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LEADING FIGURES IN JEWISH HISTORY

Editor: ISIDORE FISHMAN, M.A., PH.D.
Director of Education,
London Board of Jewish Religious Education

LEOPOLD ZUNZ
HIS LIFE AND TIMES

by

RABBI Dr. H. J. ZIMMELS

Jewish Religious Educational Publications,
Woburn House, Upper Woburn Place, W.C.1.



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Introduction

One of the outstanding Jewish literary developments of the nineteenth century is closely connected with the name of Yom Tob Lippmann Zunz more familiarly known as Leopold Zunz. This was the employment of a new method in Jewish scholarship. Hitherto Jewish scholarship had been almost entirely one-sided. The study of the Talmud, for instance, was with few exceptions limited to the knowledge of its contents to the complete neglect of its sociological background and historical growth. The age of Enlightenment introduced by Mendelssohn in the 18th century did not bring any real improvement in this respect as the Haskalah movement had an entirely different aim, to make the Jews acquainted with general culture. Lack of comprehension of the historical development of the Jewish people and its literature remained therefore as strongly marked as before. The method introduced by Zunz, however, completely revolutionized Jewish learning, to such an extent as to make it possible to speak of "Modern Jewish Scholarship." A record of the life and work of such a man cannot fail to be of interest.

Birth, Childhood and Youth

Yom Tob Lippmann (Leopold) Zunz was born at Detmold, the capital of the principality of Lippe in Germany on the 10th August, 1794. His surname is derived from a place called Zons on the Rhine. Some distinguished members of his family, who can be traced back for 300 years, lived in Frankfort on the Main, where Yom Tob's father also spent his youth as a student at the Talmudical college. When Yom Tob was a year old his parents moved to Hamburg where his father earned a precarious livelihood as a teacher at the Beth Ha-Midrash. It was he who gave the first training to Yom Tob by teaching him Bible, Hebrew grammar and composition. A pulmonary disease soon compelled him to give up teaching, and he became a merchant. His illness, however, continued, and he died of it after a short time in 1802.

At the Samson Free School

After his father's death Yom Tob was sent to the Free School at Wolfenbüttel which had been founded by the philanthropic family Samson (hence its name "Samson'sche Freischule"). It was a home with a Beth Ha-Midrash attached, and Zunz attended the latter which differed little from a *heder*, since no other subject was taught but Bible and Talmud. Before long, however, conditions at this school changed for the better. In the year 1807 its whole system of education was reorganized under the direction of Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg, one of the enlightened *Measefim* (writers in the periodical *Measef*). He introduced secular studies into the curriculum and improved methods of teaching so that, when Zunz left the school in the year 1809, he had a firm grounding in Bible, Talmud and the Hebrew language.

His Further Training

From the year 1809 until 1815, Zunz attended the Gymnasium at Wolfenbüttel, and prepared himself for the University. At the same time he taught at the Samson Free School in which he had previously been a pupil. In the year 1815 he left Wolfenbüttel for Berlin to take up his studies at the University. History, philology and mathematics were his main subjects, and he earned his livelihood by giving private instruction.

It was at the University that Zunz became inspired with the idea which was to lead to the opening of a new era of Jewish scholarship and to establish his fame for ever—this was the "Science of Judaism" (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*).

Founder of the "Science of Judaism"

What is the "Science of Judaism"? What is its method? Critical approach to the subject, deep

penetration, systematization, impartiality, comparison with cognate subjects and investigation of the relations between them—these are the methods and the processes required by the “ Science of Judaism.”

Strictly speaking this approach was not quite new. When reviewing the vast literature of our people one can see that now and then scientific methods were used. The systematization of Jewish law carried out by Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah*, the excursions of Abraham ibn Ezra into the field of comparative philology, the critical investigations of the Tosafists (France, 12th and 13th centuries) and of R. Solomon Luria (Poland, 16th century), and the researches by Azaryah dei Rossi (Italy, 16th century) in his *Meor Enayim* show us clearly that the scientific approach to various branches of Jewish literature was not unknown to Jewish scholars prior to Zunz. It must, however, be borne in mind that this method was applied to certain subjects only, or was somewhat inconsistently used (e.g. Ibn Ezra makes concessions to astrology in spite of his critical sense). Furthermore, the employment of that method was limited to a few scholars who found no followers. Quite different was the position, as we shall see, in the first quarter of the 19th century.

In the year 1818 Zunz published “ Notes on the Rabbinic Literature ” (*Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur*). The publication of this work was a landmark not only in the life of its author, but in Jewish literature in general. It gives the basis of a new approach to Judaism and its literature. The author enumerates all the departments of Jewish lore; he starts with theology, from which he passes on to jurisprudence and ethics, and discusses science, geography, mathematics, astronomy, technology, typography, palaeography, archaeology, linguistics, poetry, grammar, lexicography and Hebrew literature. He shows on the one hand the contributions made by the Jews to all branches of literature, and on the other hand the great ignorance prevailing among the non-Jewish scholars who wrote on them. He pleads that the study

of Jewish literature should occupy a dignified place at the Universities. Zunz calculated that such an approach to Judaism would serve two purposes. An acquaintance with the vast intellectual treasures of Jewish lore would raise the esteem of Judaism in the eyes of both Jews and non-Jews. To the Jews it would form a safeguard against the tendency to desert their ancestral faith so common in those days. Among non-Jews it would dispel the prevalent assumption of the inferiority of the Jewish people and help to justify its claim for emancipation.

Comparing the method of Zunz with that of Moses Mendelssohn half a century before, we can notice a great difference of outlook. While Mendelssohn by enlightening the *Jews* attempted to make them worthy of emancipation, Zunz wished also, by instructing the *non-Jews*, to convince them that their refusal to grant the Jews equality of rights was based upon prejudice and ignorance.

This book of Zunz may be regarded as his programme of the new approach to Jewish literature. In the following year, 1819, Zunz with two other scholars founded the "Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews" (1819-1824) the aim of which was to promote culture and scientific research among the Jews. A few years later he became the editor of a "Periodical for the Science of Judaism" for the publication of lectures held in the Society. In the year 1822 the first volume of that periodical appeared with three contributions by Zunz. One of them was on Solomon ben Isaac, called "Rashi." It was the first time that a biography of a Jewish scholar had been scientifically presented. The author gives a complete table of Rashi's genealogy, he tells us of the schools founded by Rashi's disciples and of his commentaries, he introduces us to Rashi's library showing us the books which were at the disposal of this great master and gives a critical review of them.

Setback and Frustration

Although Zunz worked with great zeal for the realization of his ideas, his expectations were not at first fulfilled. His co-operators had been brought up in the spirit of "enlightenment" and assimilation, lacking religious background. Their main object was to achieve a synthesis of Judaism with European culture. But they soon realized that theory and practice were two different things, and that a harmony between Judaism and its non-Jewish environment could hardly be attained. The "Society" was soon dissolved, and the issue of the Periodical suspended. The "Science of Judaism" languished and seemed to be a complete failure. Nevertheless, Zunz remained unshaken in his belief in the new method of studying Jewish literature scientifically. In those days he exclaimed: "What will emerge from this *mabbul* (deluge) is the 'Science of Judaism' since it is alive even though no hand has been raised on its behalf for centuries. I confess that after my submission to the judgment of God, occupation with this Science is my comfort and my support."

Triumph of the "Science of Judaism"

While the "Science of Judaism" did not meet with any response in Germany the idea took root in other countries. In Galicia, Nahman Krochmal (1785-1840) and Solomon Judah Löb Rapoport (1790-1867), who had already worked on similar lines, and in Italy Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865) were its main supporters. Nahman Krochmal, "The Mendelssohn of Galicia" as he was called by Zunz, lectured to young people and wrote essays on the evolution of Jewish history and on other Jewish questions. His essays remained unpublished during his lifetime, but in his will he entrusted Zunz with the editorship. Zunz complied with his request and published them under the title of "*Moreh Nebuche Ha-Zeman*" (The Guide for the Perplexed of the Time).

Solomon Judah Löb Rapoport, a profound talmudical scholar, showed how the scientific method could be employed for making use of the Talmud and the Rabbinic literature as sources of the history of our people. Of his publications, mention should be made of a series of biographies of Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages (e.g., Saadia Gaon, Hai Gaon, R. Nathan, author of the talmudical dictionary "The Aruch," Eleazar Ha-Kalir, R. Hananel, R. Nissim) and of his encyclopaedic dictionary of Judaism (of which only one volume appeared, dealing with the Talmudic period). All were masterly works and were used by Zunz in his researches. Samuel David Luzzatto, the fourth of the founders of Jewish science, was active mostly in the field of Hebrew philology. Unlike his colleagues, Luzzatto lived in a country which possessed many libraries rich in their collections of Hebrew manuscripts. He was thus able to provide his friends with information about manuscripts and rare editions of books. The founder of the "Science of Judaism" became a pioneer of research in the particular field of Jewish literature and liturgy.

It might be of interest to mention that in the Middle Ages the foundation of famous schools was also ascribed to groups of *four* men. Thus the medical school at Salerno was said to have been established by an Italian, a Jew, a Greek and a Saracen. Similarly, the transfer of Jewish learning from Babylonia to Africa and Europe in the 10th century was said to have been accomplished by four Babylonian Rabbis. Returning home from Italy, where they had collected money for the Academies, they were taken captives and sold separately in various countries where, after being redeemed, they founded Rabbinical schools. While these reports bear a legendary character, the foundation of modern Jewish learning by four men is, as we have seen, a historical fact.

Thus four men of different countries served one idea, the idea of modern Jewish scholarship, by bringing system into the vast field of the spiritual activity of the Jewish people and revealing to the world the great treasures hidden in it.

Preacher

Zunz commenced his career as a preacher. In the year 1820 he was appointed to the office in the New Synagogue in Berlin. His tenure of it was, however, of short duration. His endeavours to check the ignorance prevailing in his congregation owing to their indifference led to arguments between the young preacher and the Synagogue leaders, and after two years Zunz decided to resign from the post.

The sermons which he delivered there were published by him and they testify to his great learning, eloquence and elegance of style.

During those years two important events occurred in the life of Zunz. Although he had concluded his studies in Berlin in the year 1819 it was not until 1821 that he received his Diploma of Ph.D. in Halle, and a year later he married Adelheid Beermann, who proved to be his worthy companion in good and evil days.

Journalist and Teacher

The next official position Zunz held after he had relinquished his post as a preacher in Berlin was that of sub-editor of the *Haude und Spener'sche Zeitung* in 1823. It was one of Zunz's most striking characteristics that though occupied with the past history and literature of his people, he was also interested in current problems, so much so, that later he took an active part in general politics. It should be borne in mind that in those days without telephone and telegraph the position of an editor of a paper was quite

different from that in our times. Zunz had to peruse many foreign newspapers daily to gather information for his readers. In spite of his strenuous labours his earnings as a journalist were insufficient and he had to augment his income by giving private tuition.

Thanks to his appointment as director of the newly founded Jewish Communal School in the year 1826 his financial position improved. He was never, however, able to hold any position for long. In the year 1830, i.e., after four years' service at the school, he gave up this post because the changes he desired to introduce were opposed by the authorities. A year later he withdrew from the *Spener'sche Zeitung* owing to some political differences.

Years of Hardship and Disappointment

The years which followed were full of hardship and disappointment. His application for the Rabbinate in Darmstadt in the year 1833 was unsuccessful in spite of warm recommendations. This failure embittered Zunz so much that he refused to apply for the vacant Rabbinate in Cassel. When, however, two years later (1835) he received a call from the Community in Prague to become their preacher, he accepted. His stay in Prague was but of short duration because the people there did not appreciate him and his work sufficiently, and in addition, he greatly missed his "Science" and his literary friends, his books and periodicals. He therefore left Prague, to the great regret of his congregation.

Throughout his struggle, which was courageously shared by his wife, Zunz had the one satisfaction, that he could devote himself to the conception to which he had dedicated his life. It was not long before the "Science of Judaism" started its triumphal progress and its founder made the most valuable contributions to Jewish learning.

Defender of Judaism

Zunz was able to place the "Science of Judaism" at the service of his people by using his scientific method to repulse the attacks made on them. His activity in this respect can be divided into the following three branches:—

(1) *Defence of the Talmud.* Accusations against the Talmud date from the Middle Ages; they were brought for the first time at the public disputation in Paris in the year 1240 which ended with the burning of the Talmud. From then onwards whenever the opponents of Judaism wished to rouse enmity against the Jewish people they directed their attacks on the Talmud. All these attacks in whatever country and in whatever age they were made, have one thing in common; they are based upon false interpretations of Talmudical passages torn from their context.

In the year 1830 the Abbé Chiarini, professor at the University in Warsaw, published a book entitled "Theory of Judaism" which contained grave accusations against the Talmud. Zunz then wrote a pamphlet with the title "Elucidation of the Theory of Judaism by the Abbé Chiarini" in which he accuses him openly of plagiarism and ignorance.

(2) *Defence of the Jews in Germany.* The end of the 18th and the first decades of the 19th centuries belong to the most stirring times in the history of Europe. They witnessed the rise of Napoleon, his victorious campaigns, his conquest of many lands, his creation of new sovereign states and other political changes wrought by him, but they witnessed also his downfall, the "Battle of Leipzig," the "Congress in Vienna" and, finally, his complete defeat. The history of the Jews in Germany was closely connected with each of these phases of general history, and their political position underwent many vicissitudes. The German states granted the Jews more or less equality of rights, either because of their occupation by Napoleon's armies or for other political considerations.

But, during the reaction which ensued, attempts were made to annul these grants. Thus the Edict of Emancipation which was proclaimed in Prussia in the year 1812 by King Frederick William the Third was during the reaction following the "Wars of Liberation" (1813-15) cancelled by him. The same king imposed on the Jews a new restriction by prohibiting them to preach in German. Thereupon Zunz wrote his "Liturgical Addresses of the Jews Historically Elucidated" (*Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt*) (Berlin, 1832). By his vast Rabbinical knowledge coupled with his scientific method of presentation, Zunz showed that preaching always formed part of the divine service of the Jews and that the sermon was usually in the vernacular of the people. In view of this, preaching in German could not be called an innovation; on the contrary, it was a continuation of a long tradition. Therefore no reason whatsoever existed to prohibit the Jews from making use of an ancient practice.

A few years later Zunz had another opportunity of employing his "Science" on behalf of his brethren. In the year 1836 a royal decree forbade the Jews, who were regarded as foreigners, to assume German Christian names. The Jews of Berlin felt this discrimination most acutely, and appealed to Zunz for assistance. In response he published a booklet entitled "Names of the Jews," in which he dealt with the history of names of men and women in all countries throughout all the ages and showed that the Jews used to bear Greek, Roman, Arab, Spanish, Gallic, German and other foreign names. This work caused a great sensation and was hailed by both Jews and non-Jews (e.g., Alexander von Humboldt). The Government was forced to revoke the decree in part. For Zunz, personally, the work was at the same time a financial success. Apart from a monetary gift he received from the Jewish Community, he was later also appointed director of the Teachers' Seminary.

Another work of his was directed against the oath "according to the Jewish manner." There existed a custom in Christian Europe dating from the Middle Ages according to which Jews when taking the oath at a Christian court were compelled to do so under humiliating ceremonies, known as "more Judaico" (according to the Jewish manner). Although this custom was abolished in many European countries in the first half of the 19th century, Prussia retained it until the year 1869. Against this cruel custom Zunz protested in a pamphlet "Directions regarding the taking of an oath by the Jews" (*Die Vorschriften über Eidesleistung der Juden*) (1859). Ten years had to elapse, however, before the Government abolished it.

(3) *The Damascus Affair*. In the year 1840 a great stir was caused in the Jewish world by a tragic event known as the "Damascus Affair." On the 5th February of that year, a certain Father Thomas disappeared in Damascus, and the Jews were subsequently accused of having murdered him for ritual purposes. Several of the leading members of the Jewish Community were arrested and tortured, some of them died, others were condemned to death. Through the intervention of the lawyer Isaac Cremieux and the orientalist Solomon Munk, both of France, and Moses Montefiore of England, the charge was dropped and the absurdity of the blood-libel proclaimed. Zunz also tried to intervene in that affair by writing an article in the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung* entitled "Damascus, a Word of Defence" (*Damaskus, ein Wort zur Abwehr*), in which he showed the absurdity of the blood-accusation and of other accusations brought against the Jews throughout the ages. The article also appeared separately, and a copy of it was sent to Rothschild in Paris with the request to have it translated for the French public.

Translator

(1) *Translation of the Bible.* Zunz was not only interested in promoting the scientific method of study among scholars, but he also aimed at spreading culture and knowledge among the laity. To achieve this he translated the Bible into German, and thus made the people, especially women and children, better acquainted with the Holy Scriptures.

Zunz, of course, was not the first Jew in Germany to translate the Bible. Long before him such translations had been made, but they were of quite a different character. In the period prior to Mendelssohn (1729-86) translations of the Bible had been made into Judaeo-German (*Yiddish*). Such translations were generally termed "Teutsch-Hummash," and some of them were embellished with legends and moral teachings, and were specially designed to be read by women on the Sabbath. In the year 1783 Moses Mendelssohn published a translation of the Pentateuch which was later followed by a translation of the other books of the Bible made by his colleagues and friends. This translation, though in German, was printed in Hebrew characters, and was accompanied by explanatory notes in Hebrew (*biur*).

Only in the 19th century was a beginning made of printing German translations of the Bible in German characters: in the year 1838 such a translation was made by Zunz and his collaborators for "Home and School." Zunz himself, translated the Books of the Chronicles and revised the translations of the other books. He also compiled a list of the historical events of the Bible. Zunz's translation enjoyed great popularity as can be seen from the fact that eighteen editions appeared between the years 1838 and 1889.

(2) *Translation of Religious Poems.* While the translation of the Bible was meant mainly for "Home and School," Zunz's aim in translating *piyyutim* (religious hymns) was to furnish an anthology for

learned circles not acquainted with Hebrew, and particularly with the difficult style of the Jewish poets in the Middle Ages. In this field Zunz proved to be a poet himself, using metre and rhyme and poetic diction. These poems form an integral part of his classical work, "The Synagogue Poetry of the Middle Ages."

Politician

As already mentioned, Zunz was not only interested in the history of former days, but he took also an active part in current political affairs, not, however, before he reached a mature age. As a lover of freedom and an enemy of oppression and tyranny, Zunz tried to intervene whenever he saw wrong being done regardless of the creed or the nation attacked. As he asked for his own people, "Not rights, but right; not freedoms, but freedom," so he raised his voice on behalf of all the politically oppressed. Gifted with great eloquence and a fine pen, Zunz put both at the service of this ideal. Such an opportunity occurred in March, 1848, when demonstrations took place in Germany and in Austria against the reaction which had dominated the nations of Central Europe for thirty years. In memory of the partisans of freedom who fell during their fight on the barricades in Berlin, Zunz gave an address, and published it in a pamphlet which drew general attention upon him. It bears the title: "To the Bereaved ones of the Heroes of Berlin during (the Revolution in) March: A Word of Comfort" (*Den Hinterbliebenen der Märzhelden Berlin's. Ein Wort des Trostes*).

From 1848 onwards, we can see Zunz taking an active part in election campaigns, addressing public gatherings, presiding at meetings and even elected to various political offices. Many of his addresses are printed in his "Collected Works" (*Gesammelte Schriften*).

Attitude Towards Reform

The first half of the 19th century witnessed the birth of another movement besides the "Science of Judaism," which proved of no less significance in Jewish history—namely, the so-called "Reform Movement." It was a secession from Rabbinical Judaism, rejecting all Messianic and national allusions found in the prayers. It confronted Judaism with a great crisis since the orthodox regarded it with reason from its right beginning as a threat to its very foundations. This fight which started early in the nineteenth century, lasted for several decades and was conducted with great heat and bitterness on both sides. Pamphlets were written, synods were summoned, and German Jewry was split into two camps.

What was the attitude of Zunz in this struggle? A man of his learning, whose name was known and respected in and beyond Germany, could not fail to have a definite standpoint and ally himself with one party or the other. And so he did. Although not orthodox himself, he was strongly against Reform. At first, however, he did not take any active part in this fight. He was too much absorbed in his "Science" to allow himself to be distracted from his studies. He tried, however, indirectly, by means of his "Science" to intervene in this struggle. It is significant that in the same year in which the adherents of the Reform movement assembled at a synod to abolish certain religious laws and to introduce a number of alterations in the liturgy (Frankfort, 1845) Zunz presented the world with his famous standard work "On History and Literature" (*Zur Geschichte und Literatur*). In it he dealt particularly with the famous schools of the Rabbis in France and Germany, with the Tosafists and Moralists who by their great erudition and nobility of soul illuminated the dark Middle Ages. The appearance of this work was like a solemn protest against Reform, which tried to dispense with the teaching of such learned and great men.

Similarly, when the Reformers decided to discard the recital of *piyyutim* (liturgical hymns) Zunz collected material for his famous "trilogy" of the history of Poetry which is still a guide and a source of profound scholarship. By doing so he not only preserved them from being forgotten, but also revealed to the world the vast treasures of spiritual greatness stored in them.

Zunz also wrote two pamphlets which were directed against the Reform movement. They are: "On the Tephillin" and "On Circumcision." Both commandments were regarded by some adherents of Reform as obsolete. Zunz in these essays proves their importance and pleads strongly for their preservation. The reasons he gives for their retention are not usually to be met with in orthodox circles. In his view, these commandments deserve to be kept in virtue of their being ancient Jewish symbols. Perhaps he thought that this argument might convince their opponents more readily of the value of these commandments.

Finally, it should be mentioned that he saw in the Reform movement a menace to the unity of Judaism. Although he himself does not regard music and choral song during the service as against tradition he declares: "Unity is, however, the most euphonious concord. Therefore let organ and choral singing be dispensed with, if they alone should cause serious disunion."

Character

As we have seen, Zunz was an outspoken lover of freedom and justice. Wherever he saw wrong he raised his voice or used his pen in protest, regardless of whether those oppressed were his co-religionists or Gentiles.

From his dealings with his fellow-men and from his letters, it seems that Zunz, unfortunately, was not a very attractive personality. Stubborn in argument,

he felt offended if people did not share his views or failed to appreciate them. This was also the reason why he could not remain in one post for long, and had always to be changing. In one of his letters dated May the 8th, 1842, he complains that his income was as low as that of a slaughterer of fowls (which was indeed very small in those days). From his meagre income he had still to save money for buying books and defraying the cost of copying manuscripts. But his friends, the enthusiasts for the " Science of Judaism " in Germany and abroad, understood Zunz well and esteemed him highly. So did his wife, who shared with him willingly all his privations. When she died in the year 1874 after fifty-two years of marriage Zunz was left a broken man for the rest of his life. His power of writing declined, his literary activity came to an end. In the twelve years that he outlived his wife Zunz did not write a single essay of importance, he only superintended the publication of his essays by his friends on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

In his researches he was scrupulously exact. He had a special liking for arithmetical calculations. He tells us, for instance, that the Babylonian Talmud is four times bigger than the Palestinian Talmud, and eleven times bigger than the Mishnah. Some of these calculations sound to us rather strange, as for instance when he tells us how many hours elapsed from the death of Gedaliah (who was killed in the year 586 B.C.E.) until his own days, or when he computes the hours that have elapsed since the first time he preached in Leipzig or since the publication of one of his special articles. It should, however, be pointed out that mathematical exercises were of great help to him in the identification and dating of some obscure and anonymous poems by means of *gematrioth* (numerical value of the Hebrew letters).

Whatever his caprice, Zunz had a profound affection for his people. Their sufferings in the long course of history which strengthened them in their religious belief and ennobled their character without preventing

them from producing immortal work filled him with great admiration and reverence. Therefore he could not understand the tendency of the Reform movement to give up most important and sacred Jewish ceremonies for which the Jews had sacrificed their lives.

Method and Approach to History

In his researches Zunz was a pioneer. His scientific investigations were an exploration of lands still unknown. He had to go singlehanded to the quarries to hew out the stones and to carry them away and build his edifices himself. Particularly formidable were the obstacles that encountered him in his researches in poetry. Hundreds of authors and innumerable poems still only in manuscripts lying in libraries had to be consulted. Zunz saw quite clearly that they could not be disregarded in his work on the poetry in the Middle Ages. Correspondence with friends could bring him only little help. He spared no pains to visit libraries in Germany and abroad to examine manuscripts and to copy them. Thus we see him visiting Hamburg, London, Oxford, Paris, Rome and Parma. During one of these visits he had the honour to be introduced with his wife to Queen Victoria.

Zunz's greatness as a scholar can be gauged from the fact that his works have not become obsolete in spite of the lapse of a whole century. Some of his conclusions may not be in accordance with modern researches and investigations based on new discoveries. His works in general, however, are still unsurpassed and therefore remain standard works. Is it not sufficient proof for the classical character of Zunz's works that the first book in the series of translations of scientific works to appear in the "Bialik-Foundation" in Jerusalem in the year 1947 was *Haderashoth Be-Yisrael*, a Hebrew translation of the *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden* written and published by Zunz in the year 1832?

Quite different, however, must be our judgment of his approach to history and his conception of the role Judaism played in the Middle Ages. According to him the whole history of the Jews is a continuous chain of sufferings and their sole activity consisted in creating literary works. This view was shared by the whole school of the " Science of Judaism " until recently, and to some extent even by the great historian Heinrich Grätz (1817-1891). It was the historian Simon Dubnow (1860-1942) who showed in his " History of the Jewish People " that even in the darkest days of their history, the Jews were not only a religious group but also a nation with a great creative power in the social, economic and administrative spheres even in the lands of their oppressors.

Literary Activity

From the previous pages it can be seen that Zunz was a very prolific writer and that his literary activity was not limited to one subject only. Although his main work was devoted to Jewish literature he also wrote on history, Bible, Jewish customs and on philology. Zunz published also biographies of two famous men (Rashi and Azariah dei Rossi). It is indeed very difficult to give an adequate account of his works and essays. Not less difficult is it to describe his standard books. For each of them contains far more than its title indicates. His activity in general can be summarized under the following five headings:

- (1) History of Jewish Homiletics.
- (2) History of Jewish Liturgy.
- (3) History of Jewish Literature.
- (4) History of Jewish Life and Customs.
- (5) History of the Jews and Biographies of Famous Men.

His works are written in German, except for a few essays which are in Hebrew. Two essays written by Zunz in the year 1841 appeared in an English translation in the same year, viz.: "Essay on the Geographical Literature of the Jews from the Remotest Times to the Year 1841" and "On the Geography of Palestine from Jewish Sources."

Several of Zunz's books and essays have been mentioned already. The following is a brief review of his classical works:—

(1) "LITURGICAL ADDRESSES OF THE JEWS" (*Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*).

The reason for writing this work was, as mentioned above, the prohibition of preaching in German decreed by the Prussian Government. Although originally designed to deal with a particular emergency, the work has not lost its importance during the 120 years which have elapsed since its publication. It gave an invaluable analysis of the Rabbinic works, particularly of the Midrashic (homiletic) literature, and brought system and order in the vast field of this branch of literature.

In the introduction Zunz describes the role which the Synagogue service played in Judaism. The two main uses of the Synagogue were for praying and teaching. The latter was closely connected with the reading of the Torah introduced by Ezra. Since many Jews did not understand Hebrew a translation of the portions of the Law into Aramaic, the vernacular of the Jews in those days, was required. Hence the origin of the *Targumim*. As many passages and laws had to be explained to the people, interpretations were added to the service which gave rise to the sermon (*derashah*). When the diaspora of the Jews widened and Jews settled in Egypt and the Greek-speaking countries, sermons in the vernacular became part of the divine service. The author shows the traces of the

interpretations of the Law found in the books of Chronicles and of Ezra and Nehemiah, he deals at length with the *Targumim* and with the various forms and characteristics of the *Agadah* in Talmudic and post-Talmudic times. He then describes the system of lecturing and the various forms of the *derashah* in different countries at various times and the vernacular used in them. He concludes with a reference to the conditions in Germany in his own days and with a very optimistic forecast of the future, which unfortunately, as we know, has not been verified.

The book appeared in German twice (1832 and 1892), and in Hebrew in Jerusalem, 1947.

(2) "ON HISTORY AND LITERATURE" (*Zur Geschichte und Literatur*), Berlin, 1845. This work deals with the following points:—

(a) The author discusses various problems of Jewish literature and gives an account of all Christian scholars who treated the subject.

(b) After an introduction, Zunz deals with the medieval literature of the Jews in France and Germany. Special chapters are devoted to the activities of the Tosafists (authors of critical notes on the Talmud), Exegetes (commentators of the Bible), Grammarians and Moralists.

(c) Bibliographical Notes.

(d) "The Memorial of the Righteous" (dealing with various abbreviations used in eulogies).

(e) The Jewish Poets in Provence.

(f) History of the Jews in Sicily.

(g) Numismatics (on various coins mentioned in Rabbinical literature).

(3) THE TRILOGY consisting of:—

1. "THE SYNAGOGUE POETRY OF THE MIDDLE AGES" (*Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*).

Zunz shows first the difference between Prophet and Psalmist. The former is the representative of God admonishing the people and exhorting them to follow the right way. The latter is the representative of the nation beseeching God for forgiveness. The *piyyut* (poetical insertions into the prayer) developed from the exhortations of the Prophets, while the *selihah* (penitential prayer) had its origin in the Psalms and expresses the anguish of the people because of its sufferings. Zunz then gives a list of the sufferings of the Jews, from the time of the Emperor Constantine (306-337) until Charles V (d. 1558), which caused the poets to pour out their soul to God in their *selihoth*. He shows the development through the centuries of both *piyyut* and *selihah* and describes their various forms and terminologies, giving also an anthology of the *selihoth* with historical and literary notes. In the last chapter he deals with the sufferings of the Jews in the two centuries following the Middle Ages which caused the poets to compose their *selihoth* as an outcry against their oppressors. At the end of the book there are twenty-six appendices consisting of notes on history, liturgy, grammatical forms created by the poets, metaphorical expressions, etc.

The work appeared in the year 1855, and was re-published in the year 1920.

II. "THE RITES OF THE SYNAGOGUE SERVICE" (*Die Ritus des Synagogalen Gottesdienstes*), (Berlin, 1859).

In this book the author traces the development of the various rites in vogue among the Jews. He shows that all of them have their origin in the two main rites,

the Babylonian (East), and the Palestinian (West). While the Jews in Spain (Sefarad), for instance, adopted mainly the Babylonian rite, the Jews in Germany (Ashkenaz) followed mostly the Palestinian, hence the difference between the *nusah Sefarad* and the *nusah Ashkenaz*. He discusses the various sub-divisions of these rites, their differences, their development and the role they played in Judaism. The compilers and commentators of the *siddur* and *mahzor* are also dealt with.

III. " HISTORY OF THE LITERATURE OF THE POETRY OF THE SYNAGOGUE " (*Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*), Berlin, 1865.

In sixteen chapters the author describes the history of the *piyyut* and the *selihah*. He first guides the reader through the whole of the period prior to Eleazar Kalir (first half of the 9th century), enumerating the *piyyutim* composed in those days. He then gives an account of the *piyyutim* of Kalir and of the poets who succeeded him up to the year 1140, and finally continues the record up to the year 1540. In a similar way the *selihoth* are dealt with from the earliest times until the year 1772.

Various notes and appendices which are in themselves an inexhaustible fund of knowledge are added at the end of the book.

In the year 1867, Zunz published a supplement to the work which contains new material quite unknown before.

The Last Years of his Life

The indifference Zunz had to endure at the hands of the Jews in Germany in the early days of his career were partly atoned for when he became advanced in years. The publication of his books and essays and particularly the spread of his scientific method revealed to German Jewry that a great man was living in their

midst. At last they learnt to appreciate Zunz, and in commemoration of his seventieth birthday there was created the so-called "Zunz-Foundation" which contributed in the course of time to the spread of knowledge by financing and helping the publication of learned works. It was this foundation which on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, issued in three volumes selected essays of Zunz (*Gesammelte Schriften*) which originally had appeared in various periodicals and pamphlets. When he celebrated his ninetieth birthday (1884) a Jubilee-Volume ("Jubelschrift") was published in his honour containing essays written by scholars of different countries. Many articles appeared in various papers on that occasion, praising him and his work. The *Jewish Chronicle* too (August 22nd) published an article written by Zunz's intimate friend, Dr. David Kaufmann, professor at the Seminary in Budapest. In several towns of the German and Austrian Empires Zunz's birthday was celebrated in synagogues, schools and gatherings of many societies, and addresses were sent by the "Society of Friends" of which he was a member, the Rabbinate of Berlin, the German Union of Communities, the French Société des Etudes Juives and many other organisations. All this shows clearly that Zunz's reputation was firmly established.

On the 18th March, 1886, Yom Tob Lippmann Zunz died at the age of ninety-two. His death was mourned by the whole of Jewry.

Zunz did not leave any children, but his name will live for ever. Through his work he brought order and system into the vast and uncharted field of Jewish literature. Before his time great uncertainty existed about the personalities of the liturgical poets, philosophers, Tosafists and commentators. Authors of midrashim and piyyutim, their countries of origin and historical backgrounds were unknown. They could be compared to a great collection of paintings by artists

of various countries and nationalities stored in the rooms of a dealer in antiquities. The lover of art may be interested in them, he may admire one picture or another, but he can never be able to appreciate them at their true value because he lacks the knowledge required for a critical judgment. This was the position of Jewish literature prior to Zunz. Its real value could not be appreciated because the individual works had not yet been classified according to their date and place of origin. It was Zunz who transformed the storehouse of the dealer in antiques into an art gallery where paintings of masters are properly exhibited and catalogued; it was he who gave every visitor the clue to the proper understanding of each painting, and who turned even the layman into an art expert and connoisseur.

Spread of the “ Science of Judaism ”

Although Zunz did not see all his wishes fulfilled, since the “ Science of Judaism ” continued to be barred from the Universities during his life, he yet witnessed its dissemination over the whole world. He saw the epoch-making researches of Solomon Munk (Paris, 1803-67), Zecharias Frankel (Dresden, Breslau, 1801-75) and Moritz Steinschneider (Berlin, 1816-1907). In the year 1854 the first institution was founded for the pursuit of Jewish scientific studies. This was the Jewish Theological Seminary at Breslau, whose first head was Zecharias Frankel. Soon afterwards similar institutions were established in other countries of Europe and America.

The great change which was noticeable already in the days of Zunz can be seen from the following fact. In the years 1820-29 Isaac Marcus Jost, a schoolmate of Zunz, published a comprehensive history of the

Jews (*History of the Israelites from the Time of the Maccabees until our Days*, 9 volumes) which at first enjoyed great popularity. With the rise of the "Science of Judaism," however, Jost's history soon became antiquated as it did not satisfy the needs of the scientifically minded. In his endeavour to prove his loyalty to the German State, Jost tries, for instance, to mitigate the severity of the persecution of the Jewish people on one hand, and on the other, to magnify even the smallest relief granted by the "wise and gracious monarchs." (Dubnow, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. IX, p. 118). Being a rationalist and adherent of the Reform movement, Jost had no appreciation for Talmudic Judaism and its great works. Small wonder, then, that after the critical investigations of Zunz, Rapoport and Frankel, which placed the history and the literature of the Jews to appear in quite a different light, Jost's history was regarded as not satisfying proper scientific standards and was therefore discarded.

To-day, the "Science of Judaism" forms an integral part of general knowledge. It ranges over the whole field of human intellect. The programme set forth by Zunz in his book "Notes on the Rabbinic Literature" in the year 1818 has been realized. There is no department of Jewish lore specified by Zunz which has not become the object of research with the most fruitful results. Such researches are carried out at Colleges, Universities and Seminaries; special mention should be made of the University in Jerusalem which is the centre of the "Science" in the new state of Israel. Thus scholars, although differing in their religious views, are united in the idea of serving the "Science of Judaism" as promulgated by its famous founder Yom Tob Lippmann Zunz.

Extracts from Zunz's Literary Work

From the "Essay on the Geographical Literature of the Jews from the Remotest Times to the Year 1841," printed in the 2nd vol. of *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, edited by A. Asher, London, 1841, p. 230ff.

Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela travelled in 1160 and the following years from Saragossa by way of Catalonia, the South of France, Italy, Greece, the Archipelago, Rhodus, Cyprus and Cilicia to Syria, Palestine, the countries of the Caliph, and Persia. From thence he returned by the Indo-Arabic ocean, the coast of Yemen, Egypt and Sicily, to Castile, where he is said to have died in 1173. Even if the object of R. Benjamin's travels was of a mercantile character, it is evident that he also intended to become acquainted with the state of his brethren in distant countries. This prompted him to mention the Jewish leaders and teachers in every town which he visited on his outward journey, and which contained a Jewish congregation. Of such men he names 248 on the route from Barcelona to Baghdad; whereas of the more distant countries of Persia, Chorosan, Khiva, the Indian Islands, Chai-bar, Yemen, Nubia and Abyssinia, he only mentions four, and even those from hearsay. Besides these he speaks of one man in Ispahahan and of two in Egypt. He visited, beyond doubt, all those towns in the above-mentioned route, whose Jewish leaders he mentions by name; and the details of Jewish names as well as those of Jewish literature agree exactly with Benjamin's account. As, in addition, we find the historical and geographical data to be fully authenticated, and as the fables must be charged, not to his own account, but to that of his time, a sound critique rejects with justice all those suspicions and attempts at derogation which have been directed against this, our first traveller.¹

¹ The *Itinerary* itself, both Hebrew and English, is contained in the first volume of Asher's edition. Another translation by Marcus N. Adler appeared in London, 1907.

Petahyah of Ratisbon, like his brother R. Isaac Ha-Laban ben Jacob, lived in Prague, and set out from that city upon his travels prior to 1187, probably between 1170 and 1180. He visited Poland, Kiev, Little Tartary, the Crimea or Khazaria, the country of the Turkmans, Armenia, Hesna, Khaifa, Nisibis, Mosul, Baghdad and Susa. He returned by way of Nehardea, Hella, Mosul, Nisibis, Haran, Edessa, Hamah, Haleb and Damascus and proceeded through Galilee to Jerusalem. He returned to Bohemia by way of Greece and visited Ratisbon, where his countryman, R. Judah ben Samuel, surnamed the Pious, wrote down his notes, though incomplete and without any order.²

Liturgical Addresses of the Jews

Chapter Twentieth: The Method of Preaching in Antiquity.

On the Sabbath and on the New Moon the Prophet used to raise his voice announcing the word of the Lord to the family and the people. They used to proclaim their prophecies in the halls of the Temple and in open places before the gates. When Israel lost its independence, when foreign nations dominated it, and when new ideas and a different language came into vogue, and the written word became the guiding star of the people, the voice of the prophet gradually became silent; not so the word of God. Homeland and Law remained, the love for the God of the forefathers was deeper and holier, and on the Sabbath and on the Festivals people used to turn to the Book of the Law and to the Sage inquiring of the Lord. He answered through the mouth of the Soferim and the Sages who interpreted the Law and the Prophets, and

² *The Travels of Rabbi Petahyah*, Hebrew and English, were edited by A. Benish, London, 1856. Another edition appeared in London in the year 1861.

their sermons found more attentive listeners than had their predecessors. Nowhere is a restoration of the Mosaic Law mentioned after that of Ezra and Nehemiah. The dissemination of the holy books, the activity of the Soferim, the hatred against the Samaritans, even the state of dependence contributed to the strengthening of that law for which we already find great enthusiasm two centuries after Nehemiah. In view of this we have to assume that the attachment to the Jewish institutions took root and spread from the time of Ezra. Because of this the teaching of the Law, the reading of the national writings (holy scripture), the celebration of the Sabbath and the Festivals, the public instruction and the service gradually became established. The author of the Chronicles already attributes to the time of Ezra the public reading of the Law accompanied by interpretations on Festivals and Fast-days, using certain expressions which belong particularly to the period when the exposition of the Law was instituted. Soon afterwards the Men of the Great Synagogue appear as promoters of the exposition of the Law and as organizers of the Divine Service. In view of this we may assume that the reading from the Law with interpretations must have been in common usage already in the first century of the Greek era (312-212 B.C.E.) at least, during the Great Festivals. Those who performed it had received their instruction from Priests, Levites and Soferim in the same way as the disciples of the Prophets did in former times. Perhaps several young men were taught together in groups in the schools of distinguished scholars. The High Priest Simon the Just, one of the survivors of the Great Synagogue, used to say: "Upon three things the world stands; upon the Law, service and charity." Perhaps this dictum is derived from the Men of the Great Synagogue who strove so much for the Holy Scripture, Divine Service and the strengthening of national bonds.

On History and Literature

From the Chapter on "Characteristics."

Already, at the earliest stage in the education of the child, every act was devoted to his ancestral faith. When the boy was to commence learning the Holy Scripture, he was washed carefully and accompanied by a pupil-teacher to school who took him under his cloak and was led to the teacher. There he was given cake mixed and stirred with honey together with milk, fruit and other dainties. Afterwards the Hebrew alphabet, written on a tablet of parchment or of wood, was shown and read to him forwards and backwards, and he licked off the letters over which honey had been spread. Then he was brought back to his mother. The day on which he commenced learning the Holy Scripture was celebrated as a festival. Leviticus was commenced from the same book which had been put into his cradle under his head when he received his Jewish name. In some places the first lesson in Torah took place at day-break on Shabuoth. The children were covered carefully to prevent them from seeing unclean and disturbing things. After the boy had been placed upon his master's lap, he was ordered to repeat the words "The Law Moses commanded us," "The Law shall be my occupation;" "He (God) called to Moses." The words of Isaiah, L, 4-5 were written on the honey cake—similar ones were also eaten by grown-up people on that Festival—"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backwards." On the shell of a boiled egg the words of Ezekiel III, v. 3, were written: "And He said unto me: 'Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee.' Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." The boy had to repeat both biblical passages spoken by his teacher and then he was given the cake and the egg to eat.

I. THE SYNAGOGUE POETRY OF THE
MIDDLE AGES.

Chapter II: Sufferings. (Translated by A. Löwy, *Zunz on the Sufferings of the Jews in the Middle Ages*, in "Miscellany of Hebrew Literature," Vol. I, London, 1872, p. 167ff.)

If there be an ascending scale in suffering, Israel has reached its pinnacle. If the duration of afflictions, and the patience with which they are borne, ennoble, then the Jews may vie with the aristocracy of any country. If a literature which owns a few classical tragedies is deemed rich, what place should be assigned to a tragedy which extends over fifteen centuries in which the poets and actors were also the heroes?

The dispersion of the Jews, sufficiently disastrous in itself, but especially so when considered in connection with their desire for reunion, might have filled a sympathetic heart with charity and respect, and entitled the Jews, all the more, to proper treatment, since among themselves the stranger had always been protected. Lowly and powerless, they should have received protection; it was preferred, however, to exact from them heavy taxes and imposts, even from their poor. "He who works his way through brambles," says the Midrash, "in detaching himself on one side, entangles his garment on the other; and such is the case in the land of Esau. Barely has the land-tax been paid, when the poll-tax is demanded; and while this is being collected the exactor of new tributes makes his appearance." "Edom is never satisfied; whatever flows thitherward never returns to its owner." "The princes of Edom are covetous of money, and therefore they flay Israel alive." Hence the Jews are designated by Joseph ben Isaac as "a people plundered by exactions." The history of

mediaeval Europe illustrates these sayings. “ *Hab, hab* ” (give, give!), the forerunner of the “ *Hep, hep.* ”¹ a cry by which the Suabians used to mock the Jews, is the threatening call of the Roman Empire.

“ Give, give, ” the impious cry :

“ Gold supply ! ”

Is their battle cry.

—Isaac Halevi.

They cry, “ Give, give ! ”

Neither is there anyone to curb

The insults of the proud.

—Jehudah Halevi.

(The author proceeds to describe the persecutions of the Jews and of the Talmud and concludes this chapter with the following words):

The foregoing historical survey contributes to our understanding of the Synagogue liturgy. It explains its motives of wrath and exasperation, it lays open the source of tears, it reveals sorrows and wounds. We feel the sufferings, we hear the imprecations, we share the hopes. The stern words uttered in these Jewish Psalms, by which no Christian ever lost his life, rise as a dying cry of myriads of murdered human beings; only love, not derision—justice, not oppression, can ever hope to bring atonement.

(It was this chapter which caused George Eliot to write her novel *Daniel Deronda*, where (superscription to Book VI, Chapter 42) the first paragraph of this chapter is fully quoted.)

¹ See The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. VI, p.350f.

II. THE RITES OF THE SYNAGOGUE SERVICE.

The difference which prevailed in olden times between the services inside and outside the Temple, between Palestine and the communities in exile, have been partly retained in the usage of the West (Palestine) and of the East (Babylonia). In the course of time, divergent traditions developed in regard to the wording and cantillation; sages as well as readers embellished the festive and the fast days with prayers, which were spread by the congregation, so that here one ornamentation became popular and there another. Many a benediction was handed over in various versions, even the *tephillah* was not transmitted in an undisputed text. In antiquity the biblical verses which were to be included in the service, the choice of Psalms, the selection of the *haftaroth* were left to the reader's discretion and not fixed. The arrangement of the portions of the Law to be read on the Sabbath was not uniform, there was a one-year, a two-year, and a three-year cycle. Even the practice prevalent in Europe remained fluid for many centuries, and the separation or combination of two *sidroth* was also regarded as merely a *minhag* (custom).

III. HISTORY OF THE LITERATURE OF THE POETRY OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

The intellectual activity of the Jews limited for almost five hundred years to Asia, spread from the middle of the tenth century to the Western countries; the works of Saadia Gaon and of David ibn Al-Mukammas, the Responsa (written replies to questions of Jewish law), and the prayer-books of the Geonim, Masorah (traditional notes on the Biblical text), and grammar, dictionaries and commentaries move from the Persian provinces to those in Africa and Spain,

while Talmud and Midrash (the homiletical section of Rabbinic literature), Targum, sermon, and piyyut (religious poetry) flourish in Greek and Italian towns, and are taken from there to France, Germany and Slavonia. About 1050, Synagogue poetry is to be found in all Jewish centres in Europe. No region of the Romanic and German lands, which had already been influenced by grammatical, exegetical and poetical productions, was without a Rabbi or Reader who enriched the public or the home service with addresses and musical compositions. Hence the increase in the number of the poets, and the occasions for which their activity was demanded. Of the poets of that epoch (1050-1140) known by name, four belong to the Romance lands, ten to Italy, nine to France, and eleven to the lands of the Rhine, while the origin of eight cannot be determined; they should, however, be assigned to Middle Europe, apart from Selihah (penitential prayer)—poets and anonymous authors.

IMPORTANT DATES.

- 1794 Birth of Yom Tob Lippmann Zunz.
- 1803-1815 Zunz in Wolfenbüttel.
- 1815 Zunz a student at the University in Berlin.
- 1818 Publication of "Notes on the Rabbinic Literature."
The beginnings of the "Science of Judaism."
- 1819-1824 "Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews."
- 1820-1822 Zunz Preacher in Berlin.
- 1823-1831 Zunz Sub-editor of the *Haude und Spener'sche Zeitung*.
- 1832 Publication of "Liturgical Addresses of the Jews."
- 1835 Zunz Preacher in Prague.
- 1836 Publication of the "Names of the Jews."
- 1840 Zunz Director of the Teachers' Seminary.
- 1845 Publication of "On History and Literature."
- 1855-1865 Publication of the Trilogy.
- 1886 Death of Zunz.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING.

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