A Study of Aaron Chorin

as

A Religious Reformer

by

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Part I

Aaron Chorin, The Man and His Times

The Enlightenment

"Chorin taught as he believed and acted as he taught. While his teachings were ahead of his generation and his contemporaries were not ripe for his doctrines, he had the courage to stand for his convictions, to fight for them, at a time when he stood yet entirely alone and in opposition to a world which was bitterly opposed to him. He was not afraid of the difficult struggle; he came forward and manfully endured the hot day's work."[1]

These were the words of Rabbi Daniel Pillitz of Szegedin, spoken at the funeral of Aaron Chorin. They were a fitting epitaph to a man whose ideas were ahead of his times, whose burning convictions allowed him no rest until he spoke out fearlessly and strongly for what he believed to be the truth.

Aaron Chorin was one of the pioneers of Reform Judaism. The last quarter of the eighteenth century, marked by two great revolutions, presaged the development of a new interpretation of Judaism. The feeling of emancipation ran high in Europe and the minds of thinkers and scholars were aflame with the visions of a new life at the same time that tumbrils rattled in the streets of Paris and the guillotine functioned overtime. The great political influence of the American and French revolutions can hardly be over-emphasized in their effects

on the minds of eighteenth century men. But in addition to the firing effect of the stirring events of the time there were other influences at work less dramatic but equally effective.

The age of the Enlightenment had a strong influence on the thinking of many Jews. Striving to be modern, to adjust themselves at long last to their environment, the Enlightenment presented opportunities that for centuries had been closed to Jews. For it now appeared that a Jew could be at home in his country and still remain a Jew; he could be both modern and Jewish. Judaism, with no sacrifice of principles, could be adapted to the new way of thinking.

"The Enlightenment was a common sense philosophy that conceived of the universe and all history as something which can be made quite clear to reason because everything grows out of reason. The adoption of this point of view must 'clear up' all mystery, do away with all superstition and illuminate everything by the torch of reason. Knowledge must be made the possession of all people. The mind must be made free and rule every act. Reason is the only road to salvation. Reason which ruled the world of Nature was accorded an almost religious veneration. Yet despite the preponderance of rationality in everything the background in the German Enlightenment was always moral and religious."[2]

Philosophy became democratized in the eighteenth century. It emerged from the lecture hall of the scholar and student and went back to the days of the Greeks when Socrates mingled with hoi polloi in the market place. Philosophy forsook its own private language and began to express itself in the speech of the people, in terms which were clearly understandable to all men of some intelligence. The Enlightenment found its greatest development in France. There was its most radical expression, its most profound influence. The Revolution itself was a result of the new thinking. "The respect for human reason and human rights which characterized nearly all the important modern philosophical doctrines, became universal in the eighteenth century, and the words humanity, good-will, natural rights, liberty, equality, brotherhood, were on every tongue. Even the paternalistic governments regarded it as their function to contribute to the happiness and welfare of mankind. The revolt against medievalism culminated in the great social and political upheaval that marked the close of the century: the old regime gave way to a new society. What the modern spirit had been demanding was in part achieved: liberty of conscience and worship, equal opportunity and economic freedom, representative government and equality of all individuals before the law."[3]

The Enlightenment in Germany was influenced by

English ideas. Translations of the works of Locke, Hume, and such English moralists as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Ferguson began to remove the dominance of the Leibnitz-Wolffian metaphysicians. A sort of synthesis took place in Germany with the result being a combination of rationalism and empiricism, "...an eclecticism or common-sense philosophy that conceives the universe and human history as a rational, teleological order which can be made perfectly intelligible to reason because it is the expression of reason."[4]

Rationalism was applied to the study of history. Human reason was the originator of language, law, religion, morality, and the State. Man developed a language in order that he might be able to communicate his thoughts. He organized his government to preserve his own welfare. Rationalistic thinking changed German politics and the theories of equality and natural rights of man became popular even in the courts of the rulers of the country. Frederick the Great and the Emperor Joseph even accepted the principle that social distinctions among men are contrary both to reason and to nature.

Tradition was antithetic to the thinkers of the Enlightenment. The future was in the hands of the individual, and the future was undeniably good. For men must advance, ever forward, to freedom, dignity, and human happiness. Respect for human rights, liberty, equality

and brotherhood coupled with unbridled optimism was the central theme of the Enlightenment. The world is "the best of all possible worlds", however satirical Voltaire was in his Candide.

But the Aufklarung in Germany was not without opposition. The great leaders of literature and philosophy who dominated the scene in Germany attacked the rational theories of the Enlightenment. Kant attacked its rational theology. Herder attacked the rationalistic interpretation of History. Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller attacked rationalistic aesthetics.

The superficiality and inadequacy of rationalism as seen through the eyes of Herder did not stop the historian from making the following statement: "What a prospect it would be to see the Jews, an intelligent people, devoted to the culture of the sciences, the welfare of the state which protects them, to other purposes of value to mankind, and to have them in their deeds and thinking, too, completely humanized. Gone the proud old national prejudices, thrown away the customs which for our time and constitution, even for our climate, are antiquated. Let them not work as slaves on a Colosseum, but as associates of cultured peoples on the greatest and most beautiful Colosseum: the building of the sciences, the complete culture of mankind. Not on the naked hills of Palestine, that narrow and desolate land, but everywhere,

let their spiritual Temple rise from amidst the ruins. Let all nations honor with them and they with all nations the Creator of the world in that they develop and exalt His picture; --reason, wisdom, generosity, and kindness to humanity. They cannot be brought to honor and morality through the granting of new business opportunities; they can raise themselves to this height only through pure, humanitarian, scientific and civil accomplishments. Their Palestine is there where they live and are an influence for good: everywhere."[5]

"A time will come when people in Europe will no longer ask who is a Jew or a Christian, for the Jew also will live according to European standards and will contribute to the welfare of the state from which he has been shut out only by a barbaric constitution."[6]

Moses Mendelssohn's translation of the Pentateuch into German broke down the barrier that had, for so long a time, kept the Jew from secularly emancipating himself. "...as long as Yiddish was their language the Jews were debarred from the intellectual companionship of the masters of thought, but when they succeeded in acquiring the German language in its purity, the domain of Kant and Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, was open to them, and their outlook upon things was changed materially."[7]

Early Reform and Reformers

The Reform movement is generally regarded as be-

ginning in the opening years of the nineteenth century. But it is impossible to state dogmatically that Reform Judaism was born in a certain year. The tendencies that were soon to make up the new development in Judaism were present in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and made themselves felt in varied ways. In 1793 a book was published in Berlin under the title Besamim Rosh. This work was ascribed to the hand of Asher ben Jehiel. Asher ben Jehiel (1250-1328) was the spiritual head of the community of Toledo. He may be characterized by two words: simplicity and piety. Because of his simplicity and piety he was disdainful of secular and philosophical studies "since by syllogisms men were drawn away from faith."[8]

Besamim Rosh was published by Saul Berlin, the son of the chief rabbi of Berlin, Herschel Levin. A collection of responsa, this work sanctioned such reforms as the use of rice and legumes on Passover; the use of cheese and wine when procured from non-Jews; the use of a knife for shaving; riding on the Sabbath; cancellation of fasting on the Fast of Esther; elimination of the piyyutim on Rosh Hashana, etc. According to Dr. David Philipson in his article on the "History of Reform Judaism" in the Jewish Encyclopedia, this work was written by its publisher, Saul Berlin, who was influenced by the spirit of religious emancipation prevalent in his time. Not possessing

the temerity to advance such radical ideas as his own, he ascribed them to a man whose name was revered and respected by Orthodox Jewry. That the book was a fraud was discovered by Marcus Benedict, the chief rabbi of Moravia, and he attacked it vigorously. No less vigorously was the book defended by the chief rabbi of Berlin. Herschel Levin realized that changes were on the way and felt that he was powerless to stand against them. For that reason, and because many of the contemporary Jews had forsaken the rigid observance of their faith, Herschel Levin left his congregation to spend his remaining years in Palestine.[9]

A fresh spirit was in the air in the eighteenth century, but the time was still not ripe for a true cleavage between the old and the new. Thus, there was only one tangible result of the new spirit. That was in Holland where, in 1796, a congregation was formed with the express purpose of introducing some reforms. But the reforms of Congregation Adath Jeshurun were neither sweeping nor effective. They consisted mainly of the abolition of some of the piyyutim in the service and the introduction of the vernacular for sermons.

Israel Jacobson may well be credited with being the first to introduce reforms into the Synagogue. He, if any man, was a product of his times. Deeply influenced by the Enlightenment, the reaction to it had little effect upon him. He had a charming method of adaptation. What agreed

with his basic enlightenment views he assimilated, throwing overboard items which were either unacceptable or displeasing. Lessing's great play, Nathan the Wise, appeared in 1779. In this work, the enlightened Jew is presented by the liberal writer as the exemplar of a truly free mankind and of a religion, undogmatic, and filled with brotherly love. Through its incorporation of the old story of the three rings the play presents a message of tolerance rare in its time. Lessing's ideas appealed to Jacobson and to many other contemporary Jewish thinkers.

When Israel Jacobson turned to the Synagogue he found that form and ceremony had replaced what to him were the essentials of Judaism. He found, as did Chorin later, that the services held in the Synagogue were followed only with the greatest of difficulty. Disorder and complete lack of decorum were characteristic, and certainly did not promote the spirit of devotion among the worshippers. Indifference among Jews was a result of these conditions and Jacobson was disturbed by their lack of interest. He personally possessed a strong attachment to Judaism and he was convinced that the cause of the indifference among his co-religionists was the deterioration that had taken place in the Synagogue.

Cautiously Jacobson set about to make what to him were long needed reforms. He began with the children. Founding a school at Seesen he instituted instruction in

secular subjects as well as the regular Hebrew courses. He also held a religious service for the children, and that was his opportunity for the introduction of reforms in the Synagogue. Since the services were not felt to be bona fide religious service since they were for children, changes could be made that would not have been tolerated in the Synagogue attended by adults. Songs and sermons in the vernacular were introduced and were at once immensely popular. The services were not only attended by children, but adults came to the new type of service and became accustomed to the innovations. These friends of the new reforms were enlisted later for the furtherance of the ideas of Jacobson. And when the children grew up they were enthusiastic in their support of his reforms.

In 1808 came Jacobson's real opportunity to further his new ideas. It was in that year that the French occupied Westphalia and set up a consistorial form of government for the Jews. Israel Jacobson became the president of the consistory. Utilizing his influence and position he encouraged his friends to help him establish a school at Cassel along the same lines as the one at Seesen. In addition to the school, a place of worship was also built where Sabbath services were conducted partly in Hebrew and partly in German. A sermon was preached in the vernacular and songs were sung in German. The enterprise was successful and Jacobson became encour-

aged to proceed with his plans. At his own expense he built a temple at Seesen in which he placed an organ and organized a choir from among the students in his school. This was the first Reform Temple and it was dedicated on July 17, 1810.

This first attempt at Reform was purely local. It did not have much effect on anyone beyond the province of Westphalia. Its limitations proved to be a spur to Jacobson and his next step was to introduce reforms into Berlin. He began to hold weekly services in his own home with music by a choir with organ accompaniment and with the sermon and prayers in German. Again the innovations met with success and soon the crowds desirous of attending the new type of religious services were too many for the limited accommodations of the home of Jacobson. Therefore, similar services were started in the home of Jacob Herz Beer (the father of the composer Meyerbeer) who was a well-to-do banker. There too Reform services were met with great approval.

But Orthodox Jewry was not inactive in its reaction to the innovations. In 1817 the Orthodox group in Berlin appealed to the German government to stop the services held in the two homes on the ground that they were undermining the Jewish faith. The government responded to the appeal with an order which directed that all private synagogues be closed at once. Despite maneuvering by

Beer and attempts at compromise the Orthodox group was successful in closing the new houses of worship. Aided by a reactionary government opposed to any kind of reform, the Orthodox Jews were soon able to point to a decree which stated that "the divine services of the Jews must be conducted in accordance with the traditional ritual and without the slightest innovation in language, ceremonies, prayers, or songs." This decree, issued on December 9, 1823, effectively stopped the further development of the new synagogues and the Beer Temple was closed.[10]

In 1817, however, when the first skirmishes were going on between the Orthodox and the Reform, one of the preachers of the private Temple in Berlin moved to Hamburg to become the principal of the Jewish Free School. There he began to speak for reforms in the religious services, found people sympathetic to his point of view, and in 1818 the Hamburg Temple was dedicated as a result of his efforts. Eduard Kley, the moving spirit behind the new Temple, was not without opponents. The same bitterness that existed in Berlin soon was in evidence in Hamburg. But the reformers adopted an attitude in Hamburg that took much of the sting out of the blows of the Orthodox and robbed them of a great part of their ammunition. For the reformers claimed that they were making no departure from the rabbinic standpoint or concept of

of Judaism. Instead, they claimed that the reforms which were being instituted by them were in full accordance with traditional, rabbinic Judaism. They cited Talmudic passages to prove their points and argued with the Orthodox that their position was in no wise inimical to the established principles of Judaism.

This was the principle upon which Aaron Chorin operated. And his religious reforms were carried out with a constant eye on the standards of rabbinic Judaism. After careful research Chorin demonstrated that his new ideas were not incompatible with Orthodoxy.

Aaron Chorin

Aaron Chorin was born in Weisskirchen, Maehren, August 3, 1766. He died on August 27, 1844, in Arad, Hungary. He was a product of his times, influenced in no small degree by the tenor of the new spirit of his day. Aaron Chorin is well-deserving of attention, and his works to careful study because he was the first Rabbi, who, in his capacity as Rabbi, was in favor of Reform. For a Rabbi to be so advanced in thought in his days required no little amount of courage.[11]

Kalman Chorin, the father of Aaron, was not a rich man. But he made every effort to secure the finest education obtainable for his young son. He hired the best teachers that were available in his town and Aaron was

instructed along the usual lines of the day. The Bible with Rashi's commentary, Talmud, and a smattering of Hebrew grammar comprised the standard curriculum of education at that time.[12]

When young Aaron was fourteen his family moved to Hungary, to the small village of Deutsch-Kreuz. There the facilities available for education were exceedingly limited, for the boy was already quite advanced. He was, therefore, sent to the neighboring town of Mattersdorf where, under the rigid supervision of a Rabbi Jeremias, a Yeshiva operated. Jeremias was a man somewhat distinguished because of his reputation as a Talmudist. He was honored by the title of Gaon, indicative of no judicial authority, but in acknowledgement of his scholarship.[13]

Chorin was a diligent and able scholar and progressed rapidly in his studies. He spent two years in Mattersdorf and then was prepared to attend the lectures of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague. In 1782 Chorin, then sixteen, left for Prague to continue his rabbinic studies.

It was in Prague that Chorin first began a systematic study of Hebrew grammar and German. His preparation up to that time had been quite haphazard and inefficient according to Prague standards. While in Prague Chorin lived with a family that has been suspected by some of belonging to a Sabbatian group. This influence was supposed to have directed Chorin along the road of Reform.

At any rate, Chorin remained in Prague for three years and then returned home to marry. He was then nineteen and according to the laws of Orthodox Judaism a man should marry at eighteen.[14]

After his marriage Chorin went into business. A scholar at heart he was unable to make a success of his commercial activities and when a call was extended to him from a congregation in Arad, Hungary, he went there as Rabbi. His ministry began in the spring of 1789.

Chorin's salary was very small. He received four Rhenish gulden a week in addition to free rent and the usual perquisites. In the months of Nisan, Sivan, and Tishri, his salary was doubled because of the additional work. After a year's service his salary was raised to five gulden. Although the Arad congregation was small and poor, they felt that they owed it to their scholarly rabbi to operate a Yeshiva for him. This was a real hardship for the people because they were responsible for the care of the scholars who took their meals at the homes of the wealthier members. Chorin was as careful as a teacher as he was as a scholar. He was mainly interested in Talmud, Bible, Hebrew Grammar, Philosophy, the Zohar, and Midrash. An eloquent preacher, he was well thought of not only by the members of his own religious grpup, but by many others who came and heard him. He was in constant correspondence on Talmudical questions.

Three years after Chorin began his ministry in Arad an interesting and trouble-provoking question was raised. The discussions concerning its solution were indicative of the mood of the day and of the problems which faced any man desirous of making changes. In 1792 a rabbi of Temesvar addressed a question to the well-known Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague with regard to the eating of sturgeon. The sturgeon is a large fish known today chiefly because caviar is made from its roe. The problem in 1792 was whether or not the sturgeon was a fish permissible for consumption by Jews; whether or not it had scales and was otherwise acceptable. In the Orient the Jews had long been accustomed to eating this fish and there were some Sephardic Jews in the Temesvar congregation who wished to use it also. So their rabbi, Rabbi Hirsch, sent samples of the fish to Prague. There, Rabbi Landau, declared that the fish was kosher. Thus, to all intents and purposes the affair was settled and the Jews of Temesvar settled down happily to eat their sturgeon.

Chorin heard of the decision that his old teacher had made and declared to the members of his congregation that they, too, could now make use of the fish. He did this after he had seen and studied the declaration that Landau had made. The action of Chorin angered Rabbi Isaac Krieshaber of Krakow who was serving as rabbi in a

congregation at Paks, Hungary. Krieshaber was a member of the rigorous school and was almost fanatical in his efforts to stay away from any deviation from the old and established principles of Orthodoxy. After hearing what Chorin had done he sent him a letter requesting him to withdraw his decision regarding the sturgeon. Chorin refused to do this. Thereupon Krieshaber assembled a number of rabbis and made every effort to have them certify that the sturgeon was an unclean fish on the basis of a decision made by Nahmanides in 1266 on what constituted "scales". But the objection of Krieshaber was not whether the scales of the fish were only rudimentary. His argument was based on Jewish custom. Since custom prohibited the use of sturgeon in Jewish homes, therefore it must not be used even though it is actually all right.[15]

Feeling still ran high against the Sabbataians and Krieshaber labeled those Jews who used sturgeon "frivolous Sabbataians".[16] But the rabbi knew that he would have to do more than call names to win his point. Therefore, he wrote to Chorin that Rabbi Landau, who was a respected and esteemed authority, had reconsidered his decision and reversed himself. This was an absolute untruth which was quickly pointed out by other rabbis. The net result was that Chorin stood firm and Krieshaber was somewhat discredited.

Sides now began to form. The Chief Rabbi of Maehren,

Mordecai Benet, opposed Chorin in the matter. He prohibited the publication of a treatise written by Chorin and warned Chorin's congregation not to eat sturgeon. On the side of Landau and Chorin was the rabbi of Altofen who issued a document which stated outright that Krieshaber had lied with regard to Landau's recantation. Several rabbis signed the document and the rabbis of Prague also issued a similar declaration. Krieshaber came back with a statement that "he thanked God that he had never devoted himself to such staudies as Chorin was engaged in."[17]

Some time after the sturgeon affair Chorin issued his first pamphlet. It was called Imre Noam (Words of Pleasantness) and was published in 1798. A year later Chorin published a polemic work bearing on the fish question of seven years previous. It was called Siryon Kaskassim (The Scaled Coat of Mail). This volume replied directly to a previous pamphlet issued by Krieshaber called Makkel Noam (Pleasant Rod). Chorin's polemic contained the declaration of the rabbis of Prague against Krieshaber.

But still the Orthodox rabbi of Paks was unsatisfied and he attempted to open up the whole matter for discussion again by threatening that all those permitting the eating of sturgeon "will not enjoy the great privilege of partaking of the banquet which God Almighty will

give to his thirty-six chosen and pious ones in the world to come, where the fabulous Leviathan will constitute the main and most favored dish in the bill of fare."[18]

Rabbi Eleazar Flekeles of Prague, the most recent victim of Krieshaber's attack responded to the above statement as follows:

"You make yourself seem ridiculous indeed; it would be far better if you would cease to indulge in such useless and sophisitical disquisitions in order to invent new burdens. Did not the old Palestinian, Rabbi Isaac, declare: 'Be satisfied with the prohibitions of the Torah, and do not lay upon yourself new limitations, of which the Torah knows nothing.'"[19]

So the matter of the sturgeon was laid to rest. And although the side upon which Chorin was active won a victory the undying hostility of many rabbis was probably the main result. They determined to have revenge on Chorin and their opportunity came in the following way.

Chorin was now quite well known in Arad and the adjoining countryside. Merchants traveled extensively in those days and some of them came to Chorin with the suggestion that he leave Arad and go to Somogy where they believed he might be elected rabbi of the entire district. In the spring of 1802 Chorin left for Somogy and was encouraged by the assurances he there received

on his forthcoming election. He preached in Gross-Kanisza on his way home and was very well received. The President of the Congregation, Moses Lackenbacher, a wealthy and influential man, was favorably impressed and gave Chorin his promise that he would do all in his power to secure for the Arad Rabbi the election as Rabbi of the district of Somogy. But Lackenbacher did not keep his word. On a business trip to Pressburg he came into contact with certain individuals implacably opposed to Chorin and to the reforms for which Chorin stood. These men so influenced Lackenbacher that he turned from a supporter of Chorin to one of his enemies, doing all in his power to prevent his election. Because of the wealth and influence of Lackenbacher, Chorin failed in the election.[20]

The following year Aaron Chorin published another work called Emek haShaweh translated by some as Reconciliation of Faith with Practical Life. This was a philosophical polemic divided into three parts. Chorin in it attacked the rabbis for prolonging the synagogal service by their "lpud rendition" of the Shema. He charged that this practice made the service tedious to the worshippers.[21]

Emek haShaweh also contains the attitude of Chorin toward the oral law. This is discussed in the third division of the work. There Chorin states that the reason the law was not written down by the ancient teachers

and scribes because they realized that times changed and new interpretations would be necessary. If they had written down the law they would have prevented teachers and rabbis of later times from making new laws or changing the old, in conformance with the needs of the times.

In Emek haShaweh Chorin also tried to prove that the study of philosophy was in no wise at odds with the study of Talmud. In like manner he tried to give a philosophical interpretation of the Kabbala. Chorin was not opposed to the study of Kabbala. However, he denounced "the mob, who believe that there are men, who, by means of senseless combinations of spoken or written letters, are capable of forcing the laws of nature to be changed from their regular course. It is, however, clear that this belief is incompatible with sound reason; for, 'shall the axe beat him that heweth therewith?'" (Isaiah 10.15)[22] Chorin was not influenced to change his mind with regard to the supernatural by the attitude of the Talmud when it spoke of the efficacy of amulets.[23] He held fast to the belief that such effectiveness was only imaginary, and if contributing to the good of the patient did so in a psychological way.

Chorin was not, of course, acquainted with modern psychological interpretations of the efficacy of faith healing. His opposition to the use of amulets and anything of the supernatural was based on his dislike of the mysterious. He was a man of his times. The ra-

tionalistic thought of the day had a great effect on the thinking of this man and influenced to no small degree his attitude with regard to his religious beliefs.

Emek haShaweh was a popular work. Indeed, it was so well received that Chorin was forced to enlarge and revise it in preparation for a second printing. However, the plans to publish the revised edition never materialized because of the opposition of the Orthodox party which brought pressure to bear to prevent its publication.

The opposition of Orthodox Jewry to Chorin was mot without meaning. We have mentioned above that the chief rabbi of Maehren, Mordecai Benet, changed his friendly attitude toward Chorin when the matter of the sturgeon came up. With the first publication of Emek haShaweh he became still further estranged from his colleague and became an open and active enemy of the Arad rabbi. He wrote to Chorin's congregation damning the third division of the book and demanded that it be burned. He stated that the work was heretical and therefore must be destroyed before it did further damage. But Chorin's congregation as a whole was loyal and stood by their rabbi. There were, however, some of its members who became aroused over the charges of Benet and created an opposing faction in Arad. One of the members of the opposition within Chorin's congregation became so

inflamed that he selected the Sabbath of Repentance as the time to utter curses against Chorin at the time of the Rabbi's sermon. Chorin's friends within the synagogue were ready to avenge their rabbi but Chorin stopped them. He ordered the synagogue closed and tried to pacify his friends and end the incident with the words from Psalm 109: "May our enemies curse, thou, O God, wilt bless."[24] He continued his sermon and the service despite the interruption.[25]

The struggle went on between the supporters of Chorin and his opponents. Conciliation seemed impossible until the leader of the opposition stated that he would be satisfied with the opinion of the Rabbi of Altofen regarding Chorin's book. On August 8, 1805, the opinion of the Rabbi of Altofen was given. He stated to the effect "that while the author had written some things which must appear strange to the mob, and concerning which disputes had arisen in centuries gone by, he is unable to find heresies in the book and holds that the congregation of Arad is in duty bound to honor and respect their Rabbi."[26]

The Rabbi of Altofen was a man by the name of Moses Muentz, a very cautious individual. He made out the document, and gave the above decision. But he was careful not to sign it. His reason for such a weak action is obvious. He was sympathetic to Chorin and un-

derstood the motives of the man. But the opposition was too strong and their influence too great for him to jeopardize his own position simply to aid another rabbi. His chief interest was to remain neutral in the dispute so that he could remain friendly with both sides. He did not have the courage of his convictions as did Chorin.

But the semi-appeasing attitude of Moses Muentz did not get him very far. The Orthodox Jews were not satisfied. They felt they were in the right and that they were entitled to complete victory. They insisted that the book be condemned and the author punished as an example to those who might be tempted to do the same. Moses Muentz gave in to these forces and invited two fanatical rabbis of Assod and Zambek to come to Altofen on September 1, 1805, to sit in council to reach a decision with regard to Chorin, who was also summoned to be present at the decision.

Possibly to show that he was sympathetic to Chorin Muentz did not appear at the meeting where Chorin was to be punished. Rabbi Samuel Butschowitz of Assod announced to Chorin at that meeting that unless he recanted his beard would be cut off. Chorin pleaded that the passages which were suspect of being heretical be pointed out to him. The rabbis refused to listen. His choice was made clear. Either give in or be publicly shamed. Chorin submitted and signed the following statement: "Having been

informed that my book Emek haShaweh has created an excitement among some rabbis, I declare, that I submit my opinions to the judgment of the sages of the present time. Altofen, September 2, 1805. Aron Chorin."[27]

The trial was over. The recantation was done. Chorin left the scene of his disgrace to be pelted with stones by the young men of Altofen. His judges in addition to forcing the recantation also reduced his salary. But his congregation continued to pay him. The members, with the exception of a small minority, were loyal to him throughout. They refused to accept the verdict of the judges and were bitter toward Muentz. They blamed him for his lack of courage and felt keenly that he had been false to the trust which was implicit in his position as a judge. The congregation encouraged Chorin to appeal to the Hungarian government. He did this, requesting that the verdict of the Rabbinical tribunal be annulled.[28]

The appeal was successful. Not only did the government set aside the decision but also decided that the leaders of the opponents of Chorin must pay the expenses of the lawsuit. Chorin refused to accept any monetary restitution. The decision of the government made no difference. Popular opinion had turned against Chorin because of the unceasing labors of his opponents. And, of course, these men who hated him were not stopped in their

activities by a mere decision of civil courts. They were as bitterly opposed to Chorin and all he stood for as they had ever been. Chorin was tired of the disputes. His father was old and did not like the unseemly controversy. So in order to keep the peace Chorin engaged in no more polemics. He set aside his pen and rested for about thirteen years.[29]

Then, on October 18, 1818, the Hamburg Temple was dedicated. The first Reform ritual was set up with German prayers and hymns accompanied with organ music and with a sermon in the vernacular. Prayers dealing with the coming of a personal Messiah were either omitted or modified to meet the standards of the times. Orthodoxy was not slow in reacting. The Rabbinical College of Hamburg, comprised of Rabbis Baruch Meyer, Moses Jacob Jaffe, and Michael Speier published an interdict against the new ritual. The authorities of the College also brought pressure to bear on the Senate of Hamburg in an effort to close the Temple. The proponents of the Hamburg Temple were not silent. They quickly contacted the different Rabbinical authorities of Europe for their decision on the matter. Chorin was among those asked. We might think that Chorin, after his experiences of 1805 would have learned caution. But his spirit was undaunted despite his struggle of thirteen years before and he came out in favor of most of the reforms. He

did this on April 7, 1819.

We could trace the turbulent history of the discussions over the Hamburg Temple. But there is neither time nor space to devote to this interesting phase in the history and development of Reform. Suffice it to say that the discussions were lively, embittered, and enthusiastic.

Chorin might well have used more discretion. For as soon as his position was known a hornet's nest was stirred up all over again. Rabbi Meuntz of Altofen sent Chorin a letter as soon as he found out his position. In it he gave Chorin a choice. Either recant his position with regard to the new Temple, or lose his pulpit. A poor man, with a large family, Chorin had no alternative. He knew he could not earn a living outside of the rabbinate. Once again he was forced to recant which he did in 1819. That he acted for expediency's sake only is seen from a book which he published in 1820 -- Dabar beItto (A Word in Its Time). In this work he advocated a reform of the religious service on the basis of his first decision regarding the Hamburg Temple.

Dabar beItto concludes with an appeal to contemporary Rabbis. Chorin urged them to be tolerant. He spoke from the fullness of his experience when he warned them not to persecute their brethren. He also came out in favor of agriculture and trade among the Jews.[30] The

pamphlet was met with approbation by the progressive Jews of Pressburg and Vienna. And, with the encouragement of progressives in Germany the booklet was translated into German and printed. Had it not been for the sentiment against him in certain circles in Hungary, Chorin would have been elected preacher in Vienna. But Mordecai Benet was an obstacle to the introduction of the Hamburg ritual into Vienna.[31]

Chorin's latest work was quite a sensation in Germany. On the other hand, it was almost forbidden in Hungary. Had it not been for the influence of Michael Lazar Biederman, one of the progressives in Hungary, the pamphlet would have been interdicted. The reason given for the prestige of Chorin in Germany lies in the fact that he was a Rabbi. In Germany it was customary for Reform to be defended by merchants, teachers, and some preachers. People were not impressed by their defense of the innovations. But when a Rabbi rose as a champion of Reform it was different, and attracted attention. Chorin was clever in that he used "rabbinical"weapons with which to defend Reform. Through his use of the Talmud to prove that the innovations were acceptable, he had a great influence on the contemporary form of logic. For the people were by no means weaned away from the old Talmudic standards. They were eager for innovation. But they liked them so much the better

if they could be demonstrated acceptable through the Talmud. They did not wish to sever their connection with tradition.

Chorin and His Contemporaries

As an individualist Chorin was frequently impatient with those about him. He saw their faults too clearly. He was particularly intolerant of some of his colleagues in the rabbinate. That they could suffer the existence of deplorable conditions which he himself had seen Chorin could not understand. During the course of his travels he frequently asked his colleagues what they were doing about the unsatisfactory religious conditions obtaining. Their almost universal answer was, nothing. They acknowledged their impotence to do anything to correct the evils which existed.[32] Chorin condemned these men roundly in his Iggeret Elasaf. He possessed nothing but contempt for those who would not even try to remedy a situation.

His colleagues were not the only men of religious authority to feel the scorn of Chorin. He was contemptuous of Chasidism and minced no words in expressing his attitude toward the Chasidic leaders. Chorin placed the Chasidim in the same category as the groups which separated themselves from the rest of the people in prophetic times. He believed that the Chasidim were irreligious and dangerous, that their place in contemporary Jewish life was untenable, and that they were harmful

to the general position of the Jewish people.[33]

Chorin's attack on the Chasidim is interesting because of its tone. He does not deal with them in the sense of his position as a reformer, but rather as though he were a crusading prophet seeking to remove a dangerous group inimical to the welfare of Judaism. He saw himself as a prophet in modern dress fulminating against wrong in similar manner to the ancient seers. He condemned as he believed his models of greatness -- the Biblical prophets -- condemned. He attacked with righteous ire as he imagined they would have done in the same position.[34]

Chorin had a liberal and human attitude toward the problems of women. The following incident is related: "The Jewish married ladies of a little town, Mako, in the county of Csanada, Hungary, hold Chorin, no doubt, in grateful remembrance. It was on the second day of Shabuoth, 1840, when the wise Rabbi, and still wiser board of trustees of the Jewish congregation in Mako ordered several ladies who appeared in the Synagogue with their own hair instead of the 'scheitel' to leave the gallery. The ladies, or better their husbands, had the courage to seek recourse at the law against the perpetrators of this fanaticism. The learned Bishop of Csanada (Lonovics) who had to decide the question, asked for Rabbi Chorin's advice, and his decision was given in favor of the women." [35]

In 1844 a Rabbinical convention was held in Braunschweig, and in it Chorin saw his dream of a Synod (which we will discuss later) fulfilled. He sent a letter of encouragement to the convention, but his high hopes were without justification for the pseudo-Synod was a failure. A few days after he had sent the letter, on August 12, 1844, Chorin died. He was 79 at the time of his passing.

The Arad Congregation immediately notified the important Synagogues of Europe of the news. Chorin's funeral was attended by a large number of people, practically the entire population of the city of Arad being in attendance. The news of his death was announced in all of the churches of Arad on Sunday, following his death on Saturday. And during his funeral the bells of the churches tolled. In 1850 it was decided to place a bust of Chorin on the grave, and the statue was unveiled on June 18, 1851. Civil, military, city and county authorities, delegates of neighboring congregations, and the entire membership of the Arad Congregation honored Chorin on this occasion. While the larger synagogues of Hungary ignored the passing of Chorin, he was appreciated and respected in other countries. The press of Germany and France paid tribute to the man and his works, and numerous contemporary scholars paid their respect by including an account of the man and

his labors in their works.

So passed Aaron Chorin, the man. Our next task is to survey his works and evaluate his position as a religious reformer.

Part II

Iggeret Elasaf and the Proposed Reforms of Aaron Chorin

Iggeret Elasaf

On February 3, 1821, Aaron Chorin was asked by the governmental authorities of the grand duchy of Baden for his opinion as to the duties of a rabbi. He answered the query by writing Iggeret Elasaf, known in German as the "Letter of an African Rabbi to His Colleagues in Europe". This work was published by M. I. Landau in Prague, in 1826.

Iggeret Elasaf is an interesting and revealing work. In it Aaron Chorin not only presents his point of view with regard to the prevailing conditions in the practice of Orthodox Judaism, but he delineates for the reader his own personality and character. It would be possible for one to write an almost complete character analysis of the man by reading this one work, for the reader is constantly aware throughout its pages of the personality behind the words and of the fact that a man with a definite point of view was writing his confirmed convictions.

Iggeret Elasaf is not a long pamphlet. It consists of thirty-five double pages of Hebrew text printed in Rashi script. If one were to choose its outstanding characteristic that would be the carefule documentation of every new idea by old authorities. Chorin is not willing to make a step without confirmation by the past.

He constantly refers to Talmudical references and to the Rambam for his authority to make statements at variance with the accepted point of view. He sought to prove that his reforms were acceptable on the basis of respected and valid authority. His asked his readers to accept nothing on his own account.

This is an interesting aspect of the early days of Reform. The reformers were not ready to break away from the past. They were possibly afraid that their followers would leave them if they forsook that which for so long had been part of the lives of the men who were now interested in Reform. We say "possibly" because we believe that in the back of the minds of the early reformers was the conviction that what they were doing was not thoroughly acceptable unless it could be proved on the basis of the long-accepted rabbinical authority. They, themselves, were not ready to break with the past completely. They rather sought to determine how the past could be brought to bear on the present and how flexible their interpretation of the past might become.

Perhaps the discretion of Chorin was the better part of his valor. We have already seen the trouble in which he involved himself through the expression of his new ideas. Perhaps Reform would have made no lasting impression whatsoever had the new ideas not been intro-

duced as merely new interpretations of the old. It was probably wise that the early reformers sought no final and absolute break. For it is clear even to the casual student that a clean break would have had serious effects on the temuous future of Reform. For its times Iggeret Elasaf was a remarkable work if for no other reason than its demonstration of the changing of the old order in the new-found courage of men to express themselves, and in their deep and firm conviction that not all was well in the ways and practice of Judaism.

Iggeret Elasaf has another rather unusual characteristic. It is purported to be the letter of an African rabbi to his colleagues in Europe. We might conjecture as to Chorin's desire to remain anonymous. Perhaps it was due to the difficulties that ensued after the publication of Emek haShaweh. Perhaps it was because Chorin believed his ideas might have more force if they came, not from Aaron Chorin, but from some individual far away and unknown to the men who would read the pamphlet. Then, as now, men were prone to consider personalities first andfacts afterwards. The very fact that Aaron Chorin was the author of the pamphlet would automatically predispose many against it. Chorin sought to circumvent this probability by disguising himself in the cloak of a foreign rabbi and scholar. But the probability is that Chorin did not fool anyone with his anonymous

personality. His style, his beliefs, his mode of expression, were well known to his contemporaries. It may have been only for the maintenance of nicety, and for more freedom in expression that Aaron Chorin made himself out to be a rabbi from far away on the dark continent.

Iggeret Elasaf has an engaging and pleasant style It is not pedantic or pompous. It is simply and logically written with an obvious attempt to cause the reader to read the entire book. For that reason, possibly, there are relatively few sections where the author allows himself to fulminate excessively. The work is restrained. When one considers the humiliation that Chorin had undergone, the years of unpleasantness and rancor, one is impressed by the man's ability to write in a human and tolerant style.

But let us not leave the impression that Chorin presents his case in a weak and namby pamby fashion. Indeed not. Nothing could be farther from the truth. He speaks out on several occasions in the work in no uncertain terms, clearly expressing himself and clearly stating his position with regard to the situation as he saw it. He was not afraid. He always possessed the courage of his convictions. With these words of description we shall begin our analysis of this work of Aaron Chorin.

Aaron Chorin was a realist. He was not afraid to

face the facts of life. Though he addressed an unsympatheitic audience, his convictions were strong enough to enable him to face his opponents and to express his beliefs definitively. Clarification and instruction were his desire when he stated that"he would raise his voice to teach the children of Israel."[36]

It was with humility and compulsion that Chorin began his Iggeret Elasaf. Humility which he demonstrated by stating that it was without haughtiness of spirit or pride that he set about to write this work. Pride was an abomination to Chorin. He had to write his letter. He saw faults within the synagogue which were like leprosy in the skin of a man. He saw deviations from what he considered to be proper affecting the whole of worship, impairing the religious health of the synagogue. With indignation and amazement he cried: No one was concerned! No one explored the causes of the unhealthy conditions. No one investigated their reason. "...therefore, in a place where there is hillul hashem and there are no men to rise in zealous defense" there is only one thing to do: "Strive thou to be a man!"[37]

The Synagogue

With dynamic words Chorin began his defense of the

synagogue, his battle against hillul hashem. "Ḥazak ve' ematz! The weak one shall say 'I am a hero!' and his loins will be girded with righteousness and faith to go out equipped for war for the sake of His honor; and his voice will be heard on high when he cries: 'He who is for the Lord, come with me!'"[38]

Chorin was filled with enthusiasm for the success of his battle for much needed reform in the synagogue. He could conceive of no result other than positive, for he was convinced that there would be some people, the יודעי דת ודין who would be influenced by his words. A holy fire would be kindled within their breasts to further the principles which Chorin would advance.[39]

To win the attention of his readers Chorin introduced the idea expressed in Pirke Abot in his words: "Who is a wise man? He who learns from all men." Therefore men must pay attention to him because though he is small and unimportant, he still may have some words to say of significance to the thoughts and lives of his listeners.[40]

The primary concern of Chorin is with the sanctity of the synagogue. He is interested in the proper form of worship and proper respect on the part of the worshippers for the place wherein they pray and for the God to whom they address their prayers. "The great duty of every

man," says Chorin, "is to glorify and to exalt the honor and majesty of the Synagogue, the House of Prayer."[41] There are three sources which give this information to individuals. They are 1) the wisdom of the sages; 2) the words of the Torah; 3) the tradition which the sages received. Chorin then proceeds to elaborate on the statements of each of these three sources with regard to the actions of worshippers in the Synagogue in the matter of preserving proper etiquette in the House of Worship.

"Our sages taught", states Chorin, "not to be disrespectful when near the Temple mount; as, for example, the Tana R. Jose explained at the end of Berakot in Tosefta, in this manner: R. Jose said: 'One does not approach a King when wearing sackcloth.' There is a kal v'homer in this matter. If one does not come before a King of flesh and blood dressed in this way, how much the more should one be careful of his dress when approaching the King of Kings, the Holy One blessed be He."[42]

Respect for God is not limited to those people who worship the true God. But even those who are idolaters, says Chorin, are aware of the respect which they owe their deity. Thus, throughout all generations, wherever one looks, whether at the true worshippers of God or the worshippers of idolas, one is aware of the honor and respect which people show to their Creator, and to

the place of worship of their God.[43]

As an additional authority with regard to the importance of respect and honor in worship Chorin turns to the Rambam and quotes the following words:[44] "The watching priests do not sleep in their priestly garments, but they take them off and place them under their heads and put on their own garments and sleep on the ground as is the custom of all the guardians of the courtyards of the kings, who do not sleep on beds....And therefore, it is forbidden for any man to enter the Temple when he is drunk or when he is improperly groomed -- this is a disgrace. Even though there is no definite prohibition (as to correct attire) to enter in a shameful attire is lack of respect and honor."[45] From the Biblical quotation "You shall fear my sanctuary"[46] Chorin goes on to state, quoting Maimonides, that respect for the synagogue is a positive commandment. Respect does not consist of guarding the synagogue against thieves or of protecting it in a physical way. It is rather a sign of awe which man is required to show. "...We are required to show respect to the Synagogue in all measures of the honor that we accord to the palace housing a mortal King."[47]

The main purpose of the Synagogue was not sacrifice. The Synagogue existed for the individual Jew. It was a place for the expression of his deepest thoughts,

his inmost feelings. For in the Synagogue a Jew should pour out his heart and soul to God in prayer and supplication.[48] In such a spirit was the prayer of Solomon made on the day of the dedication of the Temple.[49]

The traditional designation of the Synagogue as the Beth Tefillah was offered by Chorin as evidence to emphasize the importance of prayer in the life of the pious Jew.[50] As an indication of the universal quality of prayer Chorin offers several midrashim to illustrate that the poorest among men can offer prayers as acceptable to God as those of the rich.[51] He further gives evidence of his personal acceptance of the universal character of prayer and the Synagogue through his quoting and amplification of Isaiah 56.7: כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים [52]

But the ideal function of the Synagogue as a House of Prayer was far from being realized in his times, according to the criticisms of Chorin. He was aware of many faults, many deviations from what he considered to be the proper method of worship. These he sought to correct.

In the sections of Igeret Elasaf dealing with the Synagogue Chorin is, as elsewhere in this pamphlet, deeply indebted to Maimonides for much of his material. Paragraph after paragraph consists of nothing more than a quote from the Rambam, with a sentence or two of comment by Chorin. One might say that this large-scale quoting

invalidates much of the work as a contribution of Aaron Chorin. But, on the other hand, through his selection of the material which he wished to include, and through his comments Chorin made his own and unique contribution.

Iggeret Klasaf deals at some length with the Synagogue, with its ideal position in the Jewish religious community, and with the conditions prevailing therein contemporaneous with Chorin, which he was engaged in correcting.

We have already seen the high position that the Synagogue occupied in Chorin's conception of the ideal Jewish community. He saw the Synagogue as the focal point of all Jewish life and therefore assigned a particularly respectful and reverential attitude toward it. The etiquette of the Synagogue was strict and uncompromising. There were certain actions that simply could not be done. There were also other aspects of the Synagogal position in which Chorin was interested/ He was aware of the importance of the existence of a House of Worship simply as such. He knew that for the welfare of Judaism much depended on the feeling of the individual that he had entree into a place specially devoted to worship and study. The cohesive effect on Jewry, the spiritual effect on the minds of individuals, was brought about through the important place of the Synagogue in

Jewish life.[53]

Ignorance was one of the main causes of improper worship. Chorin, [illegible], was impressed with the widespread lack of information on the part of the people with regard to correct religious procedure. In the small communities [illegible] Chorin was aware that men were "nullifying through their ignorance" the commandment of putting on phylacteries. They did not know exactly where to place the phylacteries of the head, and Chorin stated categorically that through their improper placement the blessing which they recited was repeated in vain. Their observance of the commandment was ineffectual since they apparently had not been instructed as to the proper place of the tefillin.[54]

Naturally, the conduct of people making use of the Synagogue was an item of interest to Chorin. Reiterating the statements of Maimonides he brought out clearly that the House of Worship is no place for frivolous actions. Laughter and empty conversations do not belong in the Synagogue. Nor would Chorin allow people to eat or drink or play games in the temple. Further, to emphasize the solely devotional nature of the Beth Tefilla, Chorin stated that men should not enter its gates on a sunshiney day to find shade from the heat of the sun. Nor, on the other hand, should they come into the Synagogue on a rainy day to find shelter from the

rain.[55] The Synagogue could not be used as a place of business in which money was collected for any but charity purposes or for the redemption of captives.[56] Should the entrances of the Synagogue be so situated as to offer a short cut for people in crossing from one part of the town to another, they were not to be used for such a profaning purpose. The Synagogue was for worship.[57]

A bit of lenience was shown with regard to the custom of meeting friends in the Synagogue. Since it was a convenient location in which to meet, provision was made for such use of the House of Worship. People could arrange to meet there, but they had to stay a while a recite a scriptural verse.[58]

All the above restrictions delineating the position of the Synagogue in Jewish life were the expression of Maimonides quoted by Chorin and placed by him as acceptable in his reforming work.

After Aaron Chorin developed the description of what was to him the proper tone of the Synagogue, he proceeded to describe the ways in which the contemporary practice had departed from the ideal. Chorin was not pleased by the entrance of children into the Synagogue. He stated: "Men come to study, women come to listen, children come to bring reward to those who bring them." By the actions of the children w ithin the Synagogue, the holy place was desecrated. Their laughter, their

running about, their hitting of one another, all was objectionable to Chorin.[59]

But the poor decorum which children brought into the Synagogue was not the only example of improper etiquette with which Chorin was concerned. Their elders were just as bad. They carried on lengthy conversations with no relationship to the prayers which they should have been reciting. The worshippers kept no order, and indeed, showed no respect even when the Torah was being read. This did not represent true worship to the Arad rabbi.[60]

Chorin was always fond of likening the attitude which the Jewish people should possess toward their God to the respect which other people showed to their king. He was amazed that people, even when they had an ideal set-up for worship, should be disrespectful, and profane the holiness of their own worship. These same people, Chorin stated, perform actions in the sight of their God and in His holy place that they would not dream of doing before an earthly king.[61]

It was not only the actions of people within the Synagogue that troubled Chorin and caused him to write so energetically in condemnation of prevailing practice. But in his time, as today, attendance was very bad. Quoting the rabbis, Chorin stated: "He who lives in a town where there is a Synagogue, and does not attend

services is to be known as a bad neighbor."[62]

It was not enough for the reforming rabbi of Arad merely to list the many items which he saw as objectionable. He felt that he had to do something about them. And he was prepared with an actual plan of reforming many of the practices which were displeasing to him from an aesthetic or religious point of view. Below we shall list some of the abuses which Chorin sought to eliminate from the Synagogue and from Jewish homes as well:

1) He was dissatisfied with the kabbalistic prayers which were regularly recited in connection with the blowing of the Shofar on the New Year and also with the "duchan" and "u-mipne hataemu".

2) He wished to stop the custom of changing the name of a sick person at the time of the public prayer for his recovery. It smacked to him of superstition. And, while he recognized the importance of public prayer for the sick, he was not willing to allow the introduction of the supernatural into worship.

3) He wished to eliminate the "kapparoth" on the eve of the Day of Atonement.

4. He wished to do away with the precautions which were practiced by all devout Jews before the "t'kufa".

5. Chanting of Kol Nidre on the eve of the Day

of Atonement was also objectionable to the Hungarian rabbi.

6) The "Haman knocking" on Purim brought too much levity and lack of decorum into the reading of the megilla.

7) Chorin was opposed to the "extremely indecent swaying of the body" while at prayer. He would eliminate the noisy crying which accompanied worship and the spitting of the worshippers at the Alenu.

8) Another superstitious custom which Chorin wished to see done away with was the fastening of talismmans on the windows and doors of rooms of pregnant women.[63]

Around 1830 Chorin made an interesting innovation in the practice of naming children. In that year the Arad Community Council decided in favor of a suggestion of Chorin to name both boys and girls in the Synagogue. The naming was to be done by the rabbi himself. Just as the boys were brought to the Synagogue for circumcision and at the same time were given their names, so too were the girls to appear in the Synagogue for their names.[64]

Chorin also performed weddings in the Synagogue. He began to do this around 1815.[65] He probably felt, as with regard to the naming of children, that the introduction of the ceremony into the Synagogue could serve

several purposes. First of all, it could identify the people involved with the religious organization. Then, too, the solemnity of the occasion would be heightened in the background of the Temple. Probably Chorin was aware of the importance of the maintenance of the Synagogue as the focal point of Jewish life. He surely was at all times concerned with making it more meaningful through heightened beauty of services, and more acceptable through reinterpretation of outmoded or ill-used practices connected with it.

Bareheadedness

One of the main concerns of Iggeret Elasaf is the matter of bareheaddedness. The question of wearing a hat while praying was a basic and intriguing problem to Chorin, and he devoted a great deal of space to the question in this work.

Iggeret Elasaf was a pseudipigraphical work, Chorin writing under the name of an Algerian rabbi. The Algerian rabbi, the figment of Chorin's imagination, did a good deal of traveling. And in the course of one of his imaginary trips he came to a city on the border of Hungary. Since he wished to leave the Austro-Hungarian empire to enter the land of the Sultan of Turkey he was required to go before the magistrate of the small city

to obtain his permission. One of the local inhabitants accompanied him, since Chorin was a stranger.[66]

Chorin relates that when the two of them came to the door of the antechamber before the palace of the local magistrate, the man accompanying him removed his hat and instructed him to do likewise. Chorin asked the reason. He was told that no one could come before the magistrate with his head covered. At this point Chorin began to think to himself. How strange it was that there should be such a variance in custom between different localities. In Asiatic lands, when a man wished to show his respect he left his hat on his head. Here, in Europe, it was mandatory that the hat be removed if the magistrate was not to be insulted. Then he thought of the advice of the rabbis: עלת לקרתא הלך בנמוסיה[67]
אל ישנה אדם מן המנהג

Chorin followed the example of the man who was with him and removed his hat before entering the hall. Showing the official his papers, Chorin was given the necessary clearance, and was allowed to go his way.[68]

The event had a significant effect on Chorin. It brought home to him for the first time in concrete manner the adjustments that the exile necessarily forced upon the Jewish people. It should not be derived that up to the time of this experience Chorin was naive to the compromises that were necessary for people who lived

in others' lands. Chorin began to feel that the exile had a definite effect on the lack of spiritual well-being in the Synagogue.[69]

There seemed to be, to Chorin, a certain inconsistency in the custom of wearing a hat within the Synagogue. It was worn to denote a sense of respect. But, reasoned the Arad rabbi, if it is contemporaneous custom to show respect by removing the hat (as was done in the case of the Algerian rabbi when he stood before a local magistrate) then why should not modern custom be applicable with regard to the practice within the Synagogue.

To his opponents, to those who cried: "Behold, a man has come from across the sea who would force us to become renegades, force us to transgress the first law set in the Shulḥan Aruk",[71] Chorin quoted a responsum of Solomon Luria (16th century) "who rebukes his contemporaries for paying no attention to the Talmudic prohibition against walking four cubits in an erect position as an attitude of insolence, while they are very punctilious in regard to the injunction to keep the head covered, which after all is not a law, but a mere custom." (Cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. II, p. 532) He also made use of another statement of Solomon Luria in <u>Iggeret</u> <u>Elasaf</u>, quoting: מי שירצה לברך ברכת המזון והוא בלילה שאין לו כובע די לו במה שמכסה ראשו בידו[72]
That this was in only one peculiar instance and under

rather unusual circumstances did not appear to weaken the logic of his case to Chorin. He was able to adduce further proof directly from the Talmud to show that it is permissible to sit or stand in the Synagogue without wearing a hat. However, even this liberal source prohibited the recitation of prayers while bareheaded.[73]

In Shulḥan Aruk Oraḥ Ḥayyim[74] a rabbi argued that since the gentiles removed the hat to show respect this is an excellent reason for the Jews' not doing so. To buttress his argument he quotes the Biblical verse: "...neither shall you walk in their statutes".[75] Chorin was unimpressed by this and stated:

[76]והגם שכבודו הרב הגדול יקר בעיני, הנה האמת יקר מכל

Chorin held that the rabbi had misinterpreted the Levitical verse containing the prohibition against following the custom of the non-Jews and stated firmly:

[77]וכן שעושים משום כבוד או מצד אחר מותר

Despite the fact that Iggeret Elasaf deals with the problem of bareheadedness in such complete detail and with such firm conviction on the part of the author, the conclusions that Chorin is able to derive from his Talmudic sources are not at all convincing. Though he is able to demonstrate that the Talmud permitted men to stand or sit in the Synagogue without wearing hats, he is unable to prove that they are permitted to recite prayers in the Synagogue while bareheaded. The closest that he

is able to come to a traditional proof that men are allowed to recite prayers while not wearing a hat is the allowance granted to a sick individual at night, when it might cause him grave inconvenience.

It seems to this writer that Chorin's best arguments are the rational ones that he proposes. His own simple brand of logic has an appeal and a certain charm. This is particularly apparent in such a statement as the following: "To think that covering the head without knowledge or understanding would lead to fear of heaven is the same as believing that the ashes of the red heifer cleanse the unclean."[78] In this type of argument, where Chorin is rationalizing and presenting his own reactions to what he personally saw, he is most convincing. It is perhaps characteristic of his period that he thought it necessary to bring forth Talmudic proof for any change he might make. Still bound by some of the ties of Orthodox thinking it was inconceivable to this man that his own thoughts on an issue might be valid and might stand by themselves. To Chorin it was better to take a Talmudic source and derive as much as possible by questionable interpretation than to develop his own.

However, let us not give the impression that Chorin was entirely bound by the Talmud. We have seen how he began to develop his argument regarding bareheadedness. He started from the point of contemporary usage. He in-

dicated that in his times and in his country it was the practice to show respect by removing the hat. This, however, was not enough, for he had to show that it was permissible to remove the hat while at prayer. The only argument he is able to find for this is the statement pertaining to praying while ill at night. Chorin is able to demonstrate that it is permissible to stand or sit in the Synagogue while bareheaded. But he is unable to prove conclusively by means of his Talmudic derivation that praying in the Synagogue while bareheaded is to be allowed by traditional Judaism.

It should not be felt, however, that Chorin's efforts to legitimatize bareheadedness were a complete failure. Undoubtedly his new ideas on the subject had their influence on contemporary thought. Even if they were not completely logically acceptable they marked a development from the prevailing point of view. Chorin had something to offer in his approach to this problem.

Kavana

There were other items of interest to Aaron Chorin in the custom of prayer and liturgy of his time. He was desirous of developing and amplifying, while at the same time correcting, existing conditions. Chorin was vitally concerned with the preservation of ideas and

and customs which he felt were indispensable even to a modern interpretation of Judaism. This is a noteworthy fact: merely because a man becomes classified as a Reformer does not mean that he is desirous of changing everything to conform with his ideas. It is quite conceivable that a Reformer sees qualities in the old which he regards as being worthy of a re-emphasis. This Chorin apparently felt many times.

He was interested in the custom of standing while at prayer,[79] and with the custom of facing the Temple in Jerusalem while praying.[80] Standing at prayer was important to him because it imparted to the worshipper an added sense of reverence. Standing made for greater kavana during worship and was therefore desirable. Chorin agreed with Maimonides in his designation of the instances when a man did not have to stand while praying. Some of these were while riding in a wagon, sailing on a ship, or while riding a horse or donkey. The provision is made, however, that if a man is able to stand even when he is in one of these positions, he should do so. The same general principle held in the matter of facing Jerusalem. In some instances, when it was an inconvenience,[81] it was not required to face in that direction.

Chorin went farther than the Rambam in his interpretation of standing while at prayer. There was one reason for praying while standing. That was to give greater

kavana to the prayer. If, reasoned Chorin, one stands while praying for the purpose of greater kavana then the important thing about the act is the kavana and not the standing. The attainment of kavana became the main factor involved. Since it was all important, what difference did it make how it was attained. If it came to a man while he is standing and praying, that is good. But if, on the other hand, he can achieve the same degree of kavana while remaining seated why should he force himself to stand?[82] לא הכונה שיהא עומד אלא המפרש אשר תפרש הנפש להטות משפט השכל[83] בכוונת התפלה

The attention that Chorin paid to kavana is demonstrated in his attitude toward the quality of voice used by an individual while praying. He was acquainted with the Maimonidean principle of not praying in a loud voice.[84] לא יגביה קולו בתפלתו[85] This attitude was expressed further: כל המגביה קולו בתפלתו הרי זה מקטני אמנה[86] ומנביאי השקרים with regard to the priests of Baal (I Kings 18.28): ויקראו בקול גדול ויתגודדו כמשפטם In amplification of his attitude with regard to the importance of kavana in prayer Chorin made the following comment on the statement in Talmud Yerushalmi concerning praying on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in a loud voice:[87] לפי שהם ימי תשובה משמיעים קולם כדי לכוין יותר[88] Kavana was the most important aspect of all prayer, the ultimate of worship.

As standing while praying, as facing Jerusalem, as reciting the prayers in the properly modulated voice contributed to the kavana of thr worshipper, so too did bowing kirie[89] have an important effect on the frame of mind of the individual engaged in worship. Chorin agreed with Maimonides who prescribed five bowings of the head. Chorin felt the need of bowing ~~kirie~~ in rendering the spirit of a man suitable for praying with kavana.[90]

The movements of the limbs of the body, the position of the hands and feet, the appearance of the individual, his stance, and his inner devotion all were regarded by Chorin as being immensely important aspects of the devotional life of the Jew. A man must consider his appearance and his bearing when he prayed, as though he were standing before an earthly king. Therefore, the arrangement and order of the place of prayer, the appearance of his garments, was important. But, just as Chorin felt that great care must be taken in attention to these matter so did he feel that there should still be left lattitude in the strict observance of law. Chorin was opposed to the establishment of strict and comprehensive laws pertaining to the minutiae of preparation of the individual or the community for worship. He believed that each state, each community, could have its own proper method of performance of prayer.[91] Here we are able to recognize his respect of custom, of local

usage as a means of determining the correct procedure. Quoting the hazal he states: [illegible][92]

Liturgical Reforms

Aaron Chorin's interest in prayer did not limit itself to the outward manifestations of methods of worship. He was concerned with far more than the number of times a man bowed his head during the services, or whether the phylacteries were in their proper position, or the voice of the worshipper properly modulated. Chorin was interested in the development of the liturgy itself.

We have shown above how changes were introduced into the prevailing liturgy by some of the early Reformers. We have also seen how they were accepted. Let us now briefly survey some of Chorin's work in adding to the development of a Reform liturgy.

One of the first accomplishments of Chorin in Arad was the composition of Selichoth for the eve of the New Moon of Adar. In 1803 Chorin, distisfied with the regulations of the Chevra Kaddish decided to do something to rectify an unsatisfactory situation. The statutes of the Burial Society of Arad provided for the recitation of the entire Book of Psalms after the morning service for the Adar New Moon. This was an annoyance not

only to Chorin, but also to the entire Jewish community because of the excessive prolongation of the services.[93]

Chorin knew that it would not do for him simply to set aside the custom of the local burial society without substituting something for the Psalms. So he composed prayers of repentance which referred to the kind offices of the community, and dealt also with the doctrine of immortality. These Selichot were published in printed form in Ofen in 1819.[94]

Before the publication of the Selichot Chorin published an essay which justified his elimination of additions from the services. Kinat haEmet was published in 1818. In this pamphlet he brought forth proof from the Bible as well as the Talmud to show that he was justified in his composition of Selichot. Indeed, states the essay, it is not only permitted, but even a duty to cleanse the prayers from unworthy additions and to compose them, in some circumstances, in the vernacular.[95]

The belief by Chorin that the vernacular had a place to play in the recitation of prayers was illustrated in 1827 by an important innovation of his in the liturgy. In that year Chorin began to give the prayer for the King and Fatherland in German. He based his right to do so on Talmudic proofs adduced in Kinat haEmet.[96]

Chorin was interested in the so-called Hamburger Cultus and this interest is illustrated in a letter which

he wrote in 1842 with regard to innovations which he had made or was preparing to make in the liturgy. He wrote at that time: "I have written a pamphlet on the order of the Synagogue, and the liturgy and the daily prayers which I may publish under the title Shaare Zedek. I have added nothing concerning the Sabbath and the holidays because I hope to get to the point of introducing the Hamburger Cultus. However, this will take some time since we lack the prayerbooks and hymnals."[97]

In Iggeret Elasaf Chorin went into some detail in a description of the correct way of reciting the morning prayers. He was concerned with the niceties of their recitation. The Cantor had to be a man who was genuinely devoted to his work: אשר רוח אלוקים בקרבו [98] עליו לדעת לפני מי הוא עומד The prayers had to be recited properly, each word pronounced with care. The service was to be dignified and impressive, expressive of the true devotion of the worshippers. Chorin would have liked to have seen the prayers recited by the congregation in unison repeated together as though one voice were reciting.[99]

We have seen briefly the effect that the ideas of Chorin had on the liturgy of his time, not only with regard to actual changes in prayers, but in respect to the physical conditions obtaining in the Synagogue. One of the dominating ideas behind this rabbi's work was that

of making Judaism more meaningful to its people. He wanted to give his religion more popular appeal. And one of the ways which Chorin believed in to accomplish this end was a more impressive religious service. He constantly fulminated against ugliness and lack of reverence in the Temple.

When the Arad rabbi wrote vehemently and sincerely in opposition to prevailing practice which to him spoiled the meaning and the dignity of the Synagogue, he demonstrated his conviction that in the impressiveness of the religious service lay much of the inspiration that Judaism was able to offer its people. And when he eliminated parts of the prayers which lengthened without adding meaning to the service, he was expressing in another way his desire to make his religion most meaningful to the lives of his people. The use of the vernacular, simplification when necessary, beauty, and dignity, all added to the elevation of contemporary Judaism to a much higher plane. Chorin saw the need for the aesthetic and the beautiful as a means of developing and nurturing latent religious impulses in his people. He also was aware that the tedious, the complicated, and the incomprehensible detracted from the religious experience of the individual.

There was another important principle that guided Chorin in his attempts to render the liturgy and methods

of worship more acceptable. That was his compelling desire to adjust ideas and practices to their times. Chorin wanted to see things in consonance. He wanted to see harmony. Let us not, however, gather from this wish to adjust that Chorin would have liked to see all religious practice strictly regimented. He did not have the temperament of a dictator. He was a man who liked to see growth and development, a man to whom a static condition was an unhealthy condition. He was aware that Judaism had developed in the past. He could not accept unchangeable principles for the present.

In this frame of mind did Aaron Chorin appraoch the liturgy and the liturgical practices of his people, and with a similar attitude did he make his contributions to their growth and development. (Cf. 61a for additional liturgical material)

The Organ

Instrumental music in religious services stopped, of course, with the destruction of the Temple. It ceased as a token of mourning for the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple. Although prohibited in the Synagogue during regular religious services, the organ was nevertheless used on occasion. At the time of a wedding the Shulhan Aruk allows non-Jews to play musical instruments at weddings on the Sabbath of the Sabbath of the week

In addition to the reforms cited above Chorin suggested the following outline of the Morning service in his Iggeret Elasaf, pp. 33b-35b.

He began the service with Baruch shesmar which was recited by the cantor and repeated by the congregation. The cantor then read mizmor lethoda with the congregation, followed by Psalms 145-150. (The Ashre and Halleluya) This was followed by baruch adonai leolam (cantor and congregation) wayvarech dawid (cantor and congregation) and yishtabbah, which was read by the cantor aloud, the congregation reciting it quietly. The Kaddish was then recited followed by the barechu, the yotzer, the kedusha d'yishava, which was read together. Baruch kevod adonai mimkomo was read together followed by baruch hu u'varuch sh'mo read by the congregation. The second blessing of the Shema (Ahava) was then read, with the congregation reciting v'keravtanu leshimcha hagadol aloud. The Shema was read together as were its closing benedictions. This was followed by mi camocha, which was read together followed by Shira hadasha which was read by the cantor himself up to the words adonai yimloch leolam voed which was read together. The Amida was then recited. The Kedusha was recited in the third benediction. Following the Amida, Kaddish was recited followed by vehu rahum (Tahanun) followed by another recitation of Kaddish. This concluded Chorin's arrangement of the morning service as presented in his Iggeret Elasaf.

in which the wedding occurs.[100]

On Shabuoth, June 14, 1815, Israel Jacobson introduced the modern organ as part of the regular worship. His action brought about a great storm of protest, and so loud and strong did the controversy become, and so insistent were the Orthodox of the community, that the Temple was closed by order of Frederick William III on the grounds that such action was "detrimental to the established rights of the Jewish Church".[101] The Temple of Jacobson was closed December 6, 1815, but the proponents of Reform and the use of the organ were not to be denied. On October 18,1818; they succeeded in dedicating their first Temple at Hamburg where they had a fine organ and employed a non-Jewish organist.[102]

Aaron Chorin was in favor of the use of the organ in connection with religious worship because he felt it would beautify the service.[103] His efforts to place the organ in the Synagogue came much later than the original attempts, for it was not until 1839 that he expressed himself officially on the subject. In that year, during a Sabbath Shekalim sermon, he mentioned that he would raise no objections to the purchase of an organ and to the employment of a Jewish organist.[104]

On February 23, 1839, he wrote: "This proposition (concerning the purchase of the organ) deserves

special attention for economic reasons....Only wealthy communities can employ singers. What...will happen in smaller and poorer communities....It is more practical and easier to introduce simple songs in harmony with the psalms to organ accompaniment. To begin with, mostly youth must participate in the singing; later on, the whole community will do so."[105]

Chorin stated his position with regard to the playing of the organ on the Sabbath as follows: "Already the Tosafists declared that the prohibition concerning the use of musical instruments on the Sabbath and holidays is limited to Talmudic times. For, in those times, many were trained in the production and repair of musical instruments. This fact prompted the fear that playing of musical instruments (which in itself does not constitute a violation of the Sabbath) might lead to the making or repair of musical instruments and thereby afford the opportunity of violating the Sabbath. ...Moreover, the principle of precautionary prohibitions concerning the Sabbath has no validity in the Temple of Jerusalem (אין שבות במקדש) should also be applied to the Synagogue service inasmuch as the vigilance of the religious authorities guarantees now just as much respect of the Sabbath laws as the vigilance of the priests in the Temple of Jerusalem did in former days."

"Indeed, R. Mordecai b. Hillel (d. 1310) regarded

it permissible to pray at candle light on the Day of Atonement because the special solemnity of that day obviates precautionary rules. (On ordinary Sabbaths it is forbidden to read at the light of candles in order that a man should not be tempted to turn the wick to make better light).

"If the religious service can be made more uplifting, the solemnity of the Synagogue on every Sabbath will suffice to prevent violations. Therefore, precautionary measures concerning the playing of musical instruments in the Synagogue are unnecessary. Finally, it is noteworthy that R. Isaac Alfasi permitted the blowing of the Shofar even when the New Year fell on a Sabbath, because he believed that the vigilance of the religious authoruty can prevent transgressions."[106]

Chorin, in his desire for the introduction of the organ, differed from some of those who preceded him. He wanted to have a Jewish organist. This is quite a significant variation from the plans of other reformers. To Chorin the organ's position in the Synagogue was solely a method of beautifying the service at the lowest possible price. His was no mesalliance with non-Jewish practice. He wanted a Jewish organist because he believed there was no breaking of the Sabbath involved in playing the organ. And he saw no reason for appeasing any element of people which might accept an organ for

aesthetic purposes but reject one because of religious difficulties. Always trying to add more meaning to the service, to heighten its beauty, to make it more impressive, Chorin found the organ a ready means of accomplishing these purposes. Justifying his use on technical grounds, the Arad rabbi was able to demonstrate to his own, and to others' satisfaction, that the use of the organ was acceptable even to traditional Judaism.

The Sabbath

Critical of the loose Sabbath observance which he found during the events of his travels, Aaron Chorin still had ideas pertaining to the modification of some of the rigorous observance of the day. In Iggeret Elasaf he condemned the failure of people to keep the Sabbath. Instead of attending their Synagogues on the Sabbath many people used the day as an opportunity for revelry and enjoyment. Such employment of the day of rest was as evil in the eyes of Chorin as work itself.[108]

In 1830 a question was put to him asking whether he would favor the suggestion to observe the Sabbath on Sunday. This suggestion was rejected categorically by Chorin.[109] He took the opportunity which was given to him at the time to express himself on some other aspects of Sabbath observance. He was, he stated, in favor

of an attenuation of the rigor of the Sabbath laws with regard to travelling and the writing of non-Hebraic letters. These two deviations from the accepted mode of Sabbath worship were proposed by Chorin because of the temporary conditions which made it extremely difficult for men to refrain from riding and writing on the Sabbath.[110]

In his justification of travelling on the Sabbath Chorin made use, once again, of Talmudic sources. He examined carefully the many arguments concerning the subject. And, because of the construction of railroad cars he was able to deduce permission for travelling on that day. The Talmud leaves undecided the question of whether it is permissible to travel in a structure ten arms widths above the earth. All railroad coaches are elevated at least ten arms widths above the earth. Since this is so, and since the Sabbath limit is not a Pentateuchal, but a Talmudic institution, a decision must be made in favor of riding on the Sabbath. This must be the case also because in a case of doubt rabbinic laws are interpreted with a view toward leniency, to permit the act in question. Chorin added, ~~however~~, that travellers ~~must not~~ could leave the train ~~(unless compelled to do so) if their destination lay beyond the Sabbath limit~~ when the conductor alighted, according to their need.[111, 140]

Chorin also made use of a statement of Rabbi

Jacob b. Meir Tam (the grandson of Rashi) in connection with his proof that Sabbath travel was permissible. R. Jacob b. Meir Tam stated that journeys for the purpose of legitimate business or visit of a friend possessed religious significance. He further stated that this ruling should be considered especially in contemporary times when making a living was so difficult.[112]

Chorin was moderate in his efforts to bring reforms into the traditional observance. He preferred to change only when there was actual need of change, and when lack of the new and preservation of the old made for hardship. It was Chorin's desire to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath. He saw, however, that if reforms were not made no part of Sabbath observance would be safe from improper observance. He preferred to make such concessions as were necessary to enable the retention of much that might otherwise be lost.

Mourning

The humane nature of Chorin is illustrated in no better way than through a suggested reform of his with respect to the length of time involved in mourning.

It was customary in the time of Chorin for burials to take place sometimes two or even three days after death. This was possible because there were no sanita-

tion laws ordering immediate burial or embalming of the dead. Mourning customarily began after interment. Thus, it may be seen, that the mourning period could be considerably lengthened, sometimes lasting ten days or even more.

Chorin explained that it was possible for the period of mourning to be lessened without doing violence to any laws. According to the Talmud the time for mourning begins as soon as the corpse is covered with the golal. Rashi explains the golal as the cover of the coffin. Chorin quoted Nahmanides as saying: "According to Rashi's explanation, the time for mourning begins as soon as the corpse is placed in the coffin in the house of the mourners, and when the cover is nailed to the coffin...."[113]

The method of shortening the period of mourning is thus quite simple. After the customary washing, the corpse is placed in the coffin on the same day as death took place. The time of mourning may, therefore, begin from the day of death.[114]

We make mention of this reform of Chorin's as but another example of the sensible way in which he went about making contemporary Judaism more acceptable and more in harmony with its times. Once again, through the use of traditional material, he was able to develop a new practice, welcome,indeed, to his people.

The Synod

Chorin had more to offer than criticism to a reform of the conditions which he considered remediable. He possessed a strong belief in the efficacy of an organization to achieve through united expression and understanding what his own single, small voice was unable to accomplish. Chorin knew and appreciated the imporaance of organizations and of organized power. He had been able to experience personally the results of a unified opposition. He, therefore, viewed a united effert with respect.

In his Pamphlet Yeled Zekunim Chorin devoted considerable attention to the formation of a Synod. Up to that time only a few individuals had taken the intitative in the reforms. Of these not all were competent, and much confusion had been caused by the best intentioned actions. "Some", said Chorin, "produced theories that do violence to the pious heart and bore harmful fruits. For the abolition of old forms and customs that are not replaced by better ones can never lead to order, but rather cause anarchy."[115]

Chorin felt that the general excitement and thought of the time produced a few good ideas that had taken root in proper soil and even developed into pro-

mising changes. Many communities created institutions for the education of their youth, and established temples where the services were conducted with dignity and propriety. But for the vast majority little had been accomplished. "This majority needs an authority, a central religious body that can make the efforts of individuals into something total and general. For without this, there can be no final and redeeming reform."[116]

Chorin felt that unless the great masses of Jews realized the compelling necessity of ceremonial reform, or were made to realize that necessity, that all the attempts at reform would ultimately be only destructive. The great masses of Jews had to be made to know that ceremonial reforms were necessary for the maintenance of the essence of Judaism, and for the adaptation of Judaism to existing conditions in society. To accomplish this, to reeducate and truly reform, a great many prejudices had to be overcome. This could not be accomplished by contempt for the old or through a belittling of old custom. It is very easy to tear down. To construct a firm and lasting foundation for future success requires time and patience.[117]

Chorin firmly believed that his times were charged with the task of opening up to the people "the inner sanctum of their Divine faith by proper

reform of our ceremonies."[118] Through a popularization of a pure and genuine enlightenment, through the awakening of religious enthusaism, he believed that the great mass of Jewry could be torn out of their moral paralysis. But this could not be accomplished merely through the efforts of individuals. "A steady, persistent development and evolution of all powers and a proper final reform cannot take place so long as every Synagogue remains a body by itself, and as long as every change is subject to the opinions of every community in the province, and even every opinion of every individual."[119] For too long a time the leaders of Jewish communities had misunderstood their tasks, and failed to appreciate the importance of their position. Their arbitrary judgment was not sufficient for a continuous growth and development of Judaism.

But Chorin did not wish to regiment or destroy all expressions of individuality. This was far from his purpose as he states:

"In order to prevent a misunderstanding I should like to note than in speaking of a uniform reform, I do not mean a general universal reform comprising every Jew on the face of the globe. But, as I stated in my Iggeret Elasaf, provincial synods may be established no matter how different their resulting reforms might be, just so long as they remain united concerning

the essentials in religion.[120] As long as they maintain union in the essentials they will serve a beneficial end and will maintain the essence of religion through external ceremonies even though they appear different. Concerning them it may be rightly said: אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים."[121]

The formation of the Synod was to be accomplished by popular petition. Jews in every land were to petition their government for permission to form a Synod which would then exist under the protection of the government.[122] The Synod would not be composed solely of professional rabbis, for Chorin felt that few of them were capable of leaving the beaten path and rejecting what to him were antiquated prejudices. Chorin had a great deal of faith in the Jewish laity. "Israel does not lack men who combine Talmudic erudition with literary education and the logic of truth. Men who are capable of arriving at decisions serving the maintenance of our religion as well as the secular good of our co-religionists. Men who can express their decisions in an understandable language. I have already said that in all times existing Synods have the right to modify commandments and prohibitions, and even to suspend them for a while."[123]

After the assembling of rabbis and Jewish scholars with literary education, men who were unbiassed and pos-

sessing moral integrity, an election would be held. The object of the election would be to elect a Nasi. The Nasi would then appoint twenty-two members who would constitute a Sanhedrin and "the unanimous decisions of such a body should have legal validity for the Jews of that state or province" (wherein the Synod was assembled).[124]

After such organization, the Synod could institute reforms, the authority for which, according to Chorin, was not unprecedented. Such power was granted in many Talmudic and rabbinic sources. Chorin emphasized particularly the principle of Maimonides which empowered every religious authority to carry out temporary reforms. Since this principle might be interpreted as applying only to authoritative bodies consisting of "ordained" members (s'muchim), Chorin pointed out that the entire question of s'micha lends only greater authority in the administration of criminal law, but means nothing in the realm and business of Reform.[125]

In this manner Chorin wished to constitute and give authority to the Synod. The realization of the need for a Synod and its ~~advocation~~ advocacy by this early Reformer is one of the most important aspects of his work. He showed, through his desire for such an organization, that he was aware not only of the superficial difficul-

ties that plagued Judaism, but, more important, that he was cognizant of the deep-seated reasons for these difficulties.

Chorin saw that he could never succeed in reforming Judaism by himself. He also saw that the other early Reformers could not succed individually, nor even if they united together to form a sort of united front of Reform. He saw that the basis for reforms had to come from the people, themselves, not only from the rabbinate. And therein lies an important point. For Chorin recognized the significance of the secular in Jewish life. He saw how secular influences were at work on the lives of the people. And he realized that these same influences could be brought to work for the principles upon which he stood.

Chorin demonstrated his far-sightedness and his sincerity in the plans he made for a Synod. He was not interested in power for himself nor in a great amount of prestige for the new ideas which he brought to Judaism. The man was concerned solely with the welfare of his people which he believed depended on a preservation of the essence of the principles of Judaism. To accomplish this end, to make possible the existence of a harmony between traditional Judaism and modern problems, Chorin favored

a Synod.

Part III

Conclusion

The Philosophy of Aaron Chorin

We have seen, in the course of this thesis, a great many evidences of the nature of Aaron Chorin's individuality. Through his actions, through his polemics, through his attitudes, we have been able to formulate a picture of the type of man he really was. Sometimes he did things which appear to have been carried out without much forethought. Others of his deeds follow a generally consistent pattern.

What were Chorin's motives, his reasons for throwing himself into the bitter struggle for reform in Judaism? We may quote from his Yeled Zekunim for an expressive explanation of the reasons behind his fight:

"God is my witness! Not self-interest, not craving for honor and fame guided my steps. Rather, I was distressed over the sorrowful condition, the helplessness and humiliation of my brethren. It pained me to see human beings equal with all men in talents and claims to happiness in permanent isolation, deprived of so many advantages, without civil industry or skill. I could not bear the thought of the shamefull degradation and despicable apathy in which you, my dear brethren, find yourselves, a condition that

does not even permit the growth of the desire for improvement.

"I could not even find consolation in our holy religion, that Divine daughter....She appeared to me as a widow, disgraced by her own children. Gone is her splendor, her temple is deserted, for no one attends her feast.

"...so I asked, what is the cause of all this evil? What is the reason of this isolation from society? Upon diligent examination of the statutes, institutions and observances within and without the Synagogue, I discovered many which not only contribute nothing to the maintenance of our essential faith, but obscure its brilliance and frustrate its uplifting purpose.

"I found many which obstruct the development and expansion of our religion, others which directly oppose it, and I determined to use all my powers, time, and diligence to restore to our faith its splendor and solidity, and to prevent its threatening disintegration.

"For the sons of our time, equipped with a better, though still insufficient appreciation of the beautiful and of true enlightenment, began already to deprecate the statutes and customs born in times of oppression, barbarism, and cruel persecution, and soon even ridiculed them. Thus, there was danger that the fruit might

be thrown away with the shell.

"For all these reasons I was inspired with zeal and unwavering persistence to prove that our ancestral faith can not only survive a cleansing of disfiguring admixtures, but even can be strengthened and solidified thereby..."[126]

There was a decided difference between the motivating philosophy behind a man like Chorin and others of the early reformers. Some of his contemporaries believed that a reform of ceremonies necessitated the abolition of the Talmud. This attitude antagonized conscientious Jews who wished to hold fast to tradition.[127]

Chorin believed firmly that religion cannot maintain itself without certain customs and traditions. However, the concept that religious ceremonies must remain forever unchanging at all places and under all circumstances appeared to him, as to others, as an intolerable constraint.[128] Therefore, Chorin looked for a middle road, a road which would allow for reforms without eliminating the Talmud. "For, admitting that blind perpetuation of antiquated institutions causes thoughtless bigotry and hypocrisy, the careless tearing down of old forms is followed by schisms, destruction, and ultimately, indifference."[129]

The following Mishnaic principles have often been cited as prohibitive of reform of existing cere-

monial law:

1) The laws promulgated by a Sanhedrin can be abrogated only by another Sanhedrin superior to the former one in knowledge and number of its members.[130]

2) All laws which do not refer to land property in Palestine must be observed strictly everywhere, also outside of Judea.[131]

But those who used these two Mishnaic proofs for prohibiting the reform of existing ceremonial laws seemingly ignored the principle which the Talmud recommends: that every rule has its exceptions. To quote Chorin: "In my publications Iggeret Elasaf and Zir Neeman, I proved from Bible and Talmud that it is the duty of every provincial synod to modify statutes and prohibitions of former synods and even of the Bible wherever necessary, and to suspend them in accordance with the needs of the times in order to preserve the essence of religion לחזק הדת and in order to promote the good of society."[132] לקיום הסדרים

Chorin stated firmly that rabbinical Judaism, in its original purity, makes possible a ritual reform in the following manner:

The Talmud is based upon the principle expressed by Rabbi Johanan and R. Lakish: "A time may come when a portion of the ceremonial law must be destroyed in order to preserve the divine truth."[133]

"Whoever rejects this principle", states Chorin, "undermines the basic motive for the origin of the Talmud. He must likewise reject the Talmud because the writing of the Mishna and the Gemara constitute a suspension of the principle necessitated by the circumstances, that oral tradition cannot be recorded in writing."[134]

Chorin's position clearly is, that Reform, in full accord with the spirit of the Talmud, is necessitated by the needs of the times. A new and more refined taste demands ritual reforms. Certain customs and observances must be diminished and simplified because contemporaneous conditions make them annoying, oppressive, and in some professions observance is almost impossible.[135]

In his pamphlet Dabar beItto Chorin defended Reform against its opponents by using the example of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau. This rabbi permitted shaving on half-holidays in order to prevent other transgressions. Chorin interpreted Landau's action as an expression of the principle that in times of wide-spread tendencies toward transgression, no further prohibitions are to be enacted. But, on the other hand, that which is permissible should be publicly recognized as such.[136]

Chorin also used the following statement of Maimonides[137] for additional support:

"If it is deemed advisable by a court (a reli-

gious authority) to suspend temporarily a commandment or a prohibition in the hope that such a measure might lead many back to Judaism, or prevent them from transgression in other respects, the court is permitted to act in accordance with the needs of the moment. Just as the physician amputates a hand or leg in order to save the life of a patient, so a court can likewise grant temporary infringement upon certain laws, so that, at some later date, all laws might be observed."

This principle caused Chorin to speak in favor of ritual reform, "for the same right which Maimonides accords to a Beth Din belongs to every religious authority no matter how small."[138]

Chorin was no haphazard or careless thinker. He proceeded cautiously and slowly to conslusions that were logically satisfactory to him. There is no mistaking that here was a man determined to adjust his people to reality, to enable them to live in harmony with a changing world. His philosophy is interesting and significant, because it demonstrates how Chorin was able to rationalize Orthodox principles, and demonstrate that it was unnecessary to sever every tie with Orthodoxy to be a Reform Jew. Indeed, to Chorin, Reform was only the modern expression of Orthodoxy.

Concluding Notes

We have but little to add to our survey of Aaron Chorin as a religious reformer. Throughout our thesis we have tried to evaluate as we presented the picture of the man and his works. But a few words of summary are not out of place here.

Aaron Chorin was the product of his times, the result of new ideas, new ways of thinking. He was a modern man. Aaron Chorin was courageous and resolute, possessed of firm conviction. But he was also a human being, with all the frailties of a man. Though he had the courage of his convictions he had to renege. For he had not the stern nature capable of enduring the sight of suffering for his family because of his personal differences with the authorities. There are some who no doubt would say that Chorin was an individual who followed the way of expediency; when the going became too difficult he changed his course. It is true that Chorin recanted. But he did so not for his own personal welfare, but for the safety of his family.

Aaron Chorin was a liberal. He was not afraid of change or of new ideas. Innovation did not frighten him. But though he was a liberal, though he believed

in the new, he did not discard the past. The old possessed value for him. He did not evaluate in terms of old or new; he analyzed thoughts and ideas in terms of their innate value. Aaron Chorin was no more ready to throw aside or disregard the past than he was to turn his back on the future.

Chorin was a prolific writer. He had a great deal to say, and he did not spare himself in saying it. His style is pleasant and not without a certain charm. Repetition spoils parts of his works, but perhaps we should excuse his over-clarification on the grounds of diligent pedagogy. No one would deny that the development of an idea is carefully and precisely accomplished in the works of this man.

Chorin was a clear, if not altogether original, thinker. Some of the reforms he advocated were not his from the very start. But he gave to them a character and a certain flavor peculiar to him alone. One of the favorite methods of Chorin is to quote an outstanding authority, such as Maimonides, at great length to buttress his case, to give status to what he is about to prove. Constantly using source material to illustrate his case, Chorin still managed to be pre-eminently fair and decent. He did not twist facts. He did not suppress, enlarge, or exaggerate. His gentlemanliness stands out in marked contrast to some of the writings

of his opponents.

As for tangible results of all that he did we could indicate many. Let us offer but two. We dealt at some length with Chorin's introduction of the organ into the Synagogue. Emanuel Schreiber in his Reformed (sic) Judaism makes the following interesting comment on this accomplishment:

> "Some readers of this book may not feel inclined to think so (that the introduction of the organ was important) from the fact that the organ is introduced into a number of Orthodox Synagogues in America. But America in 1892 is not what Europe was in 1840. The following facts will prove my assertion. In Vienna, with a Jewish population of 100,000 souls there is even today (1892) not one Jewish House of Worship in which there is an organ. Dr. Gudeman, preacher of the Vienna Temple in the 'Leopoldstadt' in 1871 denounced an organ in the Synagogue 'as the worst kind of idolatry', and compared it with Simri's (sic) act of the most shameful licentiousness. Prof. Graetz, who denies the supernatural origins of the Pentateuch in the first two volumes of his 'History of the Jews', strongly opposes an organ in the Synagogue. Dr. Israel Hildesheimer, a leader of Orthodoxy in Germany, publicly revoked, a few years ago, his Rabbinical certificate given to his disciple Dr. Goldschmidt because the latter favored an organ in the Synagogue. Indeed, an organ in the Synagogue is regarded even this day as the 'Shibbolet' of the Orthodox and Reform parties in Germany. The Hirsch-Lehman-Hildesheimer school declares a Synagogue in which there is an organ -- 'anti-Jewish'. Wherever in Germany in the last two decades an organ has been introduced into the Synagogue, it was the signal for a split in the Congregation and for the establishment of a new Orthodox Congregation. In the Temple of Prague, the organ is permitted to be played on weekdays only at weddings and similar occasions, not, on Sabbath and Holidays. In other

> Congregations of Germany they would not permit a Jew to play on the organ on the Sabbath and Holidays. They have therefore, as a rule, Christian organists. These instances show the importance of the introduction of an organ in 1840 by Chorin in Arad. If I am not mistaken this was the first organ introduced into a Synagogue of Austria-Hungary. From a letter dated 1842 it can be seen how optimistic Chorin was in the matter of the Reform of worship. He said, among other things: 'I hope to introduce (in Arad) the Hamburger Cultus, which, however, takes time, as we have not the prayer and hymn books.'" [139]

Chorin's ideas pertaining to the establishment of a Synod were utilized as late as 1904 in no less a body than the Central Conference of American Rabbis. For in that year during the discussion on the floor of the Conference on a projected Synod, the ideas and plans of Aaron Chorin were quoted.

Chorin's contributions to the growth of Reform, to its foundations are clear and incisive. He provided it with a tie with the past. He showed that it was possible to reconcile the past with the present, to derive concepts of lasting value from what had gone before. Chorin also made a very great contribution in demonstrating that Reform was Judaism in as true a sense as Orthodoxy, and that Reformers belonged, as all other Jews to the Congregation of Israel. He was no separatist. He did not wish to escape. He knew that escape was impossible and could only result in destruction. For Judaism's strength is the strength

of the whole. Chorin felt that Reform and Reformers merely translate the old. They do not wish to destroy, they desire to build. He believed that there was room for great improvement, that there were many faults sadly in need of correction. But he also believed that there is much in the old of value to the new. This attitude of Aaron Chorin is surely of value to us today.

Today the reforms of Aaron Chorin may seem to be pale and unexciting beside the burning issues of our own times. It is true that the questions with which he and his contemporaries were vitally concerned are problems that no longer plague the mind of the modern religious thinker. But we must not lose our sense of perspective and relegate the works of Chorin to a position of insignificance. He was a pioneer, his was an important early chapter in the history of Reform.

Footnotes.

1. Emanuel Schreiber, Reformed Judaism, Washington, 1892, pp. 60-61.

2. Jacob Rader Marcus, Israel Jacobson, C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. XXXVIII, 1928, p. 8.

3. Frank Thilly, A History of Philosophy, New York, 1914, p. 383.

4. Ibid., p. 385.

5. Marcus, op. cit., p. 13.

6. Ibid.

7. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. X, p. 352.

8. Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, A History of the Jewish People, Philadelphia, 1938, p. 435.

9. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. X, p. 353

10. Ibid., p. 356.

11. Schreiber, op. cit., p. 61.

12. Ibid., p. 66.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 69.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 70.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 71.

21. Ibid., p. 72.

22. Ibid.
23. Talmud Sabbath 61a
24. Psalm 109.28.
25. Schreiber, op. cit., p. 74.
26. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 76.
29. Ibid.
30. Cf. pp. 55-61 in Chorin's pamphlet Dabar beItto.
31. Schreiber, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
32. Aaron Chorin, Iggeret Elasaf, Prague, 1826, p. 15b.
33. Ibid., pp. 11b-13b.
34. Ibid., pp. 14a-14b.
35. Leopold Loew, Der Juedische Congress in Ungarn, Pest, 1871, p. 158.
36. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 3a.
37. Ibid., p. 3b
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 4a
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 4b
44. Chapter VIII from Beth Habehirah, Halakah 6.
45. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 4b.
46. Leviticus 19.30.

47. Iggeret Elasaf, pp. 4b-5a.

48. Ibid., p. 5a

49. I Kings 8.30, 33-40.

50. Iggeret Elasaf, pp. 6a-7b.

51. Ibid., pp. 5a-5b.

52. Isaiah 56.7.

53. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 8b

54. Ibid., p. 16a

55. Ibid., p. 9a.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. 9b

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., pp. 10a-10b.

60. Ibid., pp. 10b-11a.

61. Ibid., pp. 14b-15a.

62. Ibid., p. 15a.

63. Aaron Chorin, Yeled Zekunim, Vienna, 1839, pp. 38-39.

64. Dr. Weil (pseud. for Leopold Loew) Aron Chorin, Eine biografische Skizze, Szegedin, 1863, p. 105.

65. Ibid.

66. Iggeret Elasaf, 16b-17a.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., p. 17a.

70. Ibid., pp. 17b-18a.

71. Shulhan Aruk, Orah Hayyim, #91.

72. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 21a.

73. Ibid., pp. 21b-22a.
74. Orah Hayyim #152
75. Leviticus 18.3
76. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 23b.
77. Ibid., p. 24a.
78. Ibid., p. 22a-22b.
79. Ibid., p. 24b-25a.
80. Ibid., p. 25a.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., p. 25b.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 27b.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., p. 28a.
87. Ibid., p. 27b.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid., p. 28b.
90. Ibid., pp. 28b-29a.
91. Ibid., p. 29b.
92. Ibid.
93. Weil, op. cit., pp. 104-105.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p. 47.
96. Ibid., p. 105.
97. Ibid., p. 108.
98. Iggeret Elasaf, p. 33b.

99. Ibid., p. 34a.
100. Orah Hayyim, 338, 2.
101. Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume IX, p. 432.
102. Ibid.
103. Yeled Zekunim, p. 51.
104. Weil, op. cit., p. 105.
105. Ibid., p. 106.
106. Ibid., pp. 121-122.
107. Iggeret Elasaf, pp. 15a-15b.
108. Ibid.
109. Weil, op. cit., p. 67.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., p. 111.
112. Ibid., pp. 111-112.
113. Ibid., p. 116.
114. Ibid.
115. Yeled Zekunim, p. 27.
116. Ibid., p. 28.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid., p. 29.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., p. 30.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Weil, op. cit., p. 58.

125. Weil, op. cit., p. 62.

126. Yeled Zekunim, pp. 48-50.

127. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid.

130. Mishna Eduyoth 1.5.

131. Mishna Kiddushin 1.9.

132. Yeled Zekunim, pp. 22-23.

133. Ibid., p. 24.

134. Ibid.

135. Weil, op. cit., p. 69.

136. Weil, op. cit., p. 45.

137. Cf. Weil, op. cit., p. 46 for additional support of Reform.

138. Ibid., p. 46.

139. Schreiber, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

140. Yeled Zekunim, p. 4b

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