

**JACOB HENRY SCHIFF:  
A BIOGRAPHICAL  
SKETCH, PP. 3- 68**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649334735

Jacob Henry Schiff: A Biographical Sketch, pp. 3- 68 by Cyrus Adler

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**CYRUS ADLER**

**JACOB HENRY SCHIFF:  
A BIOGRAPHICAL  
SKETCH, PP. 3- 68**





JACOB H. SCHIFF

JANUARY 10, 1847—SEPTEMBER 25, 1920

# JACOB HENRY SCHIFF

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

CYRUS ADLER

New York  
The American Jewish Committee  
1921

Amer. Jew. Com.  
7933  
Libra.  
11-1-1922  
gen.

Copyright by  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE  
1921

---

*Reprinted, with minor changes, from the American Jewish Year Book, Volume 23*

## JACOB HENRY SCHIFF

### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

#### I

JACOB H. SCHIFF was known in all parts of the American continent, in every country of Europe, in Palestine, in Japan, in fact throughout the civilized world. Vaguely he was considered as the combination of a great financier and a great philanthropist, but in neither capacity had the extent of his deeds been brought home to any considerable proportion of the vast numbers to whom his name was familiar.

What manner of man was this who, of no ruling family or exalted official station, so impressed himself upon the imagination of people in many climes and in all conditions of life? To answer this question is well nigh impossible in a brief sketch. And yet the attempt should be made, for mankind is enriched by the story of great personalities, and future generations are stimulated to high deeds by the knowledge of the acts of those who have gone before. The public, too, has a right to know of the lives of those whom it has followed and admired, so that it may be

410051



ennobled by the consciousness of the "merits of the fathers."

Jacob H. Schiff was born at Frankfort-on-the-Main on January 10, 1847, and died in New York on September 25, 1920. He was descended of a family known to have been settled in Frankfort since 1370. The pedigree carefully worked out in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* presents the longest continuous record of any Jewish family now in existence. The earliest Schiff, named Jacob Kohen Zedek, was dayyan (ecclesiastical judge) of the Frankfort community in the fourteenth century. Another, Meir Kohen Zedek Schiff, was parnas (president) of the community in 1626. Among those who followed were business men and a number of Rabbis. Of the latter several were men of distinction, notably Meir ben Jacob Schiff, called *Maharam Schiff* (1608-1644). He was a prolific author, composing commentaries on the entire Talmud, some of which were published in 1737. Another member of the family who gained eminence in the Rabbinate was David (Tebele) Schiff, who became chief rabbi of England in 1765 and died in London in 1792. He was a preacher of great power and also a man of native ability, as is

shown by his correspondence recently published by Doctor Charles Duschinsky in his work *The Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue*.

It is impossible and indeed inappropriate even to endeavor to give here an outline of the history of this distinguished family. The few facts mentioned are intended to indicate that for over six hundred years there can be traced an unbroken line of rabbis, scholars, men of affairs, and communal leaders, all of whose qualities went to make up the background of the very remarkable man who is the subject of this sketch and in whose single person nearly all the traits of this long line of ancestors were blended—some appearing in greater proportion than others, but all nevertheless present.

His immediate forbears were Moses Schiff and Clara Niederhofheim. The father, a man of high sense of duty, exact and stern, was rigorously devoted to religious observances, and demanded a similar devotion on the part of his children; the mother was a woman of sweet and conciliatory nature. The distinctive traits of both of these personalities were found in the son, for Mr. Schiff set before himself a life of exacting duty, whilst toward

others he showed great kindness and consideration.

His education, both secular and religious, was thorough for a layman. In the course of time, by wide reading and contact with men, he acquired a broad, general cultivation. He had a good knowledge of the Hebrew language, and could freely quote the Bible in the sacred tongue. He read some favorite commentaries, and kept himself abreast of the developments in biblical studies. His exactness in method and his knowledge of, and interest in, Jewish learning undoubtedly went back to the excellent if severe training of his boyhood days.

In 1865 he left Frankfort ostensibly for England, but he had already determined upon America as his future home. As the voyage across the Atlantic was in those days still a fearsome enterprise, he stopped in England long enough to write a series of letters to his mother which were left in the hands of a friend to be mailed at regular intervals, so that the mother should be spared the anxiety of his passage across the ocean until a letter would have been received from New York announcing his arrival there.