America's Debt to the Jewish Heritage Pt.1

By Charles Feinberg

[musical introduction]

Thank you, Dr. McCall. Appreciate these good words of our chairman. One always likes to hear a little beforehand the obituary. But we have, for many years, enjoyed fellowship. You will notice that this is the beginning of the morning sessions, and rather than sermons, they are formal, may I say important, every one of them, they are formal papers. Position papers with reference to our wonderful country and biblical truth, Israel in the word of God. I trust you will become acquainted with all these leaders: Dr. McCarcall [sp?], Dr. Douglas McCarcall, dear friend, honored president of Philadelphia College of bible. I trust you'll become acquainted with him. Dr. Earl Rodmocker [sp?] the honored president of western Baptist seminar in Portland, Oregon. Dr. John F Walberg [sp?] the God honored and beloved president of Dallas Theological Seminary, my own alma mater. We had the privilege of being classmates together there. Dr. W A Chriswell [sp?]. Please be sure that you meet all these, and Dr. McCall. And by all means Dr. Daniel Folks [sp?], beloved and honored president of [inaudible].

Now I'm glad Dr. McCall [sp?], this isn't being recorded this is strictly on neutral time. Dr McCall [sp?] indicated this is all going to be recorded not only so it will be in print as well, will it not? So if you will give us your undivided attention, we'll appreciate it. Don't take notes. You'll have it all better than you can take notes. And if you will exceed to that ground rule, I will give up one of the most cherished of all privileges of a professor: and that is the right to give you an
examination. I’m not examining you on any of this material. Is that fair? Alright. The hour is
9:20. I have forty minutes at my disposal. Shall we pray?

Our Father, at the very beginning of this wonderful bicentennial congress, may we know Thy
blessing. May we know of Thine enriching grace, and may blessing go forth not only to all the
world but to our land and not to our land alone but that well beloved people in whose interests
were met that chosen people of God. Abraham's seed natural and spiritual we pray in the savior's
name Amen.

You notice our subject this morning is America's debt to the Jewish heritage. Friends, it's not
uncommon for the uninformed to ask, "What have the Jews ever done for America?" When that
subject is carefully and deliberately searched out, it staggers the imagination as to the magnitude
of the debt that America owes to the Jews. He who cannot be impressed with the recital of this
truth is indeed impervious to both logic and evidence. First of all, it was an indispensable part
which the Jews played in the very discovery of America. It can validly be stated that the history
of the Jews in America starts with the journey of Columbus to America. In Columbus's fleet
there was a Jewish interpreter, Louis Detorres [sp?], a Jewish surgeon, a Jewish physician,
Bernal [sp?]. The Jew Rodrigo de triana [sp?] was the first to catch a glimpse of the new land,
and Louis Detorres [sp?] was the first white man to tread the soil of America called afterwards
San Salvador.
But Jews did more than accompany Columbus on his voyage to the west. They played a leading part in making the voyage possible in several ways. The success of the journey was attributable to Jewish knowledge of navigation and astronomy. That was the work of Abraham Ibanezra [sp?]. The sea quadrant which is commonly credited to someone to whom it does not belong, Rigio Montanas [sp?], but that sea quadrant was invented by the Jew Levi Vangursey [sp?]. The map used every day by the navigator was drawn by a Jew Yahuda Cresces [sp?]. Columbus had strong influential Jewish friends in the royal court of Spain: they were Louis Desantagan [sp?] the chancellor of the royal household, Gabrielle Sanchez the chief treasurer [inaudible] and Ron Cabrero the king's chamberlain. They were able finally to convince King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the importance of the proposed expedition. It was Sant Angel [sp?] who personally lent the court 17,000 Florence to pay for outfitting the three ships. Jews helped to provide Columbus with the tools of navigation as we've already indicated. They were among the best mapmakers and astronomers in both Portugal and Spain. The most famous of them was Abraham Van Samuel Zacuto [sp?] who was attached to the court of Spain. It was his astronomical tables that guided Columbus through the unknown seas. Yet in 1492 a sad comment in 1492 the Spanish monarchs ordered their 300,000 Jewish subjects either to adopt Christianity by force or leave the country, and most chose exile. Within 5 years, Portugal expelled them as well. Neither nation has been a major power in the world since then.

As for settlement in America, Jews were among the very early settlers in south, central, and North America. The first English colony in North America, as you know, was in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607\. The pilgrims came to Massachusetts in 1620\. Thirty years later in 1654, the
first Jewish settlers arrive. They came to New Amsterdam, begun by the Dutch from their settlement in receife [sp?] Brazil, the norther part of Brazil. When Dutch rule of Brazil passed to Portugal and hence the dominant church, Jews immigrated to America for freedom of religion and a better life. In New Amsterdam now known as New York, they led the struggle for the rights of citizenship and freedom of religion. In Rhode Island under Roger Williams, that state was the first colony in North America free from religious persecution. Jews settled there from Holland, Portugal, Poland, Spain, nearby New Amsterdam. Adam Lopez from Portugal settled in New Port, Rhode Island. He became the first chief shipping merchant on the eastern seaboard. At one time he had as many as thirty ships carrying his goods around the world and to the sea coasts and the sea cities of the colonies, the coast cities at home.

At the beginning of our nation 1776, of the four million who lived in the thirteen colonies it's estimated there were about 2500 Jews. The story continues on as I say he who will not heed it is truly impervious to these remarkable historical facts. Jews joined in the movement westward across our land, when large new areas were added to the original thirteen colonies of the United States of America. They aided in the building of towns. They opened trade routes to develop business. Some labored as carpenters, ironworkers. Others were craftsmen, artisans of all kinds. A number entered politics. Writers were able to find successful careers in journalism, writing of plays, poetry. All in all they were among the pioneering Americans who grew with a nation.
On the eve of the American Revolution, one estimate puts the Jewish population of all the colonies at about 1000, we see in other figures 2500. The general population of non-Jews totaled 2 and a half million. The first Jew to die in battle in the war of independence was Francis Salvador, notice how many of these Spanish names, these romance languages come in very heavily because that's where the Jews had settled with prominence. Francis Salvador his early ancestry can be traced back to Portuguese Hebrew believers. He is buried in South Carolina. When the British took Savannah in 1778, they placed Mordechai Sheltal [sp?], a Jew born in Georgia; they placed him on a prison ship. He was the leader of the Revolutionary Committee of Georgia and a member of the Georgia brigade whose duties covered arms and food supply. The British were never successful in getting Sheltal [sp?] to divulge where the Americans kept their supply. He finally escaped to the city of Philadelphia. At the conclusion of the war, this patriot was given a land grant for his outstanding service to America’s war of independence.

Benjamin Nonas [sp?], a Jew born in France, enlisted in the colonial armies of private. He advanced to the rank of major and staff officer. His famous commander, you all know him Gerald Polaski, gave him a citation for, I quote, "the bravery and courage which a military man is expected to show for the liberties of his country," when the government desperately needed money for the war, Jews played a vital role in financing the revolution. Some like Isaac Moses of Philadelphia, Jacob Hearts [sp?], senior of Baltimore, made personal loans to the government. Others supplied uniforms, blankets, rifles, gunpowder; Ship owners turned their ships into raiding vessels to fight the enemy on the high seas. They ran an armed blockade against the British merchandise and sank British ships. The one that did more than any other individual to
obtain urgently needed funds for the government to carry on the war of independence was Jiam Salomon [sp?] an immigrant for Poland. Only recently honored fittingly in the city of Philadelphia with a statue to his memory. Salomon, you spell it s-a-l-o-m-o-n, Salomon landed in New York in 1772 from Poland (my parents are from Poland too I am happy to say). He joined those called the sons of liberty who vigorously promoted the revolution. When the British took New York, he was arrested as a spy, and when he was freed, he aided French and American prisoners of war to escape. He was able to convince Heshen [sp?] Mercenaries to defect from the British forces. When the British were about to arrest him again, Salomon fled to Philadelphia. Though he arrived in this city penniless, as a broker he began to raise money for the revolutionary forces. It's been estimated that Jiam Salomon [sp?] raised, and not in inflation days, 200,000 dollars to help finance the war of the revolution. He became known as the quote, "broker to the office of finance of the united states." Sadly enough when he died at forty four years of age, he left a wife, four children, the oldest only seven years old. His widow went to New York from Philadelphia to be supported by relatives.

But it was certain that Washington, General Washington, would for a time have to leave New York. Rabbi Dershom Mendez [sp?] exhorted his congregation to leave the city of New York with him. He argued that to stay would amount to giving support to the British. As a result of his urging, most of the congregation left with the Rabbi. That occurred in 1776, Rabbi Sisadas [sp?]. It was only in 1783 when the continental army expelled the British from New York that they were able to return to their homes with the rabbi. Article six of the federal constitution in 1787 and the first amendment to the constitution both guarantee freedom religion of religion. It was
only then that they all realized that that was ample payment for the many sacrifices. As an interesting postscript, Rabbi Dershom Mendez [sp?] a trustee from 1787-1850 of King’s College later Columbia University where I attended one summer in 1938, he was a trustee there. He was one of the ministers that took part in President Washington's inauguration.

When the United States went to war with Britain in 1812, again the Jews came to the defense of our country. Benjamin Nonis [sp?] veteran of the revolutionary war fought in the war of 1812 also. The outstanding Jewish officer in the war of 1812 that rose to the highest naval rank of commodore was Uriah Phillips Levy [sp?] who worked unceasingly to outlaw flogging of seamen, an effort that was successful in 1862 when congress outlawed it. Many Jews fought in the anti-slavery movement, notably David, Rabbi David Einhorn [sp?] who had the fleet from Baltimore because of his fiery sermons and during the civil war most Jews of the north and west supported Abraham Lincoln, President Lincoln. Many distinguished themselves in battle. Several of them were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor our country's highest military decoration. In every war of our country, there have been Jewish military men. A son of Jiam Salomon [sp?] and grandsons of Mordechai Shelfall [sp?] as well as several Jewish naval officers fought in the war of 1812. Jews, many of them just newly emigrated from Germany and the German states took part in the fighting of the army of Texas of the Alamo and in the Mexican war. That's my adopted state, Texas where I was married and where all our children were born. That's not historic but it's important to me.
In the Mexican war David Camdleon [sp?] served as physician and soldier, winning the distinction of the fighting doctor. The best known Jewish officer was Uriah Phillips Levy [sp?] we mentioned him at the end of his life he was a commodore, flag officer, highest rank that the American navy had at that time, with some of his funds he bought [inaudible] and repaired the home of his hero Thomas Jefferson at Montecello, Virginia. He and his family requested of our government that that place be designated a national shrine. He gave our government a statue of Jefferson whom he esteemed as a great liberal and fighter for freedom.

As to Jewish influence on law, let's hear president Woodrow Wilson, who in my opinion was the most learned of all our presidents. As to Jewish influence on law president Woodrow Wilson in his treatise on the state wrote, "It would be a mistake to ascribe to roman legal conceptions and undivided sway over the development of law institutions to the Middle Ages. The two ton came under the influence not of Rome only but also of Christianity and through the church that entered into Europe a potent leaven of Judaic thought. the laws of Moses as well as the laws of Rome contributed succession, suggestion, and impulse to the men and institutions which were to prepare the modern world and if we could but have the eyes to see the subtle elements of thought which constitute the gross substance of our present habit both as regards the sweet private and as regards the action of the state. We should and we ought to easily discover how very much besides religion we owe to the Jew. Even in times of expulsion of the Jews of a given country, their legal institutions were left behind and appropriated by their persecutors and their enemies no method has yet been devised whereby theological, philosophical, political and economic concepts can be admitted but legal ideas excluded.
For example the expression that common ancestry of mankind is an anthropological concept. The so called brotherhood of man is posited as the same idea in religious term. The dictum that all men are born equal is a portion of political philosophy that says the same thing and equality before the law is the legal aspect of the same teaching. All of this we owe to Jewish thought. It's long been held that the western world welcome roman law but in many respects they departed from roman precedence in the areas of family law including marriage, divorce, domestic relations, and inheritance even in countries influenced by roman law it’s easier to find a kinship with Judaism than with the civilizations of the roman world. Several attempts in the history of the western civilization to copy the laws of Israel can be easily pointed out: the Alfred's code, Calvin's theocratic state in Switzerland, little previous but it was built on the old testament, England and America, Anglo Saxon laws quote all the books of Moses, the books of kings, job, psalms, proverbs, the apocrypha, the new testament books. It was an American colonial times that the judges of Massachusetts, Connecticut, the new haven colony, west jersey had been changed. Those laws had been changed to inflict penalties according to the law of God. In Pennsylvania, this home state here, at one time the eldest sons inherited a double portion, biblical indeed. The isolation of lepers based on Jewish law was cited in a case in the state of Michigan. Quarantine laws were enacted to prevent the spread of disease as found in the book of Leviticus. the great concern of Jewish law for the stranger, the afflicted, the widow, the orphan, its humanitarian measures concerning the ox that treads the corn and the mother bird, its concern for the labor in the vineyards, the hard man waiting for his reward, the poor dead are all this was impelled as well as aided and covered whom reformers even when their proposed legislation
contained none of the terminology of the bible. Jewish influence can be seen in the general theory of law that developed in Judea in the time of the birth of Christianity. The Jews developed what is known worldwide among legal authorities, philosophers; the Jews developed what’s known as [inaudible], which would be natural law and that of the gentiles. They called it the seven commandments of the descendants of Noah. They held that righteous gentiles who obeyed these commandments would share in the world to come and the rabbis made much of that concept. Specifically there were justice between man and man; prohibition of idolatry sounds a good bit like acts 15 at the council of Jerusalem. Prohibition of blasphemy, of incest, of murder, of theft, and the prohibition of eating parts cut from living animals. The laws in Leviticus against marriage within forbidden degrees known as [inaudible] the laws found their way into secular systems throughout the western world. Now returning to the influence of this law of nature is called we read no other single force had been so potent in the shaping of modern European law as the notion that there was a discoverable law of nature in the universe engrained in God’s created universe. Crotias [sp?] made it the foundation of international law. In the American colonies it’s furnished the bill of rights in the various constitutions. Indeed the appeal of the declaration of independence is the laws of nature and natures God. The principle of law is a means of protecting the individual against the power and tyranny of the state, a recognition of the place of the church in and alongside the state is traceable to the biblical dictum that there is to be no respective persons in judgment whether they are influential or not. As for the area of government, the earliest constitutions of the New England colonies were expressly framed after the model of the mosaic. Here’s some of the words from ministers of those days who were aware of what was going on. Dr. Jonathan Mayhu [sp?]. He’s been called the father of civil and
religious liberty in Massachusetts and in America preached a sermon characterized as the morning gun of the revolution. Later in the city of Boston may 1766 said, I quote him, "God gave Israel a king, an absolute monarchy in his anger. Quoting Hosea I gave [inaudible]. because they had not sense and virtue enough to like a free commonwealth and to have himself for their king where the spirit of the lord is there is liberty, and if any miserable people on the continent or isles of Europe be driven in their extremity to seek a safe retreat from slavery in some far distant climb, oh let them find one in America."

Dr. Samuel Langdon [sp?] president of Harvard College, recognized authority on the science of government and a minister as well, foremost minister said, "The Jewish government according to the original constitution which was divinely established is considered merely in a civil view was a perfect republic and let them who cry up a sponsored advocate the divine right of kings consider that the form of government which had a proper claim to a divine establishment was so far from including the idea of a king that it was a high crime for Israel to ask to be in this respect like other nations and when they were thus gratified it was rather a just punishment for their folly. And the realm of economics it was the Jews who helped significantly in the transition in Europe form a barter in exchange economy to a money economy during the years 1100 ad to 1350. Moreover they were part of the transition from the money economy to a credit economy the present stage of economic development which you all know since you're all living with the rest of us under the celluloid tyrant. Modern credit system and thus a modern capitalism arose from the need of money payments to mercenary soldiers in the war between Charles the fifth and Francis the first ad 1520 on. In the 16th century moronos [sp?] believing Jews from Spain and
Portugal spread throughout the new world, they formed a financial link between Amsterdam especially in the 17th century. A link between Amsterdam, Mexico, Brazil, Lisbon, canary island, Hamburg, and even London; they were active in [inaudible] brokerage, colonial trading sugar and indigo, Cromwell all over Cromwell used their services in England. Jewish communal development owe much to their wandering and disperse family relations. They had branch offices everywhere. they were pioneers in the fields of international finance, historians of commerce trace the beginning of real joint stock trading where shares had a face value endorsed to the bear and could be dealt with as negotiable property. They traced that to the forming of the Dutch east India Company I tell you the Dutch are foremost not only history of our country but in the history of Israel. I love them with a passion. In the first issues in which the Jews, this is the forming of the Dutch east India company. In the first issues in which Jews had a share Jewish finance influenced the beginnings of railways in Europe and America, in our country cool loben company. It was the Jewish Abraham de leon [sp?] who introduced litting country [sp?] That’s the growing of grapes in Georgia. We are all so dr. nonues [sp?] French Jew who largely developed the growth of indigo. In California Jewish firms had much to do with the early development of the country especially with the connection of California with Alaska, and the sea fisheries which had been largely developed by Jewish companies. Copper mining, smelting in America you know owe much to the firms of gugenheim and lewison [sp?]. Jews still predominate in department stores and clothing industries. Now when we consider the spheres of science, thought and culture, the role of the Jews is central. The 12th 13th century Jews in [inaudible] lands were the intermediaries; they were the bridge between the east and west in Greek astronomy, medicine, and especially philosophy, specifically the works of Aristotle. They
were thus the catalytic influence in European thought and culture. It’s admitted that the chief influence on medieval Jews on the civilization of Christendom was their dominant thinkers: men like iben babireal [sp?] and maimonides. Both were quoted by name and with high respect by all the chief scholastics of the 13th century. Alexandrew hales [sp?] who died in 1245, Albertus Magnus, the count of bolsted [sp?] 1193-1280, and Thomas Aquinas 1225 to 1270. The greatest contribution of Jewish philosophy to modern European thought came through Moses Maimonides called by the Jews rombom, the initials of this name. 1135 to 1204 he died in Cairo, buried in the holy land. Now the background to modern scientific ideology is to be found now in the empirical monism of Greece but from the transcendental monotheism of Israel. The concept of absolute cosmic regularity insofar as it has touched general thought is of theological origin. Folks don't realize in the least how much they owe to proper theology. Among eminent Jewish scientists were hardol lewr [sp?] who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry, Albert Nicholson [sp?] who won the Nobel Prize in physics, and probably the greatest of them all and I’m not quoting them all Albert Einstein 1879-1955 the Jewish physicist who developed the theory of relativity for which he was granted the Nobel Prize as early as 1921. You’d remember he was a refugee from Nazi Germany and he had some very remarkable, commendable words to say concerning the church and his stand for God against that demon of an individual by the name of Adolf Hitler.