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American Jewish Personalities

## Samuel Myer Isaacs: The Dutch Rabbi of New York City

*Robert P. Swierenga*

Dutch blood runs thick in the veins of American Jewry. The first Jews to settle in New Amsterdam in the 1650s were from the Netherlands, and a continuing trickle of Dutch Jews followed in the next centuries.<sup>1</sup> During the great period of European migration, 1800–1915, an estimated 10,000 Dutch Jews immigrated to the United States. Most came from the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam, which was the largest in all of Europe, and they settled in New York City, where half of all the Dutch Jews in America lived in 1880.

Just as the Dutch comprised a minor part of the European emigration to America, so Jews made up a small portion of the Dutch emigration. But Dutch Jews were far more likely to emigrate than other Netherlanders.<sup>2</sup> They were a highly mobile, urban people who began emigrating to England and America during the Napoleonic conquest (1795–1813) four decades before the migrations of Orthodox Protestant groups in 1846–1847.

One of the early emigrants was Meyer Samuel Isaacs, a prominent merchant-banker in Leeuwarden, who suffered great financial reverses during the Napoleonic wars because of international trade restrictions and the British naval blockade.<sup>3</sup> The Napoleonic wars, which pitted England against French expansionism, and especially the British Orders-in-Council of 1805, which effectively blockaded the European continent, severely hurt international merchants like the Dutch Jews, who traded largely with London. Meyer Isaacs fell into debt after 1805, and by 1810 he had borrowed 6,300 English pounds from family and friends.<sup>4</sup> After Napoleon formally annexed the Netherlands in 1810 and sent in French occupation forces, Meyer Isaacs and other merchants, already financially strapped and increasingly fearful of the loss of their historic liberties and property, fled to England, leaving behind their property and debts. The Isaacs family

departed in 1814 and settled in Spitalfields, a district of East London that was a Dutch Jewish center.

The Isaacs family were devout Jews, members of the Leeuwarden Synagogue, whose 600 seats made it the largest in the Netherlands outside of the main centers in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague.<sup>5</sup> Meyer Isaacs entered the rabbinate in London, and four of his five sons also became rabbis, including Samuel, who was ten years old when the family moved to London, young enough to learn to speak English without a Dutch accent. This ability later earned him many speaking engagements in America, where sermons and public addresses in English were much preferred to the customary Yiddish or German tongue.

Samuel attended public school, but as an Orthodox Jewish teenager he also studied Hebrew, the Talmud, and Jewish history in the synagogue school and under the tutelage of his father. After completing his education Samuel taught Hebrew for a time at the Jewish Orphanage of London and then in the 1830s became principal of a Jewish day school. This position enabled the young man to become well-connected in the wider Jewish community. He developed a life-long friendship with the famed Anglo-Jewish banker Sir Moses Montefiore, who shared his devotion to Palestine. He also became acquainted with Solomon Hirschell, the chief rabbi of the Great Synagogue of London, and the leading rabbi in the entire British Empire.

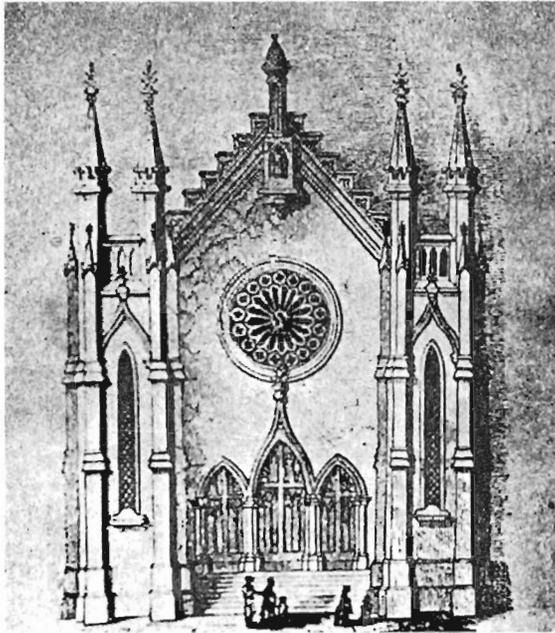
The year 1839 marked a major turning point for the thirty-five-year-old Hebrew educator. He was married in the Great Synagogue by Rabbi Hirschell himself, and shortly before this he had decided to emigrate to America with his bride, in response to a call from the newly founded Ashkenazi (Germanic) congregation Bnai Jeshurun ("Sons of Israel") of New York to be its first preacher and cantor. The congregation, an offshoot of Shearith Israel, was at this time located in the midtown area on Elm Street. The synagogue trustees had offered Isaacs the position without an interview but only after a "scrutinizing vigilance" of his credentials and upon the recommendation of Solomon Cohen, a trusted intermediary in London. Undoubtedly, Isaacs's unique ability to preach in perfect English was a major factor in his appointment. A few days after his wedding, Isaacs and his new wife, Jane Symmons of London, took their "honeymoon" trip

to New York aboard the brig *Emery*, arriving on September 10, 1839, after a lengthy two-month voyage on stormy seas.<sup>6</sup>

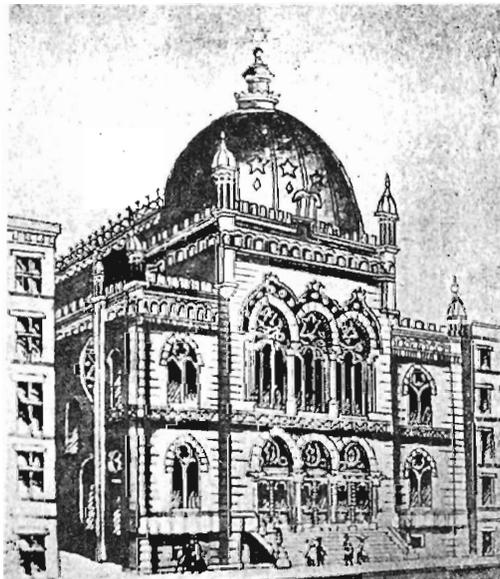
The title given Isaacs at Bnai Jeshurun was chazzan, which signified that he was the chief religious leader, acting as reader (cantor) at the services and conducting weddings and funerals. As chazzan he was recognized by the Gentile community as the "minister" of the congregation. In addition to his other duties, Isaacs also preached on special holidays and every Sabbath service before the New Moon. Regular preaching in the vernacular language, following the model of Protestant ministers, was just entering the synagogue at this time. Isaacs had likely learned the innovative practice of weekly vernacular preaching (as compared with the traditional formal preaching on only two Sabbaths per year) from the London Synagogue, which began English-language preaching in 1817.<sup>7</sup>

Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs ministered at the Elm Street Synagogue for five years, until a schism in 1844 rent the congregation due to ethnic rivalries. He and at least twelve other Dutch Jewish families, together with a number of English families, withdrew from the increasingly German synagogue, and formed a new congregation, Shaaray Tefila ("Gates of Prayer").<sup>8</sup> Such splintering over Old World nationality differences was endemic in America among both Jews and Christians. By 1860 New York had twenty-seven synagogues, and each nationality or subregional group worshipped according to its customary ritual.

Isaacs served Shaaray Tefila for thirty-three years, and his tenure marked the high point of Orthodoxy in New York Judaism. In 1847, when the congregation dedicated its new Wooster Street Synagogue (at 110–112 Wooster Street, between Spring and Prince Streets), Isaacs's friend Rabbi Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia gave the major address. Leeser was the acknowledged leader of American Orthodox Judaism, and Isaacs was his associate and collaborator.<sup>9</sup> Isaacs devoted his pulpit to the defense of pure religion undefiled, calling the faithful to observe the full Mosaic law, the Levitical dietary rules and purification rites, and especially to keep the Sabbath. Honoring the Sabbath was difficult for Jewish retail merchants because Saturday was the major American shopping day, and state and local Sunday-



*The Wooster Street Synagogue*



*The Forty-Fourth Street Synagogue*

closing laws often kept Jewish businesses closed on that day as well, until they won legal exemptions.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, as a second theme, Isaacs sought to uphold Orthodoxy against the new Reform Judaism that German Jews were bringing to America in the 1840s. Among other worship practices, Reform introduced mixed choirs and instrumental music, integrated seating, prayers in English, abolition of head coverings and calling men up to the Torah, and confirmation for young women as well as young men. Reform congregations also were lax in enforcing religious discipline.

Isaacs challenged these new ideas "from the fertile fields of Germany, where everything grows fast, although not always wholesome." What is at issue, he warned, is that Jews are "assimilating our system to that of Christianity. . . . Shame on those Rabbis who have A.D. in their thoughts." In 1840, within a year of his arrival, Isaacs led a movement to exclude nonobservant Jews from membership in Bnai Jeshurun. But the majority favored benign tolerance, and Isaacs could only wield his pen. He lamented:

In the days of yore, violators were . . . publicly stoned to death, . . . but now . . . we court their society, give them the first honors in the Synagogue, [and] call them up to hear that law recited which anathematizes the Sabbath-violator. . . . We behold the hands of sacrilege destroying the ten commandments.

There is no place for a doctrine of "the *minimum* God, the *maximum* man," he thundered. Such strong sentiments led historian Hyman Grinstein to declare that Isaacs was "without doubt the most ardent exponent of Sabbath observance in New York City prior to the Civil War."<sup>11</sup>

In 1833 Isaacs carefully constructed a ritual pool (mikveh), and he regularly admonished the women of his congregation for not washing in it. He even attributed the recent deaths of several young married women in the congregation to God's anger at their direct disregard of the law of purity.<sup>12</sup>

Isaacs's goal was to safeguard the rank and file of American Jewry from Reform.

My object is . . . to prove, from facts, that our system of worship, apart from its *temporalities*, is the best of all systems; and to adduce evidence that adding or diminishing, abrogating, or altering our form of prayers, handed down to us

from the Men of the Great Synod, . . . at the will or caprice of men, who, however well-intentioned, are yet tintured with the spirit of the age and are not capable of judging correctly or dispassionately—that reforms so instituted—will lead to inevitable ruin in our polity, and tend to unfetter the chain by which we have ever been riveted in union and in love.<sup>13</sup>

Clarion calls such as this put Isaacs at the forefront of the defense of Orthodoxy in New York and throughout the country.

Shaaray Tefila prospered under Isaacs. The liturgy, ritual, and physical arrangement of seating all conformed to the requirements of Orthodoxy. But the worship services were tempered by such “Protestantizing” practices as regular vernacular preaching from English-language Jewish Bibles. Also, Isaacs’s expanded role as minister of the congregation was more akin to that of an Episcopal priest than a traditional cantor. The appreciative congregation increased their rabbi’s salary regularly from \$1,200 in 1845 to \$3,500 by the end of his tenure in the 1870s. The congregation also showed their high regard for his services by buying a \$5,000 insurance policy on the life of their leader. In 1851, when Shaaray Tefila gave their “worthy minister” permission to return to England for a three-month visit, his student, Aaron S. Solomon, also a Hollander, served as reader for the congregation.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1860s, the Uptown movement of Jews directly affected the synagogue. Orthodox Jews who lived Uptown would not ride on the Sabbath, so they transferred to nearby synagogues. In the face of declining membership and a growing indebtedness, Shaaray Tefila was forced to relocate Uptown. In 1863 and 1864 the congregation discussed a proposed merger with the mother synagogue, Bnai Jeshurun, which also planned to move Uptown, but in the end Shaaray Tefila decided to build on its own. The spirit of rivalry was too great to overcome.<sup>15</sup> Shaaray Tefila sold its Wooster Street Synagogue in 1864, and after worshipping for five years in a rented building on Broadway at 36th Street, in 1869 the congregation dedicated a newly built \$150,000 synagogue on 44th Street at Sixth Avenue, about two miles to the north, where they worshipped until 1894.<sup>16</sup> Barnett L. Solomon, another Hollander, was president of Shaaray Tefila during this relocation. Because of the “flourishing condition” of the congregation, the chazzan’s workload was so heavy that the trustees in 1865 hired an assistant “to conduct the service according to the ancient

liturgy with the accepted tunes, leaving the duties of Preacher more especially to the veteran of the New York pulpit."<sup>17</sup>

In 1857 Samuel Isaacs carried the fight against Reform to the wider Jewish community by launching a weekly periodical, the *Jewish Messenger*, which he made an effective organ for Orthodoxy. He wrote ringing editorials against Reform and enlisted others, including his eldest son, Myer S. Isaacs, to contribute essays, stories, and poems that nurtured Orthodoxy.<sup>18</sup> The *Messenger* also promoted Jewish charities, day schools, orphan asylums, and the creation of a national board to present a united front for American Jewry.

A few years before his death, Isaacs took yet another bold step to save historic Judaism. To stem the growing secularization among the young, he agreed somewhat reluctantly to support a radical plan proposed by another Orthodox rabbi to prepare a liberalized and simplified Ashkenazic worship rite (*minhag*) acceptable to all American synagogues. The time for nationality synagogues with distinctive rites had passed, Isaacs believed.

Portuguese and German, Polish and Hollander, in connection with the manner of worshipping Israel's God, are names that should, long ere this, have been erased from our nomenclature. . . . The badge we all should have proudly worn is that of "American Jews" . . . signifying that the circumstances which had given origin to marked differences in ritual had ceased to exist, and that the necessity for reconstructing another, perfectly uniform, and more comfortable to our changed condition, had arrived.<sup>19</sup>

In 1875 Isaacs published the revolutionary proposal and warmly endorsed it in his *Jewish Messenger*, but the plan was stillborn, even though it stimulated widespread debate. It pleased neither the ardent Orthodox nor the Reform movement. And Isaacs's declining health and approaching retirement made it impossible for him to carry on the crusade. Apart from a universal worship rite, he opposed any change in law or custom that deviated from the traditional ritual of worship, and he especially opposed any plans to remove Hebrew from the prayer book. Judaism, he insisted, was a religion based on traditional law that could only change slowly with the authority of generations, and it must keep its link to the ancient land of Israel.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to his ministerial and journalistic work, Isaacs promoted the customary Jewish tenets of charity, Palestinian relief, and reli-

gious education. His motto was, "Not to touch the worship, but to improve the worshippers." A colleague aptly characterized him as a "humble Jew to whom the needy turned with confiding looks; with affection." His early editorials in the *Messenger* advocated the founding of Hebrew orphanages by harping on the disgraceful case of a Jewish orphan placed in a Christian institution and converted there, all because no Jewish asylum existed. The Hebrew Benevolent Society of New York was smitten by this charge and established the Hebrew Orphan Asylum in 1859. Subsequently, Isaacs worked assiduously to combine all the Jewish charities in the city by organizing the United Hebrew Charities in 1873. He also helped to establish Mount Sinai Hospital (1852) and served as its first vice-president.<sup>21</sup>

Internationally, Isaacs crusaded for Palestinian relief, and as early as 1849 he began long-term fund-raising efforts. In 1853 he became treasurer of the North American Relief Society for Indigent Jews in Palestine, a position he held for many years. When news came of a massive famine in Palestine in 1853–1854, Isaacs was the "first to take action; the other ministers followed his lead." He mounted the first national campaign in the United States for the relief of Jews overseas. Isaacs's exceptional efforts earned him the accolade of "champion of charitable institutions."<sup>22</sup>

Isaacs also promoted Jewish education, decrying the fact that Jewish children were taught by Gentile teachers in the public schools. In 1842 he converted his congregation's afternoon school into an all-day English and Hebrew school named the New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Institute, with the Dutch-born Henry Goldsmith as teacher of Hebrew. Although the school began strongly with eighty boys and was one of only three in the entire country, it failed within five years because of financial difficulties. Isaacs was not easily discouraged. A few years later he opened a Hebrew high school and taught Hebrew there himself. In 1852 his congregation again founded a day school, the Bnai Jeshurun Educational Institute, which boasted an enrollment of 177 pupils within a year; but it too had to close after three years (1855) because of insufficient students. The Hebrew free school movement was hampered because New York's state legislature had secularized the public schools, eliminating Protestant textbooks and allowing local school boards to choose daily Scripture readings. In

Jewish neighborhoods only Old Testament passages were read. Jewish children began flooding to the public schools thereafter, and all Jewish schools had closed by 1860. Nevertheless, in 1865 Isaacs finally succeeded in establishing the Hebrew Free School in New York, which flourished for many decades.<sup>23</sup>

The Dutch rabbi particularly decried the lack of Hebrew seminaries and colleges to provide educated leaders. "Synagogues are crying aloud for ministers, he said, "and there are none to respond to the call. Jewish children are hungering for religious food . . . and there is none to supply the desideratum; and this in free and happy America! Where are our collegiate establishments? Where our theologian institutes?" In 1867 Isaacs achieved his goal by helping to establish Maimonides College in Philadelphia, the first theological seminary for Jews in the United States. Unfortunately, the college failed after a few years through no fault of Isaacs.<sup>24</sup>

Besides his religious activities, Isaacs also involved himself in "political" issues, especially efforts to defend Jews worldwide against anti-Semitic outbursts and to unify Judaism in America. Only a year after his own immigration, the famous Damascus Affair of 1840 provided the first opportunity. This international crusade, which aimed to rescue a number of Jews imprisoned in Syria, is sometimes considered the beginning of modern Jewish history because it aroused a latent national consciousness and identity. Isaacs and Henry Hart, another Hollander at Bnai Jeshurun, served on a seven-member committee of correspondence to coordinate a petition drive calling on the American government to intervene. Out of this effort, Isaacs joined with Rabbi Isaac Leeser, the conservative leader of Philadelphia, to help unify American Jewry. In 1849 and 1850 Isaacs sent out numerous appeals for an all-Jewish convention or synod to promote the "welfare of Israel" by developing a uniform synagogue government and by establishing Hebrew seminaries and colleges to provide educated leaders for the future. Reform leaders refused to cooperate and the unity movement failed.

At the outset of the Civil War Isaacs made yet another attempt to restore law and order to the disjointed and religiously confused Jewish community. He proposed, in the pages of the *Jewish Messenger*, that the learned and esteemed Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Rice of

Philadelphia be elected chief rabbi of the United States, since American Judaism was a body without a head to guide it. The proposal met with a storm of criticism from independent-minded Jewish leaders, and Isaacs was forced to abandon the plan.<sup>25</sup>

Isaacs also joined the Jewish protest chorus against the papacy in the famous Mortara affair of 1858–1859, which involved the supposed “child stealing” and baptism of a Jewish child by Italian Catholics. Isaacs chaired a combined committee of all twelve synagogues in New York City, which sponsored a mass meeting of 2,000 persons, both Jews and Protestants, to petition President Buchanan to intervene with the Vatican. When this effort proved unsuccessful, because American Jewry was too disorganized, Isaacs in 1859 led in the founding in New York of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites. This body expanded into a national organization of Orthodox congregations that safeguarded Jewish civil and religious rights at home and abroad.<sup>26</sup>

His public activities and unusual facility in the English language gave Isaacs a high visibility. Jews and non-Jews alike held him in great esteem, and Protestant intellectuals and clerics particularly respected him. In 1845 several professors at Yale College and the mayor of New Haven invited him to lecture on the topic: “On the Present Condition and Future Spiritual and Temporal Hopes of Jews.” When Shaaray Tefila dedicated its new Wooster Street Synagogue in 1847, many Protestant clergymen attended and several addressed the congregation.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1850s, Isaacs endeared himself to the Northern public by using the pages of the *Jewish Messenger* to advocate the antislavery movement, even at the expense of losing Southern readers. “We want subscribers,” he editorialized, “for without them we cannot publish a paper, and Judaism needs an organ; but we want much more truth and loyalty.” Isaacs was well acquainted with prominent antislavery leaders, such as Professor Calvin E. Stowe, husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe and a prominent philo-Semite, and in 1856 Isaacs campaigned for the antislavery candidate John C. Fremont. But Isaacs refrained from preaching antislavery sermons, not wanting to bring “politics into the pulpit.” During the Civil War, he strongly defended the Union cause “with or without slavery,” and after President Lin-

coln's assassination he was one of two ministers selected to give prayers at the public memorial services in Union Square.<sup>28</sup>

Although never formally ordained, Isaacs was one of the leading Jewish ministers in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. One of his colleagues called him the "Father of the American Clergy." His funeral service at Temple Shaaray Tefila in 1878 was the largest Jewish funeral of the century. Every synagogue and Jewish organization in the country sent representatives. Isaacs was a religious leader of major influence, a renowned journalist, and a mover and shaker in Jewish affairs. He was the first Jewish cleric to preach regularly in English in Ashkenazic synagogues, and for this reason he was much in demand as a guest speaker.<sup>29</sup> Throughout his long career he was the featured speaker at some forty-seven synagogue dedication ceremonies across the country.<sup>30</sup>

But Isaacs was most honored for his defense of Orthodoxy. Colleagues eulogized him as "a faithful proponent" of Judaism who "lamented the increasing defection amidst our ranks; the prevailing disloyalty to the sinaitic covenant." An eminent Christian clergyman, in a glowing tribute sent to Isaacs's sons, described their father as "a bulwark of strength against the infidelity and godlessness that are growing upon us in this great city. His firm devotion to God's holy word brought him into direct and cordial sympathy with us Christians. . . . May his mantle rest on his children. Your father's death is a public calamity. Who shall fill his place? Our city could better spare millions of its money than one such resolute watchman and soldier in its moral defense."<sup>31</sup>

Ironically, within two years of Isaacs's death, Congregation Shaaray Tefila began going over to Reform, led by the new minister, who not surprisingly described his predecessor as "rigidly, obstinantly orthodox." The conservative Dutch contingent resigned in the face of this revolution, along with their English and Polish compatriots. Most of the German Jews, who tended toward Reform, remained. Thus, the end of Dutch leadership marked a crucial turning point in the history of the Shaaray Tefila congregation.<sup>32</sup> More broadly it signaled the waning influence in American Jewish life of the traditional British-Dutch-Polish amalgam, which had succumbed to the overwhelming numbers of German immigrants.

Reverend Samuel Isaacs, like his Dutch Calvinist counterparts in the Midwest, was a fiery champion of the old ways in religion. He was largely responsible for shaping unorganized New York Jewry into a coherent, articulate, and respectable community. As the first English preacher in Ashkenazic congregations, Isaacs used the pulpit to preserve historic Judaism through strict religious observance, Hebrew education, and community self-help organizations. In the early years he was second only to Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia as the most influential Orthodox rabbi in America. This son of Friesland, whose family fled the oppression of Napoleon, cut a wide swath in American Judaism. He placed pulpit, pen, and podium in the service of Orthodoxy and valiantly fought against the forces of secularism and liberalism that were rotting the roots of the Jewish faith in the rising age of unbelief.

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## Notes

1. The best surveys are David de Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682–1831* (New York, 1952); Hyman G. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (Philadelphia, 1946).

2. The Netherlands ranked tenth among European nations in overseas emigration and seventeenth in the United States among nationality groups. Of an estimated 86,000 Dutch immigrants to the United States between 1800 and 1880, Jews numbered about 6,500, or 7.5 percent. For the period 1880–1920, Dutch immigration totaled 165,000 and Jews comprised 3,500, or 2 percent. Their overall proportion of the Dutch emigration was 4 percent, or twice their percentage of the Dutch population.

3. On the Isaacs family and son Samuel, see E. Yechiel Simon, "Samuel Myer Isaacs: A 19th Century Jewish Minister in New York City" (Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1974); Charles Reznickoff, s.v. "Samuel Myer Isaacs, *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1948), 5:594; Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 340–342. Samuel M. Isaacs was born on January 4, 1804, in Leeuwarden, the capital city of the province of Friesland in the far northern Netherlands. His mother was Rebecca Samuels, daughter of Jacob Symmons of London. Davis and all other Jewish historians erroneously describe Isaacs as an Englishman or English-born.

4. Mortgage documents in Germeentearchief, Leeuwarden: August 31 and November 12, 1807; July 25 and August 11, 1810 (Hypotheek 173/83 and 173/91). One of Isaacs's younger brothers, David Myer Isaacs (1810–1879), was a rabbi in Liverpool and then in London. In 1841 he was the first to preach in English at London's Great Synagogue at a special service honoring Sir Moses Montifiore's return from his Damascus mission. See Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue of London, 1690–1940* (London, 1950), p. 259.

5. On the situation of Jews in Friesland, see H. Beem, *De Joden van Leeuwarden* (Assen, 1974). The Leeuwarden synagogue seated 400 men and 200 women.

6. Israel Goldstein, *A Century of Judaism in New York: B'nai Jeshurun, 1825–1925; New York's Oldest Ashkenazic Congregation* (New York, 1930), pp. 76, 80–81, 92–93. An incomplete but useful genealogical tree of Samuel M. and Jane Isaacs is in Malcolm H. Stern, comp., *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654–1977* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1978), p. 110.

7. Lance J. Sussman, "Isaac Leiser and the Protestantization of American Judaism," *American Jewish Archives* 38 (April 1986): 8–10; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972), s.v. "Preaching," 13:1002–1007. This extensive article does not mention Isaacs or Leiser.

8. Simon Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila: A History of Its Hundred Years, 1845–1945* (New York, 1945), pp. 22–25. This sorry affair was fully documented in the *Occident*, including an exchange of letters containing charges and countercharges, Rabbi Isaacs's statement, and the full text of the New York court's decision. Despite the documentation of the power struggle for control of the congregation, there is no mention of underlying causes, which may have been a case of old-timers against newcomers, natives vs. immigrants, or even nationalistic rivalries. See *Occident* 3 (1845): 255–260, 300–305, 357, 408–415, 478–480. I. Harold Sharfman describes the schism as an English vs. German conflict, *The First Rabbi: Origins of the Conflict Between Orthodoxy and Reform* (Malibu, Calif., 1988), pp. 169–170. Goldstein, *Century of Judaism in New York*, pp. 92–94, refers to "two opposing parties in the Congregation" before 1844, but does not explain the reason for the division. On this point see Jonathan Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 376.

9. Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," pp. 1–21; Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 134–138, 340.
10. Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 134–138, 340; *Occident* 5 (1847): 382–394.
11. *Occident* 4 (1847): 542, 239; Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila*, p. 9; Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 340, 342.
12. Sharfman, *First Rabbi*, pp. 145–146.
13. *Occident* 2 (1844): 284.
14. Isaacs returned from Liverpool on the ship *Africa*, arriving in New York April 10, 1851. See New York Ship Passenger Lists, Series 237, 1851, no. 319, in the National Archives.
15. The spirit of the rivalry is clearly evident in the very frank personal diary entries of 1863 by the young Myer S. Isaacs, eldest son of Rabbi Isaacs, who accuses the "Greene Street people" of "mischievous," "contemptible conduct," and playing a "trick" because of their plan to relocate to the same vicinity on 34th Street where Shaaray Tefila planned to move, and for supposedly blocking attempts by Shaaray Tefila to purchase lots on that street. See "Myer S. Isaacs Diary, 1863 and 1868, New York, N.Y." (typescript copy, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati), vol. 1, 1863, pp. 59–61, 66, 68, 76.
16. The 44th Street Synagogue occupied four building lots covering over 10,000 square feet, with an alley on each side. The architectural style was Byzantine, and the building had seating for 400 on the main floor and 320 in the galleries. *Occident* 26 (1868): 93.
17. *Ibid.*; Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila*, pp. 18–26. In 1850 Samuel Myer Isaacs and his wife Jane lived with their four children at 669 Houston Street between De Paw Place (Thompson Street) and Laurens Street in Ward 15. By 1860 the family, then with five children, had moved into a bigger house at 649 Houston, and by 1870 they had moved to the fashionable district of Uptown, living at 145 West 46th Street near Broadway. In 1869 the Shaaray Tefila congregation also had moved Uptown to the 44th Street Synagogue at Sixth Avenue (Ward 22). In the 1870 census, Samuel reported the value of his home as \$30,000. Simon, "Samuel Myer Isaacs," pp. 7–9; Swierenga, *Dutch Households in U.S. Population Censuses, 1850, 1860, 1870: An Alphabetical Listing by Family Heads*, 3 vols. (Wilmington, DE, 1987), 1:484–485; Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila*, pp. 22–25; Goldstein, *Century of Judaism in New York*, pp. 63–96.
18. Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 216–217, 366–367.
19. Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 162–165.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 165–167, 431–432, 298, 308.
21. *Jewish Messenger*, May 31, 1878; Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 160–161, 436; Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 60–64, 70, 78, 129–130.
22. Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 446–447; *Occident* 10 (1852): 170, 263; 11 (1854): 503–504; 18 (1860): 202–203.
23. *Occident* 1 (1843): 470–473; 23 (1865): 190, 238; Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila*, p. 2; Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 231–234, 244–245; *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1901), 6:635, s.v. "Isaacs, Samuel Myer"; Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 38. The classic article on Jews in the public schools is Lloyd P. Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted: American Jews and Public Schools, 1840–1875," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (Waltham, Mass.: American Jewish Historical Society, 1976), pp. 157–189. Cf. Isaac Leeser, "The Jews of the United States—1848," *American Jewish Archives* 7 (January 1955): 82–84; Alvin Irwin Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966), pp. 22–23.
24. *Occident* 7 (1849): 137–139; Simon, "Samuel Myer Isaacs," pp. 107, 131–132.
25. Sharfman, *First Rabbi*, pp. 687–688.

26. Grinstein, *Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 217, 430-435; *Occident* 17 (1859): 83, 86-87, 193-194, 218-220.
27. *Occident* 3 (1845): 526; 4 (1847): 224; 7 (1849): 614; Bertram Wallace Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), pp. 50-51, 57.
28. *Occident* 3 (1845): 526; 4 (1847): 224; Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 110-111.
29. The key to Isaacs's claim is the word "Ashkenazic." Prior to Isaacs, Sephardic clerics in America preached in English: Gershom Mendes Seixas of Shearith Israel beginning in 1768, Jacob de la Motta in Charleston and Savannah from 1785, and Isaac Leiser of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia beginning in 1830. Leiser was actually the first Jewish minister to preach regular Sabbath sermons in English. See Leon A. Jinks, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1976), pp. 10-11, 60-61; Sharfman, *First Rabbi*, pp. 169, 175-176; Sussman, "Isaac Leiser and the Protestantization of American Judaism." Sharfman erroneously described Isaacs as "the Englishman" (p. 169) and a "native of England" (pp. 170; cf. 622, 624, 654). He likely followed Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, who made the same error (pp. 78, 82, 101).
30. Simon, "Samuel Myer Isaacs," p. 1; Davis, *Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 2. See *Occident* 3 (1845): 361-367; 5 (1847): 225; 6 (1848): 142, 371; 8 (1850): 198, 312, 619; 19 (1861): 190; 21 (1863): 479-480, for reports of some of these appearances at Baltimore, Albany, Elmira, Rochester, New York City, Buffalo, and Chicago.
31. Obit. in *New York World*, May 21, 1878; *Jewish Messenger*, May 31, 1878.
32. Cohen, *Shaaray Tefila*, pp. 28-35; *Jewish Messenger*, May 31, 1878.