

THE
REFORM IDEAS
of
ISRAEL JACOBSON.

Thesis submitted as partial requirement for the Degree of Rabbi.

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DEDICATED
in
LOVING ESTEEM
to
THE INSPIRATION OF
the
L'OFTY IDEALS
of
My CHERISHED ALMA MATER,
MY REVERED PROFESSORS,
and
MY FELLOW STUDENTS.

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INTRODUCTION.

Anyone, who is interested in the position and the influence of Israel Jacobson in the affairs and religion of the Jews, must remember that Jacobson, preeminent as he was by virtue of his wealth, his social position, his personal influence, and his official position, was not an isolated personality but a member of the Jewish community. To understand his life, one must know the life of the community in which he lived. To appreciate the struggles that were taking place within the narrow radius of his own soul, one must be cognizant of the conflicts and struggles surcharging the Jewish consciousness of his day. To judge of the inspiration which shaped his character and works, one must consider the yearnings of the social group from which he sprang, their ideals and their attempts to effect their realization. And to finally set the stamp of credit or discredit upon his life work and influence, one must be acquainted with the material with which he worked and struggled, the Jews of his day. In short Jacobson was a Jew and to know him we must first know the Jews among whom he lived.

But after all, the Jew was not alone in the world. He lived scattered among other nations. His life, whether he willed it or not, was bound up with theirs. By their laws, he lived. With their permission, he struggled to maintain his livelihood, too often a bare and scanty one. It might almost be said that he needed their license to breathe the free air of heaven. However, notwithstanding all of this, it cannot be granted that the Jew was the creature of his environment and that he could not and did not resist the forces of that environment, which frequently by their brute force could crush and kill the best in many of his number but could not force him to

surrender his identity. The Jew was no knarled and mighty oak that might weather almost every blast, only to fall crashed by some fierce and terrible storm. He was rather like the supple and flexible willow, which may bend beneath the whirlwind of the tornado and the hurricane, but on the morrow casts its graceful shade and in its humble strength endures. Yielding at some points, remaining steadfast at others, he became able to adapt himself to the environment in which he lived without making the life of those around him altogether his life. He became able to discriminate between that which glittered around him and the true gold of the life of the age. He could choose and select from the best, he could adapt it to his own needs, he could play the eclectic, without surrendering the distinctive traits of his own individuality, without becoming false to the ideals of his fathers, without giving up his aspiration toward the higher, the nobler, and the more sublime things of existence. In short, without becoming the slave of circumstances, without being the creature of his environment, he nevertheless was strongly influenced by the world surrounding him. To understand the desires of the Jew, to appreciate his strivings, and to estimate correctly the efforts that he made to realize his ambitions, it is necessary, therefore, first of all to know and understand the life around him.

Only through a thorough comprehension of the time, its characteristics, and its moving forces, can one come to know the Jews among whom Jacobson lived, and only through an extensive knowledge of the thoughts, the activities, and the character of that Jewish community, can one arrive at a just and fair appreciation of the life and the work of Israel Jacobson, the reformer. It has, therefore, seemed advisable that, before the treatment of the reform ideas

of Jacobson, there should come a consideration of the life of the Jews of his day, a general appreciation of their position, and a brief account of the great movements of the time bearing on their problems.

CHAPTER ONE.

- THE DIASPORA. -

In considering the life of the Jews of any period, it is wise to remember that the Jew has had a history of thousands of years. Slowly down the centuries, he has grown and developed. Historical forces have played upon his heart strings and have helped to mold his character and his destiny. He and his life have developed from and are founded on the past. The bond that ties them with that past, is lasting and indissoluble. Accordingly, to understand the life of the Jews in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one must know the historical facts and the events, which acting over a period of almost two thousands of years, had made the Jew what he was at the commencement of the period in which our subject is placed.

The Jews looked upon themselves as living in exile. Driven from the land of Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era, they had gradually become scattered over the greater part of the globe. But, where ever they went, they always looked back with eager yearning towards the land of their fathers. They recalled the glorious days of Israel's freedom when the Temple stood on Mt. Zion's summit, and they believed that some day they would return to the land of Palestine, the line of David would be restored on the throne, and they would be living happily and contentedly in their own land under their own vine and olive tree. Now they were not living in their own land, but in a strange and foreign country, which was a temporary home for them, a place where they might rest for a brief stay and sojourn, but was not their own.

The world, at large, regarded them in the same light. It remembered that they were once citizens of Palestine. Hav-

ing lost their independence and all of the rights connected therewith, they had gained none in the land into which they had come. They were foreigners and as such did not possess the privileges and the opportunities that the people among whom they lived, did. They were governed by special laws and were usually subject to special taxes of an oppressive and a burdensome nature. Being almost as it were a nation inside of a nation, they were treated not as individual citizens but as a group, a group with which the central government was concerned. Coming more directly under the control of the central power, meant being placed in the hand of the ruling sovereign or king. He looked upon them as his personal and private property. He could handle them as he wished and make whatever profit that he could out of them, for his own benefit. He could sell them if he so wished or he could sell the right to tax them. In brief, he usually got everything possible out of them, acting on the ground that they were strangers and lived simply by his grace, with no rights of their own.

As the result of such consideration, they were burdened by special legislation. Their right to engage in business was circumscribed and limited. They could not enter certain localities. They could not travel as they pleased. They could not dwell in such places as they deemed best in order to pursue their trade and maintain their life. They might be expelled entirely from certain cities and districts and in fact from entire countries. They might be permitted to enter a certain town to do business and not be allowed to sleep within the corporation limits. They knew not when new and more burdensome restrictions would be placed upon them, not necessarily to bring about some desired change or improvement but to fashion a new weapon in the hands of their enemies to extort additional money from

them. By being kept out of the manual occupations, their activities were limited to a narrow sphere, which could react upon their life only for harm. Their entire range of life was limited and narrowed by such legislation. A certain small part of the city was made their residence. It mattered not that as the population of the city increased, the number of the Jews increased and their small prison became more and more crowded. They were given no more room in which to live but had to remain within the fixed limits of the ghetto, however crowded and overpopulated it might become.

To such harsh, unreasonable legislation, were added tyrannical laws that almost knew no limit. Discouraged as the Jews were at every turn in the pursuit of their business, hindered by the direst of restrictive laws, and with their whole range of life narrowed and cramped, they were often denied the expression of their natural instincts, and had taken from them one of the dearest rights of normal life, the perpetuation of their name, their family, and their kind. Only a certain number of families could exist legally in the community and no one could marry until a vacancy occurred. The offspring of any other union would be illegitimate and could not inherit but could be seized by the state and brought up as a Christian, which was regarded by the Jew of that time as a living death. Added to this tyranny, were various insulting measures like the wearing of the yellow badge. Often did it seem that no more oppressive legislation was passed against the Jews simply because the fiendish ingenuity of man had been unable to invent further tortures.

This harsh, cruel, and inhuman legislation, however, was but part of the affliction and the suffering that the Jews had to endure. Various false and malicious charges were made in order to a-

rouse the mob against them, and in order to bring outrage after outrage upon their innocent and almost defenseless heads. One of such pretexts was the blood accusation, that Jews needed and used human blood during the celebration of the Passover holidays, and secured it by murdering some Christian child and draining its blood. This accusation, under the charge of murder, appeared as early as 1146 on the continent and 1144 in England where the Jews were accused of having murdered a boy, William of Norwich and having nailed him to a cross in order to mock the crucifixion of Jesus. On the charge of ritual murder in 1235, a number of Jews were killed in Fulda. This charge was repeated with sad effects, and during every period of religious fanaticism the Jews suffered terribly. The Jesuits aroused hate against them. They were persecuted during the crusades, and were accused of other crimes, such as desecrating the host.

The first case of an outbreak on account of the charge of desecration of the host, occurred in 1298, when a very serious persecution broke out in Franconia. This is the first case of its kind but it was often repeated up to the sixteenth century. The host is a wafer made of flour and water. It is consecrated and is supposed to be eaten during the holy ceremony of communion, when it is thought, according to the doctrines of certain branches of the Christian church to become the flesh of the saviour, Jesus, and as the host is eaten, the flesh of the saviour enters the flesh of the religious devotee. The charge against the Jew, was to the effect that he had not respected the sacred character of the host. Sometimes, it was said that he pricked it with a pin to see it bleed or that he defiled it purposely. In itself, this is almost a laughable charge but it often brought great misery and suffering upon the innocent Jews and bloody persecutions.

Other charges against the Jews might be mentioned, such as the accusation that they had poisoned the wells during the Black Plague or smeared some poisonous salve on the doors, or that because they were so successful in the practice of medicine, that they were in league with the devil. Other annoyances might be set forth, such as when rulers declared void the bonds held by Jews. In general, it might be said that their life was usually a hard one with far more than their share of suffering and trouble.

An additional burden was placed upon them when they often were compelled to leave the land of their birth where they may have been living for hundreds of years. They were expelled from England in 1290, from France in 1394, from Spain in 1492, and from Portugal in 1498. They had to sell their property at a great loss and undergo the hardships and the trials of long, wearisome journeys. Often they were not even allowed to take their possessions away with them or if they had converted them into gold, they could not take the precious metal but had to convert it into bills of exchange which might be valueless in the country into which they came. They became a wandering people, driven from corner to corner of the earth.

Nor did fortune ever seem to smile upon them, although in later years they gradually regained a foothold in the lands from which they had been driven. They returned to the Netherlands, the cradle of liberty, which had freed itself from the hated tyranny of the inquisition, very gradually and unostentatiously. Unnoticed, they returned to England and to France and as the liberal movements of the day had gained considerable force, they were allowed to remain and live. This return was not a matter of a day but was accomplished slowly. They were made to realize that they lived only by tolerance.

They were still the victims of discrimination and persecution, and lived apart from the world around them.

What were the results of these dire persecutions and cruel sufferings? They destroyed the relations of the Jew with the rest of the world, that is the finer and the higher relations. He was forced to depend upon himself and live for himself. He often could trust no one but his own kin and people. His outlet for expression of his individuality was limited. He could not enter the same professions as his fellow beings. He could not aspire to the same positions. He could not associate with them socially. With no external outlet for his energy and the fulfillment of his desires and ambitions, he naturally was compelled to turn them inwards, to emphasize more and more the life within the narrow circle in which he lived.

But there was still another reason for the importance which he placed upon his community life and the things that promoted the strength and the vitality of that community. The disintegrating forces working from the outside were extremely powerful. Again and again, they threatened to extinguish the life of the Jew and make his name the title of a departed people and race. Every conceivable force in the power of man was brought against the Jew in the effort to make him surrender his religion and cause him to join the Christian fold and profess the Christian religion. These forces could only be withstood by stressing and developing the most effective cohesive forces and binding elements in the life of the Jewish community. Every law that made them a Jew and different from those around them, helped in the struggle. They demanded the observance of the meticulous minutiae of the Talmud and the Shulhan Aruk. They could admit of no heresy. They

could permit no great variance of opinion. Resisting the force used to compel them to give up those things that were so dear to them, they became more and more tenacious in their hold upon their treasures. They became more jealous of their possession, and through this fear of their loss, they became more and more unwilling to change or alter them. The commands of the Talmud came to take on the aspects of the immutable and the unchangeable divine law.

But there were still other forces helping to make the Jew more conservative and more unwilling to change. His life had become narrowed and limited to a narrow sphere. Intellectually, he could not go outside of the Bible and the Talmud. Socially, he was a pariah and was closely restricted. Politically, he was a nonentity. He had lived in the walls of the ghetto and breathed its atmosphere so long, that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he might be said to be living in an intellectual prison house, the narrowing influence of the Ghetto and the Shulhan Aruk. It was through no choice of his own that this had come about. He had resisted the forces acting upon him and in building up the barrier of resistance that barrier had become so high and strong that it became a virtual prison.

But this had not been true in the past. The Jew, before, had held himself open to every healthful influence in the world around him. He had lived keenly awake to the progress of the day. He had been abreast of the progress and the culture of his time. His contact with the Persian religion left an impress upon his religion that has never been effaced. His relations with the products of the philosophical schools of Greece had had a remarkable influence upon his thought as can be measured by his literature of that period. In fact,

he had never allowed his thought or his religion to become codified and unchangable before. As new conditions arose, as life in the world changed, a corresponding development took place in his religious laws and views as he adapted them and himself to varying conditions. Through the Mishnah and the Talmud, themselves, can be traced that stream of growth and change, which marks one continuous, natural, unbroken line of tradition. It was only within the narrowing influences of the Ghetto walls and endless persecutions, that these became fixed and unchangable laws. It was only when the Jew was denied intercourse with the broad current of the world's life, that he became estranged and separated from it.

When the liberal forces of enlightenment arose and conquered the world, they found the Jew largely locked within his narrow environment. How would he be liberated so that they could act upon him? How could he regain his contact with the progressive forces of human life in every direction? How could he emerge from the prison created by his persecution and his sufferings? That is the question which we will consider, after we glance at the new forces which came into prominence at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The new Europe, that had such a great and varied history, was the life and the being of the new in the time of the new, might be said to have had their birth with the Renaissance and the Reformation, and to have reached their maturity in the century following upon the French revolution. They were the result of a great group of phenomena, which in brief, are the decay of the great empire of the church and empire; the appearance of full-fledged nationalities and languages; the enrichment of the social system throughout Europe; the invention and application of paper, the printing press, gunpowder, and the discovery of America.

CHAPTER TWO.

- THE EMANCIPATION. -

In 1492, when the last of the Moors were driven from Spain, the world was divided into two parts, the Christian and the Moslem. The Moslems had already been driven from the Iberian Peninsula, and the Christians had been driven from the North African coast. The Moslems had been driven from the Iberian Peninsula, and the Christians had been driven from the North African coast. The Moslems had been driven from the Iberian Peninsula, and the Christians had been driven from the North African coast.

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THE new forces, that had such a great and marked influence upon the life and the being of the Jews in the time of Jacobson, might be said to have had their birth with the Renaissance and the Revival of Learning, and to have reached their culmination in the period following upon the French revolution. They were the result of a great group of phenomena, which in brief, are the decay of the great fabrics of the church and empire; the appearance of full-formed nationalities and languages; the enfeeblement of the feudal system throughout Europe; the invention and application of paper, the mariner's compass, gunpowder, and printing; the exploration of continents beyond the ocean; and the substitution of the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system of astronomy.

In fact, they are the forces that have produced our modern era. During the eighteenth century, their influence had already begun to manifest itself strongly in certain liberalizing and emancipatory tendencies. Although their effect was slow and greatly retarded at times, it was through them that the old order of ideas yielded to the new all over Europe, that science won firm standing ground, and political liberty struggled through the birththroes of its origin.

Liberal ideas began to spread and were the forerunners of tolerance and religious liberty and equality. The rights of the individual and the common man were recognized more and more. With the rise of more liberal ideas, there came a greater freedom of thought and speech. All men were declared equal. All men were said to have the same rights. With the French revolution, these great principles passed from the realm of thought and literature into the realm of actuality.

The French Republic granted full citizenship to all classes of men. As French influence spread and became the dominating power in Europe, old institutions were overthrown to make way for the new. French ideas reigned supreme, and the liberalizing forces of the period gained the upper hand and swept into the seat of power from which, despite the great wave of reaction and conservatism following immediately upon the downfall of Napoleon, they were never driven.

These forces were beginning to open the hearts and the minds of men. They were laying the foundations for a truer culture, a wider spread civilization, and an era of enlightenment and progress not for a favoured few but for the masses and the great majority of the people. They were calling forth new energies in the individual man. They were opening up new vistas. They were making plain possibilities and potentialities, hitherto unknown and unthought of, in the lives of men and women. And as men began to awaken, as they commenced to realize their own worth, the greatness that lay within them, they saw more in their fellow beings. Their sympathies were becoming broader and broader. Various parts of society, thus recognizing more elements of kin in each other, were drawn closer together. Old and narrow distinctions and prejudices began to disappear. The metal gates of men's personalities started to swing open and unbar themselves.

Thus, we see that the forces of progress, that had come into the ascendancy at the commencement of the nineteenth century in their broadening and liberalizing influence, were diametrically opposed to the influences that had hitherto been the strongest in the environment of the Jew during the period of persecution. Instead of suppressing, they wished to liberate the energies of the various peo-

ples. Instead of working to separate one group from every other and create friction and hostility between them, they tended to bring them nearer together. They started men on the road toward understanding each other. Where distinctions and barriers had been increasing and had become more and more emphasized, they did their best to obliterate them. In short, not suppression but free expression became the order of the day.

But here, the Jew found himself at a disadvantage. He was no free citizen of the world. He had not been able to live where he chose nor had he been able to live among and with the people in the midst of whom he was. He was surrounded by them but he was not one of them. He had been separated from them by an artificial barrier that had become almost a prison to him. The wall of the Ghetto circumscribed and limited all of his activities. It shut him off from social intercourse with those around him. It made impossible the human bounds of sympathy and understanding that are the basis of cooperation ~~and~~ between men and their mutual progress. But more than that, it cut him off from the thought of the age. His own thoughts, his feelings, his religion and all its details and laws, had become separated so long from the life of the age, had had to stand by themselves for so long, that they had assumed a peculiar character. They had become so strong in resisting outside influence or change that they had almost, as if it were, become bomb-proof against any missile or high explosive shell that might be rained upon them. But as their strength increased, they became less elastic. As their frame hardened they became less and less able to expand and grow. It was, therefore, true that they could not change readily and easily. They were not of the nature that would so wish. They had become more and more conservative. They had held the past so dear and rallied around it so often

that it meant more to them than the present. Thus it was doubly difficult for the Jew to take advantage of the new day, its liberality, its promise and its hope.

The French Revolution, however, meant far more to the Jew than it did to his neighbors since it freed him from his former disabilities, it removed old burdens and taxes from his shoulders, it gave him equality and freedom such as he had not enjoyed before. But at the same time, it seemed to threaten everything that he deemed most sacred. The lure of the new liberty, the fascination of the new freedom might very well make the Jews become just like the people around them. They might be tempted to give up those marks of separatism, such as the Talmud and the Shulhan Aruk, that had come to be regarded almost as holy and sacred as the word of God. Then arose a conflict in the inner soul of the Jew. How far should he cling to the past? How far could he allow himself to be influenced by the new? It was no philosophical, abstract question for him. It was the most vital and meaningful question in life. Could he allow the new contacts to change his manners and his customs? Could he allow his children to spend a little less time in the study of Talmud and learn the vernacular and secular studies? Would there not be grave danger that he might be weaned away from his Hebrew by more attractive secular studies? Might he not give up his Hebrew entirely and soon be lost to Judaism? He was face to face with a grave difficulty. He had seen many leave the fold because of tempting bait. It seemed that they preferred to give up their Judaism rather than undergo the trials necessary to uphold it. He felt a contempt for them since their religion seemed a matter of convenience. He felt that he could not measure the force of the new attractions. He was afraid of the unknown. Perhaps, his religion and

the precious heritage that he had saved through centuries of suffering and affliction, would be lost. Perhaps prosperity and freedom would prove more powerful than the rack and the burning coals and persuade him to surrender that which even death had never before been able to wring from him, his Judaism.

Not did his problems diminish when he left his Ghetto and stood on an equal footing with his neighbors. His life was based on the past and connected with it in innumerable ways. He could not sever himself from it, but he was forced to readjust himself. An example of this is found in his religious services and daily prayers. They possessed little or not appeal in themselves. As the years had passed by, the symagogue and the ritual had gradually lost what little hold they once had, through their subject matter, on many of the people. All that was left for the great majority of the worshippers, was the force of the past, the pressure of the present to preserve their religion or perish, and the decrees of custom. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was an open question as to how the religion of the Jew might be related more closely to the life around him, how the service might be made more meaningful to the people.

We might say then that there were two struggles going on at the same time, as a result of the emancipation brought by the French revolution. The one was one of the exterior ~~struggle~~ and dealt with the more material things of life. It was a question of the Jew adjusting himself to life and the problems that he had to meet. The other might be described better as an inner or soul's struggle within himself. That was the larger and far more important problem. Could he free himself from the tyranny that the centuries of persecution

had placed upon him? Could he strike off the chains of his intellectual prison house and stride forth a free man into the light?

We will now try and see how these problems were faced by the Jew at the beginning of the nineteenth century and what efforts he made to solve them. How could he settle the conflict that waged within his soul? How could he orient himself to world forces and adjust himself to life?

It is not our purpose in this modest work, to attempt to give consideration to all the movements in the Jewish sphere of influence that had a bearing upon these problems, but rather to look at the first attempts to bring about their solution. To cover all the influences that had some bearing upon these attempts, would be far beyond our strength and purpose. We are concerned not so much with the theoretical and abstract aspects of the general situation as we are with the beginnings, with the progress that was made, with the reforms that were adopted, and with the practical movements that actually took place. For these reasons, we have selected as the subject of our thesis, the reform ideas of Israel Jacobson, who while he has not exercised as great and as an important an effect upon the development of the reform movement in Judaism as some others, might be called the first practical reformer. He did things where no one had done them before. He brought about results. At the commencement of the reform movement, he, therefore, ranks as an important figure.

Israel Jacobson was born in Halberstadt, October 17, 1768. He was educated in a Jewish religious school and apparently lived an entirely normal and not unusually eventful life. At the natural age, he was engaged to the grand-daughter of Philip Samson, the founder of the Samson-Schule at Wolfenbüttel, where Zunz and Jost were educated. It seems that this connection had a great influence upon his life and thought and probably helped to direct his interest along certain lines of a character that might otherwise well have been strange and foreign to him.

He resided in Brunswick and through his business ability, his thrift, and his industry, he became rich. He devoted a great deal of his money and his time to philanthropic and communal purposes. He established a school in 1801 in Seesen with a distinct object in mind. He had felt that the Jew was estranged and separated from the life around him altogether too greatly. He felt that this was largely due to the fact that there were so few points of intimate contact between the Jew and his neighbors. He deemed it possible if such contact and intimacy was established in the earlier years of the life of the individual, that a mutual cordiality of greater depth and intensity than that existing, would be created between Jew and nonJew. For this end, he founded a school that should not be limited to Jewish children and Hebrew studies but should be open to Christian children also. This school had about forty Jewish and twenty Christian pupils and was remarkably successful, but more consideration will be given to this in a separate chapter.

Jacobson gradually became more and more important. He was the most influential person of the Jewish community and stood in high esteem with Napoleon. It is even thought, although no actual proof has been found, that it was through his suggestion that Napoleon was moved to call an assembly of Jewish notables in France, modeled on the great Synhedrion of ancient Israel. He, himself, was made the official head of a similar organization of the Jews in Westphalia, being appointed to the presidency of the Jewish Consistory by Jerome, the brother of Napoleon and the king of Westphalia, a kingdom created by Napoleon. In this position, he exercised great influence upon conditions in Westphalia. He stood vigorously for the rights of his coreligionists and was prominent in ushering in the new and the

most welcome freedom for the Jews.

Despite the prominence that was his by reason of his wealth, his social position, and his official capacity, despite all of the calls that came to him from different quarters, he was always vitally interested in the affairs of the Jewish community and gave them the first of his attention and energy. In 1810, he built a beautiful synagogue and introduced an organ. He initiated the ceremony of confirmation by confirming five Jewish boys in 1811. He removed to Cassel and there encouraged reform and the adoption of a ritual similar to that of Seesen and founded a seminary for Jewish teachers.

At this distance, he seems to have been most tactful and able, paying respect to tradition and the established institutions and bringing about reform slowly and cautiously. However, it was impossible for any one attempting such things to avoid censure and rebuke. The feelings of the time ran too high. He and his ideas were opposed most vigorously by many of the older school. He and his ideas became a storm center. They were a fortress of strength for those who fought the battle of improvement and reform, and at the same time they were the most important point of attack by the upholders of strict orthodoxy.

One of the most noteworthy and remarkable things about his career, was the fact that he had had no special training or work that would turn his mind toward religious subjects. He was a capable, energetic, and wealthy business man. That a man of his type and his great prominence should take such a deep and vital interest in religious reforms is, indeed, interesting.

After Napoleon's downfall in 1815, Jacobson's position was rendered difficult by reason of the fact that he was known to have been so sympathetic and close to the Napoleonic regime. As a result, he left Westphalia and moved to Berlin. He held services in his own home and continued the work that he had begun before, and though his services were suppressed by the government on complaint of the orthodox as being something new and therefore revolutionary and dangerous to the established institutions, he contributed much to the service of reform. He did all in his power to bring about and maintain a better understanding between the Jews and the Christians and remained an influential and powerful figure until his death at Hanover, September 14, 1828.

We will now consider, more in detail, the changes that he deemed necessary, and the way in which he attempted to bring them about in his life time. In other words, we will take up the reform ideas of Israel Jacobson and consider their meaning, their purpose, how near they came to solving the questions which existed in the mind of Jacobson, and the influence and position, which through them, might be said to belong to Jacobson.

CHAPTER FOUR.

- EDUCATIONAL REFORMS.-

The first and probably the most important thing that Jacobson had in mind was the condition of his brother-Jews and their religion. As Graetz has expressed it, (5:501)

"Noble-minded, good natured, ready for any sacrifice, and energetic, he (Jacobson) kept one aim before him, the removal of the hateful, repulsive exterior of the Jews and Judaism, and the endeavor to render them externally attractive and brilliant."

Jacobson realized that the position of his coreligionists was not what it should have been. He saw that they were out of touch with life. Their long continued study of Hebrew and the Talmud prepared them in no way to meet the problems of the hour. At the same time, those who did not learn their Hebrew, found nothing in their religious services. To many, the prayers were meaningless. They seemed to many to be a remnant of a decadent and useless past, especially as the new age claimed to be so far ahead of the past and despised the old and ridiculed it at every opportunity to even a greater degree than most ages mock the generations that precede them. For this and other reasons, there were those who were abandoning the faith and creed of their fathers and betaking themselves to strange gods.

How could the average Jew be educated up to the needs of the moment and at the same time be kept true to his ancestral religion? Or in other words, how could he be made a true citizen of the modern world without losing his religious beliefs, the basis of all worthy character and moral life? It seemed that if he were to give up his Hebrew and turn to secular studies, he would lose connect-

ion with the sacred past, he would not understand the prayers, and he would look upon Judaism as an outworn and useless form, that only brought discrimination and difficulty to its followers in the various walks of life, and had better be deserted than cherished.

The problem had puzzled Jacobson. "Through his business connections, he traveled extensively and noted the peculiar conditions existing among the Jews. Deeply attached to his people and his faith, he could not but view with concern the indifference of the cultured Jews of the period, notably in Berlin, to their religion; the rupture between this cultured class and the mass of the people was becoming more and more pronounced; the Judaism of the synagogue had degenerated into a lifeless formalism; the forms, customs, and ceremonies had usurped the place of the essentials; the public service consisted of an endless recitation of frequently unintelligible liturgical pieces, and was marked by such noise and indecorum as consoorted ill with the spirit of devotion; there was nothing to attract one to whom religion meant something more than the slavish observance of traditional forms which however religiously significant they may once have been, had lost much of their former power to impress. He felt that there must be some middle way between the contemptuous attitude of the so-called enlightened class towards Judaism and the official expression of the faith from which the living breath had departed, leaving only the dry bones. This middle way spelt reform."⁽¹⁾

In the mind of Jacobson, such reform could be best brought about by two changes, one a change in the system of schooling of the day and the other a change of the form in which religious services were conducted in the synagogue. Both affected each other

(1) See Philipson, Reform Movement

and were most closely interrelated, but in point of time the educational reforms preceeded the others.

In Jacobson's time, "education had come to be restricted to purely Hebrew instruction. In Germany the Jewish schools had fallen to a sorry state. The school masters, called, melammedim, were for the most part uncouth Poles, devoid of all pedagogical ability. The Cheder, as the Jewish school was called, was synonymous with disorder; the instruction was haphazard and the influence of the teachers was not for the best. A thoroughgoing reform of the school system was necessary if the Jews were once again to participate in the life of the world as seemed likely from the signs of the times."⁽¹⁾

Jacobson, accordingly, founded his school in Seesen in 1801. His was not the first school founded to embrace secular as well as Hebrew studies. It was much like the others in general. They were to teach pure morality, love for humanity, the duties of men as subjects, as well as writing, reckoning, language, geography, history, and natural science in order that the pupils might become useful citizens of the state. These schools broadened the interests of the Jews. They increased their general knowledge. The Jacobsonschule in particular brought the Jewish children into contact with the Christian children and created better understanding. About half of the children were Christian. During the years from 1838 to 1867, there were 1444 pupils, of whom 719 were Christian children. When we remember that the Jewish children had been educated entirely by themselves before, we can appreciate what a change this was and what a larger outlook and point of view it gave to the children. It was a

(1) Philipson, Reform Movement in Judaism, p.17.

liberalizing influence of the utmost value.

Our interest, however, does not lie in the Jacobsonschule for these reasons, even though it was remarkably successful in broadening the life of the Jew and achieving the things that it had set out to do. It was through the influence of such schools exerted through their instruction that the first reform of the ritual and public service became possible. In these schools, a service was introduced that would not have been tolerated elsewhere. The children became accustomed to the reforms and when they were older enlisted in the cause of reform. Often the sermons and the songs in the vernacular, could not be introduced into the service in the synagogue but they could be introduced in the school service and many people attended such services who would not have attended similar services in the symagogue.

The Jacobsonschule deserves our particular attention because Jacobson was the man of action who instituted the first reforms in the Jewish service. He directed the activity of the consistory along the lines he had laid down in Seesen. A school was established at Cassel, in which instruction was given in elementary branches. Divine services were held in the chapel of the school every Saturday. The prayers were partly in Hebrew and partly in German. A member of the Consistory or usually the President delivered an address in the vernacular. Hymns in German were sung.

That these services marked an improvement is shown by the statement of David Frankel in referring to religious services in the school,

"A quiet worthy of imitation and a solemn devoutness rules in this synagogue." (Sulamith 3:1:10.)

The rabbis took pains to show that these alterations did not transgress any rabbinical enactments. These were slight changes but they were the beginning of the reform movement as a practical achievement.

The school started out with no more than a few
men and further in administering the service. He built a temple in
the city of this one purpose. He organized a choir and had an organ
and in "the temple". There he had done all in his power to make the
service of real significance and meaning to the men and women of his
city. He had introduced German hymns, German lights, and some German
songs. The German hymns were an improvement upon the German ones
that had been the order of the day. They had been a kind of out-
let for the spirit of the day. That had been called preaching
in the city of this one purpose.

CHAPTER FIVE.

-TEMPLE REFORMS.-

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The school service met with so much favor that Jacobson went further in modernizing the service. He built a temple in Seesen at this own expense. He organized a choir and had an organ placed in the temple. Thus he had done all in his power to make the service of real significance and meaning to the men and women of his day. He had introduced German sermons, German hymns, and some German prayers. His German sermons were an improvement upon the Hebrew ones that had been the order of the day. They had been entirely out of keeping with the spirit of the time. What had been called preaching was either an explanation of rabbinic observance or a fantastic explanation of Biblical passages which in many cases, most of the audience could not understand owing to their ignorance of Hebrew grammar. His sermons, on the other hand, did attract some to the synagogue, who would otherwise have become entirely separated from it.

It is interesting to note at this time, that no changes were made in the prayers. Such might have been expected in consideration of the stand of the Assembly of Notables in France, as for example when they declared their loyalty to the land of their residence and claimed French citizenship, they might have given up their prayers for a speedy return to Palestine. They might have been willing to eliminate all mention of the sacrificial cult from their prayers, but no actual change took place at this time. It seems that there is usually more conservatism and things move more slowly in religious spheres than in other phases of life.

But of course, it must be remembered that Jacobson could not forget the age in which he lived and the conservative stand taken by the great majority of the people. He could not have given voice to more radical views, if he had possessed them, (and one can

neither prove or disprove such possession,) without raising an almost overwhelming storm of opposition to everything that he proposed. In other words, to secure anything at all, he had to begin slowly and gradually. As it was, he faced bitter opposition and enmity. We will see later that his opponents went so far as to have the government close his synagogue in Berlin as an innovation destructive to the public welfare. His moderate reforms in Seesen were opposed most vigorously and to such effect that King Jerome reprimanded Jacobson for his ardor in reform (Graetz, Hist. of Jews, Vol. 5, p.562) probably on complaints by some of the Jews. Samuel Eger of Brunswick (died 1842) expressed the conviction that by employing German prayers and hymns, the Hebrew language would fall into disuse and finally die out, and the bond uniting the Jews dispersed throughout the world would thereby be relaxed.

As a natural result, therefore, because his work was the beginning of reform and because he had to face such opposition it occurred that Jacobson's reforms were largely changes in the form rather^{than} in the spirit or the content of the religious doctrines of the Jew. Where there had been disorder and confusion, he introduced quiet and decorum. No talking was allowed during services and a spirit of devotion and reverence resulted. There were harmonious hymns in German. The services were read in the vernacular and everything was arranged to facilitate the congregation understanding the ritual fully. But no fundamental change or alteration took place in divine services under Jacobson.

Nevertheless, it might be said that he did a great deal for the services. It is true that Joseph Wolf in 1806 had inau-

gured preaching in German in Dessau, but it was Jacobson that reintroduced preaching in the vernacular in such fashion that it became a widely adopted practice, and aided in carrying out the fundamental aims of the service. In general, the Jewish religious service falls into two main divisions - instruction and prayer. As far back as the time of Isaiah, the people gathered in the courts of the Temple to receive instruction from the prophets and to pray. (Isa.1:12-15) Jacobson had assisted the instructive power of the synagogue by adding the sermon in the vernacular. He had also increased the spirit of devotion and prayer by making the prayers more comprehensible to the people when they were phrased in German and by maintaining order and decorum in the public service. Thus he actually helped a great deal in improving the efficacy of the religious service.

Moreover, he did much to beautify the synagogue and make the service and attendance at worship more popular. He introduced an organ into the Temple. Instrumental music in divine services had ceased with the destruction of the Temple. Music was prohibited generally in token of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem, except on festal occasions and especially at the marriage ceremony in order to delight and make happy the bridegroom and bride. It appears that the organ was employed in nuptial ceremonies which took place in the synagogue. Organs had been placed in the synagogues for a long time. One had long been a feature of the Alt-neu Schul at Prague. A new one was built there by a Jewish donor in 1716 (Zunz, Gottesdienstliche Vorträge, p.476.) The Shulhan Aruk (Orach Chayim 338:2) allows non-Jews to play the musical instruments at weddings on the Sabbath of the week in which a wedding occurs, in honor of the bridegroom and the bride. But despite the fact that the organ had been in the syna-

gogue for so long a time, it had not been used in connection with the religious services.

The modern organ in Reform synagogues as an accessory of worship was first introduced by Israel Jacobson at Berlin in the new house of prayer which he opened for the Shavuoth festival, June 14, 1815. He was attacked by the Orthodox party because of this and his other reforms. They complained to the government that new and dangerous innovations were being started in the new synagogue that would destroy the foundations of true religion and undermine the government. As a result of these charges, the house of worship was closed by the government on October 18, 1818. ?

It can readily be understood from the last section
that Jacobson could not have gone any farther than he did.
After, some with such limitations placed upon him, he proved that he
was really able to do the work of his class and to perform the necessary
work of initiation and to answer the questions put to him at least
satisfactorily. This was the part which was the most
important part of the ritual and was the part which was the most
important to the people, he recognized the meaning that the ritual had for
the ceremony of his initiation, and as a result of this he was
a satisfied man.

CHAPTER SIX.

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-CONFIRMATION-

It can readily be understood from the last mentioned incident that Jacobson could not have gone much further than he did. However, even with such limitations placed upon him, he proved that he was keenly alert to the needs of his time and possessed the necessary amount of initiative and energy to overcome obstacles and to at least partially satisfy such needs. This was the case with confirmation. Among other parts of the ritual that had lost their full significance to the people, he recognized the change that had taken place regarding the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah, and as a substitute for that ceremony he initiated the ceremony of confirmation.

He perceived that the position of woman had changed since Biblical and Talmudical days. She was no longer almost an insignificant object, being counted far inferior to a man in every way. Her place and position had improved until she deserved more consideration than she was receiving. It was only right, therefore, that she should be given some place in the religious life and in the doings of the synagogue. She had been ignored too long. She had not counted as an individual. Her testimony and her judgment had not been considered equal to that of a man and in the religious life, she almost did not exist.

But this conception had been outgrown altogether in real life. It was too fundamental a fact and too important a change of relationship to permit the old and outgrown custom of the ancient synagogue to obtain completely. Some acknowledgment of the new conditions had to be made. Jacobson perceived the opportunity of making a start toward such a recognition in the ceremony of confirmation by confirm-

ing the girls as well as the boys.

Graetz blames Israel Jacobson for having introduced among other synagogue reforms, the confirmation of boys and girls, which, he says, "has no root in Judaism." How far modern thought has ratified Jacobson's step is shown by the prevalence of the ceremony. In the opinion of reform Jews, confirmation, like the organ and other innovations traceable to non-Jewish sources and associations, lends an impressiveness to the initiation of the young into their ancestral religion which the bar mitzvah institution has lost, owing to the unfamiliarity of the children with Hebrew. Besides there was no provision for a solemn consecration of the Jewish maiden to her religious duties. Confirmation was the first step toward the official recognition of woman as a member of the synagogue.

While many Orthodox leaders object to confirmation either on the ground that it has been borrowed from the Protestant Church, where it is also but a recent development and not at all characteristically or typically Christian, or on the basis that it contradicts the principle that the Israelite is pledged to Judaism through the covenant of Mt. Sinai, by his birth, there is nothing in the rite which is not thoroughly in harmony with the spirit of Judaism. It does not mean initiation into the faith, or admission into the Jewish community, but is a solemn declaration of the candidates, after having been imbued with enthusiasm for their religion, to be resolved to live as Jews and Jewesses. For this purpose, after their religious sentiment has been awakened and strengthened, and their minds have been prepared for their becoming faithful members of the Jewish congregation, of society, and the state, confirmation comes as the solemn graduation

from the school of religious and ethical instruction, and is intended to consecrate the young to their duties as Jews. It appeals not only to those confirmed, but to the entire congregation, and thereby becomes for all a renewal of the Sinai covenant.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Confirmation has become one of the most important religious ceremonies of the religious calendar. It seems to produce a more lasting effect upon the adolescent boy and girl than any other phase of his religious or moral training and is indeed a culmination of his religious education. It also produces more interest among the adults and especially the family of the confirmants than any other of the holy days except New Year's day and the Day of Atonement. For this we can be thankful to the wisdom and the initiative of Israel Jacobson.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

•I N F L U E N C E-
and
-P O S I T I O N-
of
-J A C O B S O N.-

True, we cannot thank Jacobson as he were one of the greatest men of our faith and did more for those of his faith or men in general than any except a limited few. But even though he did not rise to such heights of greatness, even though we could not proclaim him as a second Israel as Maimonides was acclaimed a second Moses, yet we do recognize that he marks the start of a new era. He may have not been the real cause of the reform movement. He may have only given word and voice to the underlying, dormant yearning of the day. But the important thing is, that he was the one that did give expression to these yearnings of the Jew to adapt himself to the world in which he lived. He was the one that made the actual start toward accomplishing things. It was through his help, through his vigor and energy, that the movement of reform gained its impetus. He had commenced the liberation of the Jews from the intellectual prison house created by their sufferings and the isolation of the Ghetto. He had begun the movement that was to free them from the dictates of the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruk and the binding hand of outgrown custom and ceremonial.

It will be admitted that he did not strike home to the great principles of reform. He had not been a scholar and did not possess the historical background and material or the method of approach that would have enabled him to achieve the results of a Geiger. But by his work, he prepared the way for other men. He, by his work, pointed out the imperative need for the great task that they undertook, of showing that the reform movement was the logical outgrowth and result of traditional Judaism. He made things easier for them, if only by the fact that the start had been made.

That Jacobson is rightly deserving of the greatest possible praise, there is little or no doubt. He devoted all his life and all his great powers to the achievement of noble and lofty ends. As Felix Lazarus has said, (Monatschrift, vol.58-1914-p.86)

"His great, noble soul was entirely filled with the purest love of humanity. No sacrifice was too great for him, no labor too difficult, no amount of money unobtainable when it went to relieve the unfortunate of his wretched fellow believers."

Or as L.Horwitz has expressed the same thought in his book, Die Israeliten unter den Königreich Westfalen, p.8,

"He(Jacobson) had spent the best part of his life and a great part of his wealth for the refinement of his people."

That his efforts were ^{not} misspent but that they accomplished much is shown by the rank which Philipson gives him in his Book, The Reform Movement in Judaism, P/25,

Jacobson's claim to the first place, in point of time, in the history of the reform movement in Judaism is based upon his effort and his success in making the service attractive to many of his contemporaries. The true significance of this earliest effort lies in the attention it aroused to the possibility of giving Judaism a public expression sympathetic to the living generation."

It is not my purpose to multiply favorable comments upon the work of Jacobson, without end, but rather to avoid the sometimes too favorable ideas and bias that one acquires in studying the life of a man, whom he admires, by bringing in the opinions of others, who are authorities in this matter. Even one who opposed him and disliked his work, H. Graetz, admitted his sterling qualities, (ibid. vol. 5, p. 561),

"He was especially fitted for the leadership of a

new party by his attachment to his faith, his admiration for beauty and external qualities, his activity, wealth, and high position."

In other words, we see from Graetz that he had the highest qualities. We see from Lazarus, Horwitz, and Philipson that he used these abilities to the utmost and we understand why the Jewish Encyclopaedia ranks him as the pioneer among the leaders of the reform movement, (vol. 10, p. 352.)

"In as far as any one individual can be credited with being the pioneer of the movement for introducing reforms into the Synagogue, that credit belongs to Israel Jacobson."

It may be objected that he did not introduce the real thorough-going reforms, that his name is only connected with changes in the form of various parts of the service. However, it is interesting to note that the first reform prayerbook used by a Jewish congregation, that of the Hamburg Temple congregation, issued in 1819, was dedicated to Jacobson as the father of the reform movement, and he was looked upon by the people of that day, as the inspiring spirit of reform.

While the Hamburg congregation did not assume the leadership and the rank, that it might have had, in the service of reform, it can be considered as having pointed the way to the reform of the prayers and the liturgy and thus started to give expression to the basic principles of the reform movement. Their reforms were not consistent through-out. They had been made as a protest against rabbinism, yet when the test came they sought to justify their reforms

from the rabbinical standpoint instead of standing fully and incompromisingly upon the right of instituting such changes of custom and interpretation as the modified requirement of the day demanded. This was but natural since Judaism had been identified up to that time and held to be synonymous with Talmudism.

Nor were they thorough-going in the reforms they made. Some prayers for the restoration of Zion and the coming of a deliverer in the person of the Messiah were omitted while others were retained. The compromises were unsatisfactory, yet it can be said that the introduction of the first reforms really sounded the death knell of the authority of the Talmud as the absolute rule for Jewish practice. They meant the reign of progress and change over the rule of the dead hand of the past. They pointed to the victory of the reform movement as inevitable. So, we may say that Jacobson being looked upon by the people of his time as the inspiring spirit of the Hamburg reforms, may be considered as the inspiring spirit of the reform movement.

Our final conclusion, therefore, is that his services were of great account and that his reform ideas were important influences in the life of Judaism and the Jewish community. He, himself, was an energetic, intelligent, and capable man. He possessed a forceful personality. His aims and ambitions were high and worthy and he was most enthusiastic in carrying them out. He did the best that he could according to his knowledge and his ability, and if we consider the conditions of the time and ^{the} handicaps, under which he labored, we must admit that he did a great deal.

-THE - END.-