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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
New York School

Report on the Dissertation Submitted by Neil Brief
for the Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature Degree and Ordination

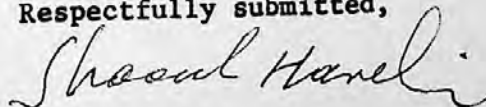
The Life and Writings of Reuben Asher Broydes

In preparing this thesis, The Life and Writings of Reuben Asher Broydes, the author, Mr. Neil Brief, was confronted with considerable difficulties which, however, he succeeded in solving satisfactorily. These difficulties derive from the period in which R.A. Broydes produced his literary work, the Hebrew idiom prevailing in that period, and the available documentation. Broydes lived at the end of the Haskala Movement and at the beginning of the revival of Modern Hebrew Letters and his work mirrors in large measure that transition in the history of Modern Hebrew Literature. Broydes, like many of his contemporaries, was at the outset a champion of Reform, but later sought to effect a reconciliation between religious traditions and the exigences of modern life within the framework of the Jewish national movement. His Hebrew idiom, too, reflects largely the longwinding and stereotyped style of the Haskala period, though enriched by new elements. As for documentation, many of his essays and articles were published in a wide range of periodicals, some of which were of an ephemeral nature.

In view of the above problems involved in the subject of the thesis, its author had to acquaint himself with a large number of contemporary literary works in order to gain a proper understanding of the prevailing trends and engage in a methodical collection of material not easily accessible. As a result of persistent diligence and great effort, Mr. Brief has succeeded in preparing a thesis that testifies to intelligent research work and to a widening of his knowledge of Hebrew literature.

I therefore recommend acceptance of his thesis.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Shaoul Hareli

April 15, 1960

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF
REUBEN ASHER BROYDES (1851-1902)

BY NEIL BRIEF

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION.

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK, NEW YORK JUNE, 1960

REFEREE: PROFESSOR SHAOUL HARELI

DEDICATED
TO
MY BELOVED MOTHER
MRS. BELLA BRIEF
AND
MY DEAR WIFE AND CO-WORKER
ERICA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude, my debt to Professor Shaoul Hareli of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, who encouraged me in my study and painstakingly guided me in the description of a period of Jewish life that is a basic pre-requisite for an appreciation of Jewish life to-day. Professor Hareli's many comments and suggestions, his freely given time, and invaluable assistance have opened before me the vast treasures of modern Hebrew literature.

Now I must go forth to learn them.....

New York, February 17, 1960

Neil Brief

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is entitled, The Life and Writings of Reuben Asher Broydes. I have studied the events, personalities, and forces that shaped Broydes' lifetime, and influenced him to produce his two greatest novels, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Mayim (Religion and Life) and Sh'Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot (The Two Extremes).

My approach is as follows:

A. The first three chapters outline Broydes' life: The first chapter is devoted to Broydes' childhood and adolescence; the second chapter discusses his continuous wandering from country to country; the concluding chapter covers Broydes' final years when he became closely identified with the Zionist movement. In this biographical sketch, I have examined Broydes' writings on such subjects as the need for religious reforms, the development of the Hebrew language, and the question of migration to America or the Return to Zion.

B. The remaining four chapters are concerned with Broydes' two novels referred to above. Chapter Four broadly reviews the framework for the novels; Chapters Five and Six analyze their specific content; Chapter Seven summarizes the basic points that made this period such a decisive one in Jewish life and literature.

The results of my research lead me to the conclusion that Broydes was in the main stream of modern Hebrew literature which sought the intellectual emancipation of the Jewish people as well as the awakening of national sentiment and Jewish solidarity.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY YEARS
(1851-1868)

Reuben Asher Broydes was one of the novelists whose literary work is concerned with the problems of religious reforms and Jewish unity in Eastern and Central Europe during the second half of the last century.

Broydes was born in Vilna in 1851. His father passed away when he was four years old. This had a marked effect upon Broydes all his life. It compelled his mother to assume a greater responsibility and prevented her from devoting much time to her son.

In keeping with the spirit of the time, Broydes was educated in the traditional Jewish Heder. Before long, his Talmudic studies distinguished him as a precocious youngster.

Broydes' years of childhood occurred within a period of deep ferment in the Jewish community. Czar Alexander II ruled Russia during this period. His liberalizing decrees influenced young men to leave the Jewish Pale of Settlement and enroll in the Russian high school and university. These young men lost their interest in Talmudic studies

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and became immersed in the new ideas of Positivism, Evolution, and Socialism, current in the nineteenth century. This new knowledge brought them into direct contact with the modern world.

Young Broydes naturally did not escape the influence of those trends. His thirst for learning was such that he tried to satisfy it in every way he could. The first to supply him with books was a book-binder whom he knew. The books, thus obtained, served him as a source of inspiration and spurred him on to his own first literary attempts.

Unlike other boys of his age, he paid no attention to children's activities. Broydes continued to read stories and poetry in addition to his Talmudic studies. Consequently, he was able to combine a taste of Enlightenment with the precepts of Torah. It was possible for Broydes to have this advantage over other young Jews of his generation as he lived in enlightened, yet observant, Vilna. Thus, his religious beliefs were not drastically altered.

He published his first literary work at the age of seventeen in the orthodox periodical, Ha-Lebanon, in

1868--that very same journal against whose orthodox circles he was later to fight so vigorously. His essays in Ha-Lebanon vividly reflected his achievements in learning and drew attention to his analytical approach in dealing with Talmudic literature.

As it was customary then among Jewish families, Broydes' mother pre-arranged a marital match for him. The girl selected lived in the nearby surroundings of Vilna. Broydes did not want to get married until he completed his studies and established himself in a secure position. His mother believed that his needs would be provided for once he was married. Dismally viewing the possibility of no alternative except marriage, Broydes had no other choice than to flee from Vilna.

This decision ended his period of childhood and began his many years of wandering throughout Eastern and Central Europe.

CHAPTER II: YEARS OF WANDERING
(1868-1884)

Broydes was confronted with the problem of where to live. He knew his enlightened leanings would not be acceptable in a strictly orthodox community. After much thought, he journeyed to Zhitomer, whose Jewish community was in its attitudes towards enlightenment similar to that of Vilna. In this new community, Broydes enrolled in the rabbinical school.

This rabbinical school was the outcome of the new Russian policy to induce the young Jewish generation to acquire general knowledge, in the hope that this would prompt them to assimilate into Russian culture. Another such school had been established in Vilna. Both schools were set up in the 1840's.

Suspicious of Czar Nicholas I, the Jewish population refused to be deceived by this token of emancipation. Only the horrors of childhood conscription (Cantonist system), still prevalent in the Jewish Pale, would tempt a Jewish youth to seek admittance to the Rabbinical School whereby

he would be exempted from this slave-like military service.

Under Czar Alexander II, however, this distrustful attitude was no longer so strong and Jewish youth availed themselves more and more of the educational facilities offered.

Broydes had an opportunity to develop his literary talents during the three years he lived in Zhitomer. He studied Russian and German, and read many books in these languages. He was influenced by the Russian novelist, ^{Ivan (1818-1883)} Turgenev, whose ideas he incorporated in writing his first great novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life). Broydes also met Moses Lilienblum (1843-1910) in Zhitomer as the latter was travelling to Odessa. The two of them discussed Broydes' proposed novel based upon the struggles for religious reforms which Lilienblum was then waging.

Broydes continued his wanderings to Kiev. There he supported himself as a private tutor, having among his students the two sisters of Asher Ginsburg (1856-1927), who later became famous as

the Hebrew essayist, Ahad Ha-Am (One of the People).

Broydes next went to Odessa which was ^{then} to become a center of Jewish intellectual life. There Broydes was deeply impressed by the religious freedom of the Odessan Jewish community and its active participation in European life and culture. Broydes later described this city in his second great novel, Sh'tay Ha-K'Isa-Vot (The Two Extremes).

Broydes had come to Odessa to complete his education. He rented a room in the home of a bookseller, who paid him twenty rubles for a Yiddish story, Ve Yankev Iz Ant-lafen Geh-Veh-Ren (How Jacob Fled). Broydes also had to teach private students to support himself.

Broydes experienced many difficult moments during the first seven years (1868-1875) away from Vilna. However, he developed his literary ideas during this formative period. In his travels throughout Southern Russia, Broydes had the opportunity to observe a different type of Jewish life, where religious authority did not exercise that all-embracing power as in other East European

Jewish communities. He noticed how Jews lived as Russian citizens and served in the many important professions.

These wanderings and contacts enriched Broydes' experience and supplied him with a rich fountain for his subsequent literary works.

In 1870, Broydes published an essay, "Sh-eh A-~~Mat~~ Ahar Mot" (One Hour After Death) in the Hebrew Periodical Ha-May-Letz. In this essay, Broydes described a conversation between two rabbis who met after their death and examined their different rabbinic views and practices. This essay, written in the form of an allegory, (as indicated by the title), dealt with the need for religious reforms and made a strong impression upon its readers.

In another essay, "Sof-Ray Yis-Ro-Ayl B'Roo-See-Yah," (Hebrew Writers in Russia) Broydes discussed what should be the function and responsibilities of the new Hebrew Literature.

Broydes published his first story, "Mis-T'Ray Bet Ts'Fan-Yah" (The Secrets of the House of Zephaniah) in Ha-Sha-Har in 1873. Yeruham Fishel Labovover (1883-1947), one of the outstanding historians of modern Hebrew literature,

maintains that Broydes is ^{here} artistically equal to the work of Perez Smolenskin (1842-1885), who at that time was regarded as one of the most creatively significant Hebrew writers.¹

In 1875, we find Broydes in Warsaw. There he wrote a book called, Mo-Deh V'O-zav (The Repentent Sinner). In a footnote at the end of the book, Broydes announced his plan to publish a very important novel concerning the life of the Jews called Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life).

At the same time, the poet, Abraham Baer Gottlober (1810-1899), Broydes' former teacher in Zhitomer, arrived in Warsaw. Gottlober invited Broydes to be the assistant editor of the periodical, Ha-Boker Or (The Morning Light) which he thought to establish in Lemberg.

Broydes had first met Gottlober when he applied to the Zhitomer Rabbinical School in 1868, where the latter was a member of the teaching staff. Though Gottlober did not regard Broydes as one of the better students, owing to his lack of concen-

tration on Rabbinic studies, he later came to recognize his literary gifts.

The renewed contact between these two writers resulted from Broydes' review of Gottlober's translation of Nathan, The Wise in 1874, in which the reviewer sharply pointed to the lesson of religious tolerance to be derived from that play. This review, together with Broydes' announced plan of writing a novel dealing with religious tolerance, encouraged Gottlober in his projected periodical, Ha-Boker Or (The Morning Light).

Gottlober believed to find in Broydes a collaborator that would enable him to publish a journal competing with Smolenskin's Ha-Sha-Har (The Dawn) in championing Haskallah aims.

Broydes began a new adventure in his life. He moved to Lemberg and edited Ha-Boker Or for three and a half years. He also published essays, short-stories, and the first two parts of his great novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life).

Broydes had been asked to be the assistant

editor of the periodical. He became, in reality, the editor, as Gottlober would be continuously travelling from city to city in order to discover new writers for the periodical. Broydes' association with Ha-Boker Or meant he had chosen literature, rather than teaching, as his profession, formerly having combined both of them to support himself.

Ha-Boker Or appeared as a periodical for five years. During its publication, Broydes was its virtual editor for three and a half years. As to the literary merits of the periodical and Broydes' editorship, opinions vary. Some think that Broydes showed many shortcomings as an editor and that his periodical fell far short of its promise. Dr. Meyer Waxman, a present day historian of Jewish Literature, contends that Ha-Boker Or was "Both in its title and contents an unsuccessful imitation of Smolenskin's Ha-Sha-Har (The Dawn)".²

However, a contemporary of Broydes, the historian, S. L. Zitron, has words of praise for

the periodical, maintaining that Broydes' years of editorship were the most fruitful of his literary career.³

There can be little doubt that if it were not for Broydes, the periodical could never have survived even for the period that it did.

Broydes' departure from Ha-Boker Or was due in the main to the fact that he did not wish to be connected with a periodical whose existence was solely for the purpose of competing with another periodical.

So Broydes resumed his wanderings and we find him next in Vilna (1879), where he remained for two years. He became friendly with Joshua Mezah, a compiler of essays by various authors, entitled Gan Perahim (A Garden of Flowers). Broydes contributed to this collection an essay called Ha-Sa-Fah Beeh-Vo-Dah Oo-V'ats-Mah (The Language In and Of Itself), insisting on the need for adjusting the Hebrew language to modern needs, in contrast to the stereotyped Hebrew idiom used by other Haskallah writers.

He took issue with those Hebrew writers who claimed that the Hebrew language was impaired by its deviation from the original Biblical style and the admixture of other elements, such as post-Biblical and modern words. Broydes answered these opponents, holding that the Hebrew language must develop and change as it had in the past in order to survive. He cited such examples to support the theory of constant growth in the Hebrew language as the more precise Hebrew that was established in the Mishnaic period in keeping with the demands of law and the new philosophic Hebrew vocabulary created by the Tibbonites in the Middle Ages. Broydes concluded that these are the marvels of the Hebrew language and are symbolic of life and development.

Broydes lived in Rumania from 1882 to 1884. During this period, the Rumanian government conducted a policy of severe discrimination against the Jews. This situation aroused the Jewish National Spirit, imbuing the younger generation with the

~~young generation with the~~ ideals of Zionism. This new development offered Broydes a fertile field for his activities. He settled in Bucharest where he published a Yiddish newspaper which served as one of the literary vehicles for the Hovevay Tzion (Lovers of Zion Movement).

In this period of strife, Broydes adopted the view that Eastern European Jewry migrate to Eretz Yisroel, rather than follow those continuously leaving for the shores of America. Although a newcomer to the Rumanian Jewish community, Broydes' fine lectures and nationalist convictions convinced many Rumanian Jewish youth of his beliefs.

Broydes' Zionist views, developed in Rumania, were quite different from those he had formerly held when he lived in Vilna and wrote an essay entitled, Bet Yisroel (House of Israel, 1880), where he raised some of the basic problems of Zionism. In this essay, he feared that the Hebrew national spirit was merely an imitation of other nations. Broydes noted the difficulty

involved, and thus doubted that Hebrew would ever again be a spoken language. Broydes raised other problems as the lack of Jewish farmers to work the land, and even if wealthy English Jews chartered to buy Palestine from the Turkish Sultan, he wondered what Jews would be willing to leave their native birth-place and material possessions to travel to the desolate holy land. He doubted if Orthodox Jewry would be of any assistance, for they were hopefully awaiting the Messiah to lead their return. Broydes therefore concluded that the Jews should migrate to America, the Land of Opportunity.

Broydes himself went to Petersburg (now Leningrad) and joined a group of Jewish Socialists.

While in Petersburg, Broydes discovered that he was suspected by the Russian authorities of illegal action, and in order to escape arrest, he left Ror Rumania, never returning to Russia again. It was in Rumania where his national views underwent a radical change.

In a novel called, Shirim A-Tee-Keem,

(Ancient Poems), a mixture of reminiscences in prose and verse which was published in its entirety in 1903, after Broydes' death, the author's views on diverting Jewish immigration to Palestine rather than to America, found full expression. The events in Russia deeply affecting Jewish life serve as a background to this novel. As a result of the pogroms in the 1880's, the Jewish camp was divided in two opposing factions, the one urging Jewish immigration to America, while the other, of a more national trend, regarded Palestine as the only salvation for the Jewish people.

In the novel, Naphtali, a former Yeshivah student, who had become a Maskil, fell in love with his teacher's daughter, Zilpah. When the question of his migration from Russia arose, he opposed the idea of going to Palestine. His reasons were fear of a "New Christian Crusade," "Turkish Domination," "Wild Asia," and "High-handed rabbinical rule in Eretz Yisroel." He therefore saw America as his objective.

On the other hand, Simon, another protagonist

of the novel, who did not come from the Yeshivah, urged in his flamboyant speeches, a return to Eretz Yisroel. His words captivated Zilpah's heart. Naphtali, torn between his love for Zilpah and convinced that America is the land of deliverance for the Jews, immigrated to America. Once in the country, Naphtali worked in a sweat-shop to support himself and thus was unable to engage in any of his cultural pursuits.

Zilpah's father asked him to return to marry his daughter, but Naphtali, now refusing to do so, described himself as a human being who has been reduced to a mere clog in America's vast machinery.

On the other hand, good tidings came from the settlements in Palestine. The new settlements were progressing. The farmers grew accustomed to the work of the their soil, and very little was felt, on the land, at least, of the rigorous Orthodox impositions.

Meanwhile, Naphtali, too, changed his mind and tried to secure the means that would enable him to settle in Palestine. However, his vitalities, sapped by incessant hard work, he did not live

to achieve his goal.

Though the novel, as pointed out by Dr. Joseph Klausner, in his comprehensive study of Hebrew literature, ⁴ is somewhat sensational in its plot and biased in its description of conditions prevalent at that time in America, it was nevertheless of great merit in giving a realistic picture of the times, and of providing an ideological background to the conflict between the "Palestinians" and the "Americans".

This novel shows us how Broydes' views had undergone great change. At first, his approach to this problem compared to that of Naphtali, the former Yeshivah student, who went to America. Thereafter, Broydes revealed himself as Simon, the modernist, who visualizes the revival of the Jewish people and its cultural life in Eretz Yisroel.

Broydes remained in Rumania for two years until 1884, when he was forced to leave the country as an alien Jew.

Professor Ismar ~~Elbogen~~^{Eibogen}, a German-Jewish historian, accurately describes the Rumanian government policy towards the Jews:

"Rumania set the record in maltreating the Jews. Russia was more brutal, but Russia had the courage to confess its brutality. Rumania, on the other hand, practiced the "cold" pogrom and washed its hands in innocence. The Rumania Jewish policy was characterized by hypocrisy and deception.

"The Rumanians always boasted of their tolerance and their liberalism; and these protestations were calculated to furnish an alibi for intolerance and obscurantism.

"Significant of the theory and practice of creating anti-Jewish sentiment was the custom of issuing solemn proclamations during the Eastern season in which, in bombastic and unctuous style, the Jews were charged with responsibility for the crucifixion.

"The hocus-pocus which declared that the Jews were aliens in the country in which they and their fathers had been born, in which they had received their education and had rendered military service provided limitless possibilities for willful and capricious treatment."

After leaving Rumania, Broydes returned to Lemberg and there continued his fight for the Jewish renaissance.

Thus we reach the final period of Broydes' activities from 1884 to 1902.

FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Yeruham Fishel Lachover, Toldot HaSafRot HaEvRit HaHaDaSha, Volume II., Page. 240.
2. Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature, Volume III., Page 255.
3. S. L. Zitron, YotsRay HaSafRut HaEvRit, Volume II., Page 159.
4. Joseph Klausner, HisToRiYah Shel HaSefRut HaEvRit HaHaDaSha, Volume V., Page 413.
5. Ismar Elbogen, A Century of Jewish Life, Page 355.

CHAPTER III: THE FINAL YEARS

(1884-1902)

Broydes lived in Galicia and Austria during the remaining eighteen years of his life. He spent twelve years in Galicia, the first seven (1884-1891) in Lemberg, the next two in Krakow (1891-1893), and the last three once more in Lemberg where he remained until 1896. He lived the final years of his life (1896-1902) in Vienna.

In the course of this period, Broydes was dedicated to the national Zionist activities. In Lemberg, Broydes was highly respected by the young Galician Zionists among whom he spent much time. They stimulated him in his literary endeavors, urging him to complete his novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life), and to set up a forum for the Hebrew language in Galicia.

Broydes, however, was not able to accomplish these aims. He lacked in perserverance. He led an unstable and poverty-stricken life. He was a perpetual wanderer, bearing all the marks of homelessness. All this undermined his will-power and drained his vitality. Had he lived in different

circumstances, no doubt, Broydes could have developed his natural literary gifts and could have had a greater impact upon Hebrew letters.¹

But even in these adverse circumstances, Broydes did not remain altogether inactive. He made considerable contributions to various periodicals, both in Hebrew and in Yiddish.

He circulated four copies of a weekly newspaper entitled Ha-Ya-Ha-Dut (Judaism). In it, Broydes wrote some interesting articles on such current topics as the development of Hibbat Tzion (Lovers of Zion Movement) in Rumania. He then joined Michael Wolf, a Lemberg publisher, who published the first two sections of Broydes' earlier novel Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life) and part three which Broydes had just completed. Wolf also serialized Broydes' latest novel, Sh-Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot (The Two Extremes) in his publication A-Ked Se-Pu-Rim (The Literary Altar). This novel was finally published in Warsaw in 1888. It proved to be the only complete novel Broydes ever wrote.

Broydes furthermore compiled a collection of stories, Z'Kay-nim TM N'ah-Rim (Old and Young) which he had written over an eight year period (1873-1881)

concerning Russian-Jewish life. He later edited the second volume of O-Tsar Ha-Saf-Rut (A Literary Collection) wherein he wrote the main essay, discussing the relationship between religion and nationality, according to the views of Mendelsohn, Geiger, and Smolenskin.

On the whole, however, Broydes' seven years in Lemberg were a time of failure and frustration, though he gained some recognition following the publication of Z'Kay-Nim Im N'ah-Rim (Old and Young) in 1886 and Sh-Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot (The Two Extremes) in 1888.

Broydes began a new period of literary endeavor when he went to Krakow in 1891, and started a Hebrew weekly, Haz-Man (The Time), in which he championed the revival of the Hebrew language and the Jewish homeland.

He also engaged in historical studies which led him to his strong opposition to ultra-orthodoxy, on one hand, and to assimilation, on the other.

His historical studies convinced him that the values inherent in Judaism could serve as a basis for a Jewish renaissance that would fuse the past with an enlightened modern life.

Broydes returned to Lemberg in 1893, where he became the editor of a weekly Yiddush newspaper published by the local Zionists who hoped that Yiddush, being the popular vernacular, would be more effective in spreading Zionist ideals. But this activity, too, like all his previous activities, did not prove of long duration.

Broydes left Lemberg for Vienna in October, 1896, where he was to become the editor of a planned new periodical in German, but nothing came of it. However, that stay in Vienna, was marked by Broydes' marriage at the age of 46 to the widowed sister of Hermann Cohen, who originally planned the publication of the paper. He tried to settle down to a belated family life by adopting his wife's two children from her first marriage and having three children of his own. As a family man, Broydes supported himself writing short stories for Ha-Magid Ha-Ha-Dash (The New Preacher).

In 1897, Broydes went to Basle to participate in the First Zionist Congress. Joseph Klausner, then a young man of twenty-three, met Broydes at this Zionist Congress. Klausner relates one experience which revealed to him Broydes' view-point concerning

the need for a synthesis between religion and life.

During a heated debate of the well-known Basle Program, Broydes led Klausner to a coat-room to show him a Jew reciting the Afternoon Service (Minha). Broydes turned to Klausner and remarked:

"Look here, Berdichevski and his friends urge a "Transvaluation of Values." (Micah Joseph Berdichevski (1865-1921), as is known, negated Jewish Values, resulting from life in exile, and interpreted Jewish renaissance, under the influence of Nietschze, as a return to the heroic life of Biblical times). That is nonsense. They won't change the life of the Jew. Life itself is stronger than all their speculations. Only thirty years ago my father beat me almost to death because I once missed the Afternoon Prayers. A Jew at that time who did not pray had to lie and pretend that he did pray, being afraid of public opinion which regarded the omission of a prayer as a crime.....

"Now a Jew coming to the Zionist Congress, which is supposed to renew and strengthen Jewish traditions, has to hide himself when he wants to practice these very traditions. This man is embarrassed to pray in public. Who would ever have dreamt that such a radical change would have taken place within a few decades?" 2

Klausner was greatly impressed by Broydes and staunchly defended him against the literary critics, outstanding among them, Reuben Brainin and Dr. Mordecai Ehrenpreiss, who both wrote disparagingly of him.

Brainin regards Broydes as a writer who early exhausted his inner strength without ever being able to renew his creativity³

Ehrenpreiss maintains that Broydes manifested his true literary ability in his first novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life) but had ceased ever since to have real insight; his approach was now purely a rational one, devoid of feeling and of poetical empathy.⁴

Despite these cruel decrees, Broydes continued to expound the Zionist idea in Vienna amongst various student groups and also established there a Hebrew speaking group, similiar to the ones already in existence in Palestine.

In 1900, Theodore Herzl appointed Broydes the editor of the Yiddush section of the Zionist weekly, Die Welt. (The World).

Broydes edited the newspaper with great understanding but with his customary lack of precision. He served in this important position for over a year until he became ill.

Broydes lived in poverty and want in Vienna, just as he had in Lemberg and Krakow. Whereas his

family was large, his salary was meager. He lived in a terribly inadequate apartment, and under such over-burdening conditions was once again brought to despair. He became deathly ill and passed away on October 18, 1902 in a Viennese hospital.

In summing up Broydes' ⁵ life and work, one writer puts it as follows:

"None of the Haskallah writers in Russia was more beloved by the people than Broydes but none was over-taken by oblivion during his life-time as Broydes."

Indeed, during his lifetime, Broydes played many different roles in varying situations. He began as a Heder student, became a Maskil who advocated religious reforms, and then a staunch Zionist, championing Jewish renaissance.

His writings reflect the spirit of the times, its struggles and conflicts, and the efforts of his generation towards a renewal of Jewish life.

Though forgotten in his own lifetime, Broydes' influence has no doubt become a force at work in the Jewish revival.

FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Reuben Brainin, "Reuben Asher Ben Yosef Broyles"
in Lu-Ah Ah-Hi-A-Saf, Volume X P. 572.
2. Joseph Klausner, HisToRiYah Shel HaSafRut
HaEvrit HaHaDaSha, Volume V, Pages 423-24.
3. Reuben Brainin, Op. Cit., Pages 572-73.
4. Mordecai Ehrenpreis, "HashKaFah K'LaLet" in
HaShiloah, Volume III, Pps. 364-65.
5. Manessah Waxer, "Reuben Asher Broyles" in
Journal of Jewish Bibliography, Volume I,
Page 23.

CHAPTER IV: BROYDES' NOVELS

In the preceding three chapters, I have outlined Broydes' biography---his youth, middle, and later years. I have attempted to depict the background for an understanding of those factors which led Broydes to think and write in the manner he did. No writer creates in a vacuum. His contacts with life and its problems influence him in certain directions.

Broydes lived in a period of great upheaval in Jewish life. He was born into a static community which was dominated by a strongly conservative religious tradition. Already in his early life, the narrowness of his surroundings challenged his alertness of mind. His reaction to this spiritual crisis molded his future years and caused him to set his mind on a constant quest, the object of which, however, seemed somehow to always elude him.

Whereas other Heder and Yeshivah students sought to destroy any ties with their earlier background, there always seemed to be the "Residual of Jewish life" in Broydes. In the course of his many wanderings throughout Eastern and Central Europe,

Broydes remembered his early Talmudic education. Despite contrary influences and trends prevalent in the Haskallah movement, Broydes attempted to harmonize Jewish traditions with a more liberal concept of modern Jewish life. However, the discrepancy between his ideal and his way of life was such that his endeavors could not bear the fruit that it would have born in different circumstances. From the biography as outlined in this study, it may be seen that Broydes did not spare himself and ceaselessly toiled for an ideal. Yet what he often lacked was a clear ~~consciousness~~ ^{consciousness} of a final goal. Hence, his frequent disappointments which had an overwhelming impact upon him and prevented him from realizing his full potentiality, though his work represents a substantial contribution not only to contemporary Hebrew literature, but also as an enduring influence.

Broydes' two most important novels were Ha-Dat V'Ha-Mayim (Religion and Life), published in 1876, and Sh-Tay Ha-K'tsa-vot (The Two Extremes), published in 1888. From both these novels, it is possible to gain a clear picture of how Broydes

defined the conflicting trends of two vital periods of his lifetime.

In subsequent chapters, I shall discuss these two novels and illustrate how Broydes saw the problems confronting his generation in that time. In Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim, Broydes showed how Judaism had become overly-stringent by an uncompromising interpretation of tradition, impeding the unfolding of life. In his second novel, Sh-tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot, published twelve years later, Broydes sought to create a common ground for all Jews, irrespective of their religious practices.

While in Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim, Broydes described how Jewish life could be adjusted to the external world, in Sh-Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot, he attempted to harmonize inner Jewish life.

In these two novels, Broydes attacked uniformity and stressed unity; he urged the old generation to look forward and the new generation to consider what was behind it. He pleaded for diversity, but not at the cost of divisibility.

Broydes has been reproached with not offering

a clear-cut solution to the problems he raised in his two novels. (See Joseph Klausner, Op. Cit., Pages 446-47 for a discussion of such criticism).

However, it cannot be denied that, in the circumstances, Broydes' perception and dealing with the problems in the way he did, was a novel phenomenon in Hebrew literature.

CHAPTER V: HA-DAT V'HA-HAYIM
(RELIGION AND LIFE)

Broydes' first great novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim, was published in serial form in the periodical, Ha-Boker Or (The Morning Light) in 1876, when Broydes served as Gottlober's assistant editor.

In this novel, Broydes deals with the basic Jewish problems of his time. Although the Eastern European Jews were forced to live within the Pale of Settlement, and restricted in terms of occupation and education, the liberalizing policies of Czar Alexander II (1855-1881) helped remove some of these barriers. This change of events had ^{an} important effect upon the entire Eastern European Jewish community. When the Eastern European Jew lived under limiting external pressures, he so internalized his way of life, that although it was meaningful to him, it also proved to be excessively restrictive. It was meaningful in the sense that it gave him a definite view of life, based upon strong Jewish learning in a set and fixed environment; it was restrictive in the sense that the Jew could not openly discover the possible benefits of European culture which might contribute to his future development.

Broydes was concerned with this problem. He was aware of his rich Jewish heritage derived from intensive Yeshivah studies. He was also impressed by the important ideas which the revolutions of 1848 created, and about which he had read in German and Russian literature. Living in an age that favorably looked upon enlightenment and emancipation of the Jew, he became convinced of its benefits for the Jewish people. When he personally met Moses Lilienblum, he discovered in him the ideal personality for his first novel, Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim. Broydes dedicated this novel to "Those of the new generation who valiantly struggled against the dogmatism which the rabbinical authorities imposed upon them when they sought to study European culture."

The main character of Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim is Samuel, an outstanding Talmudic scholar, who was influenced by his teacher, a liberal Orthodox rabbi. This rabbi taught Samuel that the new conditions of life required a reinterpretation of Jewish law. He furthermore showed him how a number of severities

existing in the Shulhan Aruk (Set Table), which had no basis in the Talmud and in the earlier rabbinical codes, should be removed.

Samuel later applied these views by opposing the local rabbi, who, basing his decisions upon the laws of the Shulhan Aruk, declared a cow ritually impure.

During a Sabbath morning service, Samuel publicly challenged the Rabbi and demonstrated to him that according to the Talmud and the earlier codes, this cow might be eaten. This community scene caused Samuel many difficulties. He was declared a heretic, lost his teaching position, and endangered his relationship with Hannah, the Rabbi's step-daughter.

Samuel was thus torn between his strong regard for Hannah whose affections he might lose because of his opposition to the rabbi, and his firm belief in the need for religious reforms. In the meantime, Hannah learned that her former boy-friend, Efros, was teaching in a nearby community, causing her to lose all interest in Samuel. In this moment of great

conflict, without Hannah's sympathy and the means of a livelihood, Samuel met Rachel, Efros' widowed sister, who lived in a neighboring town.

A group of Maskillim had advised Rachel to seek Samuel's assistance concerning a religious problem which arose when her husband died, leaving her childless. According to Jewish law, as a childless widow, Rachel's husband's brother had either to marry her or else grant her her release by a religious ceremony known as Hali'zah. Rachel's problem was especially complicated because she didn't know whether or not she had a ~~bro~~ther-in-law. All she knew was that her drunken father-in-law, Todros, had divorced his first wife when she was pregnant, and didn't know if she had given birth to a boy or a girl.

Rachel turned to Samuel for guidance in this predicament, and was very much impressed with him during their first meeting. She prevailed upon her brother, Efros, whom Samuel now accepted to be Hannah's suitor, to begin a private Jewish children's school and employ Samuel as a teacher there.

When this school began, Samuel and Rachel worked

together and fell in love. Samuel was now prepared to free Rachel from her religious difficulties when suddenly, a Yeshivah student appeared and having learned about Rachel's strange predicament from her father-in-law, declared he is the surviving brother-in-law.

Samuel rose to the occasion. He stood before the rabbis and claimed that Rachel's father-in-law's testimony cannot be accepted as binding due to his continuous state of intoxication, that levirate marriages are no longer performed in Jewish life, and that, even if the student's testimony was accurate, the Jewish court should force him to free Rachel by the ceremony of Halizah. At this point, Broydes ends his novel, leaving us in suspense as to its final outcome.

There is much that we may gather from this novel. Aware of the problems of his day, Broydes sought to illustrate them in a certain context. He recognized the need for Jewish law, a most important point which sharply differentiated him from many other Maskillim of his day, who were so impressed by European culture

that they ignored all the legal aspects of Judaism. At the same time, however, Broydes favored religious reforms in a particular framework. There is where Broydes' story has important ramifications.

Samuel was a Maskil, not only because he studied European culture, but because he was so well-versed in Jewish tradition and life, that he realized situations may develop which require new and meaningful interpretations of Jewish law. Samuel had respect for Jewish tradition and ~~did~~ not fight it in and of itself. He rather opposed the dogmatic approach that Eastern European Rabbinical authorities had developed in their understanding of Jewish law. He just didn't object to the local rabbi for being a rabbi, a representative of Jewish law. What he attacked was the local rabbi's sanctification of the Shulhan Aruk, without any previous investigation of the Talmud and other prior codes from which Joseph Karo had developed the Shulhan Aruk.

Broydes' Samuel pleads for a better understanding of Judaism rather than blind acceptance which the local rabbi sought to perpetuate. It is not the idea of Kashrut which Samuel opposes but the fact that the local rabbi, desirous of increasing his own

income from the local tax-collector, resorted to a religious principal to deprive the community. Furthermore, the local rabbi did not thoroughly investigate the entire question of ritual purity. He was so governed by his own self-interest and thus readily seized the Shulhan Aruk as a necessary crutch upon which to base his point.

Broydes' Samuel represents the anti-authoritarian trend in Judaism wherein it is possible for any individual, on the basis of his learning and knowledge, to question and discover the answer for himself.

Broydes continues one step further with his point of view. He holds that the need for changes in religious practices are not whimsical gestures, but that life itself, and especially the new life that was then emerging, required change in Jewish law. It is to preserve the spirit of Judaism rather than to destroy it, that Samuel assumed the offensive in such questions as Kashrut, Halizah, and Jewish education. In fact, Samuel was able to discover his true-self when he was teaching in the

Jewish school that he and Rachel founded. Therein he preserved the essence of Judaism while giving new interpretations to its outward practices.

Some authors may bemoan the fact that Broydes failed to complete this novel. That to me is unimportant. The significant point is that Broydes presented the urgency of adjusting religion to life, and that in so doing, we receive a picture of people who appeared to us as champions of ideas that challenged the thinking of the entire Jewish community.

CHAPTER VI: SH'TAY HA-K'TSA-VOT
THE TWO EXTREMES

Broydes, as an author, embraced two vitally crucial periods in Jewish life. In Ha-Dat V'Ha-Hayim (Religion and Life), Broydes described the Enlightenment Period in Eastern Europe with the idea that Judaism had the means in its historic framework to adjust to modern conditions of life without loss of its own strength. When persecutions became more intense in the 1880's, Broydes abandoned his advocacy of religious reforms and gave greater emphasis to the need of Jewish unity, above all religious divisions, as a basis for Jewish survival. This appears to me to be the main point of Sh-Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot (The Two Extremes) wherein the author clearly delineated the two contrasting trends prevalent in Jewish life.

On one hand, Broydes depicts the life of the assimilated and secularized Jew of modern Odessa, who is an integral part of European culture and society. On the other hand, we are brought into contact with the small hamlet of Succot where its one-sided religious -type Hasidim (Pietists) lived very much apart from the rest of the world.

In his search for unity in Jewish life, Broydes tried to show how these two radically different approaches can have a common meeting ground.

The religious Hasidic personality of the novel is Jacob Herzon. Despite apprehensions about modern Odessa, Herzon travels there to see his lawyer, Yureff, concerning certain legal matters, leaving his wife, Sarah, and his two children in Succot.

In Odessa, Herzon was overwhelmed by a whole new world which greatly impressed him. He was invited to the home of a wealthy Odessan Jew, Ahitob, and there introduced to his daughter, Lizza. Ahitob's beautiful home and society of friends, and Lizza's charm and musical skill greatly delighted Herzon and almost made him forget his matrimonial status. He fell in love with Lizza, who together with her father, eagerly welcomed him into their household. Herzon's betrothal to Lizza was about to take place when suddenly, Barzilai, Lizza's former suitor, disclosed the fact that Herzon ~~was~~ married.

Now, however, Lizza's father, Ahitob, was in desperate financial straits and required Herzon's wealth to maintain his important position. Ahitob and Yureff thereby devise a plan whereby Herzon, torn between his love for Lizza and his devotion to his family, would divorce his wife and marry Lizza.

In Part Two of the novel, the scene is shifted to Herzon's native village, Succot, where Lizza's brother, Solomon, reared as an assimilated Jew, married to Rosalie, is likewise on a business trip. While in Succot, Solomon temporarily lived at the home of Herzon's father-in-law, Yeruham. In his new residence, Solomon met Herzon's wife, Sarah, whom he thought to be a most beautiful woman but for a wig and old fashioned ways of dressing. In this Hasidic household, Solomon viewed favorably the completeness of Jewish life and became more Jewish in his feelings and attitudes. He was also attracted to Herzon's unmarried sister-in-law, Shifra, whom he considered far superior to his own wife Rosalie.

Solomon similiarly was confronted with a dilemma. He too was torn between his love for Shifra and his loyalty to his wife and background.

Herein Broydes unravelled the Gordian knot which he had designed. He introduced the personality of Judah Emanuel, Herzon's grand-father, to whom Herzon's wife, Sarah, appealed for help.

Emanuel lived in the thriving Jewish community of Vilna, the scene of Broydes' youth. There, in addition to great Talmudic learning, Emanuel had also amassed knowledge of European society and culture. Aware of the problems, Emanuel sympathetically listened to Sarah's difficulties. He urged Sarah to dress in modern clothes and remove her wig in order to captivate the heart of her estranged husband, Herzon. Sarah followed Emanuel's instructions, travelling with him to Odessa, where she once more regained Herzon's love.

In Odessa, it also developed that Lizza's father, Ahitob, is Emanuel's long lost son, and therefore, Herzon's uncle. Emanuel helped solve

Ahitob's financial difficulties, and thus removed the pressure that Yureff had sought to apply to Herzon to marry Lizza. Rosaled likewise regained Solomon's affections which he had showered upon Shifra. She, in turn, married a young man, the son of a famous physician friend of Emanuel. Indeed, a truly happy ending!!

Broydes' novel has several interesting implications. Although not introduced in his novel until the very end of it, Emanuel, to me, is the key figure. He appears more descriptive of Broydes' views than any other personality of the story. Just as Emanuel treasured Talmudic learning and favored enlightenment, so too did Broydes, instilled with a deep respect for Jewish tradition in his early youth, never abandon it even when he encountered the modern world. Just as Emanuel sought to bring together the extremes in Jewish life, so too did Broydes seek to harmonize them in his own personal outlook.

In fact, one has the impression that when Emanuel is describing what he believed is typical

of Jewish life, Broydes, ^Ihimself, is also stating his own personal views:

"I Thus see that I have given rise to two different worlds: My eldest son, Ahitob, and his children, who are enlightened, have completely divorced themselves from the ancient Jewish world, its customs, teachings, and laws; They have turned to a new life.

"And there is my second grand-child. He and his family adhere to the old and accepted customs and teachings, banishing everything that is new, everything that is the outcome of rational thinking and adapted to the needs of the time.

"And Judaism, as though it stood there beset by its own distress, appeals to its own children: "My children, why are you so profoundly separated from each other? Far better for you to choose the good contained in the two extremes and to avoid the undesirable and the evil."

This is the message that Sh-Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot offered its generation. This novel, written during the period when Broydes was engaged in Zionist activities, truly expressed the theme of unity in Jewish life that was becoming dominant in Eastern European Jewish life and was to serve as a basis for the Zionist movement.

1. Reuben Asher Broydes, Sh'Tay Ha-K'Tsa-Vot, P. 366.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS

I realized in the course of my research that many Hebrew writers were largely responsible for developing three main modern theories of Jewish life---religious reforms, the revival of the Hebrew language, and the development of modern Zionism. In much of the literature, however, a great deal of credit has been given to others besides Broydes. It is my hope that Reuben Asher Broydes will not be lost in the shuffle.

Despite his shortcomings, he too was among those stressing Jewish ideas and ideals. In spite of poverty and personal struggles, factors which led to an excessive amount of drinking and an early death, he too made a great contribution rooted in his love for Judaism and in his respect for the demands of life.

With this approach, Broydes gave future generations a message of a continuing expression of Judaism whereby he enlightened fellow-Jews in their vast tradition and inspired them with an unending faith in the future of their people.

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