinions in viewing Confederate soldiers favorably. This does not convey a message of impartiality. Jonas also reverts back to speaking ill of the North when he said Confederate soldiers returned home to “hard laws and strange rulers, and though amnestied for their offenses against the government, they found themselves proscribed and submitted to the political control of ignorance, dominated by cupidity and venality.” He also noted that Union soldiers returned home to welcoming

⁹⁶ Ibid., 8.

communities where public celebrations were on full display.⁹⁷ Jonas claimed he was not making these statements out of bitterness, and that both sides deserve to be honored. However, calling the North ignorant and corrupt shows Jonas did not forget his anger towards the Union.

Despite the mixed messaging, Jonas was clear that he was happy that the North and South were once again a whole nation. He proudly stated, “We are today as true and loyal to the government, its Constitution and laws, as those whom twenty-five years ago we met in battle. We complain of no charge brought about by the war. It emancipated the slave and we thank G-d for his freedom. We were not originally responsible for the institution of slavery. No one would accept its restoration today.”⁹⁸ This is consistent with his statements from his Senate speech in 1879 in which he said Southerners accepted the results of the war and did not complain after Reconstruction. The significant change is that Jonas claimed the South no longer believed slavery should exist. While he attempted to soften the perception of the South as a leading force in the institution of slavery, adding that he thanked G-d that the slaves were freed shows a great shift in mentality from a society that regularly referred to slaves as savages needing to be tamed. Jonas went from someone who helped force Republican Justices out of their positions to a man who preached the importance of a unified nation. Even though unity became an important topic for Jonas, it was just as important to him that Confederate soldiers be respected in the same manner as Union soldiers because it was noble to fight for causes each side thought were just. This speaks to an evolving memory in which hostilities subdued but southern pride lives on. This theme of healing while maintaining pride is also evident in the works of Moses Ezekiel.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 11.

Moses Ezekiel was a Jewish sculptor born in Richmond, Virginia in 1844. Although he was just a teenager when the war began, he still begged his grandparents to allow him to enroll in the Virginia Military Institute as a cadet. He was the first Jewish cadet at VMI. Ezekiel hoped that this would be an opportunity to one day fight for the Confederacy in battle.⁹⁹ He maintained his Jewish faith even requesting furlough from the Board of Governors at VMI to return home to celebrate Passover with his family. He got his chance to fight for the Confederacy in the Battle of New Market in 1864.¹⁰⁰ He graduated from VMI in 1866 and returned home shortly after to help his family rebuild in Richmond.¹⁰¹ Ezekiel also met General Lee at a party and became friendly with him soon after. It was General Lee who told Ezekiel, “I hope you will one day be an artist as it seems to me you are cut out for one. But whatever you do, try to prove to the world that if we did not succeed in our struggle, we were worthy of success.”¹⁰² These words would have a great influence over Ezekiel’s work as a sculptor.

Moses Ezekiel moved to Rome in 1869 where he lived for the rest of his life, but he never forgot his Southern Roots. Over the course of his career he made the *Bust of Robert E. Lee*, the *Statue of Stonewall Jackson* in West Virginia, the *Confederate Memorial* in Arlington National Cemetery, and *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* at the VMI. Ezekiel made sure to use a great deal of symbolism in his monuments. Ezekiel’s most personal statue was *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* which he finished in 1903. The statue commemorates the ten cadets who died at the Battle of New Market in which Ezekiel also fought. He created a woman in battle

⁹⁹ Peter Nash, *The Life and Times of Moses Jacob Ezekiel: American Sculptor, Arcadian Knight* (Lanham: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 23.

¹⁰⁰ “Moses Ezekiel,” *Civil War Trust*, accessed March 3, 2018, <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/biographies/moses-ezekiel>.

¹⁰¹ Nash, *Moses Jacob Ezekiel*, 33.

¹⁰² Moses Ezekiel, *Memoirs from the Baths of Diocletian* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 124.

armor hanging her head low, hand under her chin in solemn thought, and holding her spear downward. She is on top of a broken cannon. The remains of six of the cadets are in copper boxes within the monument itself.¹⁰³ The monument symbolizes the sadness of the fact these young cadets died protecting the South. At the ceremony for unveiling the statue, Ezekiel remarked that seeing young cadets honor the memory of his fallen comrades made him feel like, “something arose like a stone in my throat, and fell to my heart, slashing tears to my eyes.”¹⁰⁴ This was clearly a proud moment for Ezekiel as we witnessed fellow VMI cadets honor the memory of his fallen friends.

When asked to create the *Confederate Memorial* in Arlington National Cemetery, he remarked he, “was glad to do the work...I had been waiting for forty years to have my love for the South recognized.” When describing the monument, Ezekiel said we would make, “a heroic bronze statue representing the South, a standing figure dignified and sorrowful...Underneath [the base] would be a round disk with shields or coat of arms of the Southern states in relief. Beneath this circular body of the monument ought to have a high relief upon it to represent the sacrifices and heroism of the men and women of the South.” Moses also inscribed on the base a quote from Isaiah 2:4 that states, “and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks” along with scenes of Confederate soldiers and their families preparing for war.¹⁰⁵ The scenes of the statue are meant to convey the memories of Confederate soldiers’ heroism while the quote from Isaiah represents laying down one’s arms to foster peace and reconciliation.

¹⁰³ “Virginia Mourning Her Dead,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed March 4, 2018, https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/media_player?mets_filename=evm00002669mets.xml.

¹⁰⁴ Albert Z. Conner, “Moses Ezekiel: From Confederate Cadet to World-Famous Artist,” *Jewish American History Foundation*, accessed March 4, 2018, http://www.jewish-history.com/civilwar/moses_ezekiel.html.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 438-439.

Ezekiel wanted to promote the soldier's principles of courage and honor while also acknowledging that it was time for unity. Ezekiel also told *The Washington Post* that the monument honors the idea the South fought for constitutional rights and not for slavery. He described that the statue on top is holding a wreath, "for the past, but with the right hand resting on the handles of a plow" to signify the South rebuilding.¹⁰⁶ While Ezekiel wanted the statue to represent the South moving forward from the pains of war, he also tapped into the Lost Cause mentality when he said the Confederacy did not fight in part to preserve slavery.

Ezekiel himself never supported slavery, but he supported what he believed to be the South's right to decide for itself how to handle this institution. In a conversation Ezekiel had with Italian General Giuseppe Garibaldi, he recollected that, "Garibaldi did not seem favorably impressed when I told him that I had been in the Southern army, because the Southern States were slave states. But I told him none of us had ever fought for slavery and, in fact, were opposed to it." Ezekiel also told him that the South inherited the idea of slavery from Europe and even people in the North sold slaves in the South. Ezekiel again promoted the idea that the Confederate cause was, "based upon the constitutional states' rights and especially on free trade and no tariff."¹⁰⁷ Once again Ezekiel promoted the Lost cause idea that the Confederacy fought strictly on grounds of state rights and fair economic practices. While Ezekiel did not support slavery himself, he was wrong to state that Confederates did not support slavery. The states of Georgia, Mississippi, Texas and South Carolina even wrote "Declarations of Causes" which all mentioned slavery as a factor for leaving the Union.¹⁰⁸ Despite living most of his life in Rome, it

¹⁰⁶ "Arrive for Unveiling," *Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), June 4, 1914.

¹⁰⁷ Moses Ezekiel, *Memoirs*, 188.

¹⁰⁸ John Pierce, "The Reasons for Secession," *Civil War Trust*, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/reasons-secession>.

is clear Moses Ezekiel never backed away from his Southern roots. He was a proud Southerner who continued to believe the Confederacy fought for just purposes. His monuments are a testament to his commitment in promoting the Confederate memory of the Civil War.

These men represent a majority of Confederate Jews whose pride in the South never wavered. Henry Hyam's letter is an example of how Southern Jews may have viewed Reconstruction as another form of exile and how they wished to return to their lives before occupation. Raphael J. Moses's memoirs display the mindset of a man who was proud to be both a Southerner and a Jew that continued to support Southern ideals even after the war. Benjamin F. Jonas's speeches show that even the staunchest former Confederates believed that Civil War memory should focus on honoring those who fought to defend their principles rather than only remember the anger and hate. Moses Ezekiel's monuments and memoir prove that even those who left the South after the Civil War still remembered their pride in their Southern heritage and contributed to preserving the memory of the Confederate cause. While they may have had different opinions on issues such as slavery, their attitudes and memories show a consistent sense of a desire to represent the South with honor.

III. Jewish Women on the Homefront

Some of the most expressive memories of the Civil War came from the Jewish women who lived through seeing their cities destroyed or taken over by the Union. Several served as nurses for wounded soldiers and organized memorial events and monument dedications in the years after the war. Many did not hold back any of their true thoughts on the Union and their actions against the South. These women were proud Southerners who expressed their opinions in a very blunt manner. They were unapologetic about their support for the Confederacy and their memories showed their fondness for their lives before the war. Many of them helped contribute to the ideas of the Lost Cause through their memoirs, diaries, poems, and newspaper articles. One of the earliest examples of Jewish Confederate Memory comes from a Jewish woman known as Mrs. Abraham Levy.

After the war, the Jewish community of Richmond needed to find a cemetery to properly bury their soldiers who died in the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Wilderness. They appealed to the communities in Spotsylvania Courthouse and Fredericksburg who already constructed their own Confederate cemeteries. However, they refused to accommodate the fallen Jewish soldiers saying they didn't want "Jewish boys" buried next to their dead despite the fact these men served together fighting for the same cause.¹⁰⁹ In response to this anti-Semitism the women of the Jewish community set up the Hebrew Ladies Memorial Association in order to raise funds for building their own cemetery. The association's corresponding secretary, Mrs. Abraham Levy, appealed to the Richmond Jewish Community saying,

¹⁰⁹ Seymour Brody, "The Only Jewish Military Cemetery Outside of Israel is in Richmond, Virginia," *Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed September 1, 2017, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-hebrew-confederate-cemetery>.

While world yet rings with the narrative of a brave people's struggle for independence and while the story of the hardships so nobly endured for Liberty's sake is yet a theme but half exhausted, the countless graves of the myriads of heroes who spilled their noble blood in defense of that glorious cause, lie neglected, not alone unmarked by tablet or sculptured urn, but literally vanishing before the relentless finger of time.¹¹⁰

Mrs. Levy used the idea of memory to convince her community that they must act fast in collecting funds before people start to forget they have no final resting place for their dead. In a community where so many people were trying to rebuild, it is easy to understand why constructing a new cemetery while houses and places of business were destroyed might not seem like a top priority. That is why Mrs. Levy appealed to her community by highlighting the desire to ensure that these fallen soldiers will be remembered for their courage and honor in fighting for a cause Southerners heavily believed in. This worked and the Hebrew Ladies Memorial Association collected enough funds to make proper graves for all thirty soldiers brought to their final resting place. While Mrs. Levy's goal was to focus on the more positive aspects of memory regarding heroism and courage, many other Jewish women had more negative recollections of the war. Such is the case for Eleanor Cohen.

Eleanor Cohen was born in Charleston, South Carolina where she grew up and spent most of her life. However, she had to flee with her family to Columbia, South Carolina in 1865 as Union General Sherman was quickly approaching Charleston after conducting his infamous March to the Sea. However, Sherman reached Columbia on February 16th and began to shell the city. Cohen exclaimed after the mayor surrendered, "Oh! G-d can I ever forget that day, can time with lethean draughts ever efface from my memory the deep sorrow, the humiliation, the agony knowing we were to be under the Yankee, that our beloved flag was to be pulled down and the

¹¹⁰ Korn, *American Jewry*, 110-111.

U.S.A. flag was over the city.”¹¹¹ Right away it is clear how much it upset Cohen to see the fall of Columbia. She was so distraught by the fact she saw the Confederate flag pulled down and replaced with the Union flag. She knew this meant the South was going to be under military rule, a thought that she agonized over. She recalled that shortly after the surrender, Union soldiers began setting fire to the city which eventually reached the street Cohen was living on. She had to evacuate her house leaving most personal belongings behind. She mentioned how Union soldiers, the “vandal foe,” were getting drunk and heckling her as she and her family tried to find shelter away from the fires. She remembered taunts such as, “how do you like secesh now, Columbia is skedaddling.” She continued to express her anger accusing the “vile Yankees” of stealing food, clothes, and jewelry from everyone leaving the town in a “deplorable condition.” After Union forces left Columbia, she remarked she was fearful she would starve but was happier knowing the soldiers were gone.¹¹² Cohen did not hide her contempt in anyway when speaking about Union soldiers.

After hearing about the Confederate surrender, she acknowledged she was relieved that there would be no more bloodshed, but she was also fearful to be under the occupation of Union forces. She prayed, “Oh G-d fill us with fortitude to bear this reverse.” While she was devastated by the fact the Confederacy surrendered, she was glad to hear that President Lincoln, “our worst enemy was laid low and Seward the arch fiend was also stabbed and today we hear the glorious tidings that the Yankee congress had a row and Andy Johnson was killed. God grant so may all our foes perish.”¹¹³ There was clearly no love lost when Cohen heard the news of Lincoln’s

¹¹¹ Typescript of Diary by Eleanor Cohen, Mss 1124, Box 1, Folder 8, Cohen, Emanuel, Moses, and Seixas Family Papers, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹¹² Ibid., 6.

¹¹³ Ibid., 10.

death as well as the attacks on William Seward and Andrew Johnson (who was never actually hurt) as she still saw these top leaders as enemies G-d should kill. However, her happiness was short lived once Union soldiers returned to Columbia at the start of the Reconstruction Era. For Cohen, “this makes truly Southern blood boil to see them in our streets...and over us again floats the banner that is now a sign of tyranny and oppression.”¹¹⁴ Cohen’s anger is also a display of Southern pride and the Lost cause mentality. She saw herself as a true Southerner as it was in her blood, and completely ignores the fact slaves were oppressed under a tyrannical system in the South. Her passion showed complete loyalty to the Confederacy as her memories of the Civil War were filled with agony and despair. Such passion could also be seen in the poems of fellow Charlestonian Octavia Harby Moses.

Octavia Harby Moses was born to a leader of the Reform Judaism movement in Charleston where she grew up. She moved to Sumter, South Carolina after getting married where she would become a poet and the president of the Confederate memorial committee responsible for building a Civil War monument in Sumter.¹¹⁵ She wrote numerous poems expressing her feelings about the Civil War, the South, and the Reconstruction Era. In a poem she wrote in 1863 titled, “To the South,” Harby Moses wrote, “Oh! Shame to thee, land of the South! Shame on the inglorious day, when thy sons and thy daughters, thy mothers and sires, Shall yield to the Northerner’s sway...Arm, arm ye! Right brave Southern men! Ye must conquer them no, or forever be slaves, on your necks they will trample again.” This poem appears to be a rallying cry after the South suffered a devastating defeat. It could be possible this was written in response to losing Gettysburg in July of 1863. It is clear she is worried about being conquered by the Union.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁵ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Women: A Documentary History* (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1981), 201.

She continued to say, “the North preaches of freedom to those who know not the bliss it bestows, shall we who were born amid freedom’s bright homes, surrender our rights to her foes? Never! Never!...Struggle hard ‘tis for freedom and life!”¹¹⁶ Here it is evident that Harby Moses believed that slaves did not have the capability of understanding the meaning of freedom. She criticized the North for giving slaves what she believed to be a false sense of hope. She could not imagine a South that was controlled by Union forces who would have the power to oppress her fellow Southerners. Unfortunately, the defeat of the South brought other heartaches to Harby Moses.

Right at the end of the war, her son J. L. Moses was killed at the Battle of Fort Blakely. This greatly contributed to Harby Moses’s growing resentment towards the North. In 1868, she wrote a poem honoring his memory that said, “The long war’s danger he had passed, death’s noblest victim was his last...Give me once more to see my child! Till heart and brain at once went wild...The lovely land thou died’st to save is ruled by traitor and by slave.”¹¹⁷ It is clear to see the pain she felt remembering the loss of her son. Despite the fact the South left the Union, she saw the North as the traitors for killing fellow Americans. This is another example of the Lost Cause idea of Northern Aggression.

During Reconstruction, she continued to express themes of anger towards the occupying Union forces. She notices the low morale as her community rebuilt, so she wrote a poem saying, “What shall we wear? Only garments of sorrow, and bow the bent head, when we think of the past?...No!...Oh, land of the South, be thy soul ever sacred! Enriched as it is by the blood of the brave, to thee our love, to thy foes our hatred. Thou birth place of heroes! Of martyrs, the grave!”¹¹⁸ Harby Moses wanted to remind her community that they must remember they could

¹¹⁶ Octavia Harby Moses, *A Mother’s Poems*, self-pub., 1915), 42.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 61

not let their thoughts of losing the war get in the way of fighting back. To her, the South was a place of heroes who kept fighting until they were killed by the enemy. She wanted her community to have the same mentality of having a strong resolve. When Reconstruction ended in 1876, she wrote a poem, "To the Democrats of South Carolina" and told them, "Up Brothers and work! For too long worn and weary 'Neath tyranny's yoke, Carolina hath bled. Her days spent in mourning, her nights dark and dreary...let the battle before us, continue forever, 'till freedom is won."¹¹⁹ Once again Harby Moses used her poems as a rallying cry to motivate her community to completely rid itself of Reconstruction's influence and take back the South. She was determined to never give up on her beloved South. She continued to promote the memory of fallen Confederates through her work in the memorial association and her poems that, "honor these shrines where our martyrs sleep."¹²⁰ Harby Moses's will and determination is also reminiscent of another proud Confederate Jewish woman named Eugenia Levy Phillips.

Eugenia Levy Phillips was born in Charleston and married a Jewish lawyer named Phillip Phillips. The moved to Mobile, Alabama where her husband would become a member of Congress in 1853. After serving for two years, he moved the family to Washington D.C to practice law.¹²¹ This where Eugenia would first have problems with Union authorities. She wrote about her experiences during the beginning of the Civil War in 1889. Eugenia was a proud and unapologetic Southerner who wished to maintain contact with her family in the South even though she was across enemy lines. She managed to receive letters from her family in the South,

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 70.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 124.

¹²¹ David T. Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips: The Civil War Experiences of a Southern Jewish Woman," *Jews of the South: Select Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor, Louis Schmier, and Malcolm Stern (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 95-96.

which made Union officials think she was a Confederate spy passing along intelligence information. She was placed under house arrest until her husband used his friendship with Union Secretary of War Edwin Stanton (who she labeled, “the arch hypocrite”) to grant her release if the family returned to the South.¹²² Upon her release she recollected that, “we jumped into a little boat, with hurrahs: much to the indignation of the Federal Captain who exclaimed ‘Ladies respect our Flag.’ We said we certainly were respecting our ‘Flag’ and left him.”¹²³ This is a consistent personality trait of Eugenia. She was always witty when she felt like she was being antagonized and always displayed a sense of confidence, especially when it came to her Southern pride. While she claimed she was never a spy and that it was only an attempt by Union officials to shame her, she did mention she met with Confederate President Jefferson Davis and gave him her, “dispatches, much to his satisfaction.”¹²⁴ She never elaborated on this further, but it is peculiar that she dismissed being called a spy but mentions she had messages to deliver to the President of the Confederacy that he was happy to receive.

Her family relocated to New Orleans, but would once again have issues with Union officials once they occupied New Orleans in 1862. She wrote, “I shall never forget the scene of confusion and despairing mothers weeping over their sons in the streets...[and] a raging crowd of 10,000 demons rushed into the city hall to see the poor state flag pulled down.”¹²⁵ She always referred to Union soldiers in negative ways depicting them as monsters. Recollecting scenes of mothers holding their dead sons gives off the perception of innocent young men falling victim to

¹²² Ibid., 98-99.

¹²³ Typescript of A Southern Woman’s Story of her imprisonment During the War of 1861 and 1862 by Eugenia Levy Phillips, 1889, Mss 1125, Box 1, Folder 6, Phillips Family Papers, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 13.

ruthless Union soldiers. The treatment she eventually received from Union soldiers served as testament to her anger towards them. Her issues continued to worsen after a funeral procession for a Union soldiers passed by her house.

According to her daughter in her memoirs years after the war, they were having a birthday celebration on the balcony when Eugenia was laughing and smiling once the cake was brought out.¹²⁶ However, Union General Butler accused her of mocking the soldier's funeral and she was arrested and deported to Ship Island near Mississippi.¹²⁷ On her way to General Butler's office after her arrest, she remembered seeing, "about 100,000 filthy, reeking/drunken Negros baking in the sun."¹²⁸ This shows that even in 1889 she still used racist rhetoric and viewed African Americans as savages. When documenting her three-month imprisonment, she called it a place where, "all rights of a prisoner of war were denied and all laws set at defiance."¹²⁹ She documented how she was forced to live in a box car instead of an actual room. She claimed she was beaten by one the guards, and forced to eat only soldier's rations. She also noted that she did not like seeing comradery between white and black people on the island, further revealing her prejudices. She also got sick with yellow fever but was able to overcome the disease.¹³⁰ However, despite these horrible conditions, she always maintained high spirits.

She claimed that General Butler would periodically stop by to see her failing health in hopes she would beg to be released. But she always told him she was feeling well and hid her pain. Butler also wrote about her to newspapers calling her the worst case. In response to what

¹²⁶ Josef Nix, *My Mama's War* (Alexandria: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Agency, LLC, 2009), 78.

¹²⁷ Eugenia Levy Phillips, *A Southern Women's Story*, 17-18.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁰ Morgan, *Jews of the South*, 101-104.

she believed to be, “slander and abuse,” she signed all her letters, “truly yours the worst possible case” to show Butler he could not break her will.¹³¹ Her determination worked, as Butler released her after three months. Eugenia left with her head held high boasting she knew she was, “wholly innocent.”¹³² After the end of the Civil War, the Phillips family returned to Washington D.C, but Eugenia never forgot her Southern roots. She told her daughter, “history is written by the winners so it will be up to you children to pass on the truth, teach your children and teach them to teach your children’s children. It’s our tradition from the time of Abraham of Ur.”¹³³ Eugenia wanted to ensure her children passed down the ideas of the Lost Cause mentality. By mentioning Abraham, she also mixed the importance for a Southerner to promote the Lost Cause with the Jewish principle of *L’dor vador*. This translates to from generation to generation. This principle teaches the idea to pass down the traditions of the Jewish people so that they may never fade from existence. Eugenia wanted her memory of the Civil War passed down so that it would never be forgotten. Using these two concepts further shows the connection between Eugenia’s Southern and Jewish identity.

It is clear to see that these women never lost their Southern pride and worked to spread the Lost Cause mentality. Mrs. Abraham Levy appealed to her community by reminding them of the importance of remembering the heroism of their fallen soldiers in order to fund a proper cemetery for Confederate Jews. The diary of Eleanor Cohen and the poetry of Octavia Harby Moses are great examples of the passion Southern Jewish women had for their society. Eugenia Levy Phillip’s account of her imprisonment at Ship Island show the willpower of a woman who

¹³¹ Eugenia Levy Phillips, *A Southern Women’s Story*, 27.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³³ Nix, *My Mama’s War*, 101.

never gave up on her Southern pride. Their writings are evidence to why the Lost Cause mentality is still discussed today.

Conclusion

While each group of people brought different perspectives to the question of Southern Jewish memory and attitude towards the Civil War, the one trait they all had in common was the passion in which they used to convey their messages of supporting the South. While the rabbis had different opinions on slavery and changed their views on people like President Lincoln, they all used their sermons to defend Southern society. Although those like James K. Gutheim and Max Michelbacher were more ardent in their support for the Confederate cause than Isaac Mayer Wise and Bernard Illowy, they all understood that unity among the Jewish people meant accepting Southern Jews back into the fold of American society. Unity was crucial to these Rabbis, and they did not stay silent when they felt like the South was being oppressed. The men who served in Confederate forces continued to show their dedication to their Southern identity long after the Civil War ended. The way in which Jewish men like Benjamin F. Jonas and Raphael J. Moses fought against Reconstruction while also promoting the ideas of the Lost Cause proves that they were both proud Jews and Southerners. Moses Ezekiel spent most of his life in Rome, but he never forgot that he was a VMI cadet from Richmond, Virginia. His monuments serve the ultimate purpose of glorifying the memory of the Confederate cause. The expressiveness of Jewish women of the South undeniably shows their dedication to their communities. These women tapped into their deep feelings of contempt toward the Union, and wrote vivid accounts that highlight reverence for the Confederate cause while also refusing to accept defeat in how the narrative of the Civil War will be dictated. Even though these are only a few people that represent the thousands in the Jewish South, they are still examples of leaders who their communities looked to during a bleak period in the Post-antebellum South. Their attitudes and memories are representative of their Jewish brethren's identity as Southerners as

the years progressed after the war. While some of their memories and attitudes towards secession, slavery and, the North softened in the years after Reconstruction, they overwhelmingly continued to show pride in the South and refused to shy away from their identities as Southerners and Jews.

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