

THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Financing Freedom

When we think of heroes of the American Revolution, familiar names come to mind—George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette, and the Comte de Rochambeau, among others. Far less well known is Haym Salomon, a Polish-born Jewish immigrant whose financial support, personal loans, and tireless fundraising efforts quietly sustained the American cause at a time when the nation was bankrupt and resources were desperately scarce.

As a broker and financier in Philadelphia, Salomon became a critical financial lifeline for a young nation that lacked credit, currency, and international standing. When the Continental Congress could no longer pay soldiers or secure supplies, Salomon advanced personal funds, arranged short-term loans, and helped convert French support into money that could actually be used to pay troops and purchase supplies, allowing military operations to continue when insolvency threatened the cause.

His contributions reveal an often-overlooked truth about the Revolution: independence required financial endurance. Battles could be won, but without money to provision troops, maintain alliances, and sustain public confidence, victory could not be preserved. Salomon helped keep the machinery of revolution moving forward. Yorktown marked the war's decisive military conclusion, but the foundation for that victory had been laid years earlier through quiet financial resolve rather than battlefield triumph.

The story of Haym Salomon broadens our understanding of what it means to give—and why some forms of giving can be overlooked. An immigrant, a Jew, and a financier rather than a soldier, Salomon did not fit the familiar image of Revolutionary heroism. His contributions left no battlefield victories or monuments, only a nation that endured when it could not stand on idealism alone. His legacy reminds us that generosity often operates quietly, measured not by recognition but by impact.

What Salomon understood, perhaps better than many of his contemporaries, was that institu-

tions do not sustain themselves. Nations, professions, and systems of education endure only when individuals choose to invest in something larger than their own immediate return. As orthodontists, the protections we rely on today—licensure requirements, professional oversight, and the laws that safeguard our patients and practices—exist only because they are actively supported, defended, and maintained.

In my current role as the Southern Society of Orthodontists (formerly Southern Association of Orthodontists) director to the AAO Foundation (AAOF), I have seen firsthand how sustained support strengthens our specialty. The AAOF has long funded orthodontic research and, more recently, has expanded its impact through the For the Future Campaign, championed by Richard Williams, which provides critical financial support for full-time orthodontic faculty. At the next meeting, stop by the booth, say hello, and, if you are able, consider supporting the Foundation.

I get it—we already ask a lot of you: to be AAO members, to pursue board certification, to give back to your residencies and AAO components, and, of course, to subscribe to this journal. If financial contributions are not the right fit, remember that time, expertise, teaching, and volunteer service carry equal weight. Like Salomon, the call is simply to use whatever resources are available. I am reminded of Isaiah's response in the Old Testament, when the Lord asked, "Who will go for us?" His answer: "Here am I. Send me."

Salomon never commanded troops or signed declarations, yet his support sustained a fragile nation when it mattered most. He gave because the cause itself was worth supporting. Orthodontics need that same spirit. Progress often depends on individuals willing to give more than they receive, supporting institutions that extend beyond their own practices or careers. These contributions are often invisible, but they shape the future of our specialty. In that sense, generosity is not just professionalism. It is patriotism. NDK