U

NAPHTALI HERZ WESSELY.
(Hartwig Wessely)

A Reformer in the Field of Jewish Education.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

J. L. Landau, in his work, "Modern Hebrew Literature", 1. tells the story of a prince who was confined to a dark cell by his superstitious father; for he feared evil consequences if his son should ever behold the light of day. But the youth, having heard of the glorious world without, pleaded that he be permitted to enter into it, even though it cost him his life.

This anecdote, continues Landau, is illustrative of "the generation of Jewish youth, suddenly aroused to new life at the end of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth. "Dark, dreary, and depressing were the homes of the Jews in the narrow, dingy ghettoes. Whole generations were doomed to languish there for centuries in ignorance and slavery. The bigoted, unenlightened leaders of the people, upon whose legal decision and guidance depended the physical and mental development of the Jews the world over, could think of no better interpretation of their gloomy dreams than to condemn Israel, that royal child which perhaps was destined by providence entirely to remodel the barbarous world about it, to eternal captivity, spiritual fossilization, and physical decay." 2.

It was amid such a setting that the first battles for enlightenment and culture were fought by certain leaders among the Jews. By far the greatest glory of the battle must be conferred upon Moses Mendelssohn. But there were

others who struggled by his side, and to whom a fair amount of credit must be given. For the battle was bitter. There was a Hydra-headed monster to subdue. These men had to face the opposition and prejudice not only of the peoples among whom they dwelt; there was also a vast amount of criticism,- and bitter it was indeed,- among the benighted leaders of their own people, who considered these efforts of emancipation dangerous to their ancient traditions. Such epithets as "Enemies of Israel", "Destroyers of the Torah", etc. were common. Threats of "Cherem" were frequent. The opposition was strong and severe.

Finally, however, the influence of that small group of reformers "penetrated into the desolate, gravelike Ghettoes; and little by little the moral and mental powers of the Jewish nation awoke from their deep lethargy. The hands, that hitherto had hung down wearily, were raised in enthusiasm. It was more especially the young generation that rose as one man to the conciousness of its vitality, whose bosom was filled with an ardent, unconquerable desire for real life, and a corresponding loathing for the shadowy life they had led till now. In vain did the admonitions and warnings go forth from all quarters to those inspired youths: 'Do not open your eyes, your dim, purblind eyes, to the daylight; for it means certain death to you.' In vain came from malicious enemies without, and from blindfolded friends within, the threat,'Do not go out into the fresh air of freedom, of modern culture, because it will cost you your very life.'

Stronger and stronger rang the cry of passionate enthusiasm; 'Let us contemplate this world of beauty, this magnificent and majestic light of knowledge, even if we have to pay the extreme penalty of doing so.' And out of the depths of darkness and gloom one beheld a crowd pressing forward into the light of day. The firmly closed doors and barred windows were burst open; light and air streamed into the dull and dismal habitations. The dawn of a new life had begun for German Jewry." 3.

Naphtali Herz Wessely, known also as Hartwig Wessely, was one of the men who stood on the fore-front of the field of battle. The interests and activities of that man were directed chiefly on the field of Jewish education. It is for his labors in that field that Israel owes to him a deep debt of gratitude. It shall be the purpose of this paper to discuss Wessely as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, educational reformer of that period of unrest, to which we have referred.

II.

LIFE AND WORKS.

We find the first trace of the family Reis, later to become Wessely, in Bar, Podolia. A respectable family it was, and happy, until 1648, when the insatiable fury of the Hetman, Emil, swept over the district. His law was death. The family Reis was included among his thousands of victims. Only one boy, Joseph, survived the slaughter. With his own eyes he saw his entire family murdered in cold blood; but he himself escaped.

Heart-broken and weary, he began his enforced pilgrimage. His first resting place was Cracow. Still he felt unsafe. He continued his journey to Schlessien, and thence to central Germany, where he remained until his twentieth year. Finally, he found a safe refuge in Amsterdam, which had recently cast off the Spanish yoke. That country was now a haven of refuge, particularly for the Jew. There that people had gained its freedom along with the natives, had been granted the rights of citizenship, and had been guaranteed the possession of its property and its wealth. The Jew had never dreamed of such liberty. This was a new world for him, and held forth a bright promise for his future prosperity.

Joseph Reis took full advantage of his opportunity. In a few years he was one of the most influential and respected members of the community. We find his signature on a petition to the government for permission to build a synagogue. That

was in 1671. The request was granted, and the synagogue was built.

Two sons were born to Joseph Reis. The elder, Abraham, remained in Holland. The younger, Moses, migrated with his family to the town of Wesel, on the Rhine. There, the elder Reis departed this life in peace. There is still preserved in the synagogue at Wesel some ritual paraphernalia presented to it by Moses Reis. 2.

The son, Moses, followed in the footsteps of his father. He continued the family fortunes and activities. The French army was then in occupation of the country. 3 Moses Reis carried on his commercial transactions with the officers at Brabant. His dealings brought him into contact even with the Generalissimo, the Prince of Schlesswig-Holstein, who developed a fondness and affection for the Jewish merchant. When the army vacated the land, Moses Reis accompanied it.

Moses settled for a time in Glukstadt, where the Portuguese Jews had gained many priveleges from the king, Frederick VI. There, he took the name Wessel, later Wessely, after the town in which he and his father had previously dwelt. The family of Moses shared in all the priveleges which the Jews of Glukstadt enjoyed. He was the first man in the King's states to build a rifle factory. Later, he became an advisor to the King in the department of transportation.

Some time after this, Moses Wessely established himself in Hamburg, which was one of the free cities. There the King, Peter the Great, conferred upon him the position of general provisioner for his army in Holstein. There, too, he married

Behrend, the daughter of Herz Beer. Four sons were born of this marriage. The oldest of the four was named Naphtali Herz.

Naphtali Herz Wessely, named also Hartwig Wessely, was born in Hamburg in 1725. Even as a boy he showed great promise. He possessed a large amount of native intelligence, and a certain personal charm, which won the affection of all with whom he came in contact. While yet a boy, his father moved to Copenhagen, taking his family with him. There, Moses Wessely won the respect and friendship of the most influential men of the state, including the king, with whom he had frequent audience. Thus, he was able to give to his children all the social and educational advantages of the day.

The education of Naphtali Herz Wessely was as thorough as the conditions of the times permitted. It did not take him long to gain a reading knowledge of Hebrew. Then he pursued the study of the Talmud; so that, at the age of nine, he was able to read parts of that work himself. But, as he himself stated, he "still knew nothing of the Five Books of Moses." 4. In this, Wessely referred not to the knowledge of the Hebrew, but to the knowledge of the real meanings of the contents of those books.

It was fortunate for the young student that, when he reached the age of ten, a truly great scholar and teacher found his way into the Wessely home. That man was the Rabbi Solomon Hanan. He was responsible, more than any other individual, for the subsequent prominence of Wessely in the field of Jewish education. His teaching consisted not only of a reading knowledge of the Scriptures; but included also instruc-

tion in grammar and syntax. Thus the way was open for further study along these lines. The teacher soon recognized the unusual talents of his pupil, and predicted for him a most promising future. Under his tutelege, "The language structure became real to him (Wessely), and a glowing enthusiasm for the holy writings took possession of him; and this mounted unceasingly from day to day."5

Wessely, very early in life, realized the importance of secular education. He felt that, in order to study properly and to teach effectively, one required a knowledge of prevailing customs, fashions, languages, and the sciences. His father sympathized with this view, and he took care that his son's education along these lines should be complete. Wessely's learning embraced all these fields. Beside his thorough training in the scriptures and the Talmud, exegesis, Jewish philosophy, and history, he soon acquired a knowledge of the various languages,- the German, French, and Spanish. The geographies and the histories of both the old and the new world were included in his study, as were also the natural sciences, such as botany, chemistry, anatomy, and geology. At the age of seventeen, Wessely was a well-educated youth, in every sense of the word.

It was quite natural that an intellect of the depth and scope of Wessely's should interest itself in productive literary work. The first inspiration for this came from his uncle, Joseph Wessely, of Copenhagen. During a discussion between the two, the conversation turned upon the subject of the lost works mentioned in the Bible,- such as "The Book of the Battle of the Lord," "The Works of Samuel, the Seer", and "The works

of Gad, the Seer". They then spoke of the Apocryphal writings, and expressed the regret that these were not more familiar to the Jewish people. Wessely quoted from the "Wisdom of Solomon", and his uncle was astounded. A few days later, he handed to his uncle a Hebrew translation of that work, which he himself had completed in that time, together with a commentary. Often in later years he attributed to the labors associated with his translation of the "Wisdom of Solomon" his fluency and subtlety in word study,- historical, syntactical, and literary.

Soon after this, Wessely left his family fireside to seek his fortunes elsewhere; and, likewise, to broaden his secular education. He now possessed a broad and fundamental knowledge of the commercial field, thanks to his father's training. Thus equipped, he found service with Feitel Ephraim, a financier of the court of Frederick the Great; and that man entrusted Wessely with the supervision of his business house in Amsterdam. Wessely filled the position with great ability, and to the complete satisfaction of his patron. He soon acquired a reputation in Amsterdam for his sagacity in commercial matters. There are still in existence certain letters which reveal the fact that he made some very clever moves on the local stock exchange.

His success in business did not lessen his interest in his co-religionists. He was never entirely swayed by his lust for money, nor completely preoccupied by his business activity. He was always desirous of bringing about improvments in the religious and social life of the Jews. In the course of his many contacts with all peoples he learned to realize the great lack and need in Jewish life of secular knowledge.

Beside this interest in this need of his people, Wessely

also was one of the pioneers in the effort to create simple and pure Hebrew, free from any artificiality or obscurantisms. He was concious of the evil influences of the Rabbinic Hebrew. He was well able, through his emotional character and his broad learning, to cope with this problem; and with infinite industry he succeeded in his efforts. He himself was unsurpassed in his production of pure, pleasing, Biblical Hebrew, both in prose and poetry.

The Hebrew language used by the scholars of Wessely's time was a polyglot of foreignisms. It was artificial and stilted. Anyone who possessed a true love for the language must have been repelled by its incorrectness, and its pathetic incoherence and inconsistency, burdened as it was with idioms borrowed from other languages. The teachers of the time had to use this language, really a jargon, even though they themselves did not wish to do so. It was the only Hebrew the people understood. "Not even Moses would have been able to express himself in the current Hebrew."6 The exceptional ones who did desire to express themselves in the pure language were listened to by but few people. Only occasionally one would arise who dared to speak clearly; but he was soon surrounded by a blind multitude, and denounced as a "reformer",- a type of man which our people have always feared. Thus disheartened, the brave man would forsake the cause; and he himslef would soon be forsaken and forgotten. All beautiful, rhythmic Hebrew languished. Not even the rabbis of the time, who themselves may have loved Hebrew, could express themselves in the pure language.7

Thus, the holy tongue was waiting for a new hero to arise. It remained for Wessely to be one of the leaders, if not the

leader, to usher in the renaissance. Well-equipped with learning, rich in style, he was the man for the task. He belonged to his faith with all his heart and soul; and he was determined to be one of its champions. The evil, he decided, had to be rooted out from the very bottom. "The store of words in a language", he said,"are in direct proportion to the knowledge and learning of the people using that language. To increase the flexibility and the richness of a language, we must increase the learning of the people using it. Moreover, among the Jews, language is more closely associated with spiritual matters than among any other people, thus making of it an important factor in their religious life."

Thus Wessely's aims were to ennoble the Hebrew language, in order to express through it the Jewish concepts of the time,- the beautiful and the holy; and to awaken the urge to genuine learing, and also to continue that urge. It was not his aim to reform Judaism. He considered this neither necessary nor useful. He discovered that the source of the evil lay in the ignorance of the Jews of their own faith and their own language. This was the reason why he sought so sincerely to restore the holy language to its original purity and dignity. Through the dissemination of this pure Hebrew, he expected to unfold before his people the true treasures of Hebrew literature.

In 1765, Wessely advanced his cause by completing his work, Lebanon, ( ) , which was of great value in the study of synonymns and meanings of words, as well as in the field of hermeneutics.

Up to this time Wessely had been active in the commercial house of Feitel, in Amsterdam. His services had been valuable,

indeed, and had been well rewarded, both financially and otherwise. He had been a concientious and intensive worker; but he was unassuming and modest. He found diversion and pleasure only in learning. Soon he established his own business house, which at once became successful. His chief interest was in jewelry. He accumulated a considerable fortune. But his highest aspiration was to gather riches only as a means of achieving his aims. He was still possessed of that deep concern for his co-religionists, and hoped to contribute to their improvement.

He published the first part of his work, Lebanon, which he entitled "the Locked Garden", (גן נעול), at his own expense. He distributed copies of this free among his friends, and among the friends of Hebrew literature. That work soon established his reputation. It was highly welcome to the scholars of Hebrew, as it gave a scientific approach to that language.

In 1766, he published the second part of Lebanon, also under the title of "The Locked Garden" (גן נעול). This work received the approbation of the greatest rabbis of the time. Again, he himself paid the expenses of publication. He placed the disposal of this volume in the hands of book-dealers. The income, at first, did not cover expenses. It was only after two years, when the work became known in Italy and in Poland, that the entire edition was disposed of. The Italians valued the work; and the Poles were surprised by it. The results of this early effort were encouraging. Wessely continued his labors in that direction. He devoted the day to his commercial activities; while all his leisure time was spent in further study.

Thus far, Wessely had enjoyed the respect and love of the

most influential houses in Amsterdam. And now, this increased. The most influential men sought his company. All assemblies wherein the welfare of the Jews was a concern honored him as an important member of their councils. His modesty and patience, his interest even in the lowliest of his people, his unlimited generosity, and his flowing eloquence, won for him all hearts. Many were the people, tottering on the verge of apostacy, who, through his eloquence, gained their spiritual equilibruum, and returned to their faith.

Finally, at the earnest entreaties of his father and family, he left his friends and admirers in Amsterdam, and returned to his paternal home. Again he took up his residence in Copenhagen. There, he opened up his own business, which soon prospered. It was there, too, that he met the daughter of Mendel Pollak, Sara Emanuel, and fell in love with her. Soon they became engaged, and shortly thereafter, married. Wessely continued to devote part of his time to study and learning. He lived in Copenhagen for five years, prosperous in his business, diligent in his scholarly work, and happy in his home life.

Then came a series of business reverses. Several business houses, in which he was financially interested, failed. His material well-being was shaken to the very foundation, and he became deeply concerned over his future welfare. But just at that time Joseph Feitel, a brother of Wessely's former employer, offered to him the position as head of his business in Berlin. Wessely readily accepted the offer; for it held forth promising prospects, not only in financial fields, but in intellectual realms as well. He left Copenhagen in 1774, with his wife and children, carrying with him the good-will of his numerous friends.

Berlin, at that time, was the Athens of Germany, rich in learning, and the home of great scholars. There dwelt the man who was regarded at that time as the Prince of Israel, Moses Mendelssohn. It did not take long for these two great souls to meet. Their regard and affection for each other was immediate and mutual. They soon became bosom friends. Although their conclusions came from different points of view, still they were united in their aims. The spiritual predilection of the two differed greatly; still their object was the same. Both wished to awaked their people from the lethargy into thich they had fallen. Both were deeply desirous of restoring learning among the Jews. Both had attracted wide attention through their works. Both had gathered about themselves a host of sympathetic intellects. And both aimed tc give tc their co-religionists, who at that time possessed practically no language, the advantages of at least two languages,- the pure Hebrew, and the German vernacular.

"And yet, each of these two great men pursued his own path. Mendelssohn based his Judaism upon philosophy; whereas Wessely derived all his philosophy from Judaism. With Mendelssohn, reason held the dominating position; with Wessely, reason was subordinated to revelation."

The first literary work of Wessely, produced at Berlin, was his commentary to אבות, לבנון ו". Various scholars who read the manuscript were delighted with it, and readily gave their subscriptions. Various rabies testified to the excellence of the work. The language was fluent, even poetic in places. Everywhere throughout the work Wessely clings to tradition. He attempted to show in the work that Jewish institutions were

not the results of historic necessity, merely fitted into, and giving way to changing conditions; but that these institutions came into existence for all eternity, and for all generations.

In 1778, Wessely's friends persuaded him to publish his work, חכמת שלמה, (Wisdom of Solomon), which he had translated in his early years under the inspiration of his uncle.// He had used as his text the German translation of Luther. His work, רוח חן, (Spirit of Grace), which he had completed at the age of seventeen, was also published in the same volume. The work contains three prefaces. In the first, Wessely deals with the duties of the translator in general, and the way in which he had tried to fulfill those duties. In the second preface, Wessely attempts to prove that Solomon was actually the author of that work. He attempts to accomplish this by presenting the facts that the work contains, and by the expressions which it uses. In the third preface, the commentary itself is introduced. Through this work, Wessely paved the way for the recognition by the Jews of the Apocryphal writings. This is one of Wessely's reform influences.//

And now Wessely met with another financial reversal. Joseph Feitel had grown old, and decided to retire, giving up all commercial connections. Wessely was left without the means of support. He had no other source of income. He had accumulated no wealth while working with Feitel, and now could scarcely support his family. But he kept his troubles to himself. He continued to occupy his time with selling his books, and with the associations of his friends. Among these was included now the well-known Joseph Friedlaender.

At that juncture, another guardian angel came to his aid.

Jeremiah Bendit, the director of the Ahrmenaschtedt, at Berlin, a mutual friend of Wessely and Mendelssohn, persuaded a certain society to hold public lectures on the Holy Scriptures, and secured the services of Wessely for this purpose. A suitable honorarium was granted to Wessely for this activity. In this way, Bendit tried to help Wessely without offending his sensitive soul. His pecuniary need was ended; and his former fears were removed. The lectures were well attended. His subjects dealt only with the Pentateuch, and he gave only the results of his own researches in that field. Still he upheld the traditions. He departed from the naturalistic views regarding creation and the flood. He was accused of possessing too great a predilection for the literal Biblical accounts, and a prejudice against science. Wessely himself was ready to admit this, although he states that his reasons were merely sentimental:

"I admit that heart and mouth speak at the same time. Never my pen wrote anything concerning which my heart felt differently. I esteem him who can realize and recognize the weakness of human reason. Only in mathematical sciences has God given to man the power to distinguish the true from the false with certainty. We never are certain of absolute truth; for our heart influences our conceptions."/2

Through his lectures, Wessely stimulated the further study of Hebrew. He realized, however, that good textbooks were wanting. He himself determined to publish a book of that kind, together with a Hebrew dictionary. He began the work; but the lack of money and time compelled him finally to set it aside.

Wessely now gave all his time to the exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures. He lived quietly within the circle of his family and his friends. Frequently, he enjoyed the society

of Mendelssohn, and of the various scholars of Berlin. Their discussions were instructive and entertaining. They had become quite an institution, particularly so on Saturdays and holidays.

In 1778, Moses Mendelssohn announced his German translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The exegesis for that work was taken over by Solomon Dubnow. Dubnow suddenly stopped in the midst of that labor. Mendelssohn decided upon Wessely to continue it. Wessely's contribution consisted of a commentary to Leviticus. According to the testimony of Mendelssohn, Wessely fulfilled his task magnificently. Wessely , in that work, was modest about expressing his own views. He consulted all other commentaries before him. And he relied chiefly on tradition,- particularly on the Talmud, in which he proved himself to be quite at home.

The financial returns of Wessely's works now brought him a considerable income. He was able to live again in comparative ease and comfort. No one could deny the respect due to his ability, knowledge, and accomplishments. But it was merely the calm before the storm. In 1781, stormy clouds appeared upon the horizon. He became involved in a great dispute. Also, from that time on his needs became greater, and his income smaller. Cares soon weighed heavily upon him. Slanderers and bitter enemies arose against him everywhere.

For it was in that year, 1781, that Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, issued his famous Edict of Toleration, in which he stipulated that his Jewish subjects should be equal to all his other subjects in their legal rights. All the religious denominations in his domain should have full freedom to practice their faith. The occupation of any citizen should be limited

only by his own ability. The Jews were permitted to live in any free city in the empire. They were no longer compelled to wear any sign of distinction. They were permitted to participate in any public festival, and to pursue any trade they desired. The only distinctions that remained were retained only because of certain deep-seated customs of the state, which could not give way suddenly to the new spirit.

What a glorious opportunity! Up to this time the Jew had been deprived of all these priveleges. His legal rights had been very limited. Wherever the Jew had had any freedom whatsoever, he had paid for it with vast sums of money. Truly, the Jew had been groaning under his burden. Now, the opportunity was presented for the accomplishment of more noble things than mere self-preservation or financial enrichment. They may now familiarize themselves with a broader environment, and keep step with the great world outside the gates of the ghetto.

The Emperor sought to put his edict into practical use. He commanded that schools be established for the Jewish youths of his land. The use of the vernacular, or German, was declared compulsory. The recent German translation of the Holy Scriptures, made by Mendelssohn, facilitated even religious instruction in the vernacular. The Jew was also permitted to attend any public school or college. He was admitted into the professions,- such as medicine, law, and military service.

And yet, many Jews in Austria, instead of taking advantage of this opportunity, and being grateful for it, opposed the king and his edict. Some seemed to have learned to enjoy their darkness and their confinement. Some feared that the God of their fathers would be wroth with them, if the Christian

should now begin to tolerate them, instead of slandering and persecuting them. Others feared the "Greeks bringing gifts." Some did not like the idea of their boys studying grammar and using dictionaries, studying laws of logic, dressing neat and clean, and being respected by others and useful to the state.

All this reached the ears of Wessely. It seemed to him that here was an urgent call for him to stand up and express himself with emphasis. He was the man for the task. This was the long-awaited opportunity to put his theories into practice. This was the turning point for the Jew. He had not expected it so soon. Wessely realized full well how thankless a task it would be to point out and try to eradicate the roots of deep-growing prejudices. But his idealism and his fervor drove him on. It was in the performance of this task that Wessely wrote the four letters entitled "Words of Peace and Truth", (דברי שלום ואמת). This work forms our chief source for Wessely's views on the subject of Jewish education, and will be further treated in the next section of this paper.

No sooner was the first letter of this series published than a storm of ingratitude, persecution, and libel came into evidence. As the views of Wessely were aired a tremendous disturbance arose. His words were misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misused. He was branded as a godless man, accused of forsaking his duty toward his people, and of undermining the study of the Torah and the Talmud. "He desires", some one said, "that the Jewish youth should mock and deny the earnest strivings of their fathers."

It was proposed that Wessely be put under cherem. The chief rabbi of Prague, Ezekiel Landau, and the chief rabbi of

Lissa, David Tebel, were the leaders in this movement. Both had previously recognized Wessely as a most worthy man, and had formerly paid their respects to his knowledge and leadership. Both had praised him highly on previous occasions. There is still extant a letter from Landau to Wessely in which he, Landau, expresses his highest admiration. And there is also a letter from Tebel to Wessely in which Tebel praises his books in most glowing terms. It was no personal aversion which led to this new attitude. It was the effect of Wessely's views on Jewish education. 13.

Wessely decided not to endure these attacks without response. He thereupon wrote his second letter, in which he elaborated upon the views he had formerly expressed, and skillfully put forth his defence. "I must say something in my defence", he said, "before I am banned from the society of the good and the pious." "But I will not pay tit for tat. I will not cast aspersions upon my adversaries. I shall not even mention their names. Even though they have desecrated my honor, I shall spare theirs." 14. "After all, they are my co-religionists,- men of a high and lofty profession, and of great learning. May they atone for their injustice through their concience." Wessely did not enlist the aid of his numerous friends. He wished to defend himself only through the emphasis upon the truth of his views, and the value of his aims.

The remarks in this second letter are decisive and conclusive. He gave his adversaries three months in which to answer his arguments. 15. The time elapsed without further opposition. The world accepted the silence of Wessely's adversaries as a sign of the withdrawal of their charges. Wessely decided to

carry on the dispute no further; but merely waited for the full appreciation by the world of his principles.

The letters of Wessely had had some favorable results. The people were now somewhat pacified. Schools were established, equipped , and fairly well attended by the Jews. Wessely now devoted his time and attention to this practical work. He soon won the support of a great number of influential people. Some of these he enumerates in his third letter. The list includes the most prominent rabbis in Italy, the chief rabbis of Trieste, Ferrara, the rabbis of Venice, Ancona, and Reggio. These men had stated in a testimonial that Wessely's works were indeed "Words of Peace and Truth". And they further stated that "We give the author our complete support and approbation, without reservation". 16.

Wessely wrote yet a fourth letter in which he outlined the practical methods of putting into practice the proposed reforms in Jewish education. This letter, also, will be discussed further in the next section.

The edict of Joseph II extended also to Lombardy, (North Italy), which included the cities of Milan, Padua, Venice, etc.. A vigorous culture had flourished in Italy from the fifteenth century on. Many of the cultured Jews expelled from Spain had found refuge there. There they found opportunities for development. They had not been so hesitant, as were their brothers in other lands, to take up the vernacular, and even to write books in that language. Consequently, when the news of Joseph's edict came to the Jews of Northern Italy, it was received by them with enthusiasm.

The Jews of Trieste attempted a practical application of

the educational provisions of the edict. They soon discovered that there was a great need for appropriate text-books. They informed the Austrian Governor of Lombardy, Count Zunzendorf, of this lack. That man directed the Italian Jews to Moses Mendelssohn. Thereupon, the Jewish leaders of Trieste wrote to Mendelssohn, asking him for his complete works. Mendelssohn found that it was possible to send those eager people only a list of the titles of his books. Together with this list, he recommended urgently the works of Wessely, and sent to them a copy of "Words of Peace and Truth" . The people of Trieste then wrote to Wessely, requesting a complete set of his works. Wessely wrote to the leaders of that community requesting that the letter which had aroused such a storm of opposition, "Words of Peace and Truth", be given to the local rabbis for complete examination. The people of Trieste answered Wessely in a most flattering manner. They assured him of their loyal and continued support. They were ready at any moment to defend his honor against his critics in Germany. The work submitted for their examination was translated immediately into Italian, and found ready support among those people.

Wessely now enjoyed the fruits of his labors. His reputation rapidly increased. He stood beside Mendelssohn as one of the bright lights in Israel. About them gathered the other luminaries. Together they dispelled, slowly but surely, the darkness that had enveloped their people throughout many centuries.

In the year 1783, a group of young men, headed by Isaac Euchel and Mendel Bresslau, determined to adopt a more positive policy of reform than did their masters, Mendelssohn and Wessely.

First of all, they founded the society called "The Seekers of the Good and Noble". Their aims were thus expressed:

"Behold, a period of research and of study has now dawned upon all nations. They devote their days and nights to the education of their children. Why should we, only, live a life of indolence, af mental inactivity? Why not revive the precious, valuable stones out of the heaps of dust? Let us join hands across the lands and follow our spiritual leaders who are willing to guide us." /7.

It was becoming necessary to publish a public organ in order to give wider publicity to the views and aims of these liberators. But before they launched their new scheme, they submitted their plan to their revered and honored leader, Wessely, seeking his patronage. Their letter reveals the high esteem in which Wessely was now held among that group of reformers:

"The weary wanderer languishes for fresh water drawn from a clear fountain. We, the lovers of the Hebrew language, seek thee. Since Israel's glory vanished, and the diadem that had adorned his head sank in the dust, since God's chosen people was driven into captivity, and the power of prophecy ceased, the music of our harps was hushed, and the sound of noble speach,- until thou, Naphtali, didst arise, and raise the sacred Hebrew tongue from the dust. Thy prophetic diction blazed forth with prophetic inspiration; and like unto the prophets thou givest eloquent expression to the longings of thy people. Who has like unto thee wrought such splendid work, calculated firmly to establish thy people's fame? Thou hast gone out in spirit to Babylon, hast taken down the ancient harp from the willows

of the brook, and its sweet melodies have become thy immortal song. Since thy writings have spread through the habitations of Judah, they have kindled the enthusiasm of the enlightened of our brethren, who long for thy word. . .. We, a small band of intellectuals and seekers of truth, therefore reverently approach thee with the request to guide and assist us in our efforts." /8.

In 1786, in the city of Koenigsburg, Prussia, this organ was founded and entitled קהלת שלמה. It was to appear in the Hebrew language. Wessely became an active member in the group of men interested in its publication. He contributed to it essays on various subjects.

In that same year, 1786, a startling article appeared in which the author satirized the Talmudic views concerning the punishment of sinners after death. Wessely was asked to defend rabbinism against this article. He was rather reluctant to deal with that subject. He considered the field vague. But, finally, he complied. Again we have a glimpse of Wessely defending tradition. He began by outlining in the Talmudic views of punishment after death. He accused the author of the satiric article of being arrogant and insolent. "If that man had known the Talmud", he said, "he would not have spoken against it." Wessely, however, admitted that "We do not know the true fate of the soul in eternity." He recognized the right of reason to investigate; but only so far as it does not encroach upon the domain of the holy. That realm belonged to the field of faith.

Wessely was still active in a literary way in his later days. In 1785, he wrote his Sefer Hammidoth, in which he

attempted to fill the gap which he felt existed in the works on Jewish theology. It is in this work that Wessely takes issue with Mendelssohn on the subject of revelation. Wessely, as we have seen, clung to the traditional view. 19.

In 1785, Wessely suffered a severe blow. In that year, his wife died. She had been a true helper to him, and a source of peace and inspiration. The loss was indeed great.

The greatest work of Wessely's later years was his Shire Tiferes, (Songs of Glory). In this poem, Wessely portrays the life of Moses from the time of his birth to the giving of the Ten Commandments. It includes the days of the bondage in Egypt, the liberation, and the revelation at Sinai. The various scholars differ as to the worth and the literary value of this work. Herder seems to have inspired the writing of that poem.20. Landau regards it as "The first great Hebrew poem since the final revision of the Bible,- a poem of magnitude, grandeur, and importance."21. Graetz regards Wessely as a poet who, in reality, "only possessed uncommon facility and skill in making beautiful, well-sounding verses of blameless refinement, of graceful symmetrical smoothness, and accurate construction."22. Slouschz remarks that Wessely, "as a poet, possessed perfection of style; but lacked feeling and artistic imagination." 23.

But whatever be the opinions of later scholars, the work, Shire Tiferes, soon found favor at the time. It passed through a large number of editions. It was regarded with favor even by the most orthodox people of the day.

Many of Wessely's works still remain in manuscript. These

include various subjects, poems, treatments of events, etc.. There are also a great number of letters which he wrote to the rabbis of various lands.

Wessely had been reared to follow the Sephardic ritual. He preferred this to the Ashkenasi ritual. He also pronounced Hebrew in the Sephardic manner. But he never gave offence to others in this matter. While in Berlin, he followed the Ashkenasi ritual. It was in this way in general that Wessely was accustomed to act, behaving in a noble manner to every man, everywhere. He was most unassuming, never sought greatness for himself, but strove only to serve his people. For this he was recognized everywhere. Late in life he received an invitation from the Portuguese community in London to become its leader, or chief rabbi. But he did not accept the offer. He felt that he was fast approaching his end. He had reached his seventy-ninth year. .

In 1804, Wessely gave one of his daughters in marriage to a Doctor Meir, of Hamburg. He himself decided to accompany his daughter and to live with her. His parting from his friends in Berlin was touching and impressive. That was the city in which he had achieved the height of his success. But he was received in Hamburg, his former home city, with great pomp and ceremony. He lived happily with his daughter for eight months. He still remained active, delivering lectures to large audiences. Finally, a fatal sickness took hold of him. He lost the power of speech; but maintained his cheerfulness to the end.

There has been some confusion in determining the date of

Wessely's death. This seems to have been due to the fact that the year in which he died was a leap year. The Jewish date of his death was the second day of Adar Sheni, 5565, which was the day of February 28, 1805. This date is concurred in by Landau, the Jewish Encyclopedia, and other sources. Simonsen, the German scholar, also arrives at this date as the day of Wessely's death. 24.

III.

VIEWS ON JEWISH EDUCATION.

I shall attempt to organize Wessely's views on Jewish education, combining the first two letters published in the volume, דברי שלום ואמת. The second letter is an elaboration of the first, expressing the same views and aims, but in greater detail. Therefore, the two will lend themselves very readily to this plan of treatment.

First of all, he appealed to the Jews to take advantage of the opportunities presented in Joseph's edict. It is done for the honor of God's people. The ignorant believe that Joseph commands them to leave the Torah. These people need my words. Those who possess a broader knowledge, know better. They realize that a familiarity with the various languages, the sciences, and ethics has not caused them to leave the Torah; but has increased their love for God, and has given to them a higher appreciation of the beauty, and order, and system in His universe. They realize that we have been planted in the Garden of God; but it is necessary to pluck the flowers.

There are many people in other lands who speak and use the languages of the people among whom they live, and who also write books in those languages. Those men are, nevertheless, most reverential and Torah-loving. I found this to be true in Amsterdam, where there are many learned men, and pious as well.

Some can derive all knowledge from the Torah; but the vast multitude cannot do this. It is for these that a general education is necessary. When I proposed this, I was not speak-

ing for myself; but for the glory of God. Why am I so severely criticised for my views? I have never ceased to study the Torah. In my work, Gan Naul, (גן נעול), I strove to teach the people Hebrew grammar. It was something new. Never before had anything of the kind been published. How can my critics mock me after such a service? Anger robs people of their wisdom. My critics are superficial; they do not understand me. I am attempting to to teach them how to educate their children in a beautiful way. Should they not consider me worthy? I try to instruct them in languages, customs, and general knowledge; to love their parents, and their teachers; and to act in an honorable and respectful manner. I urge them to learn the holy language; but also to learn the German tongue, so that their teachers can explain things more clearly; and that in this manner, a true understanding of God may be gained, and a noble righteousness. And beside this, they could use their German to carry on their business, to earn a livelihood, and to maintain better contacts with the people among whom they live.

And for these views, the people have turned against me. They do not try to teach me what they consider to be the truth. They try merely to destroy me secretly. I do not learn from them. They do not merit the title of rabbi, (teacher). I am suffering a veritable martyrdom as a result of thier persecutions.

I have stated my views. But now I shall repeat them in greater detail.

I distinguish between the Torah of man and the Torah of God. The Torah of man includes nature study,(the sciences),

and ethics. Every man, from his youth, should learn to fear God; and should also achieve that secular knowledge which is necessary. In this manner only is he worthy to be called "Man". In this manner only is he worthy to study the Torah of God, and to carry out all its commandments.

First of all, as I stated, we should possess the fear of God. Then the general knowledge of the people; and then, love. We must be friendly with both the Jew and the non-Jew; if we are to merit the love of God, there must be love also on earth below. Through good manners we will be able to dwell at peace with our fellow-men. The end of wisdom is good deeds. Man should not gain knowledge, and then turn againt his elders, his teachers, and his parents, and all those who are greater than he. Such men are called "Wise men without understanding."

Along with the study of the Torah and the Mishnah, a child should receive an introduction to the natural studies and to ethics. He should study geography and history. All this is necessary in order to gain a true understanding of the Torah. Everyone should possess this general knowledge.

Each one should specialize only in the subject that appeals to him. In the end, these specialists will be able to instruct others in their respective fields. Such subjects as medicine, anatomy, botany, and chemistry require such specialization.

Those who accuse me of leading Israel into a wilderness, emphasize the difference between secular and sacred learning. It is true there is a vast difference between the two. The way of the Torah is the holy path. The way of secular knowledge is the everyday path. Secular studies may be pursuied by all, both the wicked and the righteous, both those who fear God and

who do not fear Him. All who have a craving for knowledge may satisfy that craving. But the wisdom gained from the Torah demands a pure heart, and a clean spirit. Secular studies serve only to acquaint one with practical and material things. If one wishes to learn such subjects, he may go to anyone who is familiar with them. Whereas, in sacred studies, it is one's duty, first of all, to gain his wisdom through his own efforts. The understanding of God and His ways, of prophecy, and of the spirit of heaven, will bring life in this world, and in the world to come.

No man should study the Torah for his own sake. They who would love the Torah should strive to understand its greatness and its loftiness. It is the root out of which the beauty of God evolves. The study of the Torah helps us to love God. When one reads the Torah, it is as if he were speaking to God. There should be but one purpose in all this study,- to fear god and to love Him. /.

It is our duty to lead our children, even in their early youth, into the ways of the Torah. One of the great mistakes of the day is that we instruct our children in the Mishna and the Talmud, and neglect the Scriptures. We torture boys, five or six years old, with the pilpulisms of the Talmud. Such study only confuses the child. And even when we do try to teach the Scriptures to them, our method is wrong. The child does not understand the language of the rabbi, and does not comprehend its meaning.

There are some who say that when a child studies Mishna and Talmud, the teaching of the Scriptures is not necessary. But this view is fallacious. First of all, it is impossible

to understand these studies, if one does not know the Scriptures upon which they are based. The writers of the Mishna wrote only to interpret the Scriptures, and did this only where it was conceded that further explanation was necessary.

I speak because of my love for children. And you criticize me for it. I am not the first to stress the importance of these things. In the synagogues in Amsterdam, the small children first study Genesis, and then the other books of the Scriptures. Then, when they are old enough, they study Mishna and the Commentaries. As they grow older they make progress. When I perceived this, I wept over it for joy. Why do they not do so in this country? I used to long for an assembly of leaders to outline a proper course of study. But here, the teachers themselves do not know how to translate properly the words of the Scriptures. How, then, can they help the children to understand the Torah?

We should outline a definite course of study for the children. First, up to the age of five, the pupil should learn to read Hebrew, and read with the proper accent. Then, beginning with the age of five, the boy should study the translation of the Pentateuch. The teacher should first of all explain each word by itself; and then translate the entire sentence. Then the pupil should learn by heart both the Hebrew sentence and its translation. This method should be followed for a year. After this, the teacher should take up studies in grammar. The pupil, however, should not be burdened with ponderous books on the subject. The conjugations and the declensions should be taught. This, the intelligent boy can learn in a few months. At the age of seven and a half years he should be able to translate from the Pentateuch and parts of the Prophets.

Then the teacher should take up with the pupil the systematic study of the laws of the Torah. Thus, the laws referring to holidays should be studied separately. Then, the laws regarding personal sacrifices. Then, the laws on uncleanliness, on plagues, marriages, dietary laws, Terumah, Maaseh, etc.. All these should be studied in their turn. Progress will depend on the ability of the pupil. Two languages should be used in translations,- the Ashkenasi (Yiddish), and the vernacular (German, Italian, Spanish, etc., according to the country in which one lives.)

When about eight years old, the child should be brought occasionally to the Chedar, where Mishna and Talmud are taught. The child should still continue to study along lines previously mentioned. He should still spend about two hours a day on the Scriptures. As he progresses, let him slowly increase his study of the Mishna and the Talmud, until finally, he spends a few hours a day on these subjects.

Teaching should be done with joy and happiness. The teacher should speak with affection. A few hours each day should be devoted to play. The teacher should watch the children, and even join with them in their play. Contacts between the teacher and the pupil outside the classroom are of the utmost importance. The child should learn to love the teacher, and not to despise him; and in this way learn also to despise the Torah.

Teaching in the Talmud should be gradual. The child should not be overburdened with this study. First of all, he should become accustomed to the ways of the rabbis, their methods of discussions, etc.. One Mishna should be taught at a time. The teacher should begin by giving an introductory lecture on

the Mishna In his study, the child should first read and translate the verse in the Torah upon which the Mishna is based. Progress should be slow, in order to accustom the child to the methods of the Talmud. Rashi, Tosephos, and the other commentaries shoud be used in this study. Proceed in this manner until the child is fifteen years old. After that, he should expand, and swim out into the broad sea of the Talmud, and into other rabbinic works, as well, until he should be worthy of being a teacher in Israel.

And now, let us mention the other subjects which should be studied in order that the child, when grown, shall be able to support himself in his business, and to mingle freely, and without embarassment, with his fellowmen.

One half hour each day should be spent in the study of geography. The oceans should be studied, and the rivers. And the various countries, particularly the neighboring countries, should be studied, as to length, width, form, and general physical conditions. For this purpose, a map should be used. Do not teach geography from books. I remember when I was ten years old, my father showed to me a map of the world. In three days I learned to know all the kingdoms, and how they may be reached by land or sea.

One half hour each day should be spent on books of travel. For this purpose, reliable books should be chosen, Written by recognized authorities. The boy should learn what is to be found in the various countries visited,- the plants, animals, the people, their customs and their beliefs. In this manner, we, who sit in our rooms, will learn waht is taking place in

the four corners of the earth. Such studies will be of great value also in helping us to understand the stories of Noah, and the prophets, how the world was divided, the travels of the Patriarchs, the wanderings of the Jews in Egypt and in the desert, the boundaries of Palestine, the character of the enemies of Israel, the manners and customs of the people of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome. Through this knowledge we will comprehend more clearly the historic facts mentioned in the Torah. Many people wrote on these subjects. Many have gathered together the facts reported by travellers. The children will learn this in a very short time, and without difficulty.

During the hours when the child is free from studies previously mentioned, a little instuction in Euclid (Geometry), and figures (Mathematics), would be valuable. Such studies as these sharpen the mind. They would help even in understanding the methods of the Halacha.

But God forbid that through these studies we should cause the child to diminish his study of the Torah,- a thing which should not happen in Israel. Such is not the inevitable result, as some maintain. We have seen in the case of some of our Polish brethren that they are well versed in the Torah and, at the same time, have achieved great knowledge of mathematics,- so that even the non-Jewish scholars have been astounded. This they learned without the help of any teacher. They taught themselves, with the aid of books.

Thus is demonstrated also the importance of learning the languages in which books are written. Those who know only Hebrew cannot become versed in the studies of nature, geography, and

history; for there are no Hebrew sources on those subjects. How, then, can the education of our children be complete when they have no knowledge of any foreign language? The tendency even of the rabbis was to honor the Talmud Chochem who possessed also a knowledge of these secular subjects. 3.

I do not favor the study of Greek philosophy. I do not believe that Greek metaphysics is necessary for the Jew. For the Jew derives his wisdom and the ways of his heart from the Torah. If you interpret nature through the philosophy of the Greeks, you derive only the Greek point of view. But nature is iniversal. All peoples study it, and we get various interpretations. The wisdom of the Greeks is a philosophy built up entirely upon principles of logic; and the Greeks excelled in that form of study. Rabbi Gamiliel studied Greek philosophy because he was a friend of the royal family at Jeruselem, and he thus came into contact with the Greek culture. It was necessary for him to know how to talk and to carry on discussions with the royal family, and to answer their arguments against Judaism. But for us, it is forbidden to teach such subjects to our children before the light of the Torah shines upon them.

To those of you who fear to study books written by non-Jews I would say; "May your love for the Torah be half as great as that of Maimonides, who wrote, 'Any people who write a book, whether Jew or non-Jew, which brings understanding, that book is worthy to be studied by all.'" In the case of Daniel, a knowledge of the language of the land helped him out of his difficulties; for he was able, through it, to converse with the king of Babylon.

Leisure should be spent, not in loafing, but in learning.

Those who have no success in Talmudic studies should not be persuaded because of this to waste their hours in idleness. There are many who attend Talmud Torahs and learn nothing. These should pursue the study of other subjects, and therby free themselves from general ignorance. 4.

At this point, let me again answer my critics who oppose my view that the Jew should study the vernacular.

In the first place, the proper explanation of the Scriptures is impossible if the teacher does not know the language which is in everyday use; and through which he may explain more clearly the difficult points to the pupil. A knowledge of the vernacular is necessary in order to weigh words and their meanings.

Secondly, even those who are well versed in the Torah have to devote a great deal of their time in earning a livelihood, and in supporting their children. Then why should they consider it beneath their dignity to teach their children something worth while, and through which the children themselves, when grown, may earn their livelihood. No knowledge is more valuable for that purpose than a knowledge of the vernacular. Through this knowledge, the child may pursue the study of books dealing with the trades, with buying and selling, commerce, etc., which will prove valuable in his secular work.

In the third place, even though we were scattered throughout the world because of the sins of our fathers, why should it be necessary to humble ourselves, to lessen our dignity among the peoples, and to appear inferior to them? The Jew comes into contact with all the peoples of the world. If he is not able to speak their language, they will continue to mock him. The Jew

has the opportunity to make known to all the world the name of his God. But how can we accomplish this when we do not know the language of the people among whom we live? Thus, through our ignorance, we do not honor, but desecrate, the name of God. A man's wisdom is of no avail if he is unable to impart it to others.

And fourth, through a knowledge of the vernacular, as we have seen, we can attain a knowledge of other subjects, such as history, nature study, geography, etc.. A knowledge of these subjects will increase our prestige. He who possesses knowledge, and is able to impart it, merits glory and honor, and spreads the virtues of Israel among the nations.

There are those who merit recognition for their noble work along the lines I have mentioned. There is David Friedlaender, for instance, who labored for five years to establish the institute called חינוך נערים. There they study Hebrew, the Targum, and Dikduk. They learn to read and write in the vernacular. They study also French, Mathematics, and Geography. Tuition is free for the poor; but the wealthy pay. The graduates of that institute are very successful in the world of business. Some have become prominent teachers. Others are recognized scholars of the Mishna and the Talmud. This school has survived a crisis; for there was great opposition to it . The people said that it would undermine the Torah and mislead the children. But now, there are many who seek to send their boys there. This year, they had five hundred applicants; but could accomodate only seventy of these.

And there is Rabbi David , who wrote a small book on the alphabet in simple language, together with the thirteen articles

of faith, and songs, and quotations from the rabbis. All this was explained in simple vernacular. Let us pray that such works will grow from day to day. There is great hope for Israel in all this. May God reward such efforts.

Also, there is Moses Midessia, (מעסידא), who has written books in the vernacular. He has won for himself an enviable reputation for his investigations, and for the purity and the simplicity of his language. He is being praised in all lands. Lords and princes and scholars, who happen to pass through this country, make it their business to call upon him.

Likewise, there is Mordecai ben Rabbi Lipman, who is called Doctor Bloch. Beside his achievments in the filed of medicine, he has also busied himself in the studies of nature. He has written books on the fishes found in the oceans and rivers, telling of their habits and their characteristics. He has written upon many of the other wonders of nature, also. The scholars of the world have praised him for his work. He has been made a fellow in the society of nature, in this city, in Danzig, and in Holly, (האלל"א). He is recognized as a member of that group of scholars who busy themselves in the field of economics, in the cities of Schlessien, Eyra, and Leipsig. He has been made a member of the society of scholars of Goettingen, Ittrecht, and Frankfort. The outstanding scholars write letters of praise to him. This man brings honor and peace to Israel. Only such as he can benefit his people; for his name is known among great men, and when he speaks his words bear weight.

There is also the outstanding Doctor Mordecai ben Hertz, who is called also Doctor Marcus Hertz. He is prominent in the field of medicine. Recently, he called together a conference in

his home to discuss the principles of logic and physiology. Princes and prominent men came that day to join in the discussion. He has established a reputation for himself among those men.

Those who are not able to devote all their time to the study of the Torah, and are compelled to leave such study at times in order to earn a livelihood, may well follow the examples of the men I have mentioned. They can earn their livelihood and win honor at the same time. The congregation of God will then be a congregation not only of merchants. What a great aid to us is this edict of the king, which permits us to busy ourselves in all the works of the kingdom.

At this point, Wessely musters a wealth of material from the Mishna and the Talmud in support of his views. One or two will suffice as illustrations:

"A corpse is better than a Talmud Chochem who possesses no knowledge." 5.

"Where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding," 6.

When I was a little boy in Frankfort, they began to teach me Mishna at the age of five. At the age of nine I was able to read it fluently. But I swear that I knew nothing of that which I was reading. But when I reached the age of ten, I began to study with a learned man who knew Dikduk.7 If I had not done this, the meanings of the prophets would have been hidden from me until old age. But after that, I was happy. I could examine the grammatical points and could thus understand more clearly the contents of the Torah.

Our brothers who dwell under the Caliphs live at peace. They do not fear the possibility of persecution. The Turks permit them to practice their own religion, and to pursue any occu-

pation. In pursuing these various occupations, they realize the need of the languages, and of other secular knowledge, as well as the importance of proper manners. The Jewish mercahnts of that land deal with all countries,- with France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, etc.. They study the manners and the customs of others. And they learn to respect other peoples. Our people, who live in Italy, have come into contact with them, and they have found them well versed both in the Torah of God and in the Torah of man.

Our brothers who dwell in Italy inherited their culture from the Jews of Spain, from which country they were driven out,- the culture of Ibn Daud, Gabirol, Abravanel, and others. All these recognized the value of secular studies.

But we, the Ashkenasi, came here many years ago without understanding the culture and the customs of life. We had a speech that could not be written. Many of our people accepted Christianity, and became enemies of Judaism. The Christians persecuted us, and did not permit us to do as we wished. There were many expulsions and persecutions. We were permitted to settle in the country only under certain conditions. Our occupations were limited. We became poor and discouraged. Since we were so suppressed, there did not arise among us any singers, or men used to the ways of wisdom and ethics. We became embittered.

And yet, our condition is favorable compared to that of our brothers who dwell in the distant provinces, where the small kingdoms exist, and where our people are subject to the rule of petty tyrants. Under those conditions, study is impossible. Those Jews, too, live far from the rivers and the seas, and can-

not pursue the business of trade. They are limited in their outlook to their immediate environment. But even among those people, it would be easy to learn the vernacular, to read books, and to gather all the knowledge of the world. And in this way, too, those who know the Torah would be able to honor it among the people with whom they dwell.

We, who have attempted to bring about these reforms, have been persecuted mercilessly. We have been unable to speak; for our hearts have been broken. But now, a new day is dawning. Awake, to seize this opportunity. The time approaches when all the kings will release us from the yokes which have been about our necks.

When the Jews took refuge in Holland, they raised the prestige of the whole land. They did the same in England, even before they were driven out in 1290. Now, the Jews are permitted to return to that country. And it is written in their constitution that they shall never again be expelled. The great King Frederick II of Prussia first freed our people from their yoke, and thus set the example for the other kings. He showed that monarchs should rule, not over slaves, but freemen; and that wise men should not be fettered or held in submission. He realized that it is impossible to gain the benefit of the knowledge of wise men, if they are not permitted to express their thoughts. That king, also, permitted anyone to write and to publish their books. And if there should be any critics, they also are permitted to publish their views; and the people judge between them. In that kingdom, the Minister of war, (מלחמה), wrote letters of criticism to all the kings who persecuted the Jews.

Louis XV, King of France, was also kind to his Jewish subjects. Also Catharine II, Queen of Russia, whose great wisdom is everywhere known. She too, is very tolerant toward the Jews. And Stanislav, King of Poland, has lightened the yoke of Israel, and has repudiated accusations hurled against the Jews. Christian, King of Denmark, both he and his advisors, speak words of peace to Israel. And Gustavus, King of Sweden, permits Jews to live and to trade freely in his kingdom.

But Joseph II, King of the Roman Empire, contributes more to tolerance than do all these. All his laws are filled with mercy and love. He has done a great deal for Israel. He has removed from us the mantle of shame; and has pointed out the ways which lead to the honor of his country.

The kings have done their best to establish peace. We Jews should follow their example. We, especially, who are scattered among the nations, and are without a shepherd, should live at peace among ourselves. One Jew should not persecute another. Even the Sanhedrin was condemned as a Sanhedrin of murderers if it put to death more than one man in seventy years. 9. Those who criticize me should be more deliberative, and less ready to condemn. There are many cases in which such procedure brought chaos and disorder.

Let us follow the example of the Sanhedrin. Before you condemn, examine the facts. In Jewish courts, it is the custom to consider a man innocent until he is proven guilty,- lest innocent blood be shed. And when a man comes to testify, it is the duty of the court to see that the testimony is authentic.

There are three outstanding critics who have poured out upon me their hatred and animosity. I desire them to put forth their

objections in writing. Why do they criticize me in the synagogues and the public places? My critics are not friends of Israel; but her enemies. Therefore, I give them three months in which to answer in writing. And let all Israel read their criticisms, and judge between us. If those critics do not answer within that time, then I will know that they have changed their opinions; and God will forgive them, and there will be peace in Israel. 10.

In the fourth letter contained in the volume, דברי שלום ואמת Wessely arranges his views on educational reform in a more orderly manner; and he outlines the practical methodsin which these reforms may be put into practice. I shall here endeavor to give a brief digest of the suggestions contained in that letter.

There are two fields of study,- the sacred and the secular. The sacred consists of the study of the Torah. This study should not be pursued out of fear, or for gain, or out of craving for recognition. 11.

For the student of the Torah, the time of study should be divided into three periods,- one for Mikra, one for Mishna, and one for Talmud. 12.

According to the system in use today, a boy of six is taught Talmud and nothing else. What must be the result of this sort of instruction? The child knows nothing of the history of the Torah, of the Sabbaths, the holidays, etc.. How can there be developed in boys taught in this manner an exalted fear of God? Surely, there should be no pilpulistic studies for a child of six. 13.

Every child presents a different problem. Progress in study should be based upon individual aptitude. The child should advance step by step, from Mikra to Mishna, and from Mishna to

Talmud. The new subject should be introduced gradually, whenever the pupil is ready for it.

It is the duty of every teacher to become familiar with the capacity and ability of his pupils. If the teacher finally discovers that the child does not want to study Torah, he should be taught other subjects,- even non-Jewish subjects if necessary; or he should be prepared for some occupation, or for business./4. We must give to the child his wish; and if we find that the child craves some other subject outside the Torah, let his pursue the study of that subject. By forcing undesirable studies upon the child we lead to disgust and despondency./5

There are four outstanding reasons why the study of secular subjects should be pursued:

First. To appreciate the greatness of God through His works and His ways. By knowing the wonders of astronomy, the facts about the lives of animals of all kinds, the beauty contained in a drop of water, and the microbes inhabiting it, we become astonished and wonder how God could have created allthis. Thus, by studying the creations, we come to understand the Creator.

Second. Many of the facts we learn in this manner are bound up with the laws of the Torah. To understand the calendation of teh holidays we must know astronomy. We must be familiar with the plants, the trees, and the animals, the fowls, and the fishes, in order to know which are permitted for food, and which forbidden. All these things are asscociated with the study of nature. Beside this, many of the parables of the prophets are told through the illustrations of nature.

Third. The knowledge of the sciences is useful in itself. He who possesses this knowledge will be recognized and honored

by others. Even though he may not be benefited directly through this knowledge, still it serves as a protection. For Lords and great men will recognize him, even though the uneducated may not. Only such as these are able to exalt the banner of Israel, and to gain recognition for their people. They will also disarm the criticism of those people who mislead the Jews, and also of the Jewish heretics. These must be answered, and we can answer them only through a knowledge of the subjects discussed.

And fourth. The times have changed. Once the Jews were tillers of the soil. They were poor; but content. Life was simple. The study of the Torah was simple; for it was easy to accept it. The study of other subjects was unnecessary. Conditions are different in exile. We must now work with our hands. It is more difficult to earn a livelihood. This fact is the cause of the present neglect of the Torah. Most children leave school at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and they do not carry away anything. They become merchants.. What good does this do for the Jews or for Judaism? Shall all Jews become merchants? Even those who were good scholars in school have to leave the Torah, in order to have time to earn a living. Not even the rabbi devotes all his time to the Torah.

In order to meet these changed conditions, a knowledge of secular subjects is necessary. The study of mathematics and of mechanics leads to various occupations which possess honor and prestige. The study of nature is the foundation for the study of medicine. Also art and architecture, the work of the coppersmiths, the weavers, the sculptors, etc.,- all these are beautiful occupations. A knowledge of these things is necessary under these changed conditions, to help the Jew earn his livelihood, and

to win recognition for himself.

And now, the good king, Joseph, has permitted us to pursue these activities. Let us take advantage of this opportunity. But how shall we establish in a practical way these changes among our people?

First of all, the congregations should establish instructions in Mikra, Mishna, and Talmud, as I have already outlined.

Then, there should be four other teachers:

One to teach mathematics, which is the primary requisite of all knowledge, and of all occupations.

The second teacher should give instructions in nature study, which is also a primary subject, as we have seen.

The third teacher should instruct in the science of drawing, which is a key to various important occupations.

The fourth teacher should instruct in commercial studies,- such as writing, languages, commerce, etc..

Each pupil should be permitted to study the subject he prefers, and under the teacher of his choosing.

Each teacher should have twenty (not more) pupils.

And now, you Talmudic scholars, measure for me this square, this circle, or this triangel. No, you cannot do it. You must go to Euclid, or to Ptolemy, for this instruction. (At this point Wessely reveals his broad knowledge of mathematics and the sciences.)

In the field of botany and agriculture, we must know what to plant and when to plant it. We must be familiar with the various elements of the soil. Here, we need the science of chemistry. There are many books on the subject, if only we could read them.

And it is necessary to learn something about history and cur-

rent events, that you need not sit like statues in the midst of discussions; but may be able to take part in them.

The school at Trieste has followed by suggestions. There, they have departments in Mikra. Mishna, and Talmud; and they teach thesecular subjects as well.

It is because I have loved Israel and the Torah, that I have written this work. 16.

IV.

EVALUATION AND INFLUENCE.

The views of Naphtali Herz Wessely on Jewish education do not appear to us to be particularly startling. They were, however, sufficiently revolutonary at the time he expressed them to have called down upon himself the wrath of a host of his co-religionists. The rabbis of Poland were his chief adversaries;[1] but they were not his only ones. Even in his own country, he met with bitter opposition on the part of the most prominent rabbis there. "I am suffering a veritable martyrdom", he cries.[2] Only in Italy did his views meet with a cordial acceptance.[3] And this was due, as Wessely himself said, to the enlightened condition of the Jews of that country, who had inherited their culture from Spain.[4]

We need not go far to discover the causes for this attitude on the part of the Polish and German Jews. Wessely himself was well aware of them and enumerated them in his writings.

The chief source of this opposition arose out of the fact that the people of the time had become accustomed to base all their authority upon the Torah and the Talmud. Many had gone so far as to believe that all necessary knowledge could be gained from those sources. Even Wessely admitted that "Some can derive all their knowledge from the Torah".[5] Wessely disturbed the smug complaisance of such individuals, with his emphasis on the need of secular education. To tell the Jews of that day that they must go to secular sources for their information in the field of science, for instance, was to them a revolutionary doctrine. What further knowledge of science was necessary than that contained in the con-

cept of God as the Creator, as well as the prime Mover in all natural phenomena? The so-called pious men of the time sensed a sort of heresy in this new attitude; and from their point of view, their conclusion was correct.

Wessely's insistence on the need of the vernacular also ran counter to the current view of the time. Particularly so when this need was applied as well to the realm of religious instruction. It appeared to the rabbis that any translation was an abasement of the holy language. Mendelssohn's rendition of the Scriptures in German certainly met with the most severe opposition. And Wessely's views were an expansion and a broadening of that same tendency, applying them, as he did, to the entire realm of education,- both religious and secular.

And finally, the whole movement which Wessely fostered, revolutionary as it was in a social way, and attempteing to accomplish a social readjustment for his people, was met with the same hostility which greets all such efforts. The reformer, even at his best, is usually regarded with suspicion. And these reforms, for which Wessely was striving, aimed at the very foundations of Jewish society. He realized full well that if any improvement was to be achieved, he must strike deep, and tap the roots themselves which sustained the social customs of the time. The Jew, accustomed to the ghetto, must be led into a broader environment. Content up to this time with internal associations only, he must be encouraged to seek contacts among the people with whom he dwelt. Immersed as he was in his own literature, he must be induced to delve into the literatures of other peoples. A race of merchants, he must be urged to enter into other fields of activity as well,- to earn his livelihood in more productive and

more creditable ways. Limited in his knowledge, he must be led into the vast realms of secular education. All this implied a complete social revolution. Once again the children of Israel murmured, and resisted the demand to forsake the servitude of Egypt, and embark upon a search for a new land.

Nor is it untenable to maintain that the Jew had become accustomed to his ghetto life, and to the narrow limits of his learning; that the Jewish leaders of the day regarded the existing state of affairs as a necessary condition preceding the coming of the Messiah; and that they even welcomed the degraded social status, for behind it shone more brightly their glorious relationship to God, whose chosen people they considered themselves.

Wessely, on the other hand, as well as a few other individuals of the day, held to a different point of view. The Jew must adjust himslef to the changing times. He cannot remain aloof, or apart to himself, like an island in the great sea of humanity. The stream of life flows on, and the Jew must move with the current.

When the long-awaited opportunity came, as it did with the Edict of Toleration issued by Joseph II, Wessely was quick to grasp it. All the zeal and the learning at his command were poured into his passionate appeals. The task was tremendous. The opposition, as we have seen, was severe. But Wessely persisted. He was priveleged, even during his lifetime, to see his principles put into practice, to behold Jewish schools including in their curricula the secular subjects he advocated, and to find an ever-increasing use made of the vernacular,- a thing for which he had pleaded.

In the broad currents of Jewish movements and developments, Wessely must be classified among the Maskilim. He was a scholar

in philological research; a great influence in the dissemination of modern Hebrew; and, together with Mendelssohn, spurred on the progress of the Jewish renaissance. We have seen that the founders of the organ, מאסף, addressed Wessely as their revered leader and patron.[6] The purposes of that publication were, according to Slouschz, to promote the spread of knowledge and of modern ideas; and to promote the purification of Hebrew, which had degraded in religious schools.[7] To such aims as these, Wessely gave his whole-hearted support.

"Because of the courageous battle which he fought in behalf of Jewish enlightenment, Wessely may be regarded as a leader of the Maskilim."[8]

And yet, Wessely cannot be regarded as a religious reformer, in the modern sense of the term. He continued to retain the most orthodox views with regard to the fundamental tenets of Judaism. The Talmud for him still retained its authority. Revelation still preserved its validity and its purpose. Tradition still preserved its sanctity. Wessely merely builded upon these basic principles, and added to them the secular superstructure which we have noted.

The work of Wessely awakens within us a sympathetic response. One is impressed with the sincerity of his words. He seems to speak out of the very depth of his soul. His concern for the welfare of his co-religionists is genuine. No personal purpose or selfish motive mars his activity. Throughout the bitter struggle which he waged in behalf of his people, seeking their cultural development and their educational enlightenment, he was inspired and sustained by a three-fold love,- a love for knowledge, for Israel, and for Judaism.

V.

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