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SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO'S CONCEPTION
OF JUDAISM

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR GRADUATION

BY

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[10:30]

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ABBREVIATIONS

Epist Epistolaris Italiano Francese Latino

Igros Igros Sh' dal

Jah. Ve. Jahdus Ve-Amushyus (Klammern)

Yesode Yesode Hatorah

I.M.T. Israelitische Moral Theologie

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* SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO'S CONCEPTION
OF JUDAISM *

I. LUZZATTO'S OBJECT.

No system of thought is intelligible apart from a knowledge of the purposes of its creator, and these can be deduced only in the light of his training and experience. My initial task, accordingly, is to lay bare the circumstances which called forth ^{Samuel} Solomon David Luzzatto's observations on the nature of Judaism.

Luzzatto was born in Trieste in the year 1800. The two previous centuries had been marked by the prevalence of rationalism in the form of the deistic philosophy. The deists attempted to establish a natural religion founded on intelligence alone. They viewed man purely as a machine, his sensations and actions as mechanical processes. The force of God working in man they did not perceive. The exalted vision of the prophets of truth and right was not admitted by them. Rather, they looked upon the prophets as arch deceivers. Their sole belief was in the existence of God. The miracles they denied. They had only derisive scorn for the Biblical narratives, with the attendant wealth ~~wealth~~ of parables and metaphors, as well as for the practical portions of religious books, for they considered all such products to be the inventions of scheming persons of the past. The Torah of Israel was despised by these rationalists. At the same time they had unstinting words of praise for the literature of Greece. They acclaimed it as the highest product of the human spirit. With the dawn of the nineteenth century rationalism lost vogue with Christian thinkers, but it began to find its way into the midst of the Jews of western Europe. Many Jewish scholars came under its sway. And so there arose such practises as the investigation of the Scriptures and the seeking for improvements in the Jewish religion. Scholars in Israel decided that whatever in the Scriptures was not compatible with the

understanding was a fraud. They rejected the miracles. For example, they concluded that the Red Sea had not divided but that the Israelites crossed when it was low tide. Luzzatto beheld in the rationalism of his contemporaries, which was characterized by an eagerness to share in the culture and progress of the world at large,--he beheld in this rationalism the seeds of contempt for the Jewish people.¹ Luzzatto felt that rationalism saw nothing original or primary in Judaism, that it considered the whole of Judaism, its customs and statutes, as borrowed from other peoples. He believed that the rationalism current in Jewish circles had as its prime purpose the elimination of all distinctiveness in the Jews and their taking on the aspect of the surrounding peoples. This rationalism, in his eyes, wished to see the teachings of Judaism made into a science like Christian theology, "the synagogues become temples like those of the Protestants, and the education, life, death, and customs of the Jews made like those of the Christians." He believed that the Jews were gradually proceeding toward Christianization, that they were honoring the external and changing everything, that the abstractness, plainness, simplicity and truth of Judaism were being transmuted into a hypocrisy of beautiful forms without any content or substance.² This desire to imitate the nations Luzzatto attributed to an astounding lack of national pride on the part of Jews. In other words, he attributed it to that lowliness of Jewish soul which does not recognize its superiority. Formerly, as Luzzatto saw it, the Jews regarded the peoples of the earth as walking in darkness and he blessed God for keeping him separate from them. The old Jew, despite oppression and contempt, was content with his lot, for he was convinced that truth was with him and he had that joy of heart which eclipses all pleasures. The former Jew, convinced of the truth of his faith and its righteousness, was glad all his days. The language the Jew of old used was Hebrew, because he wrote only for the sake of himself and his people. But, Luzzatto argued, times had changed. No longer did Jews write in Hebrew but in Italian, German, French and

1. Epist. Nov. 26, 1838

2. Epist. Mar. 1856.

English, so that it was impossible not to consider what the non-Jews might say. The self-esteem and inner pride were gone. While a few Jews of the time, particularly in Germany, had courageously undertaken the defense of the rights of the Jew as a man, still none evinced a genuine national pride. ^{HAVING} Having lost this pride and self-respect, the Jews were seeking to find favor in the eyes of the gentile. Thus reasoned Luzzatto. It appeared to him that, thanks to the influence of rationalism, Judaism and the Jewish people were in a parlous condition. Jewish sages of western Europe were devising plans to escape from Judaism; the breath of life had left the religion; Israel's best sons had forsaken it; and those who were still faithful to it were not in spirit abreast of their generation.

Believing, then, that rationalism was doing great damage to all the holy things of Israel and seeing in rationalism the inevitable destruction of pure Judaism, Luzzatto, as an ardent lover of Judaism and the Jew, naturally became a bitter foe of rationalism. Here we have the explanation of his espousal of anti-intellectualism. Klausner mistakenly reverses the sequence when he says that due to his belief in illusion, Luzzatto had to oppose the extreme rationalism which prevailed in Judaism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹ Rather, as I have sought to demonstrate, it was his experience of the effects of the rationalism prevalent in Judaism that made Luzzatto a believer in the validity of illusion, an anti-intellectualist. The philosophers' objective speculation with truth as the goal was vehemently opposed by Luzzatto. He claimed to have read all the ancient philosophers in the course of some twenty four years, and he asserted that as he grew more and more familiar with them, he found greater and greater deviations from the truth in their views. He felt that despite the thousands of books which had been written about philosophy, the philosophers did not agree about a single thing or subject and were guilty not only of going astray but of misdirecting their pupils. But the man of the common people,

1. Jahdus Ved-Amushyus, p. 56.

who does not know philosophy or speculation, will be delivered by the natural intellect from many confusions into which the philosopher will fall. Philosophy, Luzzatto felt, diminishes the joy of life; it dries up the hearts of the people and robs them of their sentiments. Greek philosophy, far from making those who study it happy and better, converts their natural joy to grief and their native goodness of heart to a spirit of malevolence. Philosophic beliefs, such as Spinoza's, for example, give man's heart no joy and remove him from his position as the center of creation without providing him with a perfect law by which he can live. Here is implied Luzzatto's assumption that it is the aim of civilization and education to make men better and happier. With Rousseau and Tolstoi, Luzzatto claims that this purpose is not being realized, that the vaunted progress of the race is without basis in fact. He asks whether, despite all the attempted improvements of mankind, wars have diminished, or thefts, or murder, or poverty, or misery, disease, jealousy, envy and premature death. He declares that though man perfects his modes of work (the art of weaving, printing, farming) and though he perfects wagons, ships, roads, laws, precepts, etc., still, he does not perfect himself.

It is clear then, argues Luzzatto, that the prosperity of man and his happiness are not to be attained through the progress of the search for knowledge. Not through ~~cognition~~ ^{knowledge} of the truth but through illusion does society actually exist and does man have prosperity. Nature deceives us in many ways.¹ It conceals from us the knowledge of future troubles. If nature did not thus delude us, society could not endure. For, to cite but one example, if young men knew the hardships involved in the rearing of children, not one in a thousand would get married. But through the instrumentality of the desires of the body, nature draws men out of their repose to attain an imaginary goodness which, when it actually comes, proves to be a chimera. Thus nature is concerned not with the teaching of the truth but with social utility. Nature deludes us because otherwise we would not desire, we would not act. Wretched, indeed, we would be if the veil of illusions were torn away.² But faith turns all evil into something

1. Igros V. No. 267

2. Epist. Jan. 30, 1852

salutary.

salubrious. Everything is useful, for nature is concerned with utility, not truth.¹

This notion, to wit, that man seeks the satisfaction of his desires and acts only through illusion, the instrument wielded by nature, is to be found in the writings of Schopenhauer and is, indeed, a fundamental principle of pessimistic philosophy. But in the instance of Luzzatto, the notion does not lead to pessimism. On the ~~contrary~~ Luzzatto votes nature beneficent because of its pleasant-sweet illusions which enable man to live in hopeful longing for the good. And in whatever situation man may be, pain is never his full allotment; he always receives half pleasure and half pain.

Thus convinced of the good of illusion and the corresponding evil of truth-seeking, Luzzatto was persuaded that clear objective speculation into the nature of substances for the purpose of ascertaining the truth alone was not of much worth, even though it was dear to the Greek philosophers and to Spinoza, Kant and Schopenhauer. As a "philosopher of life", to use Klausner's epithet, Luzzatto believed, with Rousseau, Carlyle and Tolstoy, that man is the center of creation, that the true good is the social good of man and that knowledge is to be sought only insofar as it enhances the good of the human family. The philosophers of life have no use for wisdom for the sake of itself. They are interested only in what contains a benefit for man. Luzzatto says: "Cursed be knowledge, if it teaches us only deceit and folly and does not increase righteousness. May wisdom and intellect perish if they remove righteousness and pity from our midst."² Actions, then, are more important than learning, and practical truth is more fundamental than abstract speculative truth. Whereas speculative philosophers have abstract fixed systems and therefore force existence and facts to fit into their systems of thought, philosophers of life, if given new points of view and conflicting data, contradict their old opinions and refashion them. The latter have no completed, closed systems. And since their philosophy is taken from life, and since ~~their~~ ~~philosophy~~ life is replete with conflicts, oppositions and contradictions, it is only natural that contradictions should be found in their philosophy. Further-

1. Epist. March 15, 1853:

2. Jah. Ve-- p. 64.

more, speculative philosophers, asserting that truth in itself is worth while, believe that everything is important, because everything is a portion of what exists, and they are interested in determining the nature of all existent substances. There are for them, therefore, no trivial or insignificant matters. They hold knowledge about worms valuable, as well as knowledge about celestial bodies.

But Luzzatto distinguished between important and unimportant truth.

Investigation to him was for a purpose. The prime purpose of his own researches was to produce a national and societal benefit. His investigations, far from being an end in themselves, had ^{as} ~~in~~ their avowed aim the increasing of his love for Judaism, the shedding of light on the value of Jewish literature, the bolstering up of the national pride and the defense of the Jewish faith through a protecting of its spirit and express nationalism. He announced his intention of battling against the dissolution of the Jewish people. He devoted his life to the renovation and revivification of Judaism, to raising it from its lowliness to the position it deserved. With these purposes in mind, Luzzatto delved into the history and theory of Judaism. He had ~~and~~ intense desire to ascertain the source, the essence, of the spiritual strength of the Jewish people. By his seventeenth birthday, he had devoted himself to a zealous study of the entire Hebrew literature, biblical, Talmudic, poetical, philosophical and Kabbalistic. By virtue of this early familiarity with the literature and by reason of his keen feeling for the Hebrew language, Luzzatto was able to sense the slowest pulse-beat of the Jewish spirit. When he was a lad of seventeen his opinions on the problems which revolved about his basic quest, namely, the essence of the spirit of Judaism, already had begun to shape themselves.

II - THE GOAL OF JUDAISM

While Zunz and Rapoport were, together with Luzzatto, pioneers in the work of establishing a science of Judaism, Luzzatto was the only one to carry on investigations along the lines of the philosophy of religion. It was his method to consider the character of religion generally, its purposes and doctrines, and to determine, in the light of that consideration, the merits of Judaism, as compared with other religions and with extra-religious thought and practice. Proceeding in this manner toward an estimate of Judaism, he set out with the initial and fundamental declaration that the prime purpose of religion is the establishment of the good and the moral, in contradistinction to the purpose of philosophy, which is the acquisition of truth.¹ A human being has not only ~~intelligence~~ intellect but also a marked poetic strain. He lives a life of feeling and emotion. Poetry predominates in him; it is his very life and soul. Religion was given man to guide the poetry innate in him in the direction of the good. Religion, then, has as its task not the elevation of the intellect through perceptions and judgments but the forming of character through doctrine and prescription; and whatever religion offers in the way of elevating the intellect is offered with the object of ennobling man's will and of creating in him the desire to fulfil the authentic purpose of religion, to wit, the effecting of the good. Real religion is accordingly not a science of divine things, but an inner belief which expands in moral acts that are either spontaneous, as in natural religion, or determined by law, as in revealed religion.² Religion, then, is not dear to God because of its truth, but because of its beneficial influences on man's morals.³ And since the real value of religion lies in its effect upon the morals, rather than in its truth, it follows that it is not necessary that all of religion's words be true.⁴ This theory of religion

1. Igros. VI 780 and throughout Luzzatto's writings.

2. Epist. Mar. 6, 1839

3. Igros. V, No. 267

4. Igros V, No. 267

Luzzatto found corroborated in the instance of Judaism. The peculiar final goal of Judaism, as revealed in Jewish literature, is, he declared, not so much truth as morality. Here we have the leit-motif of all of Luzzatto's thinking on the subject of Judaism. In Judaism everything is intended to serve the good, to inflame the heart to virtue; the world being made entirely for man, everything is subordinate to moral perfection.¹ The spirit of Judaism has to do not with the revealing of new ~~agnitional~~ truths but only with the law of life and morals which all the people should follow. Not the speculative truths it teaches but the social righteousness it inculcates is what renders Judaism pleasing and dear to God. "The purpose of the Torah is not to teach people knowledge and wisdom but to cause them to walk in the paths of righteousness."² Judaism is not a theoretical doctrine for the spreading of scientific instruction and the furthering of speculative truths; it is a practical discipline intended to ennoble man.³ Both Mosais and Talmudic Judaism are designed to form a virtuous and happy society.⁴ In a word, the goal of Jewish teaching is "the ethical ideal condition of man and of the world." Israel never produced speculative truths but only truths beneficial to society in general and more particularly to the Jewish people.

The essence of Judaism, Luzzatto held with Mendelsohn, hinges on doing, not believing. The Jewish teachers never sought to establish a confession of faith. The Sinaitic revelation was not intended to impart rational perceptions or dictums. Moses did not dictate articles of faith, because God does not command belief, because, indeed, true belief ^{cannot be} requires no command⁵. Of the Mosais laws, none reads "Believe" or "Do not believe", but all read "Do" or "Do not do."

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1. Epist. Feb. 26, 1844.
 2. Yesode Matorah p. 55
 3. Epist. July 3, 1839
 4. Epist. Dec. 5, 1837
 5. Epist. Mar 6, 1839

Even the תורה לא נאמרה כדבר שיש בו פקדון is not a command but an instruction: even in God's existence and unity we are not commanded to believe. Not only did Moses refrain from dictating articles of faith, but the prophets and early rabbis likewise refrained. While all of the books of sacred Scripture are regarded as of infallible authority and while the Pentateuch is obligatory without controversy, none of the scriptural books lays down articles of faith.¹ Judaism has no dogmas, no points of belief. It gives entire liberty of thought. It binds only the material actions, and it binds them through the prescription of religious duties, practices, and ceremonies. The Jew may reason as much as he cares to; he is held only to the observance of the divinely imposed practices. Maimonides was the first Jew to lay down articles of faith, says Luzzatto. He censures Maimonides for seeking, through his thirteen articles, to deprive the Jews of that liberty of thought which the Talmud--what with its eternal disputes--vouchsafed.² He attacks Maimonides for ascribing an immutability to the Talmudic decisions of which the Talmudists themselves never dreamed. He calls Maimonides to account for wishing to establish a fixed system, in contradistinction to the Talmud, which presents the modifications which the laws underwent in the course of the centuries. Thus Luzzatto saw in Maimonides an influence that was rigidly dogmatic and therefore not in consonance with the Jewish spirit. Luzzatto had to admit that the Talmud went as far as to threaten punishment to unbelievers and heretics, but he claimed that the punishment is threatened not for their opinions themselves, but for the crimes and sins which ordinarily are the consequences of those opinions.³ Unbelievers were never to be hated as such, according to the attitude of Bible and Talmud; Maimonides was the first to teach that they were to be hated as such.⁴ Luzzatto bitterly inveighed against what he considered the bent of Maimonides' teaching, for he was convinced that a religion which imposes practises is more advantageous to humanity than one which imposes dogmas or points of faith---than a religion which demolishes the

1. Epist. Mar. 6, 1839

3. Epist. May 4, 1832

2. Epist. Aug. 20, 1845

4. Epist. Apr. 13, 1832

principle that reasoning is permitted. Unreasoned dogmas, he argued, deprive man of his noblest prerogative, thinking. God in His law taught no doctrines repugnant to reason.¹ The Jew need not accept inconceivable dogmas. God might exact from us the sacrifice of our passions, perhaps, but never the sacrifice of sane reasoning.² Whatever dogmas there are in Judaism were established to promote virtuous actions and not vice versa.³ The practical which is predominant in religious life requires the help of religious truths; it needs certain truths to gain authority and force. Still it needs only such truths, and we must therefore content ourselves with those truths upon which we base our doing and not-doing in life. The creed fostered by the Mosais law is, accordingly, simply that we be content with those rational proofs of moral certainty by which we permit ourselves to be guided in all the affairs of life. Religion commands us to obey only reason and human nature, which in turn command us to follow the moral certainty.⁴ The most cautiously minded men are guided in their conduct by the moral certainty provided by Providence in the form of good sense and inner sentiment. Philosophers, as well as the common run of men, must in their conduct rely on the testimony of these faculties (sense and sentiment). The faith demanded by true religion is, then, merely the rational acquiescence in the dictates of moral certainty, which guides us in all the affairs of life.

Philosophical speculation, however, is not satisfied with this inner subjective moral certainty, although it can accomplish nothing when it tries to go beyond that. Hence Luzzatto's ~~intense antipathy~~ antipathy to philosophic speculation. He declared intellectualism an erroneous policy and alien to real Judaism. "All metaphysical investigations," he writes toward the end of his life, "are above the power of man, and we derive from them only controversies and chatter without end. And all this is far from the ways of Judaism." Recognizing that

1. Epist. May 4, 1832

2. Epist. June 25, 1860

3. Epist. Apr. 13, 1832.

4. Epist. May 4, 1832

Judaism was not a dogmatic or philosophic faith, he declared publicly that whoever sought to combine the Torah and philosophy only succeeded in doing injury to both.¹ In men of faith feeling, not intellect, predominates. Judaism is not a philosophy but a faith. In Judaism matter is the slave of the mind, the heart, and love; so physical verity, historical truth, and philosophy are nothing to Judaism. The commotion of soul and warmth of heart that characterize Judaism exclude objective speculation. Luzzatto believed that faith and knowledge cannot be reconciled and that it was the grievous and unpardonable mistake of Maimonides and his associates to seek to bring philosophy within the borders of the Jewish faith. Luzzatto's antipathy for philosophy is manifested in his asking why future rabbis should not study moral and religious works such as the Pardee, Etz Chayim, and Mishneth Hasidim, instead of philosophic works like Ikkarim, the Cuzari and the eight chapters of Maimonides.²

In philosophic speculation Luzzatto perceives not the Jewish but the Hellenic spirit (substituting the term "Atticism" for the more familiar one of "Hellenism.") Luzzatto, like Heine, saw in Atticism and Judaism two opposing systems. The civilization of his time appeared in his eyes as the product of these two antithetical cultures in combination. To Judaism, he says, mankind owes religion, the morality of the heart and of unselfishness, and the love of the good. To Atticism mankind owes philosophy, art, sciences, the evolution of reason, the love of the beautiful and great, symmetry, and rational calculation. Man is endowed with heart and mind, and whereas Judaism cultivates the heart primarily, Atticism cultivates the mind.³ All the evil in the world is to be attributed to intellectualism, to the reflection and cogitation of the Greek people, to Atticism. Not that Luzzatto regarded all of Greek culture as bad. He praised it for its clearness and order and its investigating of nature and its seeking out natural causes, as well as for its love of what is above nature and its ascribing of all events to the prime cause.⁴ Still, he felt that many of the meritorious

1. Jah. Ve. p. 62

2. Epist. July 6, 1820

3. Epist. Jan. 21, 1864

4. Jah. Ve. p. 75

elements of Judaism inherited by the modern world are lacking in Atticism, such as unselfish morals, love of modesty, contempt for glory, fear of heaven, meekness, saying little and doing much, and wisdom for the sake of others. True, the Greeks had a code of morals and Aristotle wrote books about the good and bad attributes and virtues. But the Hebrew moral code and the Greek moral code are altogether different. Says Luzzatto: "The way of God which Abraham taught his children is not the mediating way which Aristotle taught. The way of Aristotle is the way of the intellect and reckoning, and its purpose is our own benefit and attaining honor from men. The way of Abraham is the way of love and kindness and its purpose is the good of others and the obtaining of God's favor." ¹ So Atticism breathes an interested and vainglorious morality, a garrulous and sophistic philosophy, and the cult of the beautiful, the magnificent, the apparent, instead of the good, the true, the real. ² Judaism, however, speaks to the heart and commands deeds that are disinterested, that are opposed to all reckoning. Judaism alone, therefore, is fit to establish a righteous and happy society.

So much for Luzzatto's view of the central purpose of Judaism (in contrast to that of Atticism) as a powerful force for a man's moral salvation. A word must be appended as to the justice of some of his basic assertions in this connection, such as the assertion that biblical and rabbinic Judaism, being concerned only with the practise of the good, with morality, have no commands to belief. It is my own opinion that Luzzatto's argument here is well sustained and altogether warranted by the facts. As to the sharp antithesis between Atticism and Judaism to the depreciation of the former, it is scarcely valid, in my belief. While intellectualism rendered the morality of Aristotle calculating, it is unfair to say that the whole Greek morality was thus. As a matter of fact, more than one Greek thinker sponsored a morality fully as disinterested and fine as the Jewish; and it is a very dubious proposition that the real Greek spirit is embodied in Aristotle and not in men like Heraclitus.

1. *Jesode* p. 15. Note

2. *Epist.* Aug. 13, 1839

III. JUDAISM IN ITS SUPERNATURAL BEGINNINGS.

Luzzatto subscribed to supernaturalism in religion, to the notion, that is, of a supernaturally revealed religion. This attitude is in direct opposition to rationalism, which is poles apart from the belief in revealed religion. It is easier, Luzzatto said, to persuade an atheist to become a deist than to persuade a deist to admit a revealed religion.¹ Viewing all the conflicts raging among the Jewish scholars of his day as ultimately reducible to the conflict between rationalism and supernaturalism, he put forth polemic writings in defense of the latter. While he was conscious that the belief in a revelation was not an affair of his day and that no young man of any culture could be induced to subscribe to the belief, he was convinced of the utility and necessity of revealed religion and also of its reasonableness.² As we have seen before, there is an innate law which imposes on man the maintenance of himself and the furthering of his own well being and which at the same time impels him to help the suffering, to love righteousness, to make himself worthy of esteem. This "natural law" or "natural morality" serves as men's guide. No man waits for absolute mathematical certainty before deciding on an action. Men take as their standard and guide this moral certainty which comes to them, without syllogisms and analogies, through the sound common sense and the assent or contradiction of the inner feeling. But this natural law often lacks the effectiveness to keep men in the path of virtue. Natural desires may swerve him from that path, since there is not powerful sanction for that natural law. Then too, men are apt to leave the path of virtue if only the natural law is operating, for the reason that the inexperienced will not consider properly the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortune of the righteous, for most men would never come to know of rewards and punishments if these were to be seen only with the mere natural eye.³ Only the express will of God revealed through prophets can make the natural law effective, for it prevents a confounding of one's own desires with the demands of natural law, and it provides natural law

1. Epist. Feb. 21, 1839

2. Epist. Sept. 2, 1836

3. Israelitische Moral Theologie, par. 13.

with an effective sanction, since the reward and punishment announced by a God who is omnipotent are certain to be effectual.¹

God's problem was to determine to whom the revelation should be given, so that it might be profitable to mankind. Since God does not compel human reason, it would avail nothing for Him to reveal Himself to heathen peoples, for whoever believes in many gods cannot, even when he heard God's voice announcing His unity, get away from the thought that at some time or other another god will reveal himself to him. So God would not reveal Himself to heathens, for they can speak face to face with God without being convinced. It was necessary, then, that God reveal Himself to one who was already a believer in the one and only God, who is providential and omnipotent. Could there, however, be anybody with such a belief, prior to a revelation? Yes, there could, for man, through his personal wisdom and perception alone, can arrive at natural religion (as did, for example, the Noahites), and natural religion includes such truths as the existence of God, His unity, His omnipotence, and His Providence. However, man had fallen into polytheism, with the depraved customs to which polytheism led. Only Abraham was found to profess monotheism, he having turned from idolatry and come to the monotheistic idea through his own reason and insight.² Since, therefore, Abraham was the only one whom God could find to whom He could reveal Himself to the profit of mankind, God chose Abraham for His revelation. Abraham was thus enabled to evolve a faith based on truth and leading to humanity and justice. God, anxious that this spark should not die out, blessed Abraham and made a covenant with him and placed a sign on his flesh forever, so that Abraham might command his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord, to exercise love and justice. So that Abraham's seed should not mingle with the nations of idol worshippers but should preserve its identity and conserve for the benefit of humanity the sacred heritage amid the general aberration, God commanded circumcision for Abraham's descendants.³

1. I.N.T. Par. 15

2. Epist. May 25, 1832

3. Epist. May 25, 1832

Thus it came about that God's revelation, intended for the benefit of the entire human race, came to the Hebrew people. No other people had the idea of a one God, superior to all.¹ Israel alone was untouched by the universal depravity, and so God revealed Himself to Israel in order to keep it firm in virtue and for the salvation of the world.²

Revealed religion, then, began with Abraham. From heaven he received only the commandment of circumcision. The remainder of his religion he arrived at of his own accord. He taught the monotheistic idea which is brought to expression only through the activity of love and justice. The religion he commanded to his descendants was the worship of the one God, to whom one renders oneself acceptable by practicing the social virtues,--justice and humanity. In his religion there was no ritual other than circumcision and the spontaneous use of the sacrifices current then among all nations.³ The existence of God, His unity, His omnipotence His providence, and the immortality of the soul were all recognized by Abraham and taught by him to his family. The three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) believed in one God who is the possessor of heaven and earth, who is judge over the entire earth, who rewards the good, who requites the wicked for their evil deeds, and who protects those who reverence Him.⁴ The three patriarchs believed in miracles, wonders, angels, prophecy.⁵ They believed in the resurrection of the dead and in the continued existence of the soul, as evidenced by the fact of their determining their burial place.⁶ The conduct which Abraham commanded to his descendants as being God-like was, as is revealed in Genesis 18:19, to practise justice and righteousness.⁷

1. Epist. Dec. 26, 1856

2. Epist. May 25, 1832

3. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

4. Yesode, p. 15

5. Yesode, p. 15.

6. Yesode, p. 15.

7. Yesode, p. 15.

This religion of Abraham sufficed so long as his descendants did not grow beyond the ~~fm~~ proportions of a family, a tribe. But when in the course of time the tribe of Israel expanded into a nation it formed a far more complicated society than it had been, and its contacts with heathen neighbors grew very numerous and therefore a relapse into polytheism menaced. The need thus arose for a legislation and instruction designed to keep Israel in virtue and in prosperity and in adherence to the ancestral religion despite the example of the ~~xxx~~ surrounding peoples.¹ This legislation and instruction were provided in the Mosaic revelation. Moses as an organ of the divine will did not teach a new religion. He did not lead a people to whom the religious idea was new. The substance of Judaism was already known; it was known since the time of Abraham; Moses, for the benefit of future generations, described its character by recording the history of the three patriarchs.² All that the Mosaic revelation sought to do was to transform the family religion of Abraham into a national religion. The revelation does not announce any new truth or dogmas; it simply imposes new practises, new ceremonies. It does not propose a new morality; it only provides a code which and justice taught by Abraham develops and sanctions the principles of humanity/for his descendants were expected to be the bearers of the moral world view.³ The mosaic prescriptions and ordinances have as their purpose the promoting of the morality and felicity of the new nation, and the perpetuation of the religion of Abraham. Likewise, whatever revelations occurred after the time of Moses had as their purpose the preservation of the religion of Abraham.⁴ Actually then, the religion of Abraham (which Luzzatto calls Abrahamism) differs from that of Moses (Mosaism) only formally, not materially. In the former are contained all the essential elements of the latter, the intellectual elements as well as the ethical. Judaism should

1. Yesode p. 18--19

2. Yesode p. 15.

3. Epist. Mar. 6, 1839

4. Epist. May 9, 1839

therefore be called "Abrahamism" rather than "Mosaism", for it originated with Abraham. "Religion was given to the children of Israel as an inheritance from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the children of Israel did not learn it from Moses. This is proved by all the references in Exodus to the God of the patriarchs."¹

It may be noted parenthetically that due to his theory of Abrahamism, Luzzatto was not in the least troubled by the question of the pre-existence of the Torah before the time of Moses. All the ancient philosophers and commentators were agitated by this question, for if the Torah had no such pre-existence, how could it have been observed by the patriarchs, particularly Abraham? This worry did not exist for Luzzatto, for in the light of his theory, Judaism existed at the time of the patriarchs and so could be observed by them. Thus Luzzatto was not constrained to adopt the fanciful notion of a pre-existent Torah, which implies the existence of primary matter--in other words, an infinite thing. All that exists was created by God; and "God cannot create an infinite thing", says Luzzatto.²

Part and parcel of Luzzatto's belief in a supernatural Judaism was his literal belief in the divine origin of the Torah (כי' כן נאמר בנביא) in prophecy, and in the miracles. He wondered how people can call themselves doctors of theology who publicly deny these three beliefs.³ In defending these tenets Luzzatto recognized that he had a hard fight on his hands, because the spirit of his age (the spirit of investigation as opposed to faith) was against him.⁴ He defended the divinity of the Torah because he was convinced that this belief had saved Israel from assimilation and that if we say that all or part of the Torah was written generations after Moses, there will be nothing to prevent our children from being drawn away from their religion.

In prophecy, likewise, Luzzatto believed. He labeled as a bit of folly

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1. Yesode, p. 15.
 2. Epist. May 4, 1832
 3. Igros. II No. 78b.
 4. Igros II, "o.79

Eichhorn's statement that all the alleged prophecies of the Bible were prophecies after the event, ^{on the} per contrary, he insisted, the prophets gloried in being able to know the future. ¹ And again, Luzzatto refuted Jost's assertion that it was not in the power of the prophets to know specific future events. ² And Moses, Luzzatto believed, was a true prophet, because everything he prophesied was established either before his death or after it. ³ For the miracles, like the revelation generally, Luzzatto sought no explanation; he simply accepted them as a believer and discovered their foundation in the omnipotence of God. ⁴ The rational explanation of the miracles he rejected; his belief in them was literal and absolute. He regarded them as changes by God in the ~~the~~ established order of creation. Thus he attacks Eichhorn's attempt at explaining away rationally the Egyptian miracles of the plagues as plagues which were accustomed to come over the land of Egypt from year to year. "Can you have any greater madness than this?" he asks. ⁵ The miracles and wonders which Moses performed before all the people actually changed the order of creation. By means of those miracles God authorized the mission of Moses already referred to, for the occurrence of these miracles was sure to relieve the Israelites of Moses's day of their doubts as to the truth of his mission. ⁶ The beholding of the plagues and wonders of Egypt strengthened the faith of the people. They knew then that they were not being deluded or tricked, because for Moses, say, to bring down the manna by some trick would require that the people be blind. ⁷ Likewise, by the same token, posterity was thus prevented from suspecting that the contemporaries of Moses were deceived. The historic truth of the performed miracles is confirmed, if confirmation is needed, by the tradition of the whole nation, whose religious ceremonies are a continuous testimonial to the truth of the ancient national

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1. Igros II, No. 78b
 2. Igros V, No. 249
 3. Igros, June 21, 1819
 4. Ciudaismo Illustrato I, 5.
 5. Igros II, No. 78b.
 6. Igros Epist. May 4, 1832
 7. Igros June 21, 1819

history, which, of course, includes the occurrence of the miracles.¹

The Abrahamism theory which Luzzatto promulgates offers certain difficulties. It is thoroughly controverted by modern biblical criticism, which has demonstrated, with a convincingsness far surpassing Luzzatto's, that the Abraham story, with the attitudes and beliefs it reflects, is a product of a comparatively late age; that, indeed, Abraham himself is a fictitious character invented after the establishment of the nation; that the so-called Mosaic code embodies in large measure religious views by no means materially identical with the religious views reflected in the Abraham narrative; that, indeed, the legislation ascribed to Moses was not actually his work but the work of various men who lived long after the Israelitish nation came into being. What is more, this theory of Abrahamism is not in consonance with traditional Judaism, either. For to say that Mosaism gave Judaism nothing new is to oppose the traditional Jewish view that Moses was the founder of the religion and that the ten commandments of Moses constitute the basis of Judaism. Likewise, the Talmud regards the patriarchs as having observed the Torah of Moses before it was given to the people,--which fact shows that the Talmud considers the Mosaic laws as the foundation of Judaism.

But even within its own limits and apart from its disparity with biblical criticism and traditional Judaism, Luzzatto's theory of Abrahamism is open to attack. Thus, if, as Luzzatto admits, the Noahites, who lived before Abraham, possessed natural religion with its truths about God's unity, omnipotence, Providence, etc, would it not be expected that God would have revealed Himself to them and not have waited until Abraham came on the scene, thus losing time in the all-important project of helping men to adhere to the principles of morality? This, as I see it, is a serious objection to Luzzatto's whole argument as to the rise of revealed religion. A lesser criticism also suggests itself,--a criticism that pertains to a mere detail of Luzzatto's argument. In his anxiety to find all that he deems fundamentals of Judaism in the narrative of the patriarchs, Luzzatto

1. Epist. May 4, 1832

says that the patriarchs believed in resurrection and immortality. He infers the presence of these beliefs from evidence that is altogether inconclusive and arbitrary. Actually, they are not present in the narrative of the patriarchs at all.

IV - - - - THE MORAL CODE

Luzzatto is a homocentrist. He believes that the body of man is more appropriate and prepared for the resting of the divine Presence than is any other thing.¹ Whereas every species of animal has an inclination or preparation for some particular trait (e.g. the dog is faithful, the fox cunning), man has no one specific characteristic. The characteristic of each animal is found in some man or other; man, then, has all potentialities, just as God has. But in man these powers are separate from one another, and when we say man is in the image of God, we mean he is like God insofar as he is God, insofar as he develops his potentialities, which are all possessed by God. From birth, in the germ as it were, man bears with him virtuous inclinations, and these require wise guidance.² (This view, which Luzzatto favors and which he says, is the view of Judaism, is, it should be noted, in opposition to the Christian dogma of original sin [the degeneration of all nature as the result of the sin of the first man] and is opposed also to the statement in Genesis: כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֱלֹהִים וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֱלֹהִים.)

The concept of the God or gods one worships ultimately determines what manner of guidance one's virtuous inclinations receive and so exercises the profoundest influence on one's morals.³ Hence Jeremiah (Jeremiah 9:23) regards it as men's greatest praise to arrive at a correct recognition of God,--a recognition which is intended not for God's honor but for man's betterment.⁴ A polytheistic god conception is plainly harmful to morality. When many gods are thought to exist, none of them can be conceived as an eternal perfection, for if one of them is considered, e.g., perfect in power and in knowledge (omnipotent and omniscient), other gods are inconceivable.⁵ So in polytheism each god must be regarded as imperfect in some quality or other--imperfectly just or imperfectly righteous, etc. Thus it happened that the heathens, worshipping imperfect gods, gods with faults, gods given over to crime, committed shameful acts and palliated their own immorality

1. Igros. Jan 17, 1822

2. I.M.T. par. 14.

3. I.M.T. par. 23

4. I.M.T. par. 25.

5. I.M.T. par. 23.

by pointing to the examples of gods. Morality requires, then, a god-concept,-- but a god-concept that includes perfection as an attribute. And the idea of a perfect god is possible only in monotheism. God's unity, then, must be recognized first of all. God must be recognized also as a God of perfect mercy, justice and humanity, so that these qualities may serve as the guides of our lives.¹ Furthermore, God must be recognized as a personal God, from whom comes every inclination, the God of all mankind, whose providence is unquestioned. Luzzatto believes with the Talmudists that God in His justice will exact reckoning for every action,² and he believes implicitly in the Biblical statement (Deut. 10:17-19) that God does righteousness to the orphan and widow, giving them their bread and loving them.³ In a word, he believes in a personal specifically providential God. What is more, he believes that God must be recognized as relative and anthropomorphic.⁴ The unalterable, impassive, inflexible God of philosophy, who determined everything ab aeterno could never be the object of our worship, love, fear, and prayers. Religion inevitably offers us, then, the idea, not of an infinite God, but of a God relative to our needs and fitted to make us better and to comfort us in our misfortunes. Luzzatto, accordingly, felt that anthropomorphism and anthropopatism⁵ are wise methods, since they tend to reduce the God-idea to the level of the human intelligence, and since God, even if He had desired, could not give men an adequate idea of Himself.⁶

Fear of God is an indispensable aid to morality; indeed, without the fear of God morality would be a chimera.⁶ Through the fear of God we are able to arrive at goodness and happiness, the common desire of men. Whoever keeps God's commandments cannot possibly err or stumble; the righteous man, who obeys God, can never be handed over to actual misery and poverty.⁷ But the sinner, to feel

1. Intro to I.M.T. and I.M.T. par. 25

2. I.M.T. par. 79

3. E.M.T. par. 18

4. Epist. Aug 20, 1845

5. Epist. June 25, 1850

6. Epist. Mar 6, 1839

7. I.M.T. par. 132

secure, must flatter himself with the thought that he is unobserved by an omniscient God. The sinner is bound to be punished. The fear of God, then, is the essence of wisdom.¹ As stated previously, the cognition which God wants man to have of Him has as its object not His honor but man's betterment. Let us see how Mazzotto comes to this notion. If (he reasons) man's destiny is to serve God (conscientiously and voluntarily, of course), how does it happen that not all men, that indeed not a thousandth part of all men, fulfil their destiny?² Furthermore, the expression "to serve God" is fanciful, poetic, and hardly possessed of meaning, for God has no need of our service or labor and he can be neither harmed nor benefited by what we do. ~~Our purpose on earth, then, is benefited by what we do.~~ Our purpose on earth, then, is not to serve God; it is to serve man, to practice the social virtues toward man. Since God does not need our serviceful worship, it is clear that the laws ostensibly and formally having to do with the service of God must have as their real purpose making us practisers of virtue,--i.e., virtuous. And these laws do this by keeping alive in us the concept of God and Providence and by accustoming us to restrain our desires and to endure voluntary sacrifices, and to suffer privations patiently, so that we may be rendered superior to the passions and to the temptings of vice.³ Now since the exercise of the social virtues can produce nothing other than the well-being of human society and hence of all the individuals composing it, it must be apparent that the divine precepts, aside from any reward God may attach to their observance, are in and of themselves the cause of man's well-being.⁴ As indicated in Deut. XII, 13, III. 13 the purpose of the God-given laws is man's welfare. So then, just as the natural law imposes on man the attainment of his own good without harming his neighbor and even the furthering of the well-being of others by sacrificing a part of his own well-being, likewise the law of religion, the religious morality, the will of God expressed through His prophets, lays upon men the observance of the social virtues.⁵ The essential content of the divine law is, accordingly, the

1. Ignos. Jan 1, 1820

2. Epist. Jan 29, 1837

3. I.M.T. par. 21 and Epist. Mar 8, 1839

4. I.M.T. par. 20

5. I.M.T. par. 16.

practice of humanity and justice and of all other social virtues derived from them.¹

If the practise of humanity and justice and all other social virtues that derive from them is the essence of the moral law of religion, it follows that that feeling which, innate in man, is the root of those virtues must be aroused and strengthened. Pity is that root, in Luzzatto's estimation.² Here he follows Schopenhauer. Pity, or mercy, if you will (Luzzatto does not distinguish between them) is implanted in all men. "Everyone feels pain in his neighbor's hurt and does not rest until he helps and relieves him".³ Thus only pity can bring us to do good deeds without hope of reward. Pity is, then, the source of all genuine unselfish virtues, for it leads us to noble deeds, without any expectation of reward. So appeal to pity is manifestly the primary means for the improvement of morals. Those Greek philosophers who sought to find other means for improving the morals were in error and their work was to no avail. Philosophers who seek to guide men by means of intelligence and wisdom alone are opposed to nature.⁴ Thus with the philosophers who believed in the "categorical imperative", i.e., the compelling moral command to choose good and despise evil which man's intellect in its nature comprehends. But is this imperative implanted in every man? Surely not, else why is it that so many evil acts are committed by men? What, then, are those men to do who do not feel this inner dictate?⁵ Again, the principle that the right course for a man to select is the act that brings honor to its doer is of no help for the internal improvement of morals. And the despising of all the things of earth and the concentrating of one's thought on the attainment of wisdom and knowledge is not satisfactory either. It is wrong for all or most people to travel this road. Even if only one person in a thousand were to travel it, would that help society?⁶ It was Luzzatto's conclusion that none of the Greek

1. I.M.T. par. 17 and Epist. May 3^d, 1832 and elsewhere

2. Yesode p. 19

3. Yesode p. 19

4. Yesode p. 20

5. Yesode p. 22.

6. Yesode p. 23.

systems of moral thought was of much aid in directing the masses of people into the good path, since none of these systems bases itself on a universal natural foundation.

But the principle of pity, which the Greeks failed to use, can be used to advantage, for the pity feeling exists in some measure in every man by nature. The remembrance of our own sufferings gives us sympathy for those of others. Carousers who remove from sight the poor and the needy and other afflicted ones do so because they are troubled by the sight of these others, because their joy will be marred at hearing groans and they will thus involuntarily be put to grief. Luzzatto cites this fact as proof that pity is natural and innate in all men.¹ Even the cruellest of men are at times pitiful and merciful. Only the feeling of pity can make man choose the good and reject the evil, for a man whose heart aches at his neighbor's sorrow will not do evil to his neighbor but will try to show him kindness and help him. Pity, as suggested before, bears its reward in itself, in the peace and gladness it brings one through alleviating or abolishing the pains of other people. So, since it leads us to good actions without thought of ulterior reward, pity is the source of all genuinely unselfish virtues. Without pity man would be wise and shrewd, but always selfish. Pity, then, is the root of unselfishness, as well as of love and kindness. Likewise, righteousness and justice are only emanations of the feeling of pity, for if a man pities all men alike, he will show no favoritism but will see that all receive full justice.² So pity should have precedence over every other consideration,--pity toward the sufferings of others.³ If Pity, then, ought to be cultivated. If we wish to train a child in such a way as to improve his morals, we need only strive to make more vigorous the sense of pity innate in him, and we must attempt this by precept as well as by deed. We must accustom the child to accounts and acts of pity, and we must seek to make it hate acts of violence.⁴

Religion, particularly Judaism, implicitly recognizes the feeling of pity as the basis of morality, says Luzzatto.⁵ One of the fundamental principles employed by the Torah for the strengthening of the moral conscience of the individual and of society and for the impregnating of the moral world view in the

1. Yesode p. 24: 2. Yesode p. 24: 3. Intro to I.M.T. 4) Yesode p 24: 5. I.M.T par 18.

national nature was the feeling of pity.¹ The Mosaic revelation proves itself concerned with the development of the pity feeling, and with the actualization of merciful inclinations. The Torah trains us to act out of pity and grace, as in the instances of the laws of gleaning and of what is forgotten; of the corner of the field for the widow, the poor, and the orphan; and of the forbidding of usury.² Many of the Mosaic commandments appeal with express emphasis to this feeling of pity and seek to actualize the quality of mercy; e.g. Exodus XXII, 6: XXIII, 9: Leviticus XIX, 9, 10; Deuteronomy XV, 10: XXIV, 11: XXIV, 17, 18. If a creditor refuses to return his garments to the one who gave it to him as a pledge and who is unable to redeem it, philosophers will say he is justified. But the Torah, placing pity foremost as a consideration, says the creditor should not refuse to return the garment, for "in what shall he lie down?" Likewise, the Torah says a man should not refuse to lend money close to the beginning of the Sabbatical year, even though that year's advent does release debtors from the obligation of paying their debts.³ In the case of the Mosaic appeal to the creditor to return the garment he has held as pledge, it is a clear example of an appeal to the sentiments of people to renounce their rights, for the Mosaic doctrine comprehends the fact that morality, though founded on reason, is fruitless unless to it is added the stronger voice of sentiment.⁴ Pity, in truth, was so greatly esteemed by the Mosaic legislator that directly after the giving of the law he addressed himself to the laws pertaining to slaves and servants and modified quite a few of them in order to render better the lot of such people. Thus he enjoined a period of freedom for slaves, forbade the owner to kill or strike his slave, and provided that the servant be allowed to rest on Sabbaths and holidays.⁵ In contrast to all other ancient peoples, the Israelites gave their non-Israelitish slaves certain human rights; e.g., the protection by law of their life and bodily integrity, and the ruling that an escaped slave could not be delivered

1. Yesode, p. 18

2. Yesode, p. 25

3. Yesode, p. 26

4. Epist. I., 66

5. Yesode, p. 27

over to his master. Pity was commanded also toward women captured in war. Mosaic law enjoins pity not only towards human beings but toward animals. (Deuteronomy ^{KJV} 6-7; 22:4).., for such pity helps men in that it prevents them from becoming tyrannical.¹ Furthermore, the Talmud lays down the principle that every sort of cruelty to animals is forbidden by God's command. And to enhance the value of pity still more, the Torah ascribes the quality to God himself, calling Him gracious, merciful, full of compassion, etc. By making the feeling of pity an attribute of God, Judaism essays to win ^{our} better respect for and cultivation of this feeling as it exists in our own heart. Torture, although utilized by the majority of ancient and mediaeval legislations, was completely excluded in biblical and Talmudic law.² The only instance of the practise of torture in Israel was at the time of Herod, who was not of the seed of Israel. Even the death penalties specified in the Pentateuch are softened in traditional law ("And thou shalt love thy neighbor like ~~as~~ thyself; choose for him an easy and pleasant death"). Thus Judaism has always sought to appeal to and render active the feeling of pity. Only one form of pity is condemned by Judaism: pity which is exercised to conceal a crime, to cover up terrible inhumanity.³

With pity as the basis, the moral code of Judaism took on a highly social tone, in Luzzatto's estimation. It is the view of Judaism, he believed, that men should seek the good of society for its sake, not for their own sake. The general positive duties are to love your neighbor like yourself, to do him favors even if doing them leads to your discomfort, to practise kindness and charity toward all men, and to strive, like Aaron, to be a peacemaker.⁴ In a general way, there are the duties of justice and humanity, and these we must practise toward all human beings, toward friend and toward foe and without distinction as to race, color, religion, speech, etc., since all men are brothers, children of one Father, created in the image of God.⁵ Throughout his writings on religion Luzzatto furnishes proof that Judaism makes no distinction between Israelites and non-Israelites in regard to

1. Yesodey p. 28

2. Yesode p. 30

3. I.M.T. par. 18

4. I.M.T. par. 133-144

5. I.M.T. par. 34 and 137

just and humane treatment. Particularly thoroughgoing evidence of this is mustered in the introduction of the first part of the Israelitische Moral Theologie. He admits, however, that according to the Mosaic legislation, with regard to four practices, other peoples are to be treated differently from the Israelites, and these are as follows: (1) money may be lent at usury to foreigners; (2) money may be asked back from non-Israelitish debtors in the year of release; (3) only slaves who are Israelites are designated ~~as~~ to be dismissed as free after six years; (4) it is commanded only with reference to borrowing from Israelites that we should not cherish a grudge and should not avenge. But these four exceptions are only apparent exceptions, for they do not concern duty but only social custom, Luzzatto rightly or wrongly argues. The belief in the intrinsic superiority of the souls (hence of the people) of Israel over those of other nations is absurd and repellant to Luzzatto.¹ Israel did not hate all other nations, nor regard them as animals. But not only difference in blood but difference in religion and opinions does not justify us in hating or harming a man and does not release us from the fulfillment *Re-wind* of the general duties of humanity and justice toward him.² Luzzatto bitterly attacks Maimonides' statement that a man who has no correct conception of God but confesses polytheism is, as it were, not a man and has no immortal soul. Maimonides, he says, was only a philosopher and was influenced too much by Aristotle and therefore added on meager or no authority ~~xxxxxx~~ some intolerant statements about non-Jews instead of rejecting the few which are found in the Talmud.³ As a matter of fact, the Bible emphasizes the exercise of the greatest tolerance towards peoples of other nations with respect to all matters of faith and cult.⁴ The holiest personages in the Bible are represented as having made alliances and covenants of friendship with confessors of other religions. The prophets threatened the pagan peoples with punishment not because of their idol worship but because of their loose deeds. In no passage do the prophets reprove the other nations for their idol worship, but always

1. Epist. Aug. 23, 1829 and May 25, 1832

2. I.M.T. par. 42

3. I.M.T. par 26

4. I.M.T. par. 43

for injustice and inhumanity (see Amos I, 3--II,3)¹ And the Ninevite people escaped destruction without giving up their idols worship; they escaped it simply by bettering their conduct.

Of general negative duties, "Do not unto others that which does not please you" is the epitome.² Even though not expressly stated in the Bible because it is too general and indefinite, this principle is contained in the Torah in embryonic form. Judaism forbids the doing of anything which is harmful to others. The forbidden actions include (1) Those that are harmful to the physical sensibilities of others (e.g. murder, physical injury, passion, anger, enticement to commit wrong); and (2) those that are harmful to the moral sensibilities of others (e.g. adultery, slander, calumny, informing and all other harmful talk)³ Since the violence of a passion does not justify a crime, it follows that Judaism finds it desirable to demand of man the achieving of reasonable control over his inclinations by suppressing or moderating them at their incipency.⁴ All human inclinations may be guided by reason, by intelligence and foresight. Consideration and foresight are a religious duty.⁵ The Talmud says: "He who has no consideration deserves no pity" (Sanhedrin 92a).

Luzzatto believes that it is the dictate of the moral law of Judaism that every individual must strive to perfect himself and to attain his own well-being, and so he opposes the following statement of Wolf: "No man can perfect himself and his condition alone, but each one needs the help of his neighbor and this perfection can be gained only through united efforts."⁶ The biblical and Talmudic morality, were, in Luzzatto's opinion, divinely simple and plain. Luzzatto himself believed in the simple life, free from luxury and immoderate desires, and therefore free from the envious glances of others.⁷ But asceticism of all kinds is odious to Luzzatto. The rabbis, he says, did not praise celibacy but detested it as contrary to nature and inimical to society.⁷

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1. I.M.T. par. 43
2. I.M.T. par. 48
3. I.M.T. par. 71-93
4. I.M.T. par. 65
5. I.M.T. par. 97
6. I.M.T. par. 128
7. Epist. DLXXXV

The effect of the Mosaic morality with its foundation in the pity feeling was the insinuation of pity into the national Jewish character, so that mercy and humanity became a racial quality which constituted the glory of Israel in all centuries.¹ The sincerely religious Jew of Europe or Asia of the nineteenth century or the middle ages has always been a model of virtue.² (Luzzatto, it will be noted, has none of the characteristic snobbishness toward Jews of other countries than his own.) Yom Tov. 32 says: "Who has no pity is not a descendant of Abraham." The presence of mercy in Judaism distinguished it very sharply from Hellenism and Romanism. "Mercy is no Hellenic virtue", said Boeckh. And that the Roman world found no room for the principle is obvious when one recalls not merely the Roman national conceit toward all non-Romans (whom they called Barbarians) but also the gladiatorial contests, animal fights, and other spectacles in the circus and arenas which brutalized and dehumanized men.³ But in Judaism the whole moral structure rested on the feeling of pity--pity toward everything which lived. Every statement in Rabbinic literature which is anti-social and which conflicts with the principles of pity and toleration and love represents only the opinion of ~~many~~ individual rabbis and reflects the adverse local and temporal condition in the form of oppressions, false accusations, etc., in which those rabbis lived. No such anti-social statement represents the Jewish people as a whole or is a doctrine of Judaism, which is a religion which preaches pity and all the social virtues that spring therefrom.⁴

1. I.M.T. par. 19

2. Epist. Mar. 6, 1839

3. Yesode, p. 44

4. I.M.T. par. 40

V. THE CEREMONIAL CODE

In themselves, says Luzzatto, ceremonial acts mean nothing. It is their purpose that matters.¹ Insofar as they tend to yield social benefit, they are valuable. All the ritualistic practises commanded in the Torah promise to yield such benefit, for they all have as their purpose either the improvement of the morals of the Israelitish people or the safeguarding of the religion or both.²

The improvement of the morals is effected in sundry ways by the observance of the rites and ceremonies. Performed with the idea of obeying God, these acts recall to man or awaken in him the notion of God and His Providence and they thus make for moral elevation.³ Furthermore through necessitating self-denials and the overcoming of inclinations, the ceremonial laws help keep man in virtue, for discipline strengthens the moral fibre.⁴

And the ceremonial laws safeguarded the religion by conserving the memory and historicity of the events which served as the basis of our religion, by bringing Israelites in closer communion with one another, and by sharpening and maintaining the consciousness of calling in every individual Israelite.⁵ And in safeguarding the religion, ceremonial laws help also to promote morality, for they thus keep Israel firm in its devotion to its hereditary moral doctrines and segregated from other peoples who are infected with corrupt and harmful doctrines.⁶

Having thus attempted to establish in a general way the purposes and effects of the ceremonial prescriptions of Judaism, Luzzatto proceeded to a long discussion of the ritual laws and their benefits, particularly in his Yesode Hatorah, devoting in fact two-fifths of the actual text of that book to that discussion, and thus showing how important a place the ceremonial code occupied in his thoughts.

1. Epist. May 3, 1832

2. Yesode. p. 47

3. Epist. May 3, 1832. How the thought of God and His Providence further morality was indicated briefly in Chapter IV of this treatise and will be more fully shown in Chapter VI.

4. Epist. May 25, 1832

5. Epist. May 25, 1832

6. Epist. May 25, 1832

All the food prohibitions in the Bible, Luzzatto asserts, were designed to separate Israel and to sanctify the people of Israel as priests. These prohibitions were not prompted out of health considerations, for if such considerations were back of the food prohibitions, why was the camel forbidden, which is a good food for the Ishmaelites and in no way injurious? No, the food prohibitions are for reasons of holiness, not of health.¹ Adultery, sodomy and unchastity were forbidden for the sake of the prosperity of the home, and the improvement of the morals, and the general benefit of society.² Laws of leprosy and separation in connection with leprosy were enjoined, not because leprosy was considered a contagious disease (else how explain the fact that the Torah made no legislation about other diseases?), but because leprosy was looked upon as a sign of God's rebuke to a man for his sins.³ Likewise, the bodies of dead people are unclean because the death of a human being is a sign of reproof by God. But animals, not being subjected so much as men to Providence with its rewards and punishments, are not to be regarded as rebuked by God when they are killed by men; hence animals killed by men are not defiled.⁴

The sacrificial cult comes in for extended consideration at Luzzatto's hands. The sacrifices, he suggests, originated not in response to a commandment but by the will of the people. The people of Israel like all other peoples, spontaneously offered sacrifices, prompted by the desire to give thanks to God for His kindnesses to them or to bring a present so as either to appease His wrath or to win His favorable reception of their requests.⁵ This custom of offering sacrifices did not come in for abolishment in the Torah prescriptions,--not because the Torah was unable to abolish it but because sacrifices are not harmful but helpful to man.⁶ Although God is in no need of being honored by man He enjoined upon Israel the observance of the sacrificial cult in order that Israel might benefit thereby and the people might be rendered fearful of sinning. In those days people would not fear God unless there were sacrifices. If God, while commanding morality

1. Yesode, p. 48

2. Yesode p. 49

3. Yesode p. 51

4. Yesode p. 3

5. Yesode. p. 54

6. Yesode p. 55

and prayer and song, had not commanded sacrifices the Israelites would have thought that other nations' gods, since they were offered sacrifices, were greater and more honored than their own God who was worshipped only in words, for the people regarded as worthy of honor ~~and~~ one who honors himself. Thus the fear of God would have departed and the people would not make efforts to be righteous. To prevent such an occurrence God commanded the sacrifices. By carrying out the sacrificial laws the people became impressed with the conviction that God, the great king, was in their midst, that they were dear to Him, and that by fulfilling the demands of the sacrificial service according to His precepts they were becoming acceptable to Him.¹ It was the belief of Moses and of all Israel that the obedient spirit of the offerer of the sacrifice was what God took pleasure in, and not that the material sacrifice caused God to experience a pleasing sensation.² The Torah enjoined the having of one sacrificial place (i.e. one sanctuary) and forbade resorting to the high places, thus guaranteeing the purity of the service, whereas that purity could not have been maintained if each family or tribe had a sanctuary of its own.³ Likewise, a collective requital for the entire nation was prescribed by the Torah, all Israel being pledges for one another and the people being bound together by the feeling of brotherhood engendered through the circumstances of a common place and common time of worship.⁴ Individual sacrifices were instituted in order that God's providence might be impressed on the heart and that man might come to trust God and improve his conduct. If there were no such things as sin-offerings, unintentional sinners would despair of forgiveness and continue to sin. Thus sin-offerings help the unintentional sinner. And what is more, they are not open to attack on the ground that they encourage the intentional sinner on his evil path by assuring him of immunity, for those who sin intentionally cannot bribe God.⁵ Thus, to sum up, the sacrificial system (as Philo likewise believed, and despite the contrary opinion of the prophets)

1. Yesode pp. 55 and 56

2. Epist. Nov. 23, 1837

3. Yesode p. 57

4. Yesode p. 57

5. Yesode p. 59.

helped men to be virtuous and was on that account enjoined.

The Sabbath observance was instituted as a sign of Israel's covenant with God and, therefore, for the purpose of exalting Israel so that it might believe itself a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.¹ But the Sabbath has also an ethical aspect. The circumstance of all the people resting on one day benefits society; it tends to instil the feeling of brotherhood, it promotes a study of the Torah, and it makes for a democratic spirit by equalizing rich and poor, master and servant, small and great, in respect to the application of the law of rest.²

Likewise, the three pilgrimage festivals produce in their observance essentially the same moral benefits as the Sabbath. In addition they strengthen the people's trust in God, in His Providence, in His goodness and in His mercy.³

The year of release (Shemitah) was to indicate the holiness of the land of Israel, and was to be an incentive to the people not to defile the land or commit wicked deeds in it. The observance of the year of release tended to promote equality, to help the poor, and to arouse pity toward the poor through the fact of the declaring of the products of the seventh year to be public.⁴

Such commandments as those prescribing the use of Me zuzoth, Zitzith and Tefilin were intended to help preserve Judaism and to keep men conscious at all times of God and the Torah.⁵

Circumcision, while having no direct moral purpose, has an indirect one, in that it serves to keep separate and intact a race professing a sane morality from races professing corrupt doctrines and morals.⁶

1. Yesode p. 62.

2. Yesode p. 62

3. Yesode p. 63

4. Yesode p. 64

5. Yesode p. 67

6. Epist. May 26, 1832

VI - PROVIDENCE

Of the three principles employed by the Torah for the promoting of Judaism, pity is one. Pity, it will be recalled, is the specific means for the improvement of the morals. But while pity is the source and guiding force of all virtues, in itself it is not sufficient to cause man to adhere constantly and unconditionally to the requirements of the moral law. Its power does not suffice to enable man to ~~conquer~~ ^{conquer} his desires all the time, for a man is more prone to have pity on himself than on others, and so he will satisfy his wants even if he has to harm his neighbor to do so. The moral law needs, accordingly, an authoritative sanction and a strong prime motive. This is furnished only by a belief in a just and unfailing retribution,--i.e., in Providence. Belief in a ^Providence which rewards and punishes is, therefore, the second principle of the Torah. This belief at once helps to improve the morals and to preserve the Jewish religion. From this principle both morality and religion draw their effectiveness.¹

The Providence doctrine, as defined by Luzzatto, is the belief in "an eye which sees all, in an ear which hears all, in a book in which everything is noted down, in a requiting ~~and~~ ^{hand} which nothing can resist."² This belief, of course, is not commanded, for no belief can be commanded, Luzzatto, as is to be expected says. But the belief was simply placed before the Israelites by Moses as an idea gained, through heritage and tradition, from the patriarchs. Providence, like all other prime religious truths, had been perceived and taught by Abraham. The task of Scripture, then, was only to impress the dogma of Providence on the people's consciousness, so as to secure unconditional obedience to the moral law and so as to confirm and support the monotheistic teachings of Abraham. Israel perceived the rule of Providence in its freeing from Egypt, as an eye witness. But Providence is not confined to Israel; it rules over all nations.³ When Judaism speaks of the God of Israel or the "God of our fathers", it does not mean an exclusive, national God who

1. Yesode. p. 31.

2. Israelitische Annalen 1839, p. 237. *Reference to Pirke Aboth II:1*

3. Giudaismo Illustrato, I, 3, ff.

excludes other peoples from His Providence but it makes this designation because at one time only Israel worshipped Him. The God of Israel is not the God of the Jews alone; He is the God of all flesh. God's Providence extends over all peoples, and God's providential purpose in choosing Israel for His revelation was not for the benefit of Israel alone but for the benefit of all peoples.¹ But God's Providence is not only a general Providence extending over the human species in its aggregate of nations; it extends also over all the individual members of the species and over all the accidents of man. Providence is not being extended over the totality unless over all the individuals, for the totality is only a collection of individuals. A man cannot read a letter in its entirety without attending to every word and letter in it. If, then, there is Providence over the human species, there must necessarily be Providence over each and every member of that species and over all the individual actions of every member.² The most minute events are governed by Providence. "God looks down to see even the hyssop that grows on the wall".³ Providence may not be apparent in its actual workings, and men may complain against the seeming injustice of events. But though the wicked apparently prosper, they never have happiness, and though the righteous are in tribulation at times, they never lose their true happiness, their peace of heart.⁴ It is a matter of utmost importance to know that "the world was created by the purpose of an intender, and by great wisdom." Just as the creation of the body occurred by the divine wisdom, so the good and evil things which befall us occur by the divine wisdom and do not depend on accident.⁵ All so-called accidents are due to God's will. Israel, and all the other ancient peoples as well, ascribed all the accidents of man to the will of God. Hence the Israelites believed that it was due to the command of God that they plundered the Egyptians of jewels and vessels.⁶ But the question arises: If God thus commanded, did He not thereby teach the Israelites evil ways and encourage

1. Yesode Hatorah, p. 17 Note

2. Yesode, p. 38 Note

3. Igros. Sept. 30, 1818: This statement is reminiscent of the Talmudic dictum:
"Not a sparrow falls except by God's will"

4. Epist. Feb. 12, 1854

5. Intro. to Yesode P. 14

6. Yesode. P. 35

them in deceit and lying and leave a bad influence on their heart? Not so, for the only impression produced in the hearts of the Israelites when God instructed them to take the jewels and vessels of the Egyptians was that God requites man according to his actions, that He punishes the wicked, (e.g. the Egyptians) who oppress their neighbors, that He hates evil doers, and that He exacts vengeance for the oppressed (e.g. the Israelites.)¹ As to the instance of God's ordering the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites, no evil influence was thereby exerted on the former; the effect was to convince the Israelites of the certainty of punishment for evil-doing, the Canaanites meeting with destruction because of their wickedness.² And similarly in the matter of the destruction of the Amalakites. The prosperity or adversity of a people, the Israelites believed to depend on the decree of the God of Providence and not on accident. Thus all happenings are traceable to Providence.

But not only does Luzzatto believe that Providence governs the affairs of the world; he believes that the entire infinite series of events was foreseen and fore-evolved by the prime Cause in the act of creation.³ If, however, this view is held to, certain difficulties confront one, and these Luzzatto considers and tries to dispose of. In the first place, why did God create man, if in His omniscience He foresaw man's actions, including his crimes? To this question Luzzatto replies with the answer given by philosophers, though he hates philosophy. He says that even though God did foresee man's crimes, there was no reason why God should not create him since man cannot harm God and since, no matter how much a man may sin, the balance established by God between good and evil cannot be altered--a balance which makes all men equal before God, in that no man has an advantage over his neighbor but every living creature sees good as well as evil, prosperity as well as misfortune.⁴ The other difficulty in connection with the idea that the acts of Providence were arranged by God's will at creation is this: if God as an omniscient and omnipotent Being foresaw and fore-evolved everything that happens, how can there

1. Yesode pp. 32-33

2. Yesode p. 39

3. Epist. Dec. 8, 1856

4. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

room for free will? Luzzatto will not give up the belief in man's freedom of will and essays to show that God's omnipotence and omniscience do not exclude it, that both they and it exist. While God knows and foreknows all the thoughts and circumstances of man, man is free none the less, for man knows what he is doing and does what he wants to do. Man is thus free because he is obedient to motives and reasons. True liberty, then, far from excluding obedience to motives and reasons, requires such obedience. Man, then, has liberty even though God is omnipotent and omniscient.¹ / Man has freedom to do good or to do evil. The belief in free will is the very foundation of the Torah; and if free will were not assumed to exist, the world could not endure, for without that assumption, man could not be held responsible for his acts; hence, there could be no judgment and no judge, hence the state would be destroyed.² So the belief in free will is of basic importance, and whoever denies that there is free will is a worse blasphemer and heretic than he who denies the existence of God. "It is worse for a man to say 'There is a Creator but He forces His creatures to sin and afterwards sends His fierce anger against them' than to say 'I do not know God at all'".³

Given the belief in free will, the notion of reward and punishment is available; and the belief in reward and punishment is conducive to moral living, for man's desires and wants, which are apt to lead him into evil-doing, lose their potency in the face of such powerful influences as the hope of reward and the fear of punishment. But the reward and punishment mentioned in the Bible apply to the observance and disregard of not only moral commandments (commandments between man and man) but also of ~~xxx~~ ceremonial commandments (commandments between God and man). So the principle of reward and punishment both improves the morals and guards the religion.⁴ Now the reward and punishment posited by Judaism are received from God, i.e. they are manifestations of Providence. While God is compassionate, He ~~xxxxxx~~ punishes the delinquent one, since He finds such punishment necessary to

1. Epist. Aug. 24, 1857

2. Igros. Nov. 27, 1818

3. Igros. Nov. 27, 1818

4. Yesode Pp. 31 -32

prevent crimes. And to impress the people deeply with the thought of the penalties attendant on disobeying the divine commandments, the Bible uses expression of vengeance in describing God, for, as the ^{saying} principle goes, "the Torah speaks according to the language of men". God punishes in natural ways whoever rebels against the certitudes of religion, just as in natural ways He punishes the sceptic who arrogantly rebels against other certitudes, such as the certitude of the existence of bodies and of the principle of causality.¹ The Torah promises punishment of two sorts; general for overt sins, and specific for secret sins. Wishing to make all Israel pledges for the morality and religiosity of their neighbors, so as to help prevent the spread of corruption and evil-doing among the people, the Torah declared a general punishment that would come to all the people. Hence the directing of the blessings and curses to the whole people. Individual punishment was to come only for secret sins.² So much for the requital of actions. What about opinions? Are men punished by God for opinions too? Luzzatto maintains they are not. He says that although God knows the most intimate thoughts of man and that He alone has the power of judging opinions and beliefs, still in no scriptural passage is there even a hint that God punishes or ever punished people for opinions when these opinions were not actually accompanied by actions which were reprobable in themselves or in their consequences.³

Viewed carefully, rewards and punishments loom up as illogical, admits Luzzatto. For all our actions are the results of internal and external causes; hence righteousness and wickedness are within the nature of the action, not within the nature of the character of the doer. It is illogical, then, to requite men for their actions. Still, even though illogical, rewards and punishments must be believed in for society, as already shown, could not exist apart from that belief.⁴ In taking this stand, Luzzatto is exemplifying his pragmatic epistemology, which received detailed consideration in Chapter I.

1. Epist. May 4, 1832

2. Yesode P. 41.

3. Epist. May 4, 1832

4. Igros. V, No. 267. ~~In taking this stand, Luzzatto is exemplifying his pragmatic epistemology which received detailed consideration in Chap. I.~~

Apart from any rewards, obedience to the divine commandments is advisable, for in themselves the commandments are useful, designed as they are to keep us virtuous and therefore naturally happy. But to draw us to the observance of the law and to keep us obedient and faithful to Him, God added supernatural happiness as a reward for observing the divine precepts.¹ Supernatural felicity and bliss are not, then, the purpose of the commandments but rewards provided by God for their observance. Supernatural happiness and ~~beatitude~~ beatitude are simply generous rewards voluntarily given by God for obedience to His precepts; they are not the consequence of obedience. If they were the consequence of obedience, if the divine commandments through their own nature tended to obtain for us supernatural good, it would have been unjust of God not to teach those commandments to all mankind.² These supernatural rewards for obedience to the divine commands and, of course, supernatural punishments for disobedience to them, come to men in this world and also in the future world. That Luzzatto believes in recompense in the future world is indicated by his frequent use of the words: אשר יעשה לך ביום ההוא³ And Luzzatto seems to veer toward a more or less Christian view when he complements this by observing that also the pains of the future world are useful, in that they inspire terror and thus prevent crimes.⁴ The rewards and punishments in the future life, together with the companion-idea of the immortality of the soul, are solemn beliefs of Mosaism.⁵ Moses teaches a happiness above the happiness of this life,--i.e., he teaches that there is a future world.⁶ And the immortality of the soul is solemnly asserted in Ecclesiastes. XII, 7.

Luzzatto was violently antagonistic to the theory of the soul entertained by Maimonides. Maimonides had taken over from Aristotle the doctrine that the soul is only an ability to become, a slumbering power in potentia which on being separated from the body at death, becomes reality only out of the potential faculty of conceptual

1. Epist. May 25, 1832

2. Epist. May 25, 1832

3. Igros. Sept. 26, 1819

4. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

5. Epist. I, 185

Epist. Mar 6, 1839

thought, of thought, i.e., that comprehends the universal and necessary essence of things--and this potential faculty of conceptual thought manifests its presence, while the soul is united with the body, by recognizing the creator and general concepts according to its power. Only those souls, then, attain reality that have been possessed by men who acquired metaphysical ideas and who have correctly visualized God and the immaterial essences. Whoever lacks such knowledge becomes, upon dying, extinct like an animal. Maimonides accordingly believes that whoever has not perfected his soul through the knowledge of the specific concepts comprised under the "Thirteen Principles" of Maimonides is not a man but a beast, that all peoples who do not believe in the unity of God are animals. This theory of soul of Maimonides carried with it, then, a belittling of all heathen nations and the denial of immortality to impious people and to people lacking in metaphysical knowledge. Hence Luzzatto's vigorous opposition to the Maimonidean theory of soul and his assertion that the soul of man is a substance and is, in all instances, immortal.¹

Resurrection, likewise, is conceivable, says Luzzatto. Since the body is not destroyed but dissolved, God could well gather up its particles; or for that matter, He could give the dead man a body like his first one.² Here Luzzatto is following in the footsteps of Saadia. As evidences of a biblical belief in resurrection Luzzatto cites the already referred to fact that the patriarchs determined their burial place, and he asserts that rewards after resurrection are announced in Daniel XII, 2.

1. Igros. II, No. 83 and Epist. Aug. 20, 1845

2. Epist. Mar. 6, ~~1844~~ 1839

VII - ISRAEL'S DESTINY

The third and final basic principle utilized by the Mosaic revelation for the improvement of individual and collective morals and for the protection of Judaism is the belief in a divine mission or calling. It is the acceptance of the notion that Israel was selected by God as the bearer of the moral world view and of the monotheistic idea.¹ Israel was chosen for this work in the distant past--more specifically when God made His covenant with Abraham--a covenant designed to be valid also for all of Abraham's posterity. This original covenant was simply confirmed on Sinai, and all Israelites of all generations are expected to renew it in their own minds and to become conscious of their God-given calling. Why God made Israel His peculiar people and selected Israel for this mission is to be explained properly only in the light of the conditions obtaining in the ancient world. As shown in the presentation of Luzzatto's conception of revelation in Chapter III, Israel (as the one people aware of God's unity) was chosen by God to spread monotheism in a polytheistic environment, and to keep alive and disseminate the moral world view, and ultimately to bring about the triumph of a moral world order. Judaism is essentially optimistic, for it provides as one of its cardinal tenets the conviction of the final ascendancy of the moral world order, of the advent, in other words, ~~המשיחיות~~ of the kingdom of God, the Messianic era. This future hope, ~~is~~ held up by the prophets, has reference (in Luzzatto's opinion) to this world, and not to an unseen order. Judaism has, in its main stream, ever been averse to despairing of life's possibilities and to withdrawal from this world.

The consciousness of calling will provide the wings on which every Israelite will be borne aloft to the attainment, despite all obstacles, of the Messianic state.² But this is not to say that the future hope entertained by the prophets applies only to Israel; it applies to all mankind. A thoroughly cosmopolitan

1. Yesode p. 43.

2. Yesode p. 54.

spirit stamps the prophetic promises. Judaism was instituted by God not only for the sake of the Hebrew people but for the benefit of all humanity.¹ For Judaism maintains that all men, without distinction, are children of one Father and are created in the image of God. So all men will share equally in the benefits of Israel's spiritual treasures. If Israel has any special advantage by reason of its descent and calling, it is that Israel, as the guardian of the religious treasure and as the bearer of the divine word, will have eternal life.

Instead of receiving advantages over other nations because of its mission, Israel has greater obligations. Its calling imposes on Israel a greater responsibility for the observing of the moral law and imposes on Israel exclusively the requirement of adhering to the ceremonial law, which trains Israel for a moral priesthood and gives Israel its priestly distinctiveness.² From this statement of Luzzatto it is obvious that he believes that Judaism has a national, special phase as well as a universal, humanitarian phase. He says: "The feeling of pity and faith in Providence are or could be the common patrimony of all men. The pact of Abraham and the law of Moses are the special patrimony of the children of Jacob. Judaism will become universal in its humanitarian part, but not in its national part."³ It is the belief of Luzzatto, and as he says, of the Jews, that monotheism, the prime principle of Judaism, will one day be spread over the face of the earth and become the universal religion, but that Judaism will never become universal.⁴ The Jews do not believe nor hope nor desire that the other nations will embrace Judaism itself. The Jews believe that while the observance of circumcision and the various Mosaic ceremonies is indispensable to themselves if they are to merit the good things of earth and heaven, it is not at all necessary to those who are not of the seed of Abraham.⁵ It is clear, then, that Judaism does not aspire to become the universal religion. While not rejecting whatever stranger wishes to enroll under its banner, Judaism never hunts⁶ proselytes; indeed, Judaism is thoroughly averse

1. Epist May 9, 1839

2. Yesode p. 44.

3. Epist. Dec. 26, 1850

4. Epist. Mar 6, 1839; Epist. Mar 8, 1848.

5. Epist. Mar. 8, 1848

to proselytizing.¹ The Jew believes that the gates of heaven are not closed to men of other beliefs, that the good people of all nations have a share in the eternal happiness. It is true, of course, that when Judaism was the dominant religion in Palestine it did not tolerate idolatry in other religions there present, but it did not demand the conversion of idolaters to Judaism; it demanded only the abandonment of the worship of idols,--and that it demanded because of the immorality engendered by idol-worship.² Judaism does not command making proselytes or forcible converting. Maimonides' claim that God ordered Moses to force by the sword all nations to observe the seven Noahitic laws (which are equivalent to natural religion) is altogether arbitrary and lacks all the biblical and Talmudical proof.³ And the policy of John Hyrcanus in coercing the Idumeans to adopt Judaism was a mistaken policy bringing on the disruption of the Hasmonean house and the nation, and was never authorized by Judaism.⁴

Inimical as he is to the spirit of proselytizing and certain that Judaism frowns on proselytizing, and yet convinced that Judaism should maintain itself, Luzzatto very naturally was antagonistic to any Jew's conversion to some other faith. Religion is a matter of birth, hence an accident. The only logical thing to do is to remain in the religion one was born into. We must respect chance, which has us to be born as Jews.⁵ Luzzatto, then, wants Jews to remain Jews and Christians to remain Christians. Christianity, by reason of its biblical morality, can never be a menace to Judaism (since its essential part, its morality, is Jewish, and since it is based on monotheism), and deserves a kindly fate.⁶

Not only does Luzzatto believe that it is unnecessary to win the world to Judaism; he believes also that even if all other peoples be won to monotheism and the moral world order be ushered in, Judaism should persist none the less. Though all peoples should come to practice all the humanitarian parts of Judaism, the

1. Intro to I.M.T.: Epist. Mar 8, 1848

2. Epist. Mar 8, 1848

3. I.M.T. Par. 45.

4. I.M.T. par. 44.

5. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

6. Epist. Mar. 6, 1839

national part of Judaism will still be binding for Jewry. Accordingly, Luzzatto poured out his wrath upon Philippon and his followers (The Baale Teudah), who believed that Judaism was to endure only until the belief in God's unity should become widespread and until the vision of "the wolf lying down with the lamb" should be realized. The words of the Baale Teudah he regarded as vain and foolish, even though pleasing to the eye and ear. In the first place, he argued, Judaism cannot establish itself and bring the human species to perfection in the manner in which the Baale Teudah think it can; namely, naturally and without the occurrence of miracles and wonders. Furthermore it is an equally idle fancy to believe that the human species should ever be able to arrive at that perfection which the Baale Teudah conceive of. A basic change in human nature would have to precede such an accomplishment; mere progress would not suffice. Even the prophets did not hope for such an essential change in man's nature; they hoped simply for the predominance of social righteousness as the result of the recognition, by the peoples, of Israel's just precepts.¹ Israel, then, is not to cease being a living people.

The Frankfort reformers likewise came in for Luzzatto's diatribes. They wished to abolish circumcision and the various other exclusive practices of Judaism. Such reform he regarded as arising out of a spirit of pure imitation and apishness, out of the desire to please the gentiles, and as having its eye only on material benefits, to the detriment of the Jewish national pride and of the sense of brotherhood that linked all Israel together.² The Society of Reform, accordingly, was the object of Luzzatto's most violent invective. Here is how he refers to it: "A few Israelites, eager to free themselves from the religious practices connected with Judaism, and wishing to act with a semblance of legality so as not to be regarded as impious transgressors of the law of Moses, mask their project, that of totally abolishing the law of Moses, under the specious name of Reform. But this name is inadequate to designate these men."³ The partisans of the Society of Reform, he asserts, hold nothing sacred. They even reject what has been the principal feature of Judaism for the last thirty-six centuries, to-wit, circumcision.

To be sure, says Luzzatto, certain types of reform are permissible.

1. Jah. Ve. p. 89

2. Epist. Dec. 26, 1850

3. Epist. Sept. 1, 1843

Judaism admits that certain changes and violations of the law are necessary in every age.¹ Since the public cult of the Judaism of today is not a revealed institution but is rabbinic in origin, it is, like all human institutions, susceptible of reform, to meet the demands of time and place. The present public cult, as just stated, is rabbinic. The rabbis substituted prayers for sacrifices in the diaspora. Regarded philosophically, prayers are not less absurd than sacrifices. Praying to God is an illogical act, for God does not need us to tell Him of our requirements, nor does He change His decrees because of our supplications. God is impassive. He is not moved by anything man may say or do. Prayers, therefore, are unavailing and futile. But despite the truth of all this, religion does not teach it since it is a truth which is harmful to men, but lets men believe the contrary, for prayer is beneficial to man. Prayer, like all the acts of cult, is for the advantage of man. It serves to afford him comfort in his sorrows and to foster in him the feeling of his dependence on God.² But to revert to our more fundamental consideration, the cult may be modified, Luzzatto concedes. He grants that rabbis can in good conscience, without sinning against the divine commandments, propose the introduction of prayers in the vernacular, the abolition or modification of certain prayers or parts of prayers, the holding of divine services without the hat being worn, etc.³ He even encourages the removal of the hat, saying that taking it off induces respect.⁴

But, says Luzzatto, while present-day Judaism bears various modifications and additions and while still further modifications and additions are permissible, the members of the Society of Reform have far different intentions and interests. They declare that they have altogether renounced the Judaism of today. One can change or abolish an institution of rabbinic making and still be a loyal Jew; but to propose the abolition of any Mosaic institution, such as circumcision, the great fast day, ^{or} the Sabbath, is to be a rationalist and a destroyer of Judaism. The Jews are essentially a priesthood and Judaism is therefore ^{an} exclusive religion charged with exclusive practises.⁵ From its very inception Judaism was an exclusive

1. in Epist. Nov. 23, 1837

2. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

3. Epist. Nov. 23, 1837

4. Epist. I, 185

5. Epist. Sept. 1, 1843

religion. Abraham's family always looked upon itself as a priest-people. And as priests the Israelites were distinguished by various exclusive practices.¹ The Mosaic ceremonial laws were revealed by God for the purpose, among other purposes, of keeping Israel apart from other peoples, as was shown in Chapter V. And if they were revealed by God, it is evident that we may not oppose them.² Ceremonial may not be abolished or changed in any of its parts, for if one of its parts were to be abolished or reformed according to the arbitrary whim of man, it could be changed then in other parts according to any man's circumstances or desires and would no longer be regarded as immutably binding.³ For Luzzatto, then, the ceremonial laws are binding today--that is to say, all those ceremonial laws which are in harmony with our place of residence outside of Palestine and which do not have reference to the no longer existent Temple. For what was commanded by God cannot be done away with by man.⁴

Not only are the ceremonial laws binding today; they deserve to be binding. For though many of them were originally intended as means of keeping Israel from idol worship, the ceremonial commandments, by and large, retain at present their original purpose.⁵ A cult's value is measured, it will be remembered, by its worth to man, not by its worth to God. Viewed from this standpoint, the ceremonial law of Judaism is valuable for present day Jewry. The shedding of the blood of animals can teach and comfort man as well as anything else can. Ceremonies, rites, customs are necessary for the reason that the average person can be reached only by means of external signs and symbols. An education which brings God close to us in our thoughts is indispensable to morality, and such an education is provided for most people only in such concrete experience as the performing of ceremonial acts.⁶ The abolition of the ceremonial law would entail depriving the moral laws of their emphasis and materially weakening public morality.⁷ Then, too, in addition to retaining their function of making the Jews virtuous, the ceremonial observances

1. Epist. Sept. 9, 1843

4. I.M.T. par. 27

2. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

5. I.M.T. par. 29

3. I.M.T. par. 28

6. Epist. May 3, 1832

7. I.M.T. par 28.

still are able to fulfil the function of preserving for Jewry a special existence in a religious body, as a family within the larger family of humanity.¹

Though Judaism in spirit is a universal morality (since the way of the Lord is to practice justice and humanity), still, as the appointed propagator of this universal doctrine, Judaism is inseparable from many exclusive practises--and whoever abolishes these practises does not reform but destroys Judaism.² Any Israelite, of course, is free to renounce this exclusive religion and his priesthood. But to persist in calling oneself an Israelite when one exempts oneself from all the practises which distinguish the Israelite is a manifest absurdity.³ Jews are justified in terming apostates those of their brethren who say the exclusive practises may be abolished and who thus undermine the religion and the morality. Those who favor the abandoning of the exclusive practises would have, indeed, no reasonable ground for complaint if the Jewish authorities were to regard them as non-Jews and were to refuse to associate with them in religious projects or to grant them any share in the management of the affairs of the religious community.⁴

Are we (Luzzatto asks) to give up these ceremonial commandments and, therefore, our existence as a people? Are we to forfeit our fame ^{as} ~~and~~ the people which for centuries preserved in a confused world the doctrine of monotheism (with its implications of the unity of the human race and with its accompanying sane and healthful morality) and as the people which spread this doctrine among other nations?⁵ Israel's survival was granted by God for a lofty purpose. Are we to throw over the ceremonial laws and thus to seek a cowardly escape from a service for which God in His wisdom and love chose us?⁶ To imagine that by abandoning our peculiar customs we will win the favor of the nations in whose midst we dwell is the height of folly. For the various governments realize that only a people which is faithful to God's commandments can be faithful to neighbors, to society, and to country, and that whoever forsakes religion for self-interest and for reasons of ambition is an unreliable citizen.⁷ But those persons who, living in the midst of an alien society

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| 1. <i>I.M.T.</i> par. 30 | 4. <i>Epist.</i> Sept. 1, 1843 |
| 2. <i>Epist.</i> Sept. 1, 1843 | 5. <i>I.M.T.</i> par. 30 |
| 3. <i>Epist.</i> Sept. 1, 1843 | 6. <i>I.M.T.</i> par. 31. |
| 7. <i>I.M.T.</i> par. 32. | |

are loyal to their natal religion are never wanting in their civic duties and are esteemed as good citizens and need be in no fear of the contempt of others.¹ An irreligious person, however, will not be looked on with favor, for without the hal-
lowing influence of religion morality is only a matter of calculation and reason, and moral laws are respected only insofar as they net personal advantage. Without religion, a social order cannot perdure, and society is doomed to anarchy.² Judaism is the one and only possible foundation for an enduring society, possessing as it does a morality of unparalleled sanctity.³ If Judaism of the present commanded less than moral actions or inspired anti-social sentiments, we would be ready to cleanse it or abjure it. But such measures are uncalled for, because the excellence of the Jewish morality is unquestionable. Since Judaism, then, is so necessary to the existence of society, Judaism should be preserved. But even if the Jews' mission were consummated and the earth were full of the knowledge of God, Israel would still have reason to maintain itself and be proud of having been the first possessors of the salutary doctrines and ~~to~~ be proud of having given them to the whole world. Yet there is no immediate prospect of the fulfilment of the mission. Israel has by no means completed its task. Modern civilization is still far from perfection, thanks to the presence of the Attic influence. The principles of Abrahamism do not yet dominate the earth.⁴ European civilization is corrupt with egotism; it is sick and moribund because of a dearth of faith and virtue.⁵ The reason for this pre-
dominance and apparent triumph of Atticism is not far to seek. Since reason can make new discoveries, Atticism is progressive and is constantly assuming a new form; hence Atticism pleases, enraptures, and charms. But inasmuch as the heart, while able to grow corrupt, can never perfect itself, Judaism obviously can never do more than to establish itself in its original state, freed of all foreign accretions; Judaism can never perfect itself; it is, then, immutable.⁶ Being unable to perfect

1. Epist. Nov. 23, 1837

2. I.M.T. par. 32

3. Epist. Sept. 1, 1843

4. Epist. Sept. 1, 1843

5. Epist. July 10, 1854

6. Luzzatto declares that without the belief in the divinity of its origin and in its immutability--that is, minus the belief in the supernatural revelation and all the theological and historical elements of the faith or minus the ceremonial--Judaism would lose much of its influence on the human heart.

itself it appears every day older and less beautiful; hence, it wearies and repels where Atticism delights. The supremacy enjoyed by Atticism, however, will never become permanent, free from opposition and reaction. There is a constant struggle between Atticism and Judaism.¹ The beautiful and the great (which Atticism furnishes) cannot replace the good (which Judaism supplies), for an inextinguishable need of the good exists in human nature. Society needs enthusiastic impulses and feelings and these, far from being inculcated by Atticism and reason, are weakened and checked by them. Human nature, therefore reacts and always will react in favor of the heart, the good, and Judaism. So while Atticism will ever conquer anew, it will never be able to maintain a perpetual preponderance of influence. The struggle between it and Judaism is continuous.

It is upon the triumph not of Atticism but of Judaism that the prosperity and well-being of society depends.² The further the movement of enlightenment (Aufklaerung) develops, the greater will be men's need of Judaism. But Judaism cannot endure if its priests, the Jewish people, perish; it will never endure without the keeping of the statutes, and without the survival of the belief in the miracles, wonders, and prophecies.³ It is not to be inferred, however, that Luzzatto was at all fearful of the possible dissolution of Judaism. He was convinced, beyond the slightest misgiving, that Judaism will never disappear, because it is indispensable to society.⁴ And elsewhere he avows: "I believe in God and am an optimist. Judaism will not perish".⁵ While agreeing that no objections on religious grounds could be levelled at the contemplated reform of Gattinara, who wanted a council called to discuss the advisability of modifying minor elements of the

1. It is Luzzatto's view that even if Judaism were to give up its ceremonial law or its belief in the supernatural revelation, the conflict between Atticism and Judaism would not cease, for essentially it is in the nature of Atticism to innovate and move forward and it is in the nature of Judaism to resist innovation and to ~~remain~~ remain static.

2. Igros V. No. 267

3. Igros III No. 249

4. Igros V. No. 249

5. Epist. Apr 13, 1851

religion so as to insure the preservation of the essential elements--at the same time, Luzzatto asserted that for his part he felt tranquil in the conviction that even without resorting to councils Judaism would continue until the end of time.¹ "I have no fears for Judaism," Luzzatto says, "despite the German reform movement. Judaism does not fear the attacks of youths without conscience who sell religion to the emancipation. When there will arise mature and conscientious men, men profoundly animated by Jewish sentiments, a lasting reform will appear."²

Luzzatto, let me repeat, is firm in the belief that Israel's destined mission unto the nations is to win them to monotheism and to a moral life. Thus it is a religious and moral regeneration that the Gentile is to enjoy. But the regeneration awaiting the Jews is to be political in nature. Luzzatto was one of the foremost forefathers of Zionism. He had an ardent love for the Palestinian soil, and wanted to see Jews return to Palestine and engage in agriculture. "Judaism," he says, "must be saved from the oppression of others. The Jew must be given the Holy Land and the necessary means to cultivate it, and must be assured that the fruit will be his".³ He wished for a well-regulated Jewish settlement there under the authorization of the Turkish government. What he fondly dreamed of was the unhindered development of Palestine by the Jews. He insisted that Jews have been uniformly industrious and that whenever Jews have shown themselves lazy, it was because of the depression that came over them as a result of oppressive treatment by their non-Jewish neighbors and as a result of the indifference of governments to their plight. Another and more important reason for Luzzatto's desire for a Palestinian settlement was this: He felt, though rather hazily, the need for establishing a spiritual center in Palestine. He believed that Israel ought to be restored to that land, ^{and} that in each city ought to be established an academy in which the Mosaic and rabbinic laws would be taught.⁴ An indigenous, and not an exotic, progress did he espouse. *U-mad*

1. Epist. Dec. 26, 1850

2. Epist. Sept. 14, 1845

3. Jah. Ve. p. 91 where it is quoted from
117-118

4. Yah Ve. p. 92

In his direct way he declares, "I am not a fanatic, not an enemy of all progress. I do not want to perpetuate in my coreligionists the darkness of prejudices and ignorance. But I want an indigenous progress, not an exotic one."¹ Hence his writing in Hebrew and his laboring for the continuance of the language, for he felt that Hebrew is a national tongue connecting living scholars with past Jewish teachers and literature, and the continued usage of which will mean the growth of that literature.² Euzzatto admits, to be sure, that the Jews of past ages did some borrowing and assimilating from foreign cultures, that, e.g., the Jews in Babylonia adopted some Babylonian and Persian views which in time found acceptance throughout Israel.³ But he insists, as a foe of rationalism, on the originality and divinity of Judaism and on its superiority to any other culture or civilization. Judaism, he insisted, must be purged of all those elements which run counter to the principles of pity and Providence and which were acquired through vile imitation of Chaldaic, Persian, Greek, Alexandrian, Roman, Catholic and Protestant civilization.⁴ Not external emancipation does the loyal Jew who has vision desire, but internal emancipation--that is, liberation from the influence of exoticism.⁵ The prosperity of Israel does not depend on the gaining of emancipation; ~~xxxxxx~~ it depends on the prevalence, among the Jews, of the feeling of love and brotherhood towards one another.⁶ And the genuine Israelite, instead of aspiring for civil rights and to be regarded like other men, aims to be better than other men, to be a person whose morality is not calculating but of the heart, and whose ways are dear to God and men.⁷

1) Epist. Aug 13, 1839

2. Igros. IX, 1253

3. Igros. V. No. 276

4. Epist. July 10, 1854

5. Epist. Nov. 26, 1838

6. Igros V, 660

7. Epist. Nov. 23, 1837

VIII - LUZZATTO, -AN ESTIMATE.

All criticism worth the name must avoid appraising a work according to its success or failure in achieving an effect it never sought to achieve. It is palpably absurd for example, to condemn on the ground that he lacks cleverness a thinker whose object is other than to be clever. A work must be judged with regard to its intent and with disregard ^{to} any intent alien to it. And so we must approach Luzzatto with an eye to his essential aim. Inasmuch as he scorns metaphysical truth and seeks credence for his views on grounds other than logical appeal, it is accordingly unfair and foolish to inquire as to the logic or truth of his beliefs. Indeed, he is the first often to admit that a view of his is illogical. Thus he argues in behalf of prayer, although frankly admitting that in truth God is immutable; he openly counsels adherence to the opposite of the truth in this instance. And even if Luzzatto, like some other thinkers, had striven for metaphysical truth, I doubt whether he, any more than they, ought to be judged by his logic. For metaphysical reasoning, I am convinced, is invariably fallacious reasoning, and therefore its findings had best be regarded as pure assumptions, as views, therefore, which are outside the pale of criticism. This is not to say there is no such thing as valid reasoning. There is, but it involves only the consistency of one assumption with another. On all counts, then, the question of the logical weight and truthfulness of Luzzatto's thoughts must be waived. It would be very easy but altogether irrelevant to find logical weaknesses in his arguments and tenets. For example the belief in supernaturalism which is so dominant in his system of thought is not logically sound. For ^{this} supernaturalism, like all supernaturalism, is self-contradictory. Thus the commandments were written by God, a supernatural occurrence; but it was with His finger that they were written and on a stone tablet. So this so-called miracle was performed with due respect for natural laws of anatomy and behavior. And similarly with all supernatural beliefs. Angels are said to exist, but angels with wings,--that is the "supernatural" beings are made to fall within the jurisdiction of natural laws of physics. And thus with all the alleged miracles.

To suppose them we must allow room in our supposition for non-miraculous elements. So we can imagine a miracle only by negating it. The supernatural, then, is its own contradiction - - - But all such criticism - all criticism directed at logic - is ruled out. Not speculative truth but moral betterment did Luzzatto labor for. In developing and setting forth his thoughts on religion, Luzzatto sought to provide a correct interpretation of Judaism, so as to benefit Jewry, and mankind at large. In appraising his views one must therefore address oneself to questions such as these: What measure of plausibility attaches to his interpretation of Judaism? What effect is his teaching, if applied, calculated to have on the Jews and on humanity?

The conception of Judaism which he presents is, I think, as justifiable as one as any other that aims to be more than a mere history of all the phases of development of the faith. After all, Judaism has taken on so many diverse elements in its long existence that it must admit of many interpretations. One can find more or less warrant for a variety of attitudes in it. And Luzzatto's standpoint has an unusually large degree of justification. He is able to adduce, on the whole, weighty evidence in support of his interpretations. Of course, Judaism is so eclectic and contains such widely variant strains that even the most plausible of attempts at a definition of Judaism must perforce be one-sided. And Luzzatto's work very naturally suffers, to some extent, from that defect. Thus the monotheistic idea--always the driving and controlling power of Judaism--he shoves into the background as being a mere aid to morality. And he leaves no room in his definition for the conception of Judaism as an intellectual striving toward God. But by and large he has succeeded in putting out a singularly adequate interpretation, thanks largely to his life-long painstaking study and to his exceptional familiarity with Jewish lore.

But our fundamental consideration should relate to the value Luzzatto's views have for society. For his ultimate aim was to provide humankind with a way of life. Luzzatto's principal proposition is that it is to man's highest welfare that a humanitarian morality sprung from pity and sympathy be practised. It is a proposition based on the assumption that man desires happiness above all other things. This assumption Luzzatto clearly voices: "That which is sought by all men

are goodness and happiness. This is the desideratum commune of mankind.¹ According to this assumption, suffering, as an obstacle in the pathway to happiness, is an unmitigated evil. Those who hold to the assumption, if they be not naive minds or of bovine stolidity and therefore unaware of the existence of suffering, are accordingly moved to search for a way to abolish suffering. That is to say, they look for a palliative. The pessimists are those who, seeking for a palliative, fail to find one. The reformers are those who manage to hit upon one. Luzzatto was of the latter class. To him conduct arising out of the pity-feeling was the palliative. To my mind this view is not overly profound. Not all the sympathetic action and helpful effort at man's command can possibly eliminate suffering. But not only does Luzzatto's view lack profundity; it involves a rather pathetic procedure. To assume, as Luzzatto does, that man's basic aspiration and highest aim is and should be happiness leads to the abandonment of man's most precious instrument--the faculty of reason. Any observer of any keenness must soon come to perceive that the exercise of reason does not bring happiness. Luzzatto is therefore forced to reject reason and to advocate the cause of illusion. Now to bury the head in the sands of illusion is to strike a not very noble posture; it is the way of the panicky child and the resourceless ostrich. Furthermore, a morality based on pity can work great harm to society, for ~~human sympathy~~ since in dying there is pain, sympathy would plead for the sparing of the life of much that ought to be dead. On various counts, then, must I attack Luzzatto's moral philosophy. A more wholesome attitude, I think, consists in shaking loose from the popular assumption that happiness is the goal of life and that suffering is an evil. For then, for one thing, we are spared the need of forsaking reason and thus acting like those persons to whom Pascal refers as throwing away their only light upon plunging into a forest at nightfall. Furthermore only by taking this stand can we escape the company of both of those two children of the "happiness as goal" philosophy: reform with its shallow outlook and pessimism with its negation of living. It is untrue that men strive for happiness. They do what they feel an urge to do--and sometimes pain results, and sometimes pleasure. Is there not the woman who in giving birth to a child openly and cheerfully embraces the pain of travail? Does not the artist

who brings forth his soul-child in agony and in nerve-racking toil do so graciously and smilingly? Suffering is an unescapable law of life. More, it should be accepted with welcome. Not only because trying to avoid it is of no avail, but also because it is a supreme good. Its presence is essential to heroic living. Frank Harris somewhere says: "Strong men are made by opposition; like kites they go up against the wind." It is the part of heroism to accept pain as one of life's chiefest boons and to render also this gift to account. Better than to try to avoid pain or to succumb to it is to accept it willingly and to master it--to use it for one's own purposes. This means to triumph over suffering, to transmute each agonizing experience into a rung of the ladder on which one mounts to the heights. This attitude amounts to a tragic affirmation of life in all its manifestations--the cheerful acceptance of ^{the} sorrows as well as the joys. It is the ^{Jewish} Nietzschean attitude. In my opinion, it is at once more profound and elevated than any other and also richer in promise of benefit to humanity.

Left unpersuaded of the superiority of a morality whose cornerstone is pity, I naturally find myself dissenting ^{from} some of the main tenets of such a way of life as Luzzatto's. Thus, to cite but one example, I am not won over to the principle of equality which he constantly is emphasizing and traditionally expressing by referring to men as children of the one God and Father. Equality, in the first place, is contrary to nature. There are superior and inferior human beings. Democracy never works out in practice; consequently, the theoretical doctrine of equality invariably turns out in practice to be the tyranny of the weak over the powerful. In theory designed to uphold the sanctity of every human life and to safeguard individuality, the doctrine in its practical effect makes for standardization, uniformity, obligation of personality. Furthermore, the principle of equality is a much less generous one than that of inequality. Edwin Muir offers the penetrating observation in his "We Moderns" that the belief in equality presupposes willing that no one be other than oneself. But it takes generosity for a person to recognize and with good grace confess that some one else is greater than he.

In one of its important aspects, the morality formulated by Luzzatto appeals to me mightily. I refer to his aversion to a morality of calculation--a

morality that is pleasing and indulgent. Only a morality that is exacting and severe can produce high orders of men. A morality of expediency, a morality that bows before considerations of ease and comfort, tends to discourage all devotion to principle and to weaken the will, thus making for weak character and depriving men of ability to act. But a morality like Luzzatto's imposes a rigorous discipline, resulting in the development of capacities and powers. Insofar as one's body or mind is disciplined, one is free to do things. Freedom, as Luzzatto realized, is the possession of power. Freedom is not what it is commonly held to be: an exemption from requirements. Real freedom--the emancipation that is spiritual--means an augmenting of one's capacities. The emancipation of man that Luzzatto was interested in and struggled for was such an emancipation. The negative sort of emancipation that so many of his Jewish contemporaries were striving for in the form of civic rights, etc, he was not interested in. It is to his lasting credit that where it was the fashion to work for this external emancipation, he held resolutely to the vision of an internal emancipation for Jewry--an emancipation expressing itself in an enhancing of the personality of Jews through cultural development. Hence his plea for a renewal of interest in Jewish literature, hence his fierce opposition to imitation of the non-Jew, for he realized that a loss of the old culture would mean the impoverishment of the Jew and a consequent lack of freedom. How clearly Luzzatto understood the problem is evident from subsequent developments. These attest to the soundness of his attitude and the weakness of the standpoint of his contemporaries. For today the spectacle lies revealed of Jews who have been given the negative political emancipation that had been valued so highly and who, for all their outer freedom, are really intellectually and spiritually bankrupt--cut loose from the traditions and past of their people, devoid of all culture, thoroughly undeveloped in their capacities, and therefore much more completely enslaved than their forbears who lived before the so-called emancipation. It may be added, incidentally, that viewing progress as an inner growth and genuine emancipation as a spiritual enlargement he was not deceived by the alleged progress of modern civilization,--a civilization whose chief claim to progress lay in the political liberty that had been achieved. Luzzatto's pessimistic appraisal of the

civilization of the Western World is being sustained by latter-day facts, for from the present complexion of things, the downfall of this civilization appears more or less imminent.

An element of Luzzatto's teaching that is particularly significant today is his disposition of the question of the extent to which authority should be exercised. He followed Spinoza in favoring the limitation of compulsion to the field of conduct and in advocating ~~the allowance of~~ complete freedom of thought. His statements anent this subject are deserving of very careful consideration at a time like ours--a time when the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of opinion and speech is being disregarded in this country and the government is imprisoning men for their opinions and exercising a censorship over books and art-products.

A dominant quality of Luzzatto was his overmastering love of Judaism. In this quality we have the explanation of much of his activity. It was his love of the faith of his fathers that impelled him to his investigations in the field of religion, in the first place. It seems that, notwithstanding all contrary claims of theologians, the philosophy of religion inevitably involves the pursuit of apologetics in some measure. Luzzatto, devoted as he was to his faith and eager to show its excellence, could not escape being an apologete^{ist}. If we keep this point in mind, we shall understand his work the better. It was probably because he was filling the role of an apologete that he defended without exception all the customs and ceremonies of Judaism, including the sacrificial practices, some of which were barbarous and obnoxious; that he took pains to show that everyone of them was justified and of value because it was beneficial either to the individual or to the people, because it either safeguarded the religion or promoted morality. Some of these justifications that he offers are weak, forced and inadequate. Had he not been eager to vindicate all of Judaism it is not likely that he would have thus attempted the foolhardy. Again, only by recognizing the apologetic motive in his work can we comprehend ~~the~~ why he defended the entire morality of ancient Judaism. For example, when he essays to show that pity is the principle underlying all the ordinances of the Mosaic moral legislation, Luzzatto runs up against four clear-cut instances of laws which enjoin action toward non-Jews that runs counter to the

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dictates of pity--but instead of admitting that these four laws are exceptions to the general rule, Luzzatto vainly tries to demonstrate that they are only apparent exceptions. His work arising out of an intense love of Judaism and a desire to have the faith and the Jewish people survive, Luzzatto endeavored to show how fine was Israel's past contribution and therefore how excellent a future contribution the people might make. Thus he made a plea for the survival of the Jews on the basis of the possible contribution they might make. To feel urged to make such a plea is a lamentable circumstance, for it means resorting to apologetics, to the detriment of the cause of truth. Need one feel such an urge? Just as an individual is valuable in himself and apart from any considerations of the "contribution" he may make, may not a nation likewise insist that it is valuable in itself and that it has a right to exist regardless of whether or not it has a "contribution" to make? Where this stand is taken, there is no impulsion to apologetics--a practice that mars so much of Jewish scholarly achievement and, to some extent, Luzzatto's work.

Luzzatto's devotion to Judaism throws light also on his attitude toward biblical criticism. First of all, he insists that he is not a fanatic and opposed to all critical investigation of Scriptures. In proof of his freedom from dogmatism, he frequently asserts that he undertook independent critical investigations from his earliest youth. Thus he says that very early in life he concluded that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes, and that at the age of twenty he dared to change *נאמר* *לל* *ל*.¹ When twenty years old, he also attacked, as he points out, the authenticity of the Zohar as the work of Shimon b. Yohai.² Furthermore, did he not announce, contrary to all traditional views, that the vowels and accents had not existed at the time of the Talmudists? But we find Luzzatto parting company with the new biblical critics who were arising in Germany. He hated the new criticism.

1. Epist. Aug. 20, 1845

2. Epist. Aug 20, 1845 and Igros V, No. 249

In a letter to Reggio (written in December 1844) Luzzatto speaks of the "cursed higher criticism." He repeatedly attacked views held by these "higher critics," such as the view that the second half of Isaiah was written in Babylonia.¹ This second part of Isaiah, he says reveals a cheerfulness and joy that could not have been had by a prophet in exile.² And Luzzatto vehemently opposed the notion of a Deutero-Isaiah because to say that the author of the closing chapters of Isaiah lived later than Isaiah is to say that the prophecies in those chapters were cases of vaticinia post eventum and is to say, consequently, that these prophecies of God are not genuine prophecies. Hence to subscribe to the view of a second Isaiah who wrote in Babylonia is to undermine Judaism and to attack all revealed religion.³ Thus because of his love for Judaism, Luzzatto was hostile to advanced biblical criticism, for he saw in this criticism a foe to his faith.

Again, it was his love of his religion that determined largely his attitude toward Jewish writers who preceded him or lived contemporaneously with him. Only those of them did he admire who had what he termed the "true Jewish soul", as revealed by their preaching pity and love of humanity, morality, racial purity and holiness, and by their enhancing the glory of the Jewish people and its Torah. In all his investigations Luzzatto searched diligently for this "Jewish soul". Any investigator of Jewish literature who did not search for it wrought harm, in Luzzatto's opinion, not only to the Jewish people but to society at large. To Steinschneider he wrote: "Your chief purpose is to glorify those Jews whose soul was not the true Jewish soul but the Greek or Arabic soul. If your ways do not prosper or if the Jews do not reward it, you will have received not injustice but justice, for your labor is not for the good of society."⁴ The Jews of mediaeval Germany and France he liked, because they preserved a natural Judaism almost untouched by foreign elements and because they lived by their faith and wrote in simple Hebrew. But he disliked the Jews of Spain of the Middle Ages, for they had borrowed profusely from Greek and Arabic thought, and their faith was not pure and immediate.

1. Epist. I, p. 392; Igros II, No 78b; and elsewhere.

2. Igros II No 79

3. Epist. I, p. 392

4. Igros VII, 1031, whence it is quoted by Klausner in Yah Ve, p. 77.

Luzzatto's ideal was Judah Halevy,--for Halevy was to him the national poet and a Jew in spirit and soul, a philosopher of the heart. Jehudah Halevy had recognized in Judaism a national belief which had gone through a long, gradual historic development. Luzzatto, too, conceived of Judaism as a historical, evolved belief. And so he was inclined to idolize Jehudah Halevy and to regard him as the purest exemplar of the national good.

But Maimonides, in contrast to Jehudah Halevy, embodied in Luzzatto's estimation, all that was inimical to Judaism and all that was a perversion of the religion. He had only words of scorn and indignation for Maimonides. He regarded Maimonides as a man who, for one thing, had tried to unite the Torah with Aristot^{icism}, who had infected Judaism with speculative thinking. For Maimonides Judaism was essentially an intellectualism, the primary task of religion being, in his opinion, to recognize the highest existence (God) and the highest truths. He believed that a pure intellect was the final goal of all life and activity. Accordingly, he looked upon the intellectual values as preeminent and placed moral values in the background, saying that they were of no immediate importance in themselves, and ^{he} let the ritual values collapse entirely. But Luzzatto, as we have noted, conceived of Judaism as having as its essential purpose, the promotion of morality. Thus Luzzatto was the very antipode of Maimonides in his interpretation of Judaism. And the element of speculation, which he held Maimonides responsible for introducing into Judaism, had been, as he saw it, the cause of the neglect of Jewish religious questions and of Jewish literature. He charged Maimonides with having thought with the head of Aristotle and his commentators, and despised Maimonides on that account. Convinced of the necessity and Jewishness of the belief in a relative, personal God with anthropomorphic qualities, Luzzatto viewed with anger Maimonides' espousal of an absolute God and accused Maimonides of having borrowed the conception from the Greeks and of not having found it in Judaism. Again, he objects to Maimonides for having introduced into Jewish thought the Aristotelian immortality, because, as I pointed out before, this conception teaches that only philosophers have a soul and are immortal and thus deprives most people of the hope of immortality and is, therefore, un-Jewish in Luzzatto's eyes. Then, too, Luzzatto is of the opinion that Maimonides'

declaration of the angels to be spirits of the spheres is not Judaism but Aristotoleism and Arabism. Accordingly, he regards Maimonides as having been largely responsible for the to him preposterous doctrines of Kabbalah, which doctrines, he says, are not indigenous to Judaism and which, except in spurious books really written after Maimonides' time, are not found before Maimonides.¹ Kabbalah developed out of the mystic ^{view} interpretation of the angels and perceives the essence of Judaism as a mystic intellectualism on a ritual foundation. Thus Luzzatto looks upon Maimonides as in some measure responsible for the rise of Kabbalah,--a system of doctrines which he detests. In one place he writes: "The belief that our soul is part of God is foolish; religion never taught it. It is a Kabbalistic dream."² And still another huge grievance did Luzzatto have against Maimonides. He felt that Maimonides was the prime enemy of the progress of the Jews, having not only extended himself to enchain them in the matter of practical observance by seeking to make it fixed and immovable, but having also endeavored to embalm the spirit of the Jews with his "principles", his rigid thirteen articles of faith, his commands to believe.³ Luzzatto rightly saw in this work of Maimonides a denial of the historical, evolutionary nature of Judaism. For various reasons, then, Luzzatto found Maimonides to be an influence altogether harmful to Judaism. He says that Maimonides is to be ranked among those persons who have ~~xxx~~ ^{the} done Jewish people the most harm. He goes so far as to venture that if Abraham ben David had not been opposed to Maimonides, the Mishna and the Talmud would long ago have been forgotten. The violence of Luzzatto's antipathy to Maimonides is, then, to be attributed to his love of Judaism. In my opinion, this devotion had the effect of perverting somewhat his judgment of Maimonides. After all, Maimonides, a devout Jew, helped the Jewish faith in a way. In the time of Luzzatto to help the cause of Judaism possibly required an emphasis on supernaturalism. But when Maimonides lived,

1. Epist. Dec. 6, 1839

2. Epist. Nov. 8, 1837

3. Epist. Aug. 20, 1845

Christians were showing that their faith was consonant with the thinking of the great ancient sages and particularly with the thinking of Aristotle. If Judaism was to command respect, it was imperative that Judaism also be proved in consonance with Aristotelian thought--and it was just this work that Maimonides performed. Thus, judged by Luzzatto's own standards (to wit benefit to society and to the Jewish people and to Judaism), Maimonides is deserving of praise.

Whereas Luzzatto venerated Rashi, he attacked Ibn Ezra because the latter "did not have a true Jewish soul." ~~it~~ *More here.*

Also Spinoza was the butt of Luzzatto's attacks. He could not forgive Spinoza for failing to have a personal God, for saying that the universe has no purpose, that there is no Providence, that the good and the evil have no essential existence but are mere man-made concepts. The Spinoza teaching amounts to quietism and is hostile, in Luzzatto's judgment, to all morality and to all religion, including Judaism. Hence his animosity to Spinoza.

Luzzatto's attitude toward contemporary Jewish scholars likewise hinged on what he felt to be the sort of influence they exerted on the Judaism he loved so ardently. Thus he could not abide Jost's rationalism and on this account bade Rapoport to stop having anything to do with Jost. Rapoport would not comply with this request. It was partly because of this that Luzzatto became hostile to Rapoport, after having carried on a friendly correspondence with him. The break was in part due to another cause too. Rapoport subscribed to the opinion that the latter half of Isaiah was written in exile--an opinion which, to Luzzatto, was inimical ~~to~~ ^{to} Judaism. Thus, so dominated was Luzzatto by his love for Judaism that he ceased being friends with people whose opinions and activities impressed him as being hurtful to the faith.

His hostility to Reform Judaism also arose out of his love of the ancestral religion. As we have already observed, he heaped opprobrium on the reformers, because he beheld in them a force making for assimilation and for the dissolution of Judaism.

It may readily be argued that in showing so bitter an animosity toward

1) At one time he showed great respect for Jost

those whose views seemed to him inimical to Judaism Luzzatto was not altogether rational and consistent. For did he not repeatedly assert his supreme confidence in the future of Judaism? If he was so sure that Judaism would survive despite all the activities of its unconscious and conscious enemies, why did he engage in such heated quarrels over moot points of religious opinion? To argue in the foregoing fashion is to show oneself to be seized with the erroneous notion that the worthwhile writings are those that preserve a so-called impartial and really cautious, "scholarly", "academic" manner. This calmness of the "philosopher" is actually lukewarmness, weakness. In Luzzatto you will find none of this. His loves and his hatreds, his likes and his dislikes, are anything but tepid. He has the passionate, warm reactions of the artist. ^{of man of religion.} He is, in reality, a poet-thinker. The antithesis of the ~~poetic~~, sharply logical Maimonides, he is of a poetic nature, dominated by his feelings, excitable. Though expressed in prose, his religious principles and sentiments are poetical. I find in this quality of his a possible clue to an explanation of much of his work. In the first place, is it not rather strange that despite his life-long struggle against Atticism with its principle of beauty and charm, he was very fond of the poetry of the Torah? Keeping this fondness in mind and noting his advocacy of supernaturalism and of all the ceremonial, have I not some justification for surmising that though he defended supernaturalism and ceremonial on grounds of their moral value, etc, he really in his subconscious self liked them for their own sake,--that, at bottom, it was his love of imagery and his instinctive recognition of religion's need of imagery and of its artistic nature that was responsible for his discountenancing of intellectualism in religion and for his support of ceremonial and supernaturalism? I merely offer my surmise and pass on.

A rare forthrightness and outspokenness was evinced by Luzzatto. Fearlessly he attacked those of his predecessors whose views he considered harmful, regardless of the reverence in which these men were generally held. He was not afraid to speak harshly of famed and revered men like Maimonides and Ibn Ezra. Steadfastly he maintained his opposition to philosophical Judaism, although he was

well aware that he was thus gaining many opponents among his contemporaries. He was never influenced by any considerations of popularity. In an age when it was the proper thing to wonder what the Gentile might say and to imitate the Gentile, he devoted his energies to the task of stemming the tide of imitation. As he said, his faith was perfect; hence why need he dread the slander of the multitude? In one of his letters he says in clever word-play: אני כבודי אלהים ואני לא מפחד מן האמת ("I revere the truth but I am not afraid of the truth").¹ Integrity and sincerity Luzzatto always strove to retain. He avows that from his youth he always sought for reality, not for the shadow, and that the truth as he saw it was sacred to him, and that he accepted truth from whosoever spoke it, big or small, friend or enemy.² He affirms that throughout his life he labored to reach religious views free from both the prejudices of the ancient and the sophistries of the modern.³ There was nothing of the intellectual coquette about him. He did not lightly flirt with ideas. He had convictions; he gave himself in passionate abandon to the views he entertained. As a lover is possessed by the object of his love rather than possessing it, so the serious and sincere thinker does not possess his ideas, to handle them as he pleases, but he is possessed by them and does not shirk the responsibilities they entail. Such a manner of thinker was Luzzatto. He did not shed his views at will and believe in an opinion only at the moment he was arguing in its behalf, as most alleged philosophers do. As Santayana observes, "Merely learned views are not philosophy". Luzzatto was a genuine philosopher, for in the first place he was very slow to form an opinion, always putting aside his theories for a couple of years and thus avoiding snap judgments,⁴ and because once he arrived at a belief it became part of his very essence, so that, as he graphically expressed it, not all the winds of heaven could move him from that belief.⁵ His philosophy was a real philosophy because it was from within. His expressed opinions, his literary efforts arose because ~~exixxx~~ of an inner urge that would not let him rest. ~~xxxx~~ Himself animated by a mental seriousness and moral intensity comparable to that of Kohelet and Job, he could not at all grasp

1. Yah. Ve. p. 80, where it is quoted from אמת אלהים עברית V, 722.

2. Igros II, No. 83

4. Igros. II, No. 83

3. Epist. Jan. 1856

5. Igros. Vo. No. 249

the notion that a man lacking in purity of heart could possibly be a great thinker. No one of perverse morality could, in Luzzatto's opinion, write his name large in the firmament of thought. "Wisdom", Luzzatto says, "cannot come into a bad heart. Whoever does not admit the truth and whoever does not esteem the truth more dearly than his money and honor is not qualified to discover hidden wisdom, for he is not patient---, he hastens to form and announce his opinions, and when it is proved that he is in error---he does not confess that he has erred."¹ Furthermore, a person who in his heart does not have a moral yearning for truth seeks only what is good in his opinion--that is, what brings him material comfort or fame. Such a person does not admit the truth when it runs counter to his desires. It is therefore possible only for a man who seeks the truth to find it. And since only those of pure heart seek the truth, only, those of pure heart can attain it. Hence the wisdom of Vauven argues' observation: "The great thoughts come from the heart." Convinced, then, that the first requisite of scholarship is moral purity, Luzzatto ceased to believe that I.S. Reggio was qualified for a life of lofty thinking, as soon as he ceased to regard Reggio as pure in heart. And Spinoza he despised not so much because of Spinoza's thought but because, rightly or wrongly, he was convinced that Spinoza tried "to deceive people by means of views which he knew to be untrue."² And one of Luzzatto's grievances against Ibn Ezra was that Ibn Ezra expressed his views through ambiguous hints, not having the courage and sincerity to express them clearly and to shoulder the responsibility that comes of making a decision. He says too, that since in order to procure a livelihood Ibn Ezra had to write a book in every town he resided in, Ibn Ezra wrote as many books as there were towns that he visited. And Mendelsöhn is regarded by Luzzatto as a follower and imitator of Leibnitz and Wolf; Luzzatto doubts whether Mendelsöhn ever had an idea of his own.³ Likewise, Luzzatto asserts that the ideas of the philosophers and Maskilim of his day are not their own but the ideas of others. He says that

1. Yah. Ve. p. 78, where it is quoted from

2. Yah Ve. p. 79 where it is quoted from

3. Igros Jan. 1855

אברהם אברהם V. 701.
העברית ש"ד 1197

with them ape-like imitation takes the place of deep investigation into the nature of things, and he insists that they do not know what it means to have a thought that has been conceived in labor.¹ For Luzzatto, to repeat, honesty, integrity, and sincerity were the sine qua non of all scholarship--and in his own scholarly activity he embodied these qualities to the full.

Luzzatto was a moral man to the core. He was the very soul of his humanitarian preaching. He was a kind, soft-hearted man, though a man embroiled in conflicts all his life. He was certainly a loving, devoted father. He spent hundreds of hours tutoring his son Philoxenes. And in keeping with his philosophy, he was ever willing to guide and advise people.² A born teacher, he would take time and pains to write extremely lengthy letters even to total strangers, in the desire to explain some matter or other to them. And toward the non-Jew Luzzatto was always friendly and considerate. How dominant in his mind was his oft-repeated preachment of love of the stranger is shown by the fact that he called his eldest son Philoxengs, of which name the Hebrew equivalent is אהבה זרה (lover of the stranger). Just as the thought that dominated Isaiah--his vision of the downfall of Judah and the rescue of the remnant--found expression in the names he gave his two sons (אברהם and יצחק), so too it was a dominant thought of Luzzatto's that found expression in the name he gave his son, to-wit, the doctrine of the humanitarian: love of man. *Not quite; it was his pre-occupation with Onkelos that occasioned the name*

Luzzatto gave himself unstintingly to the rigors of severe and protracted thought. His learning was vast. He knew Latin, French, Italian and Hebrew literature. He devoted his life to serious study. He sometimes toiled away for sixteen hours of the day. One searches his letters in vain for any mention of recreation or indulgence in pleasure. In his writings he maintains a continuous vigor of thought. He never lets himself tire, he never diverges from his serious trend to take a holiday and play in a lighter vein with ideas. Quips humorous ^{observations} ~~sidelights~~, are

1. Yah Ve. p. 80

2. Epist. Feb. 26, 1844

altogether absent from his writings. The only attempt at humor I find recorded is in one of his letters, where he calls Abraham Geiger "Abraham le Violoniste", Geiger being the German equivalent of the French "violiniste" and of the English "violinist". Surely Luzzatto's was a life of intellectual striving. Like Nietzsche he gave himself with the reckless abandon of a lover to the life of the mind--and unlike Nietzsche he did not break under the strain of the mental discipline entailed.

A word now about the external aspects of his literary product. His writings on religion are not in the form of systematic and comprehensive essays and books; they are altogether fragmentary. Save for a sixty-odd page quasi-catechism (the סדרת אבות 'על) and his two thin books on dogmatic and moral theology, one can find his religious conceptions only in his voluminous correspondence in his Italian, Hebrew, French, and Latin letters. He wrote Italian, Hebrew and French equally well--with equal fluency, preciseness, and simplicity. One is reminded of that other linguistic genius: Joseph Conrad. Always plain and direct in expression, Luzzatto nevertheless preserves a certain loftiness and sedateness. He steers clear of figures of speech and he never coins words. Clarity is all that he strives for. And in striving for clarity, he achieves style. Style, it seems, is most likely to appear when it is least courted.

What a complete work

A remarkable man was Luzzatto--and a man who was aware of his virtues and who did not hide them under a bushel. He had abundant faith in his powers. In a letter to Reggio, he states that his character is unique in his generation,--that, therefore, no one can understand his character.¹ He regards his predecessors as inferior to himself. He is confident that his labor is in behalf of all future generations. He remarks, "After I die the world will know what Sh'dal was and what he did. The foxes who destroy God's vineyard will be forgotten and not missed, and the journalists who try to drag me down in order to keep the people from benefiting from my work will no longer be remembered."²

1. סדרת אבות ה' ש"ד נרנא V. 742

2. Yah. Ve. p. 82, where it is quoted from נרנא

סדרת אבות ה' ש"ד II, 1272-1273

* Reference should also be made to L's very interesting and valuable commentaries on Isaiah

On the title page of his 1772 Luzzatto wrote "I will write down my words, and if this generation is not fit for them, I will leave them to one who will come after me, and he will publish them after my death." And to top all, he declared in a letter toward the close of his life: "If Judaism is to endure-- and it certainly shall endure--where will it find an anchor if not in my works and in my words? Can it find it in Mendelssohn's, perchance?"¹ Clearly, Luzzatto was convinced of the lasting significance of his contribution. And singularly free as he was from all cant, he did not parade a false humility. The truly humble man would have to act in such a way as to conceal his humility, lest he be making a bid for praise by showing himself humble. Thus humility is a concept that is its own contradictory; it disembowels itself. How refreshing to encounter, amid all the Bovaryism of our age, a person who reveals himself as he is, who, being proud of himself, frankly manifests that pride. Says a writer of our time: "Modesty is a fig-leaf to mediocrity." At any rate, pride is a very wholesome thing, even though it sometimes does go before a fall. All artistic accomplishment, all great achievement, of any sort indeed, presupposes the assumption that one is doing something valuable. Pride is the indispensable condition of productive activity.

In glorying in his prowess, Luzzatto displayed sound judgment. For he was surely an outstanding personage, one of God's chosen ones. While much of his thought is unacceptable, there are some rare nuggets here and there in his philosophic quarry. Words of wisdom are to be found in his pages; timely counsel lurks there. And even when Luzzatto is unconvincing, he is, at least, provocative and stimulating. And perhaps best of all, Luzzatto is ~~unimpaired~~ a giant of a man, a theologian who always maintains an absolute honesty, a life-long martyr in behalf of truth--and withal, a large-hearted being, a real lover of mankind.

1. ~~See the very same book, Luzzatto's Epist.~~ Epist. Feb 10, 1857.
 Epist