

R. Jacob Joseph



A History of the American Rabbinate
Rabbi Philip Moskowitz

Rabbi Dr.
Nathan
Marcus Adler

Chief Rabbi of the
British Empire from
1845-1890



First Attempt

- ◆ The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel) 1809-1879
- ◆ Born in Bologna and was orphaned at the age of 6
- ◆ From 1838-1845 served as the Rabbi of Wreschen
- ◆ In 1859 became the Chief Rabbi of Bucharest, Romania



Was the Malbim a Good Choice?

- ◆ 26 congregations pledged an annual amount of \$2,800
- ◆ But, was he the right guy?
 - He's old
 - He's not accustomed to American Culture



America at that Time

- ◆ Between 1881 -1885 50,000 Jews immigrated to USA from Eastern European Countries.
- ◆ Many Rabbis were concerned about the spiritual state in America
- ◆ In 1887, NYC had a Jewish population of 100-120k families.
- ◆ There were some 130 Orthodox congregations and only 3-4 rabbis.
- ◆ Challenges: Kashrus, Shechita, Education

The Search Begins x2

- ◆ Began in 1887
- ◆ Many Congregations pledged \$2,500
- ◆ Recommendations were asked from leading European Rabbis
- ◆ Qualifications? Scholarship, Piety, and Kashrus
- ◆ Why would anyone come?!

First Choice...and Politics

- ◆ Rabbi Yaakov Halevi Lipschitz, secretary to Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor
- ◆ America vs. Europe?
- ◆ The last man standing...
Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Vilna



Who Was Rabbi Jacob Joseph?

- ◆ 1840 - 1902
- ◆ Communal preacher and religious judge in Vilna
- ◆ Learned in the Yeshiva of Volozhin
- ◆ Was accorded the title "Charif" (keen mind)
- ◆ Was beloved...BUT!!!!



Coming to America

- ◆ Shabbos, July 7, 1888
- ◆ ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם שחלק מחכמתו
ליראיו
- ◆ "...who has imparted of
Your wisdom to those who
revere You "



2 Jews, 3 Opinions

- ◆ Reform Revolt
- ◆ Why is the Rabbi driving such a nice car?
- ◆ The Contract

The Contract

We the representatives of the Congregations united as the Association of the American Hebrew Orthodox Congregations, unanimously decided at a meeting held on Wednesday, the tenth day of the month of Ab [July 18, 1888] to invite as our guide and rabbi the great Gaon and complete sage, the pride of Judaism, world renowned for his keen minded knowledge of the whole Torah, the Honorable Rabbi Jacob Joseph, may the Lord guard him and keep him in life, to serve as Chief Rabbi for the Congregations already united and those which will yet come under our banner; to teach us and to judge us in all matters pertaining to the laws of our holy Torah, to show us the road to follow and the things to do; to his voice shall we give heed, and from his word we shall not depart either to the right or to the left in every matter touching upon our faith. We have obligated ourselves to pay the Chief Rabbi \$3,000 per year,⁷² and also to provide for a fine dwelling place and furnishings which are to cost no less than \$1,000 per year; his will also be the income from weddings, circumcisions, holiday gifts and the like. Excluded as sources of income are divorces, *heksherim* and licensing of *shohatim*, from which it is herewith stipulated that he may not derive any income. These will be under the supervision of the Association as far as their fees are concerned. The Rabbinic Court will have the jurisdiction to arrange the *get* [bill of divorcement] or grant the

heksher, and to license a *shoḥet*, all subject to the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

We have accepted the above obligations subject to the following conditions:

- A. The arrangement of *gittin*⁷³ under the supervision of the Board, and they may only permit the granting of a *get* which does not violate the law of the land.
- B. The Rabbinic Court is to be chosen by a two-third vote of the congregational representatives, and may be chosen only with the approval of the Chief Rabbi.
- C. The Chief Rabbi has the right to dispose of any member of the Rabbinic Court if he so desires.
- D. The Chief Rabbi may not grant a *heksher* to a butcher or wine merchant, until the applicant brings a certificate from the Committee appointed for this task, stating that he is a trustworthy person and may be relied on in matters of *kashrut*.
- E. Any person who officiates at a marriage ceremony for members of the Association must have received authorization to do so from the Chief Rabbi.
- F. The Association obligates itself to pay in equal monthly installments on the basis of \$3,000 per annum salary.⁷⁴

Signed this fourth day of the week, ten days in the month of Ab in the year 5648 [1888], here in New York.⁷⁵

The First Drasha

- ◆ The Beth Hamidrash Hagadol was overflowed beyond capacity
- ◆ Shabbos Nachamu at 4pm
- ◆ 45 minutes long
- ◆ Widely acclaimed

Problems and Pitfalls

- ◆ Kashrus and taxes
- ◆ People were furious: Housewives, Butchers, Rabbis
- ◆ Professor Ketzer Selikovitch, "Karobka"

Dance, Orthodox Chickens;

Make merry, have no fear

For the Rabbi an order has issued

Shiny lead medals you'll wear.

You'll wear them after your slaughter

That the Chief Rabbi may live;

They flay the skin off the worker

A fat scary the Great One to give.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHIEF RABBI

Herewith I make known to all our brethren, the children of Israel, who tremble at the word of the Lord, that inspectors have already been appointed in the poultry slaughter houses to test the knives and to have supervision of everything in their care. From this day forward every bird slaughtered in the abattoir under our supervision will be stamped with a *plumbe* (lead seal). On the *plumbe* will be the words **הרב הכולל ר' יעקב יוסף** (Rab ha-Kolel R. Jacob Joseph) and we make it known to you that if you find any butcher's chicken not so stamped, that it was not killed under our supervision and we cannot guarantee it to be kosher. May those who hearken [to our words] prosper and share in the heavenly blessing. On the third day of the *Sidra Ha-Berakhah*, 5649 [September 18, 1888].

Saith: JACOB JOSEPH, Chief Rabbi of
New York⁹⁷

Other Options

- ◆ Some Some Hungarian and Galician congregations were considering their own Chief Rabbi.
- ◆ Rabbi Joshua Segal, known as the Sherpser Rav, was declared Chief Rabbi by 20 congregations.



The End

- ◆ He became ill and confined to bed.
- ◆ Died in 1902
- ◆ Profiting off of his death



Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph of the United Jewish Congregations, the highest official in the orthodox Jewish religion in the United States, died at 11:45 o'clock last night in his home, at 263 Henry Street. He had been an invalid from paralysis for two years. When his death was announced hundreds of Jewish men and women gathered outside the house to lament their loss.

Rabbi Joseph was sixty-two years old. He had been for fourteen years in this city at the head of the Congregation Beth Hamedrash Hagodal, at 64 Norfolk Street, between Grand and Broome Streets. He became Chief Rabbi, and was the head rabbi of the kosher meat clergymen in the United States. He had a stroke of paralysis eight years ago that partly incapacitated him. He kept on with his work, however. Two years ago he had a relapse, and did not go out again.

He was attended by his son-in-law, Dr. S. Robert Schultz of 52 East Third Street. It was believed last night that his end was near and his family gathered about his bedside. When he died his son and his married daughters were present. They are Mrs. Schultz and Mrs. Anna Brody of 1,787 Madison Avenue.

As soon as the death became known crowds began to gather in front of the house. Nearly a thousand persons were there, and prayers were offered for the rabbi. The fervor of the men and women was striking. Inside the house could be heard loud lamentations over the death.

Rabbi Joseph was born in Wilna, Russia. He took up clerical duties at the age of eighteen years as Chariff in a Wilna synagogue. He came to America later and then settled in New York. He wrote several books, among them being "Beth Jacob," a work on Jewish religion, philosophy, and law. He delivered many lectures during his career. His chief work was expounding the Jewish doctrine, and his oratorical powers were noted. He was a member of many societies and clubs.

The funeral services will probably be conducted to-morrow by Rabbi H. Klein of the Hungarian Society Synagogue, on Norfolk Street, near Henry Street.

DEATH OF CHIEF RABBI JACOB JOSEPH.

Highest Official in Orthodox Jewish Religion in America—Prayers in the Street After Announcement.

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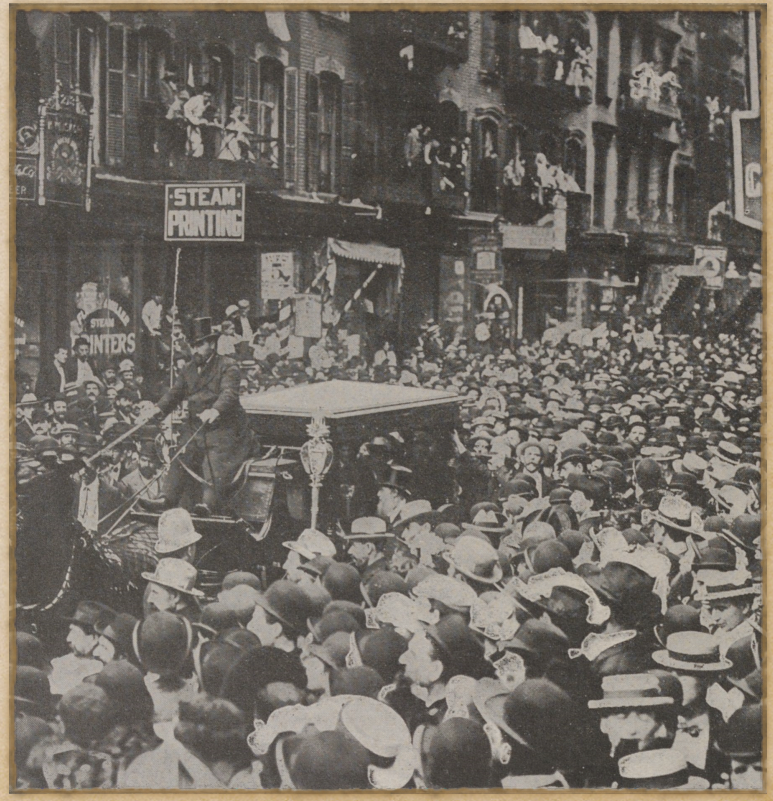
TAMMANY POLICE AND THE PUBLIC



These ruffians attacked the mourners at the funeral of a Rabbi, and left 200 wounded on the field



Here are the ambulances carrying away the unfortunate 200



Heroic Great-Grandson & Namesake

- ◆ 22-year-old USMC Captain Jacob Joseph, z"l, who was killed in action in the Battle of Guadalcanal in the Pacific Theater of War in October of 1942 -- 77 years ago
- ◆ Captain Jacob Joseph Playground, between Henry and Rutgers Streets.



Rabbi Jacob Joseph School

- ◆ Founded in 1903 by his son, Raphael, and Samuel Andron.
- ◆ Originally in the Lower East Side and then to Staten Island
- ◆ The RJJ Journal
- ◆ Notable Alumni: Meir Zlotowitz, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Sheldon Silver, Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Robert Aumann

