

important, by the founder of Reform Judaism, the most important American Jew at the time the original Klan was born.⁵⁵ Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in 1855 was unequivocal about the Jewish role in Freemasonry:

Masonry is a Jewish institution whose history, degrees, charges, passwords and explanations are Jewish from the beginning to the end...⁵⁶

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* the Jews figured deeply in Freemasonry. In fact, "it is probable that Jews were the first to introduce the movement into the country."

The influence of the Jews in South Carolina [in the early 1800s] was shown by the fact that they were intimately connected with the introduction of freemasonry into the state, Emanuel de la Motta, who was educated at Charleston, being one of its leading exponents, while Abraham Alexander, who was honorary reader of the Beth Elohim congregation, was one of those who introduced the Scottish rite into America.⁵⁷

There was also the occasion in 1843 when twelve New York City Jewish retailers, "some of them members of the Masons or Odd fellows," organized the premier Jewish fraternal organization, B'nai B'rith ("Sons of the Covenant"), with its secret passwords, rituals, and insignia.⁵⁸

The "Judaeo-friendly"⁵⁹ Masonic order was the domain of white society's elite and the bastion of power and white supremacy—and strictly Jim Crow. It was even said that Blacks may not enter or visit a white lodge or even discuss Masonic subjects with white men.⁶⁰ In Alexandria, Virginia, "virtually every Jewish adult" that was a member of the syna-

⁵⁵ For Jews in freemasonry see Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), 160-62; Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985*, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1989), 571-73 and passim; and Marilyn Kay Cheatham Goldman, "Jewish Fringes Texas Fabric: Nineteenth-Century Jewish Merchants Living Texas Reality and Myth" (Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M Univ., 2003), chap. 5, which focuses on the "extensive involvement of Jewish men in fraternal organizations such as Odd Fellows and Freemasons." Goldman writes (p. 6), "Not only did Jews join these organizations, but in several instances they were instrumental in bringing these organizations to Texas."

⁵⁶ Norman H. Finkelstein, *American Jewish History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 63.

⁵⁷ "South Carolina," *JEncy*, 11:481. "In 1793 the cornerstone ceremony for the new synagogue in Charleston, South Carolina, was conducted according to the rites of Freemasonry." See "Freemasons," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 7:124. Also, Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe, *We Lived There Too* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 61.

⁵⁸ Rowena Olegario, "'That Mysterious People': Jewish Merchants, Transparency, and Community in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Business History Review* 73, no. 2 (summer 1999): 186; Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 162; Lewis, *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt*, 27. See also Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), 168-69; Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Florida, 1997), 226.

⁵⁹ Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 240.

⁶⁰ Whalen, *Christianity and American Freemasonry*, 16, 29, 135. For claims of racial equality in freemasonry, see *A Treasury of Masonic Thought*, ed. Carl Glick (New York: Crowell, 1953), 157-59.