

LECTURE 1:

THE YIDDISH LETTER AND THE DECLARATION: THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF JONAS PHILLIPS, THE FIRST TRULY AMERICAN JEW

In this first lecture, Rabbi Soloveichik traces the life of Jonas Phillips, a German Jew who came to America in 1756 as an indentured servant. After earning his freedom, Phillips built a life for himself and his family in New York and, following the onset of the Revolutionary War, in Philadelphia.

Serving in the Pennsylvania militia, and firmly committed to the patriot cause, Phillips helped to shape America's unique conception of freedom—especially religious freedom—by asserting that he was co-equal to his fellow Americans as both a citizen and as a Jew. By examining two striking letters written by Phillips—one addressed to soon-to-be-President George Washington—we will see how Phillips portrays American Jews as having a dual character. In the words of the patriarch Abraham, each Jew is meant to be both *ger* (“stranger”) and *toshav* (“neighbor”). In America alone, Jews can retain their separateness from non-Jewish customs (*ger*), while also being full-fledged, co-equal citizens (*toshav*).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think Phillips' Sabbath lawsuit would be decided today?
2. What unique features of American political ideas and American culture allowed American Jews to live as both *gerim* (strangers) and *toshavim* (neighbors)?
3. What are the difficulties of being both *ger* and *toshav* at the same time? Are there certain settings in which separateness and solidarity are more easily integrated? Are there any ways in which the two are irreconcilable?
4. In what ways does the concept of "equality before the law" represent a mixture of both modern and biblical ideas? Is it a specifically Jewish idea?
5. In Jonas Phillips' letter to Gumpel Samson, he writes that the Declaration of Independence was a "declaration for the whole state" rather than a declaration on behalf of thirteen separate states. Why is this significant? What promise does a large nation founded on equal rights hold for Jews and other religious minorities?
6. Was Pennsylvania's requirement to have legislators attest to the divine nature of the Old Testament any less problematic than the requirement to have legislators attest to the divine nature of the New Testament? Should Phillips have objected to Pennsylvania's requirement altogether, or was it right for him to specifically object to the part about the New Testament? Was he objecting as a Jew, as a citizen, or both?
7. What sense of obligation did Jonas Phillips have toward America? What can Jews learn from him about their obligations to Jews, to Judaism, and to the United States?

PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S PROPOSED SEAL FOR THE UNITED STATES



JONAS PHILLIPS TO GUMPEL SAMSON

Philadelphia July 28th 1776

Philadelphia, Sunday, 12 Menachem Ab, 5536.

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

As it is not always possible to send a letter to England on account of the war in America, I must therefore write by way of St. Eustatia.

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

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

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

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

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

You friend, to serve. From me, Jonah son of R. Felbesh [Phoebus] (the memory of the righteous is a blessing), of Busick.

Jonas Phillips

BENJAMIN RUSH TO HIS WIFE, JULIA RUSH

My dear Julia,

Philadelphia, June 27, 1787

Being called a few days ago to attend in the family of Jonas Phillips, I was honored this morning with an invitation to attend the marriage of his daughter to a young man of the name of LEVY from Virginia. I accepted the invitation with great pleasure, for you know I love to be in the way of adding to my stock of ideas upon all subjects.

At 1 o'clock the company, consisting of 30 or 40 men, assembled in Mr. Philips' common parlor, which was accommodated with benches for the purpose. The ceremony began with prayers in the Hebrew language, which were chaunted by an old rabbi and in which he was followed by the whole company. As I did not understand a word except now and then an Amen or Hallelujah, my attention was directed to the haste with which they covered their heads with their hats as soon as the prayers began, and to the freedom with which some of them conversed with each other during the whole time of this part of their worship. As soon as these prayers were ended, which took up about 20 minutes, a small piece of parchment was produced, written in Hebrew, which contained a deed of settlement and which the groom subscribed in the presence of four witnesses. In this deed he conveyed a part of his fortune to his bride, by which she was provided for after his death in case she survived him. This ceremony was followed by the erection of a beautiful canopy composed of white and red silk in the middle of the floor. It was supported by four young men (by means of four poles), who put on white gloves for the purpose. As soon as this canopy was fixed, the bride, accompanied with her mother, sister, and a long train of female relations, came downstairs. Her face was covered with a veil which reached halfway down her body. She was handsome at all times, but the occasion aid her dress rendered her in a peculiar manner a most lovely and affecting object. I gazed with delight upon her. Innocence, modesty, fear, respect, and devotion appeared all at once in her countenance. She was led by her two bridesmaids under the canopy. Two young men led the bridegroom after her and placed him, not by her side, but directly opposite to her. The priest now began again to chaunt an Hebrew prayer, in which he was followed by part of the company. After this he gave to the groom and bride a glass full of wine, from which they each sipped about a teaspoonful. Another prayer followed this act, after which he took a ring and directed the groom to place it upon the finger of his bride in the same manner as is practised in the marriage service of the Church of England. This ceremony was followed by handing the wine to the father of the bride and then a second time to the bride and groom. The groom after sipping the wine took the glass in his hand and threw it upon a large pewter dish which was suddenly placed at his feet. Upon its breaking into a number of small pieces, there was a general shout of joy and a declaration that the ceremony was over. The groom now saluted his bride, and kisses and congratulations became general through the room. I asked the meaning, after the ceremony was over, of the canopy and of the drinking of the wine and breaking of the glass. I was told by one of the company that in Europe they generally marry in the open air, and that the canopy was introduced

to defend the bride and groom from the action of the sun and from rain. Their mutually partaking of the same glass of wine was intended to denote the mutuality of their goods, and the breaking of the glass at the conclusion of the business was designed to teach them the brittleness and uncertainty of human life and the certainty of death, and thereby to temper and moderate their present joys.

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

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

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

I have only time to add that the pleasure I enjoyed in the sight and reflections I have recorded was soon damped by my being obliged to take leave of my dear friend and late partner Dr. Hall. He took me by the hand at 4 o'clock - but was unable to bid me farewell. His eyes filled with tears, and he attempted in vain to give utterance to his affection and grief. Mr. Blakely, Dr. Griffiths, and four or five more of his companions accompanied him to Gray's ferry. He has left a blank in every part of the house. I feel without him as if I had lost my right arm.

John prefers visiting Morven in the holidays next month to a short excursion, agreeably to your proposal. I have promised Dick that he shall accompany him.

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

B. RUSH

P.S. June 28th. We met last night about our free schools. The company was well chosen and truly respectable. A plan was adopted that cannot fail (heaven continuing to smile upon the undertaking) of succeeding and doing the most extensive good. O! Virtue, Virtue, who would not follow thee blindfold! - Methinks I hear you cry out after reading this postscript, "Alas! my poor husband! he is as crazy as ever."

I have sent the wedding cake by Mr. Stockton.

JONAS PHILLIPS TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

Philadelphia 24th Ellul 5547 or Sepr 7th 1787

Sirs

With leave and Submission I address my Self To those in whome there is wisdom understanding and knowledge. They are the honorable personages appointed and Made overseers of a part of the terrestrial globe of the Earth, Namely the 13 united states of america in Convention Assembled, the Lord preserve them amen.

I the subscriber being one of the people called Jews of the City of Philadelphia, a people scattered and despersed among all nations do behold with Concern that among the laws in the Constitution of Pennsylvania their is a Clause Sect 10 to viz.—I do belive in one God the Creator and governour of the universe the Rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked—and I do acknowledge the scriptures of the old and New testement to be given by devine inspiration—To Swear and belive that the new testement was given by devine inspiration is absolutly against the Religious principle of a Jew and is against his conscience to take any such oath. By the above law a Jew is deprived of holding any public office or place of Government which is a Contradectory to the bill of Right Sect. 2 viz.

That all men have a natural and inalienable Right To worship almighty God according to the dictates of their own Conscience and understanding, and that no man aught or of Right can be compelled to attend any Religious Worship or Erect or support any place of worship or Maintain any minister contrary to or against his own free will and Consent nor can any man who acknowledges the being of a God be Justly deprived or abridged of any Civil Right as a Citizen on account of his Religious Sentiments or peculiar mode of Religious Worship and that no authority can or aught to be vested in or assumed by any power what Ever that shall in any Case interfere or in any manner Controul the Right of Conscience in the free Exercise of Religious Worship.

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

Therefore if the honourable Convention shall in their Wisdom think fit and alter the said oath and leave out the words to viz.—and I do acknowledge the scriptures of the new testement to be given by devine inspiration, then the Israelites will think themself happy to live under a government where all Religious societys are on an Eaquel footing. I solecet this favour for my Self my Children and posterity and for the benefit of all the Israelites through the 13 united States of america.

My prayer is unto the Lord—May the people of this states Rise up as a great and young lion, May they prevail against their Enemies, May the degrees of honour of his Excellency the president of the

Convention George Washington, be {Extolled} and Raise up, May Everyone speak of his glorious Exploits—May God prolong his days among us in this land of Liberty—May he lead the armies against his Enemy as he has done hereuntofore, May God Extend peace unto the united States—May they get up to the highest Prosperity—May God Extend peace to them and their Seed after them so long as the Sun and moon Endureth—and May the almighty God of our father Abraham Isaac and Jacob endue this Noble Assembly with wisdom Judgement and unanimity in their Councils, and may they have the Satisfaction to see that their present toil and labour for the wellfair of the united States may be approved of Through all the world and perticular by the united States of america, is the ardent prayer of Sires

Your Most devoted obed. Servant

Jonas Phillips

LEVI SHEFTALL TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

May 6th 1789

General George Washington resident of the United States

Sir, - We have long been anxious of congratulating you on your appointment by unanimous approbation, to the Presidential dignity of this country, and of testifying our unbounded Confidence in your integrity and unblemished virtue. Yet, however exalted the station you now fill, it is still not equal to the merit of your heroic services through an arduous and dangerous conflict which has embosomed you in the hearts of our citizens.

Our eccentric situation added to a diffidence founded on the most profound respect has thus long prevented our address, yet the delay has realized anticipation, giving us an opportunity of presenting our grateful acknowledgments for the benediction of Heaven, through the magnanimity of Federal influence and the equity of your administration.

Your unexampled liberality and extensive philanthropy have dispelled that cloud of bigotry and superstition which has long as a veil shaded religion, unriveted fetters of enthusiasm, enfranchised us with all the privileges and immunities of free citizens, and initiated us into the grand mass of legislative mechanism.

By example, you have taught us to endure the ravages of war with manly fortitude, and to enjoy the blessings of peace with reverence to the Deity and benignity and love to our fellow creatures.

May the Great Author of the world grant you all happiness, - an uninterrupted series of health - addition of years to the number of your days, and a continuance of guardianship to that freedom which under the auspices of heaven your magnanimity and wisdom have given these states.

LEVI SHEFTALL,

President.

In behalf of the Hebrew Congregation.

GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, HEBREW CONGREGATION

June 14, 1790

Gentlemen,

I thank you with great sincerity for your congratulations on my appointment to the office, which I have the honor to hold by the unanimous choice of my fellow-citizens: and especially for the expressions which you are pleased to use in testifying the confidence that is reposed in me by your congregation.

As the delay which has naturally intervened between my election and your address has afforded an opportunity for appreciating the merits of the federal-government, and for communicating your sentiments of its administration—I have rather to express my satisfaction than regret at a circumstance, which demonstrates (upon experiment) your attachment to the former as well as approbation of the latter.

I rejoice that a spirit of liberality and philanthropy is much more prevalent than it formerly was among the enlightened nations of the earth; and that your brethren will benefit thereby in proportion as it shall become still more extensive. Happily the people of the United States of America have, in many instances, exhibited examples worthy of imitation—The salutary influence of which will doubtless extend much farther, if gratefully enjoying those blessings of peace which (under favor of Heaven) have been obtained by fortitude in war, they shall conduct themselves with reverence to the Deity, and charity towards their fellow-creatures.

May the same wonder-working Deity, who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian Oppressors planted them in the promised land—whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent nation—still continue to water them with the dews of Heaven and to make the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people whose God is Jehovah.

G. Washington

MOSES SEIXAS TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

Sir:

Permit the children of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merit, and to join with our fellow-citizens in welcoming you to Newport.

... Deprived as we hitherto have been of the invaluable rights of free citizens, we now-with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of all events — behold a government erected by the majesty of the people-a government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance, but generously affording to all liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship, deeming every one of whatever nation, tongue, or language, equal parts of the great governmental machine.

This so ample and extensive Federal Union, whose base is philanthropy, mutual confidence and public virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the great God, who rules in the armies of the heavens and among the inhabitants of the earth, doing whatever seemeth to Him good.

For all the blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal and benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of days, the great Preserver of men, beseeching Him that the angels who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised land may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life; and when, like Joshua, full of days and full of honors, you are gathered to your fathers, may you be admitted into the heavenly paradise to partake of the water of life and the tree of immortality.

Done and signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, August 17, 1790.

Moses Seixas, Warden

GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE HEBREW CONGREGATION IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Newport, R.I.,

August 18, 1790

Gentlemen.

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and a happy people.

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

Go. Washington

GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE HEBREW CONGREGATIONS OF PHILADELPHIA, NEW YORK, CHARLESTON, AND RICHMOND

Philadelphia

December 13, 1790

Gentlemen,

The liberality of sentiment toward each other which marks every political and religious denomination of men in this Country, stands unparalleled in the history of Nations. The affection of such people is a treasure beyond the reach of calculation; and the repeated proofs which my fellow Citizens have given of their attachment to me, and approbation of my doings form the purest source of my temporal felicity. The affectionate expressions of your address again excite my gratitude, and receive my warmest acknowledgments.

The Power and Goodness of the Almighty were strongly Manifested in the events of our late glorious revolution; and his kind interposition in our behalf has been no less visible in the establishment of our present equal government. In war he directed the Sword; and in peace he has ruled in our Councils. My agency in both has been guided by the best intentions, and a sense of the duty which I owe my Country: and as my exertions have hitherto been amply rewarded by the Approbation of my fellow Citizens, I shall endeavour to deserve a continuance of it by my future conduct.

May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your Congregations.

Go. Washington.

MANUEL JOSEPHSON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

December 13, 1790

Sir:-

It is reserved for you to unite in affection for your character and person every political and religious denomination of men; and in this will the Hebrew congregations aforesaid yield to no class of their fellow- citizens.

We have been hitherto prevented by various circumstances peculiar to our situation from adding our congratulations to those which the rest of America have offerd on your elevation to the Chair of the Federal governmt. Deign then illustrious Sir, to Accept this our homage.

The wonders which the Lord of Hosts hath worked in the days of our Forefathers, have taught us, to observe the greatness of His wisdom and His might throughout the events of the late glorious revolution; and while we humble ourselves at His footstool in thanksgiving and praise for the blessing of His deliverance; we acknowledge you, the Leader of American Armies, as his chosen and beloved servant; But not to your sword alone is present happiness to be ascribed; that, indeed, opened the way to the reign of Freedom, but never was it perfectly secure, till your hand gave birth to the Federal Constitution, and you renounced the joys of retirement to seal by your administration in Peace what you had achieved in war.

To the eternal God, who is thy refuge, we commit in our prayers the care of thy precious life; and when, full of years, thou shalt be gathered unto thy people, thy righteousness shall go before thee, and we shall remember, amidst our regret, "that the Lord hath set apart the godly for himself," whilst thy name and thy virtues will remain an indelible memorial on our minds.

Manuel Josephson.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Wilson Carey McWilliams, "The Bible in the American Political Tradition," in Patrick J. Deneen and Susan J. McWilliams, eds., *Redeeming Democracy in America*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011)

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Michael Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*, (New York: Encounter Books, 2002)

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Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013)

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KEY CONCEPTS & TERMS

Ashkenazi / Ashkenazim (pl.)

Jews from Eastern France, Germany, and Eastern Europe and their descendants

Brit

Hebrew for “covenant”

D’var Torah

A talk or discourse exploring a section of Scripture, typically the weekly Torah portion

Ger / Gerim (pl.)

Hebrew for “stranger.” In the Hebrew Bible, the term typically refers to a resident alien

Halacha / Halachic

The body of rituals and practices that make up Jewish law / of or pertaining to Jewish law

Hazzan / Hazaznim (pl.)

A professional cantor or member of the congregation who leads a synagogue in prayer

Humash

The first five books of the Hebrew Bible; the Five Books of Moses

Huppah

The wedding canopy under which a Jewish groom and bride stand during the wedding ceremony

Ketubah

The Jewish marriage contract

Kever

Hebrew for “grave”

Kiddush

The prayer recited over wine sanctifying the *Shabbat* (see below) or a festival

Kiddushin

Betrothal; the first part of the Jewish wedding ceremony, which creates a legal relationship between bride and groom

Malchut / Melech / Melech Elyon

Hebrew for kingship/king/the (Divine) King on High

Matzeva

The tombstone marking a Jewish grave

Mikveh

A ritual bath used for *halachic* (see above) purification. It is generally used in conversion rituals for men and women as well as by women after the traditional period of sexual separation during their menstrual cycles

Minha

The afternoon prayer service

Minyan

The quorum necessary to recite certain prayers, traditionally consisting of ten adult Jewish men

Nisuin

The second part of the Jewish marriage ceremony, during which the *Sheva Brachot* (see below) are recited

Parnas

The president or trustee of a *Sepharadi* (see below) synagogue

Pesach / Passover / Erev Pesach

The festival marking the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. “*Erev Pesach*” refers to the eve of the holiday

Pirkei Avot

A tractate of the Talmud (see below) devoted to the wisdom and advice of the great rabbis of the Talmudic era

Posek

A decisor of Jewish law; a legal scholar who decides on *Halacha* (see above) when a new situation arises

Seder

The family home ritual and festive meal conducted as part of the observance of Passover (see above).

Sefer Devarim

The Book of Deuteronomy

Sefer Shmuel

The Book of Samuel

Sepharadi / Sepharadim (pl.)

Jews from Spain, Portugal, North Africa, the Middle East and their descendants

Shabbat / Shabbos

The Jewish Sabbath, which occurs from nightfall Friday to nightfall Saturday

Sheva Brachot

The seven blessings recited during the *Nisuin* (see above) portion of the Jewish wedding ceremony

Shiva Asar b'Tammuz

The fast that occurs on the 17 of the Jewish month of *Tammuz*; it commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by the Romans

Shohet

A kosher slaughterer

Shtar

A Jewish legal contract

Talmud

The central collection of the Jewish oral tradition interpreting the Torah

Toshav / Toshavim (pl.)

A resident or resident alien

Yamim Noraim

The Days of Awe or High Holidays; can refer to the holidays of *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Repentance) or the period of ten days including those holidays known as the Ten Days of Repentance

Yiddish

The historic language of *Ashkenazi* Jews (see above), drawn from German, Hebrew, Aramaic, and several other languages

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

PAST

- 1654 ○ Establishment of Congregation Shearith Israel
- 1736 ○ Jonas Phillips is born in Germany **(Lecture 1)**
- 1756 ○ Jonas Phillips arrives in Charleston, South Carolina **(Lecture 1)**
- 1762 ○ Jonas Phillips marries Rebecca Mendez Machado **(Lecture 1)**
- 1775 ○ Battle of Lexington and Concord
- 1776 ○ Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense* **(Lecture 3)**
 July 2 | The Second Continental Congress votes to declare independence **(Lectures 1 & 2)**
 July 4 | The Second Continental Congress votes to adopt the Declaration of Independence & forms a committee to design a national seal **(Lecture 2)**
 July 28 | Jonas Phillips writes to Gumpel Samson, enclosing a copy of the Declaration of Independence **(Lecture 1)**
 The British take control of New York & Shearith Israel flees to Philadelphia **(Lecture 1)**
- 1781 ○ The Battle of Yorktown
- 1783 ○ The Treaty of Paris is signed, officially ending the Revolutionary War
- 1787 ○ Rachel Phillips marries Michael Levy. Benjamin Rush attends **(Lectures 1, 4 & 8)**
 The Constitutional Convention convenes in Philadelphia **(Lectures 1 & 5)**
 Jonas Phillips writes to the Constitutional Convention **(Lecture 1)**
 Pennsylvania ratifies the Constitution **(Lecture 5)**
- 1788 ○ Philadelphia's Jews participate in a parade celebrating the ratification of the Constitution **(Lecture 5)**
 New York postpones a parade supporting the Constitution due to the fast of the 17 of *Tammuz* **(Lecture 5)**
 New York ratifies the Constitution **(Lecture 5)**
- 1789 ○ George Washington inaugurated. Gershom Mendes Seixas participates in the inaugural procession **(Lecture 6)**
 Representatives Elias Boudinot & Roger Sherman propose a national day of thanksgiving to God **(Lecture 5)**
 Washington issues first Thanksgiving Proclamation **(Lecture 5)**
- 1790 ○ May | The Jewish community of Savannah, GA, writes a letter of congratulations to George Washington **(Lecture 6)**
 June | Washington replies to the Jewish community of Savannah, GA **(Lecture 6)**
 August | George Washington visits the Jewish congregation in Newport, RI and receives their letter of congratulations. Washington writes a response **(Lecture 6)**
 December | Manuel Josephson presents George Washington with a letter of congratulations from the Jewish communities of Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and Richmond. Washington writes back **(Lecture 6)**
- 1793 ○ Jonas Phillips refuses to testify in court on the Jewish Sabbath **(Lecture 1)**
- 1797 ○ John Adams becomes President of the United States **(Lecture 7)**
- 1801 ○ Thomas Jefferson becomes President of the United States **(Lecture 7)**
- 1812 ○ Adams & Jefferson reconcile and renew their correspondence **(Lecture 7)**
- 1813 ○ President James Madison appoints Mordecai Manuel Noah as Consul to Tunis **(Lecture 7)**
- 1816 ○ Mordecai Manuel Noah is removed from his position as Consul to Tunis **(Lecture 7)**
- 1818 ○ Mordecai Manuel Noah delivers address at dedication of Shearith Israel's new building and sends a copy of the address to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison **(Lecture 7)**
 Adams & Jefferson reply to Mordecai Manuel Noah **(Lecture 7)**
- 1819 ○ March | Adams writes to Mordecai Manuel Noah, endorsing the idea of Jewish sovereignty in Israel **(Lecture 7)**
- 1825 ○ Mordecai Manuel Noah acquires land in New York to serve as a Jewish colony—Ararat **(Lecture 7)**
- 1826 ○ July 4 | Adams and Jefferson pass away **(Lecture 7)**
- 1834 ○ Uriah Phillips Levy purchases & begins restoring Monticello **(Lectures 1 & 8)**
- 1839 ○ Rachel Phillips Levy passes away and is buried on the grounds of Monticello **(Lectures 1 & 8)**
- 1879 ○ Jefferson Levy buys Monticello **(Lectures 1 & 8)**
- 1923 ○ Jefferson Levy sells Monticello to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation **(Lecture 8)**

PRESENT

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