



Pardes | פָּרְדֵּס
Institute of Jewish Studies

Jews & American Politics

From Outsiders to Insiders

**The Election that Transformed a Jewish
Issue into a National Issue:**

Ulysses S. Grant and the Election of 1868

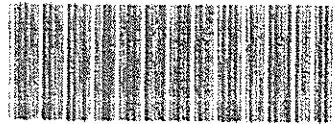
The Sidney and Miriam Brettler Memorial Series 5777

Prof. Jonathan D. Sarna

WWW.PARDES.ORG.II



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 529 780 6

GENERAL

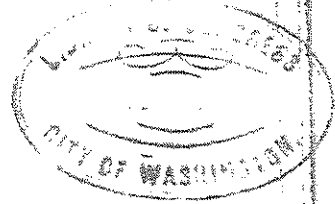
GRANT

AND THE

JEWES.

BY

PH. VAN BORT.



PRICE TEN CENTS.

NATIONAL NEWS COMPANY,
New York.

To GENERAL J. S. GRANT, U. S. A.

GENERAL:

The "New-York World" of the 24th of March, 1863, contains a communication which calls attention to an Army Order of yours therein re-printed, the contents of which are of so extraordinary a character, that nothing short of an emphatic denial of its authenticity on your part might have been expected. You have, however, left it unnoticed, and thus justified the assumption that you acknowledge the authorship of the same. Here it is:

HEADQUARTERS 13TH ARMY CORPS,
DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE,
OXFORD, MISS., December 17, 1862.

General Orders—No. 11.

The JEWS, AS A CLASS, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department Orders, *are hereby expelled from the Department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order by Post Commanders.* They will see that ALL THIS CLASS OF PEOPLE are furnished with passes and required to leave, and *any one* returning after such notification, shall be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permission from these headquarters. No passes will be given THESE PEOPLE to visit these headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade permits.

BY ORDER OF MAJOR-GENERAL GRANT.

If you had returned, General, like so many brave soldiers, after the fatigues of your bloody campaigns, to your home, proud in the possession of your laurels; if, like thousands of your comrades in arms, you had hung up your sword, and the world followed the pursuit of the husbandman, the merchant, or the lawyer, the criticism of your army orders would have been a useless task, for they would have disappeared from publicity along with your person, without leaving a trace behind them.

But fate had reserved for you a different destiny. You became the great instrument in the hands of Providence, which overthrew the rebellion! It was you who conducted that pre-tribal war to a glorious end! You are the hero whom history will know as the man who swept the accursed institution of slavery forever from the free and blessed soil of this continent!

The great result which you obtained for the history, for the civilization of the world at the point of your sword, has made you, next to the President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the armies of this nation for life-time.

You have been successful, you have been fortunate!

It is foreign to our present purpose, to subject the history of your successes to a closer scrutiny. This is not, indeed, the occasion to examine with critical analysis, your merit as a commander, your military capacity, in a word, the means by which you achieved the great result. Whether it actually was your own merit, or, rather that of your Generals, wherever it was the weight of the unhated means which the nation placed at your disposal, or whether it was the heroic bravery of your armies, whose heartombs were sacrificed in your triumphs and exploded mines, which led to the end, may remain unnoticed for the present. In how far, finally, you may have been favored by that accident, which left you at the head of affairs, after Scott, McDowell, McClellan, Halleck, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, Meade, and others had been cast aside, and the nation was weary of change, need not be examined here.

Enough, we have the results. You stand before us, a hero, a giant, in bold relief above the heads of the people: you have been nominated a candidate for election as President of the United States.

Your military genius we can, at present, afford to pass over; the war is, thank God, ended; and we pray that a beneficent Providence may forever avert renewed bloodshed. But you are now standing before us in a new capacity. You have sheathed your sword, and you come before the nation as a statesman; you now aspire to the proud position of Chief Magistrate of a community of thirty odd millions of people. And here your military qualifications, be they never so eminent, cannot exclusively serve you as a recommendation.

If the dignity of a President of the United States is not to dwindle down to a mere name and shadow, if the Constitution, under which the nation has acquired its present greatness, is to be preserved, we require for this exalted station a well-bred statesman; a worthy bearer of its heavy responsibilities; above all, a pure, a noble, a great character.

You will, therefore, no doubt, approve, General, of our desire to enlighten our minds as far as possible, as to your statesmanlike qualifications, a desire which is but natural and legitimate, for citizens who are anxious to exercise their franchise in a conscientious and intelligent manner.

But, unfortunately for this important, this momentous question, there is an almost entire lack of material which might afford us any light for our object. You, General, have deemed it proper against all usage, against all tradition, to wrap yourself in an impenetrable silence, thus leaving your views, your opinions, and your principles involved in utter darkness.

Whether this be simply the custom of the taciturn but energetic warrior, whether it be the cautious proceeding of the shrewd diplomatist, who adheres to the doctrine of using his language only to conceal his thoughts, or whether it be, as your enemies maintain, the stupefaction of an habitual profligate, laboring under a chronic softishness, produced by the fumes of whiskey and tobacco, that, General, is up to the present an unsolved enigma to us.

It becomes, therefore, our imperative duty, all the more carefully to subject your actions, your utterances in unguarded moments, and especially your written documents to a searching examination.

Your proceeding on the occasion of the surrender of the secretaryship of the War Department was to say the least of it, of a very equivocal character. In the differences between the President and yourself consequent upon that event, you have indeed suffered a most signal moral defeat. For in the face of the unanimous written testimony of five cabinet officers, a combined testimony, which gave a flat contradiction to your assertions, nobody can entertain any further doubts as to the veracity of the President. It is said that your demeanor on the occasion of a cabinet council during which you were questioned by the President in reference to your breach of faith in surrendering the War Office to Mr. Stanton, was expressive of so much contrition, that this alone was equivalent to an acknowledgment of your guilt. They say that you stood there, looking wonderfully small, the picture of abashed confusion, in fact like a school-boy who had been caught napping, stammering forth some unintelligible excuses. If this account were true, the conclusion might be drawn from it to your honor, that so far you have acquired no great perfection in the ambiguous game of diplomacy, and that it is not too late for you to withdraw from the field of politics, a field on which you have made an unfortunate debut and on which you are sure to end with a deplorable fiasco.

But these events transpired at a time when your nomination for the Presidency was an acknowledged fact; you had already thrown yourself body and soul into the arms of the radical party; you were winning already under the lash of their fanatical leaders.

Not that in the contemplation of these circumstances any mitigation of your guilt could be found; not because a deeper investigation of them would exonerate you in any way, shall we forego a closer scrutiny on this occasion, but because we have to deal with a document which emanated from your own pen and went forth to the world over your signature on the 17th December, 1862: Your famous army order in regard to the Jews!—a document which furnishes a better guide to your character, to the standard of your education, to your sense of justice, to your humanity, to your understanding of the foundations on which the nation has become great, to your qualification for the Presidential chair, which throws a stronger light finally on the mind and on the heart of the man Grant, than the most intimate study of your life could procure.

For this army order was issued by you, General, at a time when you had as yet no aspirations to a political career. At that period, now nearly six years ago, you, as little as the world, could have anticipated what was in store for you in the future. Long before the battles of Port Donaldson, Vicksburg, in the wilderness and before Richmond, had been fought,—battles in which the fortune of our smelted upon your arms, consequently long before the remotest prospect of your present claims had dawned upon you,—at that time you gave yourself as you were, at that time you were free from all calculating restaurants; the anticipated and coveted votes of your fellow-citizens had not cast their fetters about you.

But for this very reason the above-quoted document of that period may serve us the real expression of your innermost nature, as the true reflexion of your soul; for this reason your General Order No. 11 is so valuable for the study of your character and for the accomplishment of our purpose.

Let us then subject it to a closer examination.

It appears that the regulations of trade established by the orders of the Treasury Department had been violated. It certainly was no less your right, than it became your duty to enforce these orders, and to punish the violators.

Who then were these violators? That of course had to be ascertained in the first instance!

A number of merchants were present with the army for the purpose of trading with the soldiers, whom they supplied with a variety of articles both of necessity and luxury, highly welcome to them. The majority of these merchants were Christians, probably of various denominations, and no doubt Presbyterians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Baptists and whatever other sects there may be, down to the Spiritualists, who are enjoying the free exercise of their religious practices in this country, were represented amongst them.

Naturally also a proportionate number of Jews, who constitute a considerable part of the trading community in America, were among the number of these merchants.

In what manner now any connection can be established between the various creeds of these individuals and the infractions of the orders regarding the mode of trading with the army, must remain an unresolvable riddle to every impartial enquirer.

It would have been a conspicious alike wonderful and in some, if the members of any one of the above named religious confessions, had complained for the purpose of violating the trade regulations? What interest could have united, say for instance the Baptists, to resort to such an unusual mode of action? What, for instance, could have induced the Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, or—Jews, among the merchants, in their guilty as religious communities, to combine as a body against the trading orders of the Treasury Department?

Do these questions you will have to owe us the answer?

But if there exists no imaginable bond which could have united any given religious brotherhood for combined action in the direction of trade, then to single out any one of these brotherhoods at random—no matter of what denomination—from the mass of the traders, and to visit the punishment due to the crimes of individuals amongst their number on the whole community to which they accidentally happen to belong, becomes in the estimation of every healthy intellect an act of unparalleled injustice.

That, General, was the remarkable remedy which you applied for the preservation of the orders of the Treasury Department!

Instead of searching out the guilty individuals, punishing them and preventing a repetition of their crime, you have condemned the innocent *with* the guilty, and you have thus degraded the notion of a Judge into a deed of brutal and vindictive cruelty. The legitimate object of upholding the law and protecting it from violation in the future, you have thus entirely lost sight of; for in the case in question there *must* have been transgressors of the law amongst the unpunished sects quite as well as among the one which you picked out at hazard for punishment.

We venture positively to assert that in the civilized world of the present century no parallel can be found to your procedure.

But in the country to which we are proud to belong, where every citizen holds the great principle that equality before the law is the inalienable right of every man; where, as a consequence of our great war, the full British negro now participates

in this great blessing, for whose sake the law has actually been made to not backwards, in that country your action must alike provoke and disgust every spectator.

We confess that we are at a loss for expressions properly to characterize your conduct in this affair, and we do not know whether to be more astounded at the ignorance, the injustice or the cruelty which manifests itself in your edict of 17th December, 1862. You acted at the dictates of a coarse instinct, of a low nature, protected by the irresponsibility of a military commander, unfettered at that time by any thought of a political career.

We have exposed the glaring injustice of your order only generally. The utter iniquity of the same must be so evident to every impartial and thinking American, who is worthy of this proud name, that it cannot be deemed necessary to enter upon the matter more in detail, than we have done. In fact the document bears its own condemnation on its face.

The victim now of your mediæval thirst for oppression became according to mediæval examples—the Jews!

In searching the whole history of the Jews, we do not find an analogous case to the one before us, later than the year 1241: that is, more than six centuries ago. At that remote period we meet with an occurrence of which we read with astonishment and abhorrence, but which bears a remarkably strong resemblance to the one in hand. King Henry III of England, one of the worst and most cruel Monarchs of that country punished and fined the Jews of London, in the sum of twenty thousand marks or perpetual imprisonment, for a crime which the Jews of Norwich had committed. The chronicle mentions, further, that "the whole reign of this King was but a repetition of acts of the basest exorbitation and trumped up charges against his subjects." In order to further illustrate the barbarous customs of that period, we will simply add, that prisoners of war were then drawn and quartered alive.

To you then, General Grant, it has been reserved to revive those scenes of dark and bloody ages in this our nineteenth century, and that in the United States of America, a country which calls itself the most enlightened in the world, and which is held up to the oppressed nations of the Old World as the asylum of freedom.

The insulting and contemptuous mode of expression contained in your General Orders No. 11 alone, would suffice to characterize the spirit of its author, if even its contents were less barbarous. You say therein:

"The JEWS, AS A CLASS, violating," &c.

Again:

"ALL THIS CLASS OF PEOPLE are furnished," &c.

And again:

"No passes will be given to THESE PEOPLE," &c.

You presume, General Grant, to stigmatize the Jews in America as a CLASS, and to grossly insult them as a total but you did not know, Sir, when you attacked them as a CLASS, you really in your ignorance did not know what you were doing!

For we are obliged to assume that you are ignorant of the history and the traditions of a people, whom you thus undertook to disgrace; we must suppose that you are ignorant of the part they have played in the civilization of the world, of the numerous events which illustrate their greatness and their loyalty—that you are ignorant, in short, of what is known to all the world besides; for without such total ignorance we can hardly imagine that even you would have wantonly done the thing you did!

We regret that the narrow compass of a paper like this does not permit us to enlighten you with the completeness to which the grateful subject invites, and that we must restrict ourselves to giving you a few short quotations from writers whose authority you will possibly respect.

The Rev. H. H. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's, a celebrated Christian Divine, opens the first chapter of his History of the Jews, in the following strong terms:

"The Jews, without reference to their religious beliefs, are among the most remarkable people in the annals of mankind."

Miss Hannah Adams, a lady of Boston, who was active in the conversion of the Hebrews, wrote about them, half a century ago, in her History of the Jews:

"To them we are indebted for the Scriptures of the New as well of the Old Testament, to them were given the prophecy

and power of working miracles; from them were derived an illustrious train of prophets and apostles. To use the language of an inspired writer, "To them pertained the adoption and the glory, the service of God, and the promises; and of them as concerning the flesh Christ came."

Yes, indeed, a truly remarkable people; a people distinguished by an extraordinary singleness and tenacity of purpose, an indomitable strength of character, by a wonderful power of intellect; great alike under all the varied circumstances of prosperity and adversity, which fell to their lot during an existence of over fifty centuries. The first enlighteners and sowers of the first agriculturalists, the pioneers of civilization—for Abraham destroyed the images of idolatry—they became great warriors and conquerors. In peace, they were the great civilizers of the world, a mission which seems almost to have been specially entrusted to them; for their constant wanderings bringing them in contact with all the nations of the globe, both ancient and modern, they absorb and diffuse continually the culture of all, thus promulgating civilization on their track wherever they go. Under adversity, when it came, strong and faithful to their God, no reverses ever dismayed, no oppression ever daunted them. The dawn of the ages that are past, their history is bright with instances of romantic gallantry against their enemies, of their resistance to oppression, of their triumphs over misfortune. Joseph fell into a slavery, in a strange country—he became a ruler in the hand of his captivity. Pharaoh drove the sons of Jacob from their homes and country—and they gave a government and a dynasty to Egypt. Pharaoh reduced them to bondage, but the hand of Israel's God was stretched out, and Egypt mourned in darkness and desolation the wickedness and folly of her King. In the hour of their exodus from the land, when the tumultuous waves of the Red Sea lay in front, and a host of enemies in hot and blood-thirsty pursuit pressed close behind—the waves which threatened to become their graves, receded from their path and stood a wall to guard their deliverance and to engulf their pursuers. Thus Israel was redeemed from Egypt, to continue the mission of the Patriarchs, to play the part in history which Providence had entrusted to his hands, and to begin a grand, marvellous and eventful career as a nation. From that day to this the Jews have continually triumphed over every disaster. From adversity they always extracted greatness; from oppression they ever derived strength. Even the captivity of Babylon which swept them far away, from the smoking ruins of their homes

and their altars into a distant and hostile land, did not discourage and could not destroy them. The Temple was rebuilt, and once more the walls of Jerusalem raised, their embattled towers to the skies. The Roman and Moslem invasions and supremacy drove the Jews thrally from their country, and scattered them broadcast upon the face of the earth, but still they subsist, a numerous and thriving people; and wherever civilization has obtained a foothold, there they are to be found and their influence is to be felt. In the middle ages, devoting themselves to the pursuit of commerce, they became the financiers of the world, and supplied the funds with which the wars of the Crusades were carried on. Growing powerful by their wealth, they were often marked out for the spoil of the government or the people, and then their genius, in order to render torture invisible, produced the wonderful invention of bills of exchange—a device, like the art of printing, become too familiar to be admired. In the science of medicine they have been eminent from very remote ages, and gradually they have grasped every branch of art and science, and distinguished themselves amongst their first votaries. Indeed, it is acknowledged reluctantly by some, but unanimously by all historians, that they have been the chief agents in the civilization of Europe. They have gone amongst all nations, and have ever contributed to the wealth and glory of the people with whom they have dwelt; they have lived in every country, and obeyed the laws under which they lived; they have fought and bled under every flag whenever the country of their adoption called upon them; in England, in Holland, in France, in Germany, and history has never recorded the name of a traitor Jew. Gradually, and as they emerged by dint of their distinguished talents from oppression and a comparative obscurity, their persecutions ceased, and the French revolution of 1790—that event by which all that was antiquated and institutions in the old institutions of Europe, was shattered to the earth—broke their fetters, and, upheld by such men as Mirabeau and Rabaut St. Etienne, they were recognized as free citizens, and obtained equal rights in all civilized communities.

Thus the antiquities which had befallen the Jews since their dispersion ceased to exist, and since then the distinctions which had separated them from countries from other nations, but which were produced rather by their obscurity than by their confessions, had disappeared entirely. Since that time they have gained a wonderful prominence, for they stand foremost at present in every pursuit of life. The first students in every branch of science and literature, the first savants, the first

lawyers, the best financiers, the first merchants, the first artists in every branch have emanated from their ranks. And if in a country where few persons can trace their pedigree beyond their grandfather, antiquity and purity of race is a like consideration, we may, according to the Rev. Mr. Milman, also add they are of the best blood, for he says, in speaking of them in his celebrated work: "They are perhaps the only unmingled race which can boast of high antiquity."

Evans mourned only lately the demise of her Minister of Finance in the person of a Jew; England, great, haughty, powerful as she is, and one of the most enlightened nations of the world, has placed the helm of her government in the hands of a Jew; and a Jewish banker has held for years, and holds at the present moment in his control the wealth of the world, and with it wields the destinies of nations!

So much as to the status of the Jews in the old world and now for America!

We need not dilate in vainglorious self-praise on their record in this country, for unanimous would be the verdict in their favor if the votes of the nation were taken on the question.

Religious, loyal, industrious, thrifty, benevolent, sober, they stand recognized in society; and by the nation, as the models of good and virtuous citizens. Look at your criminal records, and see whether you find any Jews implicated in crime, or, if at all, in what proportion to their number! A Richmond magistrate thus speaks of the Jews, and his testimony may find a place here:

"I was Commonwealth Attorney of the City of Richmond for twenty-one years, and in that long interval, I only prosecuted three Jews, and two of them were most honorably acquitted, there being not a particle of evidence to sustain the charges. During my fourteen years of service as a magistrate, only one Jew was before me for trial, and he was acquitted. In that long period, I do not remember ever having application for public charity from any individual of either sex or any age, belonging to that faith, and so far as I am aware, no Jewish child has ever received the benefits of our free schools, for which their parents without number pay their taxes."—(National Freeman.)

And their record during the war stands equally favorable. You, General, know better than any man, that their names are

bleaching on every battle field; you know that entire companies of Jews marched to the front and stood the brunt of the battle with unshaken bravery; you know that many distinguished officers in both branches of the service were Jews. For their faith did not interfere with their patriotism! They felt as American citizens should feel, and as such they came forward and bravely did their duty!

And as American citizens—if on no other ground—are they entitled to that respect which you have refused them! Your wanton insult does not degrade them in the eyes of the nation, much less in their own; but the disgrace you sought to impose by your iniquitous General Orders No. 11 falls back upon yourself!

For, as American citizens, they now reject your nomination. As American citizens, they tell you that they consider you unfit for the first office of this Government, that you are unworthy of the dignity of a President of the United States!

A perilous time may be in store for this country; great power may have to be entrusted to the hands of a President, and what would become of the nation if a man presided over her destinies who goes back to King Henry III. of England for his model!

And as to your insult to the Jews as a religious brotherhood, to a whole people who have not been outraged for the fault or crime of a few of its members in so shocking a manner since the days of Haman, we have only one word to say to you:

As a CLASS, you have stigmatized and expelled us! As a CLASS, we rise up and vote against you, like one man!

We are numerous, we are influential, we are wealthy, we are diffused over the whole continent, we are as one family; whenever our influence reaches, every Jew—no matter of what political party—every Jew, with the votes he can command, will endeavor to defeat, and with God's blessing, will defeat you!

With this assurance, in the name of all American Jews, I have the honor to sign myself, General,

Yours, obediently,

New York, June, 1868.

A. JEW

E 184
.J5 B7
Copy 1