

Congregation Beth Shalome, Richmond, Virginia

Extracts from the Minute Book

September, 1863 — January, 1864

Beth Shalome was the first Jewish congregation founded in Richmond and in the state of Virginia. Its organizers fought in the American Revolution, but few of their descendants were in Richmond during the War between the States. Virginia Jews, like most other Southern Jewish communities, wholeheartedly supported the new government. An entry in the minute book of the congregation, dated September 6, 1863, indicates that \$1,800 of synagogal funds had been invested in Confederate bonds, "a result which cannot be otherwise than gratifying to the congregation."

Six weeks after this entry was made, the congregation assembled to discuss two items of importance: aid to impoverished residents of Richmond — Gentile refugees for the most part — and the consideration of a reply to slurs made upon the Jews of Richmond. The entries from the minute book referring to both these matters are reprinted here without further comment:

Richmond, Va., October 21st, 1863:5624.

At a special meeting of the *K. K. Beth Shalom* ["Holy Congregation of the House of Peace"] held this evening at the synagogue, Mayo Street, Present:

Jacob A. Levy, president

Lewis Hyman, treasurer

George Jacobs, sec. pro. tem.

E. Goldsmit

Isaac Schriver

Jacob Ezekiel

Jos. Cohn

M.[oses] Moonshine

Julius Krakar

The president stated that he had called the meeting for the purpose of presenting a communication from the *K. K. Beth Ahaba* ["Holy Congregation House of Love"] requesting us to co-operate with them in calling a meeting of the Israelites of the city.

The following communication was read and, upon motion, duly received:

"At a meeting of the congregation, Beth Ahaba, held on Sunday, October 18th, 1863, the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved 1st. That, under existing circumstances, it would be very appropriate that *all* the Israelites of this city hold a mass meeting to take in consideration the condition of the poor, and to find means for alleviating their suffering. Also, to consider such other matters as may be brought before the meeting, to vindicate our character as Jews and good citizens, which has been repeatedly and grossly assailed in public prints, etc.

2nd. That a copy of the above be sent to each of the other Jewish congregation[s] of this city, respectfully inviting them to co-operate with us in the above-mentioned purpose. [There were three synagogues in town: Beth Shalome, Beth Ahaba, and Keneseth Israel.]

3rd. That our president be respectfully requested to call personally on his brother presidents to ascertain if our views meet their approbation, and, if so, to arrange time and place of meeting at as early a day as possible.

Very respectfully,
 (signed) Isaac Hutzler
 Sec. K.K.B.A.”

To
 Mr. J. A. Levy, president,
 etc. etc.

Messrs. Schriver, J. Ezekiel, and Jacobs were appointed to prepare something for the action of the meeting, and after retiring for some time, they reported the following, which, after some debate, were unanimously adopted.

Resolved I. That, as citizens of Richmond, we will join cheerfully in any endeavor to ameliorate the condition of the poor of the city, but think it unadvisable to take any distinct action as a religious body, unless an appeal is made to congregations of all denominations.

Resolved II. That whenever such appeal is made on behalf of the poor, this congregation will co-operate cheerfully with the other Jewish congregations of Richmond in raising contributions from the Israelites of this city for the purpose of carrying out such charitable design.

Resolved III. That while this meeting denounces the unfounded aspersions made against the Israelites of this city, and feel satisfied that the acts of our co-religionists can well bear the test of comparison with those of

any other denomination in this community for patriotism, charity, or freedom from selfishness; yet think the best and most dignified course to be adopted, will be to treat them with silent contempt, confident that the enlightened and unprejudiced do not join in this unjust crusade against our people.

Resolved IV. That a copy of the foregoing resolutions, duly attested, be forwarded to the K.K. "Beth Ahaba."

The meeting then adjourned.

George Jacobs

sec. pro. tem.

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The committee on raising contributions on behalf of the sick and wounded soldiers made the following report which was received.

Richmond, Va., January 31st, 1864.

To the President and Members of the K.K.B.S.:

The committee appointed at the last meeting to raise a subscription from the Israelites on behalf of the sick and wounded soldiers beg leave to report that, in conjunction with the Reverend M. J. Michelbacher, they raised the sum of two thousand and three dollars (\$2,003) which was handed over to Messrs. Swan and Heiskell to be appropriated to the necessary object. The correspondence on the occasion was published in a city paper and has doubtless been seen by most, if not all, of the members of this congregation.

Respectfully submitted,

George Jacobs

On behalf of the committee

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The American Reaction to The Mortara Case: 1858-1859

by BERTRAM WALLACE KORN

Monograph No. 2 of the American Jewish Archives