

GORDON AND HIS SOCIETY, A CRITIQUE OF RUSSIAN JEWISH LIFE  
AS SEEN BY GORDON IN HIS PUBLICISTIC  
HEBREW ESSAYS

J. L. Gordon as a product and influencer of his society

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PREFACE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	page 1
General European Conditions.....	1
Russian Conditions During the Nineteenth Century.....	5
Introduction to Gordon's Works.....	18
Russian Jewry as Viewed by Gordon....	20
Haskalah: A Program for Russian Jewry..	30
Gordon the Maskil and the Russian Rabbinate.....	45
The Problem of Jewish Migration.....	54
Gordon's Conception of Jewish life in Israel.....	62
Gordon's Conception of American Jewish life.....	71
Footnotes.....	80
Bibliography.....	90



I - GENERAL EUROPEAN CONDITIONS

A meaningful discussion on an author must be concerned both with the social milieu from which the author emerged and from which he gained the impetus to write, as well as with the influence that the writer had on his society.

The author is always the forerunner of social change. It is he, who most often calls to the attention of the populace the need for social change and how it can be brought about and thus he becomes a factor in the process of social change in so far as he influences his environment. I will attempt to show the factors inherent in the social process of the society in which Gordon lived, which in their uniqueness gave rise to Gordon, the author. I will also attempt to show the way in which Gordon, the author, was an influential factor in molding the ideas of his period.

This paper will deal with the conditions of



the Russian Jewish community of the middle of the nineteenth century and with the specific problems and solutions which Gordon suggested in his essays.

To understand the world of Gordon it is necessary to consider the influence of the Russian Jewish world on Gordon, and to understand the Russian Jewish life it is necessary to understand the conditions that existed in Russia, and Russia's attitudes and actions can best be understood in its relationship to the European scene. All of these would have their influence on Gordon but, naturally, his immediate milieu would exert the greatest force upon him. Both the Russian community and the Russian Jewish community of the nineteenth century, and of the period preceding it, were undergoing not the normal or usual process of social change but, rather, drastic and severe social change.<sup>1)</sup>



(3)

Europe was undergoing a process of complete social reorganization during the nineteenth century and the several centuries earlier. As social re-<sup>2)</sup>organization takes place after the society has undergone a complete disorganization and disintegration of previously existing values, periods of reorganization are characteristically chaotic and beset with turmoil, insecurity, and great social upheaval.

The Middle Ages was characterized by stability and lack of mobility both as regards class status and locale. There was little learning during this period. The peasants were subject and loyal to their lords who in turn were responsible for the well being of their charges. Civilization was rural<sup>3)</sup> and local.

New economic needs and interests helped to bring about mercantilism and later the development of capitalism, the rise of Protestantism, and the Catholic counter-Reformation. Agricultural changes became necessary and as a result the movement known as the agricultural Revolution came into being. This movement was followed by the Industrial Revolution. The French Revolution was also a part of the pattern of



social disorganization and reorganization.

The era of conservatism led by Metternich came about as a reaction to the forces for liberalism. The unrest and the discontent felt by large numbers of people broke out in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. These led to more liberal governmental policies and to the growth of personal liberties and freedom of thought.

This period that followed the stability of the Middle Ages can best be characterized as a period of enlightenment, of yearning for spiritual, intellectual and political freedom. Although Russia was late in experiencing this general trend it could not help but be profoundly affected by the spirit of the age.



I-2 RUSSIAN CONDITIONS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The political, economic and intellectual conditions of Russia in the nineteenth century brought about a feeling of restlessness and discontent among the Russian people. The spirit of Russian life during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) can be summed up in two words, "unmitigated reaction".<sup>4)</sup> Nicholas I was an exponent of autocracy. He was known for his desire to Russify his people and for his religious persecutions. During the period of Nicholas I, such important developments as the revolutions of 1848, and the granting of a constitution, and a liberal ministry in Vienna were affecting profound changes in the European structure. Only Russia failed to yield to the spirit of liberalism which pervaded Europe.<sup>5)</sup>

When Alexander II ascended to the throne in 1855, the conditions in Russia were similar, at least as far as the social regime was concerned, to those that prevailed in Western Europe much earlier.<sup>6)</sup>



Not only was Russia backward politically, but she remained alien to most of the rest of Europe in culture. The most urgent and the longest felt reform was the emancipation of the serfs. A literature depicting the evils of the society and demanding reform had started as early as the 1830s. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War demonstrated that reforms would have to be instituted. Reform in Russia was dependent on the tsar. In 1861 Alexander II published a manifesto liberating the serfs. Although the serfs were freed many did not receive any land and those who did were unable to meet their financial obligations unless they hired out their labor. This was due to the high payments they had to make for the lands that were given to them.

The administration of the lands was not in the hands of the peasants themselves, but was controlled by the mirs,<sup>7)</sup> which had considerable power, including the right to forcefully keep the peasants within the group. In 1864, provincial self-government was instituted under the Zemstvos (elective assembly).



Landlords, townsmen (both of whom needed property qualifications) and peasants who were members of the mirs were entitled to vote. A judiciary department to hold public trials was also instituted and censorship was partly relaxed.

From 1866, when an attempt was made to assassinate him, Alexander II was constantly torn between the need for reform and his fear of revolutionaries. Thus, even while reforms were being enacted, earlier reforms were being curtailed. Censorship again became very strict, and political and press offenders<sup>8)</sup> were tried by military rather than civilian courts. The revolutionary advocates were constantly growing. As a result of the Terrorist movement, Alexander II decided to restore the old reforms. With his assassination in 1881 all attempts at reform from within ceased.

Alexander III, who followed his father, was governed by the principles of autocracy, orthodoxy and Russification. Suppression of the revolutionaries, censorship of the press, and control of the schools



by the clergy were methods used to curb potential revolutionaries. The clergy of the Orthodox Church was an important force which helped keep the peasants conservative. Thus, strenuous measures were taken to have all members of minority faiths accept Greek orthodoxy. The methods used were often brutal. The strongest opposition to this process of Russification and conversion to Greek orthodoxy was maintained by the Poles, the Finns, and the Jews.

One of the greatest economic problems that confronted Russia in the nineteenth century was caused by the rapid growth of her population due to annexations of land and natural increase. The problem of increased population in Russia was only partially solved by extending the area of cultivated land to include the black earth belt in the southern Russian Steppes. Large funds were needed to support a large permanent army and as a result taxes were high.

In spite of all its efforts, the government was



not able to purchase necessary supplies at market prices. For this reason the state was forced to supply the factories and the landowners with cheap labor in the form of serfs... Almost half of Russia's economy during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century was based on serf labor. The standard of living of the Russian peasants was extremely low. Famine was endemic, and life was hard and devoid of all comfort.

Before the eighteenth century, there was no Russian culture outside of the Church. The secularization of Russian culture was noticeable first in education. In 1802 the Ministry of Public Education was formed. This marked the final transfer of the responsibility of education from the Church to the state. The end of the nineteenth century in Russia showed evidences of a Russian interest in science as well as a renaissance in music and art.

In all fields of intellectual endeavor, there was an attempt to break loose from the shackles of



the Middle Ages. Nihilism was the earliest form of Russian revolutionary anarchism. Nihilists were opponents of authoritarian doctrines. They advocated extreme individualism and mass uprising as opposed to orthodoxy, faith, mysticism, and custom. Socialism with its doctrines of state control for the benefit of the people also became important at this time.

Intellectual endeavors in the fields of science and art soon became associated with the growing movement to gain more and more political and economic reforms. There was a tremendous conflict between the Russian people who were constantly seeking to obtain reforms and equal status with western Europeans and between the Russian government, which was all-powerful and ruled by whim, now partially giving in to the demands of the people, now rejecting their pleas completely.<sup>11)</sup> The intellectual revolution which brought the artists and thinkers to the side of the Russian peasant made the Russians more aware of their poverty and their inferior position. The seven million "alien" Jews who lived in Russia provided the new object of interest, the scapegoat that helped preserve some semblance of stability in Russia.<sup>12)</sup>



The official governmental policy of Russia toward the Jews may best be understood in terms of the conditions of instability in Russia. The policy of the government toward the Jews is reflected in the never ending restrictions which were placed on Jewish life<sup>13)</sup>. Alexander I and Nicholas still further diminished the Pale of Settlement<sup>14)</sup> by excluding from its limits the towns of Kiev, Nicolaiev and Sebastopol.

Conditions improved somewhat under Alexander II, During his reign, the Jews could even cherish hopes of complete emancipation because of the tolerant spirit of the Tsar. Even in these comparatively good times, however, Jews were not permitted any of the civic rights that were accorded to the most lowly of their fellow citizens<sup>15)</sup>. The period of Alexander III was one of great reaction, dominated by hostility toward everything that was not orthodox Russian. It was during his reign that the "May Laws" (1882) were passed, imposing on the Jews reprehensible restrictions and hardships.



In additions to ~~these~~ limitations contained in the May Laws, other limitations were imposed on the Jews from time to time. Religion, also, became the pretext under which a number of exceptional taxes were imposed on the Jews. Taxes had to be paid for the privilege of lighting Sabbath candles, for the privilege of wearing a head covering while reciting prayers and for the privilege of killing animals according to Jewish rite.

It is no wonder that thus encouraged by the government, the Russian people accepted the Jew as the object on which he could vent all his frustrations and dissatisfactions with the status quo. The persecutions suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Russian peasant were perhaps even more difficult to bear than the ~~discriminatory~~ discriminatory practices of the government. The Jews, to some extent, knew what they could expect from the ~~government~~ government but they did not know what they could expect from the angry mob.

The regime of Alexander III was inaugurated with a series of anti-Jewish riots or progroms, which



raged through the year. It spread to all parts of Russia, affecting the Jews in the cities as well as those in the small villages. The authorities did not interfere with the pogroms, nor did they try to establish the guilt of the principal organizers <sup>15)</sup>. Antisemitism in Russia was ~~partially directed~~ <sup>by</sup> authority by the ruling classes. It was these classes who supplied the food, the material and the moral and psychological justification for the popular social antisemitism in Russia <sup>16)</sup>.

The results of the governmental policy of discrimination against the Jews and the hostility of the Russian people had a very great effect on the inner life of the Jews. <sup>17)</sup>

What made these conditions even more difficult to bear was the fact that the catastrophe of the eighties took the Jews of Russia unaware, and found them unprepared for spiritual self-defence. The impressions of the recent brief "era of reforms" <sup>18)</sup> were still fresh in their minds. The disillusion



However, in the healthy part of Russian Jewry this discrimination and persecution resulted in a renewed interest in national regeneration built upon modern foundations. The salvation of Judaism was primarily associated with the idea of emigration. 26)

Whatever the solution offered, however, ~~almost~~  
every Russian Jewish intellectual was aware that Judaism  
could not survive under the domination of Tsarist Russia.



Gordon's publicist essays will be studied with reference to him as a product of his society, and as an influencer of that society. Judah Loeb Gordon's choice of topics in his publicistic Hebrew essays was influenced by the various forces in his society<sup>21)</sup>. It will be seen that the problems with which Gordon concerned himself, were real issues in the Russian Jewish community of his day. Their seriousness can only be understood in terms of the prevailing conditions of the times.

There are many who would deny that Gordon was a reformer. He did not develop a philosophy of reform. Today even many traditional Jews would not be at all dismayed by many of the reforms that Gordon advocated. His main role, however, was not to formulate a philosophical basis for a further development of Jewish life but rather to make known the abuses in his society and to create a desire on the part of the people for reforms. In order to understand his works more clearly it is necessary to discuss the



function of leadership in a revolutionary period.

In the early stages of a revolution those who would be leaders must be skilled in control devices such as agitation and propaganda<sup>22)</sup>. These, it may be said, determine who will become leaders and what devices will be used to attain social control. Thus it is the agitator who calls attention to the abuses and the unfairness in the society. It is his task to make the members of the society sensitive to the abuses existing therein. When the people are already aware of their discontent and restlessness but are too timid to act the agitator is aggressive and he intensifies and directs the tension that the people already have.

Gordon filled the role of agitator. He attempted to present the abuses in his societies in such a manner that the people would react to them. To resolve the tensions of the people, Gordon and others sought to direct their interests to the Haskalah and a program of reform in Jewish life.



Gordon did not desire to criticize any group of leaders but to shed light upon specific wrongs.<sup>23)</sup> With this in mind we can better understand Gordon's role as a reformer.

Poetry and prose are each a medium of expression but the treatment of the material is different. Gordon treated the problems that he dealt with differently in his prose than he did in his poetry. He was more limited in the development of his material than he was in his poetry. In his writings Gordon was concerned with the problems of the day. In his prose writings he had to discuss the issues as they existed and he did not have the latitude that poetry permitted him. He attempted to expound the issues that confronted the Russian Jewish community. He had to develop his theme and there were bounds and limitations that restricted how this could be done. Gordon wrote almost all of his articles after 1870 and the great majority of these were written after 1880 during the period when he was one of the editors of the magazine Ha-Melis,<sup>24)</sup> and most of his Hebrew essays appeared in this publication.<sup>25)</sup>



## INTRODUCTION TO GORDON'S WORKS

This theses presents a study of the problems and solutions that Judah Loeb Gordon discussed in his publicistic Hebrew essays. Gordon lived in a period (1830 - 1892) that brought about many changes in Jewish life.

The conditions that existed in Russia, the relationship of the Jews and of the non Jew, and the relationship of the government and the Jews would naturally command the interest of a publicist. The internal Russian Jewish life with the specifically Jewish problems was another aspect of Russian Jewish life. Thus such topics as Jewish farm settlements, Jewish factionalism, charity, kashrut, Jewish community planning and anti-semitism are discussed under the heading Russian Jewry. Anti-semitism could be viewed as a device used to unify the Russians. This unity was particularly important at a time when national chauvinism was a very important tenet in Europe.

The hope for civil rights and an equal status for Jews had a profound effect on the Jewish community and the development of the Maskalah. Gordon himself was a maskil and he was concerned with the readjustment of Jewish life under the new conditions. He discussed



the need for changes in religious attitudes, in teaching and in education as well as in occupational pursuits. Schools and rabbis controlled and supervised by the government was another topic of interest to the Jewish community.

The Rabbinate could have been discussed under the Haskalah movement in Judaism. I believe, however, that Gordon placed sufficient emphasis on this topic to justify discussing it under its own heading. Gordon recognized the unique position of the rabbis in the Jewish community. He sometimes praised them, often condemned, and always looked to them for proper and beneficial leadership.

The last portion of the theses discusses the problem of migration. This became a problem because of the Russian policy which resulted in the disillusionment of those Jews who believed in the power of the Haskalah to enable the Jews to become a part of the Russian environment. The attempt to emancipate the Jews from ancient superstitious practices was bound up with the hope that civil liberties would be given to the Jews. Gordon's motivating principle was the blending of the spiritual and aesthetic, the development of a Russian Jewish life where both cultures would be important.<sup>26)</sup> Gordon's solutions and hopes fluctuated with the changes in the fortunes of the Jews. When there appeared to be hope for European Russian acceptance he was concerned with the "when Russian culture but they were suppressed he turned his attention to the pros and cons of immigration.



RUSSIAN JEWRY AS VIEWED BY GORDON

The Jewish farm settlements was one of the aspects of Russian Jewish life that pleased Gordon very much. Their community organization with bathhouses, convalescent homes and hospitals fulfilled his dreams. Working the land and establishing a going community was a progressive step. Building homes and increasing the the yield of the fields was an important accomplishment. There were also artisans who worked with wood and with stone.<sup>27)</sup> The maskilim were overjoyed at their adaptation of trades.

One of the handicaps that prevented the development of a united Russian Jewry was the existence of three factions. According to Gordon the Maskilim stood for progressiveness, the Mithnagdim for conservatism, and the Hasidim for retrogression.<sup>28)</sup>



This third group which stubbornly stood ~~with its~~ back to the wall and refused<sup>29)</sup> to budge from its position distressed him sorely. Liberalism could not gain a foothold within the Hasidic tradition although it could sometime penetrate the environment of rabbinism; "But... heretical thinking was utterly inconceivable where the intellect was rocked to sleep by mystical lullabies and fascinating stories of the miraculous exploits of the Zaddikm. The era of political and civil disenfranchisement was a time of luxuriant growth for Hasidism, not in its creative, but rather in its stationary not to say stagnant phase."<sup>30)</sup>

Chasidism produced both leaders and martyrs. Although it exuded spiritual gloom Gordon understood that some of the adherents of Hasidism exemplified by their conduct and moral strength<sup>31)</sup>. This helps to explain and what he meant when he said that it was surprising that individuals who were so upstanding could react to proposed changes toward the betterment of the Jew in such a negative manner.



Because there was very much interest in the development of the colonies in Eretz Israel appeals were made in some of the synagogues for contributions to the colonists. <sup>32) 42</sup> There were times when the collection of the fund was not without fault and sometimes there was some dishonesty. <sup>33) 43</sup> The people were urged to contribute to the rebuilding of their homeland and to keep their co-religionists from having to beg for their food, and other necessities. The promise of a bright future for Israel was predicted on the basis of the progress made in the colonies. <sup>34) 44</sup>

One of the conditions within the Jewish community to which Gordon directed his attention was the exorbitant price of kosher meat. He felt that kosher butchers should not increase their price too much over the cost for non-kosher meat. The fee of the mashgiah should be fair so that the price of the meat would not be too expensive. He desired that both the rich and the poor would get the same quality of meat. Gordon believed that kashrut was important to maintain the unity of the Jewish community. <sup>35) 45</sup> This unity must not be impaired as a



result of change and there must be a willingness to accept new ideas and values within the framework of Judaism.

The problem of organizing to meet ~~the~~ needs of the community and to discuss them publicly was also given an important place in Gordon's essays. Hitherto organizations concerned with the welfare of the Jews had conducted meetings but their proceedings had not been made public. Gordon now proposed that at future meetings the delegates from the Jewish congregations should compile a list of all the misfortunes that were visited upon the Jew. Although this record might not be important for his time he believed that it would serve future generations as a record of all the deeds committed against Israel and the names of those who gave their lives for a worthy cause would be preserved. The Jews have no moral <sup>36)</sup> right to disregard their memories.



Gordon was concerned with the education of the Jewish students. He attacked the quota system whereby only a certain small percentage of Jewish students were allowed to enter the universities. The Russian government made the Jews attend public schools and then they officials decided that they wanted them to leave. The author wrote that in order to "shut the mouths" of the government officials and of the enemies of the Jews it was necessary to build gymnasia for Jewish students, at least in those areas where there were Jewish groups who wished to rear their children in the Jewish tradition. This would bring a twofold benefit to the Jew as it would prevent criticism and also permit the teaching of Jewish subjects.

One of Gordon's disappointments stemmed from the inability of the rabbis to realize that the unity of the Jewish people could only be preserved by instituting drastic changes in religious life. He viewed the helplessness



of the rabbis ~~is~~ bringing reforms into Jewish life  
 as a sad comment on the life of the Russian Jews <sup>46)</sup>.  
 The lack of interest of many of the Jews in some kind  
 of religious education of the children ~~also addressed him~~.  
 He was puzzled as to what the children could do ~~if they were~~  
~~left free to choose or refuse a Jewish education~~. How  
 were they to be schooled until such time as they  
 could make their choice <sup>38) 46)</sup> ?

Gordon was unhappy that the Jewish child ~~began~~  
 no longer began his Hebrew education at the tender  
 age of five. Nor did he approve of confirmation  
Shavuoth in lieu of the customary Bar Mitzvah. He  
 despaired because religious training in the reform  
 movement was less than in orthodox life. The main  
 difference, he believed was that ~~under the old~~ <sup>39)</sup> ~~education-~~  
 al method the child started his education at an  
 earlier age. He was able to carry away more knowledge  
 that was firmly rooted. This served to attach the  
 child more strongly to Jewish life .

Gordon recalled the old days when there was no



contact between the Russians and the Jewish group, a time when the Jewish people would not have changed places with anyone. There was a good and a happy home life and a healthy development of family life. This came to an end when Jews were taken into the army and forced to desecrate the Sabbath and eat unkosher food. The government schools which the children attended brought them into contact with the outside culture, and because those schools were closed it would be best if plans were made to establish Jewish schools to teach ~~the~~ religion and traditions as well as general subjects. This would cause Torah to emanate from the "mountains of Judah in Russia" and Wisdom and Torah would be established <sup>40)</sup>.

Whereas Gordon desired changes and compromises in the life of the people he did not want them to depart from the tradition or to give up the Talmud, and it grieved him that there were those who wished to do this. The evil that was attributed to the Talmud Gordon laid at the feet of its orthodox literalistic interpreters, who would ~~distort its meaning~~ <sup>41)</sup> even while praying. This article, as a number of his later ones, seem to reflect a man who is full of despair and unhappiness.



Anti-semitism was an important issue of the day that not only did physical harm to the Jew but also filled him with shame and disgrace. Too often when the Jews were accused of some evil they all too readily accepted the charge. More often than not, however, the cause existed outside the Jewish people. Anti-semitism reared its head not only in Russia but also in other countries.<sup>42)</sup> Jewish leaders constantly admonished their people to keep clear of any blame. In spite of their realization that the Jew often served as a scape-goat they were all too ready to ~~credit false~~<sup>43)</sup> charged.

Gordon was unhappy that the Jew received a double punishment both from man and from God. Others receive their punishment only from Him. Times were supposed to have changed and no longer was the Jew supposed to serve as an object of suppression,<sup>44)</sup> and yet, not alone in Russia, were the Jews oppressed but they were subjected to prejudice in France and Germany<sup>45)</sup> also.



When one of the well known enlightened figures in Jewish life, referred to by Gordon as , was being honored by the Russian government he requested that his people be allowed to settle in Finland. The government's answer amazed him. He was told that robbing and stealing had not occurred in Finland until the Jews came into the land. This individual then asked the Jews how he could ask the authorities to open the doors to the Jews if they behaved in this abominable manner. Gordon wrote that all suffer because of the misdeeds of a few because all Israel is responsible one for the other. He looked ahead to the time that all Jews would identify themselves with the Jewish group. 45) 46)

When a committee was set up in 1883 to investigate the various practices by the Jewish people Gordon's spirit rose. Makhov the head of the commission was known to the Jews as a fairminded individual who had brought some benefits for the Jews. Gordon was confident that as a result of this investigation Jews would be able to live a quiet and a peaceful life.



As the oppression against the Jews increased the greater was their willingness to affirm their group identity and <sup>to</sup> withdraw into their own world of religious practices. Thus they sought to find in the traditional ways of their fathers the stability and permanency they could not find in their hostile environment. Gordon favored a policy of moderation. He desired neither the extreme of the unreasoned relapse into mere traditionalism nor could he view with eguanimity the possibility of mass assimilation. He did prefer, however, that the children learn and follow the orthodox traditions. But this was not to be uncritical and inflexible <sup>39)</sup>. He wanted them to learn religious subjects but also subjects that would be useful to them in their daily lives. By establishing an educated group they would be able intelligently to stand up to their enemies. It would, to be sure, be necessary to guard against the children leaving the community of Israel. He hoped such planning would involve the entire community and would determine how many synagogues, health and old age institutions, schools and rabbis were needed. Then funds would be collected, and the program would be established and <sup>40)</sup> and instituted. <sup>49)</sup>ld be established and instituted.



HASKALAH: A PROGRAM FOR RUSSIAN JEWRY

The Haskalah is viewed by many historians and literary critics primarily in terms of a literary movement. The Haskalah should be understood as a social movement whose literature is merely its most observable manifestation. It emerged out of the feelings of restlessness and discontent which prevailed in the Russian Jewish community and expressed itself, through its literature, in terms of the reforms which had to be made in Jewish ideas and practices in order to reestablish a stable Jewish community in Russia.<sup>49)</sup> The Maskilim advocated a change in value structure, which they believed, would serve to modernize and alleviate all but religious distinctions between themselves and the larger Russian community of which they were a part. The movement, however, was abortive and never achieved the change in values that it sought to bring about.



Intellectually and philosophically, the ideas of the Haskalah were in keeping with the spirit of the times. The Jews in Russia could not help but be affected by this new spirit. It could not be said, however, that the greater number of Jews took cognizance of this new spirit of intellectual and social enlightenment. Most Russian Jews clung tenaciously to Rabbinism, and the Haskalah movement never gained a real foothold among them. It was only the intellectual who was caught up in the surging tide of liberalism and who attempted to formulate and propagate an ideology which he hoped would put the Russian Jew on an equal footing with his Russian neighbor.

The new ideology which emerged from the Haskalah movement was primarily concerned with the most practical necessities of Jewish social and economic change. <sup>30)</sup> Such as the broadening of Jewish horizons, their occupational distribution.



Perhaps the most basic element in the ideology of the Haskalah is its rationalism or in more modern terms, its positivism, the faith in the supremacy of reason. The Maskilim assumed that if the Jews in Eastern Europe changed their ghetto ways, they would automatically come to share in the blessings of progress with their non-Jewish neighbors.

Gordon was disturbed when the writers of his period were criticized by the traditionalists.<sup>51)</sup> He felt that the barbs hurled at the writers were unjust. Those who opposed the attempts at reform were viewed,<sup>52)</sup> by him, as inners. This is not difficult to understand because the Maskilim believed that they would bring salvation to the Jews through this movement. One of those who wrote against the Haskalah movement was a Rabbi Lipschitz. This rabbi passed judgment on it<sup>53)</sup> and found it wanting. He wrote that the Berlin Haskalah was responsible for all the troubles of the Jews. The writers were attacked for concerning themselves with civil rights because this led to some Jews changing their names, acquiring professions, and



this he claimed resulted in the forsaking of God the commandments, and the Torah. ~~It is~~ he attributed to the Haskalah the weakening of rabbinic authority and the disruption of Jewish life. But Gordon held that if all Jewish scholars were as religious and educated as the Maskilim, then all would indeed be <sup>54)</sup> living in a manner worthy of God fearing people .

The importance that Gordon attached to the Haskalah is illustrated by his statement that the <sup>55)</sup> Maskilim helped to stop the pogroms . He recognized that individual writers or individual articles or individual schools could be criticized. He objected, however, to generalizing and to attacking the Haskalah, its writers or its goals per se. The demands that Gordon made were for moderate reforms and he was constantly seeking a compromise between the old traditions and the new needs.

In Russia there was a two way movement toward enlightenment. The Russian Government in its Russification policy wanted the Jews to modernize their schools, their curriculum, and their customs,



The maskilim also wanted this, so that the Jews could take a place in the community. These facts explain the great interest of Gordon and other Haskalah writers in the educational program<sup>66)</sup>. He discussed this subject from time to time over a ~~period of many~~<sup>67)</sup> years. One of the problems of education (which was intimately bound up with the diffusion of Haskalah) concerned teaching as a profession<sup>67)</sup>. This profession was not held in high regard and the lives of teachers were often very difficult. Gordon attempted to elucidate the functions of the instructor and to gain for them improved status and working conditions. It distressed him that they were sustained through  and that his personal and family needs were not considered. Though they dedicated themselves to their work they were badly abused. When they became old they had to depend on support from their children, or perhaps earn a pittance by writing, for they were too proud to beg for charity. Gordon said that the teachers in Israel were not treated respectfully although it was because of them that the Torah was not forgotten.



The solution advocated was to train governmental rabbis, and wise teachers, and to institute governmental supervision and control of teachers and of educational plans. The community would be required to give contributions for teacher's salaries and thus good and faithful teachers would be rewarded. In this manner respect would be accorded them.

The government officials had decided that changes in the school system of the Russian Jews would have to be made. They demanded that the Jews improve their schools within a certain specified time but unfortunately these changes had not been instituted. Consequently governmental teacher's schools and seminaries were established to train rabbis who could serve the needs of the people. At this period many were indifferent to Jewish life while many others retained their strong emotional and intellectual ties to Judaism and its traditional values. There was much opposition to government rabbis on the part of the latter group. In attempting to appease them Gordon wrote that in Germany many orthodox rabbis had recieved training in sexular subjects at the universities. Gordon did not want the governmental



rabbinic schools to be closed. He desired that they spread enlightenment among the rabbis. Gordon's appeal<sup>56)</sup> was directed to the youth and he did not attempt to weaken the faith of the older generation in the old type of rabbi.

The Haskalah to Gordon did not mean the elimination of traditional observance. He recognized that although at one time, the lives of the Jews were centered around the fulfillment of to the extent that their entire lives were regulated and controlled by adherence to Jewish law and ritual, this no longer held true. The interest of the younger generation turned to more academic and cultural aspects of Jewish life. They substituted concern with the history and literature of their people for the traditional observances of their fathers. Gordon was pleased with the awakening interest in Jewish writing and culture but felt that they were meaningful only as they were coupled with an active emotional participation in the practices and traditions of Jews through the ages<sup>57)</sup>. There were many Jews who followed religious observances just as their parents had done. There were others who although they were familiar with Jewish ritual and interested in Jewish



life they did not continue the tradition of observance. Gordon believed that both an active interest in the Jewish community and observance should supplement each other.

Gordon wrote that there was a feeling of antagonism between the older and younger generation. The fathers set up Torah in opposition to secular learning and this resulted in the children placing worldly wisdom in opposition to the Torah. Even those persons who left Jewish life because ~~of~~ <sup>ed</sup> its conflict/with modern life, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> returned to the fold because of the Blows directed at them and at their loved ones, refused to change one iota of Torah or of tradition. Few seemed to realize that there had to be a compromise between both extremes .

~~Berthelievate~~ that it would be necessary to cure the breach between the generations through ~~the aims~~ of the Haskalah and ~~through the improvement of the~~ <sup>and</sup> educational methods . The attitude that no changes of even minute details could be made had to be done away with if the Jewish people were to become strong and to be ~~revitalized~~ <sup>68) (2)</sup> . Gordon suggested time and again that until such time/when the Jews would accept changes they would not be able to adjust to new living



conditions. By their <sup>conservatism</sup> ~~stubborn~~/they were subjecting themselves to ridicule and to a low status <sup>53)</sup>.

Gordon When discussing the relation of the Russians to the Jews, Gordon lamented their behavior and their attitude. In spite of this he sought the cause of such things as hatred of the Jews in the shortcomings of his people. If the Jews would come out of their shell and acquire wisdom (chochmah) by which he meant the new or modern learning they would be able to take their place in the community and win the acceptance of others <sup>54)</sup>. We must realize that within <sup>detail of</sup> the Pale of Settlement the minutest Jewish observance was regarded in the Pale of Settlement with the same awe and reverence as the holiest objects, any proposed change was a radical departure.

Gordon disagreed with those who opposed change and who regarded the status quo as the most desirable type of life. He quarreled with Rabbi Elazar Atlas who wrote that there was no need for any changes in the schools and in the yeshivoh. Atlas ~~did not seem~~ aware of the need for better facilities and better



learning conditions.<sup>65)</sup> Our author did not want Jewish students to receive an inferior education but he wanted them to have a different kind of education which he believed would result if the necessary changes would be made to improve the yehiboth.<sup>66)</sup> Gordon sought to bring light to his people and he viewed those who were opposed to innovation as unenlightened and unprogressive.

Gordon believed that one of the most important functions of the Haskalah was to mold well rounded individuals who possessed both Jewish and secular learning. He believed therefore that social intercourse between Jews and non-Jews should be encouraged. It was Gordon's belief that through such intercourse the Jews would develop his reason and intellect and he would gain knowledge and wisdom.<sup>67)</sup>

Gordon was an advocate of the Haskalah movement on both-empirical and on practical grounds. We find, however that he also advanced abstract justifications for this movement. He believed that in order for man to be more intelligent and more ethical than the animals it was necessary to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>68)</sup> In this way



His eyes would be opened and new vistas of thought would be opened for him.

One method that was advocated to encourage enlightenment was to pay for the articles of those who wrote in their native language <sup>75) 69)</sup>. Jews in Russia with few exceptions did not produce any literary work in the tongue of their country. This was not the situation in Germany and in other countries in Europe. The hope of future generations lay in the acquiring of secular knowledge. Gordon wrote that the rabbis could not write the literature and the knowledge of Israel <sup>76) 70)</sup>. Only a few in the schools and universities would be able to build and to create knowledge in the Jewish community. These few would go into the professions when they graduated. If Israel was to develop and the breach in Jewish life was not to widen then Israel would have to create an intelligensia.

One of the aims of the Haskalah was to bring Judaism closer to the culture of the country and at the same time to maintain a Jewish life. This process



became necessary in a period in which Jews were seeking or were granted equal rights and citizenship.

The struggle between those who refused to accept reforms and those who had completely assimilated brought forth the maskilim. They sought to bring about a compromise whereby the Jews would be loyal to that country but yet would maintain their Jewish life,. This helps us to understand the emphasis on youth, on schools, and on the educational methods and development of the children that prevailed among the Maskilim. There was concern not only for the children's intellectual development but also for their physical growth .

Gordon likened Israel to a two-headed and a two-hearted beast . On the one hand its interest lay in the ancient home and the ancient culture of its people and on the other hand it had a bond to the country wherein it dwelled. The Jew should bring credit to both Judaism and the country wherein he resided for they are both a part of his heritage.



In order to accomplish this goal it would no longer be possible to educate the Jewish children solely in the Torah <sup>73)</sup>. The children should also have a gentile teacher who would instruct them in secular wisdom, writings and language. Scientific schools were established. These schools provided opportunities for secular knowledge of medicine, philosophy, law, oriental studies or Hebraic studies. <sup>74)</sup>

In the earlier years of his publicist writings Gordon was primarily concerned with the Haskalah movement in Russia and Galizia. He of course also referred to the German Haskalah ~~also~~. In later years when the Jews suffered through pogroms and became added disabilities he ~~was~~ concerned with Jewish life outside of Russia. <sup>75)</sup> One of his fears about the settling of Israel was that the outworn and outdated educational methods and anti-progressive forces would also take root in Eretz Israel. It



was for this reason that he favored Jewish settlements in America or in other enlightened lands. <sup>76)</sup>

Gordon was pleased when he saw secular and religious interests merging. Thus he was pleased by the development of the Hebrew Union College where both Jewish subjects and secular subjects were taught <sup>77)</sup>.

He attributed many of the difficulties in Eretz Israel to the rejection of the Haskalah. The Haskalah which was seen by its advocate as the force that was to be the salvation of Russia never achieved this goal due to the internal conditions of the country. Had the life of the Jews been different or had they been accepted by the Russians Gordons's dreams might have been realized.



Both the failure of the Haskalah to bring to fruition its dreams and the antisemitic acts that occurred throughout many countries seeming to have weighed heavily upon Gordon. Jews were forced to abandon their agricultural settlements and many migrated to America after 1881. The Jews had been encouraged both by the Russian government and the maskilim to settle on the land and to learn trades, but this was not successful as the government suppressed them. Many Jews had to emigrate and settle in new countries. The oppression of the Jews in Germany, Austria and Hungary, also caused him much unhappiness<sup>78)</sup>. Gordon did find one note of encouragement, that was the assuming of leadership in the aliyah movement by the younger generation<sup>79)</sup>. The changing role or position of Gordon must be viewed in relationship to his background. It is obvious that if conditions in Russia had been different, the topics that Gordon would have chosen to develop, would have been different. His reasons for advocating first one solution and then the other can be understood in terms of the changing times. Thus we can understand Gordon desiring a break down of the barriers between the Russians and the Jews at one period and later his nostalgia for what he believed to be the earlier<sup>53)</sup> stable and happy Russian Jewish society which he never knew.<sup>80)</sup>



GORDON THE MASKIL AND THE RUSSIAN RABBINATE

When one has read some of Gordon's poems in which he pictured the rabbis almost as villains his discussion of them in his articles seems very mild and somewhat unusual. In his poems he attacks them unmercifully and he depicts their evil acts. He brings to light their callousness and their lack of concern for their people. Their unfair treatment of their followmen and their dogmatic and literal interpretation is vividly sketched.

He accuses rabbinism of having been responsible for the ills that have ~~fallen~~ <sup>befallen</sup> the Jews. He blamed the rabbis unrealistic approach to life for the downfall of the Hebrew nation <sup>81)</sup>. Gordon apparently meant to direct his criticism of the rabbinate toward the rabbis who lived in his time <sup>81)</sup>. A group of Gordon's poems were composed with the hope of bringing about reforms in rabbinic practices. So, for example, in the poem Ko'ach Shel Yod, <sup>83)</sup> Gordon directs his attention to the rabbis with a vengeance.



84)  
The poem informs us of the dilemma of a housewife who went to a rabbi to ask a question on kashrut. His insistence on the fulfillment of the minutest ritual detail led to the eventual break up of a home as the husband divorced his wife.

There are other poems that are directed against  
the rabbinate. In the poem *Myne p' d'v' ye*  
Gordon brought to light some of the connivings of ~~some~~  
~~rabbis/~~<sup>who</sup> ~~issued~~ false passports ~~which sometimes resulted in~~  
~~harsh~~ punishments for ~~innocent~~ people. Other poems  
also illustrate Gordon's quarrel and criticism  
against the rabbinate. <sup>86)</sup> There are many venomous  
passages withingthe poems cited. Gordon ~~did~~ not  
spare the feelings of the rabbis nor ~~did~~ he seek to  
obtain a perspective on the rabbinate. He ~~sought to~~  
indict the rabbis for the perpetuation of an unreal-  
istic attitude and for continuing outdated practices  
without any regard to reality and to human emotions  
and needs.



With this background one would expect Gordon to continue his scathing criticism of the rabbinate and his violent denunciations of their works in his essays. This however is not what we find. It is necessary to indicate that the changing Jewish life had illustrated the need for unity and had made it clear that the Jews would be restricted within their own group. Therefore they would have to continue their inner life and their development among themselves. It is also necessary once again to point out, that in the publicist articles (especially those articles written during the time that he was editor of Ha Meliz) he had to be more restrained and more true to life than in his poems. In his essays he <sup>and more</sup> ~~was more restrained/ore~~ constructive than he was in his poetical compositions.

Gordon's attitude toward the rabbinate wavered. There were times when he praised it and when he looked forward to the assumption of the leadership of the Jewish people by the rabbi. There were the



occasions when he criticized them for lack of progressive leadership. But in almost all his references to the rabbinate he indicated that it would be desirable to have the rabbis lead the people in a positive Jewish life, in a modern spirit. When he talked of the need for the Jewish people to do something for the benefit of the group he requested that the rabbis lead them on the proper path <sup>87)</sup>. He wanted the rabbis to urge the people to take action or to behave in such a manner as to bring credit to the Jews and to help them in their relationships with Russians.

The attitude of the rabbis toward change was the target of our author. It was his belief that great rabbis would never arise from the system as it existed then. Not only did the rabbis refuse to help the government with the educational schools that the officials set up but they also refused to institute any changes in Jewish life. They neglected the education of the young and the teaching of religious



truths.<sup>88)</sup> of religion . Gordon desired that those rabbis who disagreed with the majority would take a stand and would make known their attitudes<sup>89)</sup> .

One of the actions of the rabbis that Gordon resented was their sitting back reviewing and condemning th Haskalah and all of its aims and accomplishments. Passing judgement on this movement and attributing the ills of the Jews to it wounded him<sup>90)</sup> . Gordon believed that the babbis lacked perspective with ~~reference~~ to the Haskalah. Gordon attacked one of the rabbis for his criticism of the life of the maskilim and of their educational system. He wrote that the rabbi spoke without knowledge. He also said that it was apparent that no man (including this rabbi)<sup>92)</sup> was free from sin .

In spite of all the criticism and derogatory remarks that Gordon directed at the rabbis he still held them in high regard. He was particularly upset when a rabbi and his wife were involved in a scandal<sup>93)</sup> .



It was to the rabbis that he looked for Jewish leadership. Any action that might bring disgrace upon the Jews troubled him sorely. When a rabbi was involved in an unfortunate incident it was even more disconcerting to him than it was if it were a Jewish layman.

There were occasions when Gordon seemed to contradict himself and when he praised the rabbis. eruption of internal dissension 94)  
 After the outbreak in Rishon Letzion Gordon wrote that after such an incident the people must learn not to follow a layman. He implied that rabbis would have ed such incidents help/ prevent the development of /es in the Holy Land, and that they would help the people make their de- Jews cisions with deliberation so that they might achieve 95) their goals . Gordon also condemned the misrepresentation of domestic esragim as Palestinian products. He believed that the rabbis should be the leaders of such undertakings 96) so that there would not be such falsification . In this way they would protect the poor of their people and their work would be recognized and would be praised by all.



Not only did Gordon realize the importance of the rabbis and their prestige, but he was pleased when they identified themselves with a progressive movement. He was grateful that some of them attempted to help the people make a realistic and a satisfactory adjustment to their environment and their problems. It would be beneficial for the people if the rabbis would work towards and support necessary changes, ~~rather than~~ attempt to maintain the status quo. <sup>97)</sup> Those rabbis who identified themselves with the undertakings of the colonizers in Eretz Israel instead of living in a world of imagination delighted Gordon <sup>98)</sup>. He looked to this kind of rabbi to truly uphold the principles of God by strengthening the Jewish religion and by giving the people ~~direction~~ <sup>objectives</sup> and ~~direction~~. They would help the Jews find favor in the eyes of their rulers and in this way refute the charges levelled at the Jew, and ~~their leadership~~ would close the mouths of the enemies and the accusers of the Jews.



That Gordon realized the importance of the rabbinat in motivating the Jews is clear. from his i  
injunction to his people to make contribuons to  
their brethren in <sup>Eretz</sup> Israel because the rabbi who speak  
no evil have urged charity as a measure to attain a  
good year <sup>99)</sup> . This however seems to be more a de-  
vice ~~used to guide~~ <sup>used to guide</sup> the people to contribute to  
Eretz Israel than his true attitude toward the rabbis.  
It is necessary to realize that Gordon had no quarrel  
with rabbis per se, and recognized the need for them,  
but that he wanted them to be progressive.

During this period of restlessness much critic-  
ism was directed at the Jews. When a Jew who was  
honored by the government requested that Finland  
open its doors to the Jews evil was attributed to  
them. <sup>100)</sup> . Gordon wrote that it was the duty of the  
rabbis to talk to their people and to press them to  
remove the bad from among them. If they ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup> help  
put ~~and~~ <sup>end</sup> to the wrong doings of the Jews they ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup>  
help bring better days for them.



In discussing the head of the orthodox Jewish community in America we are told that such a man should be patient and worldly<sup>101)</sup>. Those rabbis who were engaged in correcting the Torah aroused his ire. He did not wish them to reduce the number of the mitzvoth. When some American rabbis gave up the hope of the Restoration of Zion he despaired for the future of those Jews who had settled there<sup>102)</sup>.



THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH MIGRATION

During Gordon's period, the Russian Jews were rejected and hated by their neighbors. The lot of the Jew was unbearable as attested to by the large scale emigration after the 1880's. Thus one of the major problems facing the Russian Jews was that of immigration. The struggle for emancipation and for civil rights was not successful and the dreams of the enlightened Jews were not realized.

The Jews were forced to dwell within the Pale of Settlement, located near the western boundary of Russia. But even this physical restriction was not deemed sufficient hardship for them by the Russian officials. From time to time laws were promulgated or interpreted in a way that made it possible to expel those Jews who had settled legally in various towns. <sup>103)</sup> Oftentimes it was possible to bribe some official to permit illegal settlers to remain, but



they were always subject to blackmail and worse yet to expulsion without any notice <sup>104)</sup>. Besides being deprived of civil rights, of equal opportunity to earn a livelihood, and of decent living conditions and living quarters they were often deprived of life and limb. <sup>Russie</sup> After constantly reducing the areas that the Jews might inhabit, ~~They were to serve~~ <sup>for the</sup> as the scapegoats of discontented and restless Russians who released their pent up energy and emotions at the ~~Jewish group living in Russia~~. This discontent took the organized form of pogroms which broke out <sup>105)</sup> against the Jews.

There were other powerful factors that account for the great interest of the Jew in emigrating from Russia. The attempt to Russify minority groups, including the Jews, led to much persecution and ill treatment of them. The desire to foster upon them the Greek Orthodox religion as a part of this process was particularly heinous to many Jews. The Russian government not only helped create many



hardships and disabilities for them but some officials openly encouraged them to migrate. The question then for many in the Russian Jewish Community was to where should the Jews immigrate?

Eretz Israel and America were the two main countries to which the Jews turned their attention. It is obvious that Eretz Israel would claim the attention of the Jews as a possible solution. It had always occupied a central position for Jewry. It was regarded as a lost homeland that would once again belong to the Jews. In literature, and in prayer, as well as in the hearts of the people, the ancient homeland occupied a major role. There were factors however that served to prevent Eretz Israel from becoming a refuge for large numbers of immigrants. America became a haven for many Russian immigrants. Gordon writing in a period in which immigration was such a burning issue had to concern himself with the question of new settlements in other lands <sup>105)</sup>.



The life of the people in Israel and in America were naturally subjects that he followed closely. He despaired when trouble befell his people and he rejoiced when benefits were allotted to them.

Gordon bemoaned the lack of freedom that was granted to the Jews. He said that he was disillusioned, and his despair was evident. The pogroms of 1881 - 1882 had occurred and our essayist reminded his public that the Jews had been plundered and ravaged. The sword hung over the necks of the Jews suspended only by a thin hair. A new exodus in the near future was the one path that was open to the Jews. Emigration was their only solution <sup>107)</sup> .

Judah Loeb Gordon wrote that hatred against the Jews existed even in enlightened countries. He believed that this situation would cease only when the Jews would have their own piece of land and be free from the rule of other nations. He said that the hatred against the Jew would not cease until



Israel would have its own piece of earth under God's  
 108) heaven .

After Gordon stated his contention that the only solution was emigration the question that still remained was to where should they direct their attention? The question evolved, shall they go to Eretz Israel or to America (or to some other enlightened country)? Gordon <sup>believed that</sup> viewed the immigration movement to Israel <sup>would be</sup> as more difficult than <sup>settling in</sup> journeying to America. In the latter the settlers would receive more physical comforts and benefits. This development would not arise out of idealism and emotional attachment but rather out of the actual  
 109) physical needs of the Jews .

Thus the immigration of the period arose out of the unfortunate circumstances that existed. The fate of the German Jew was also of interest to Gordon. One might have expected him to urge the Jews to



settle in Germany. But even in Germany the Jews had not always received favorable treatment and from 1848<sup>110)</sup> to 1880 many German Jews had emigrated to America. Israel, America, Germany and Spain were among the countries that Gordon discussed. He wrote that even in Germany and other enlightened countries the Jews<sup>111)</sup> were subjected to oppression. He reacted negatively to the Spanish proposal to settle Jews in Spain<sup>112)</sup>. The king of Spain said that he would like to make amends for the wrong that had been perpetrated on them in the fifteenth century and for their having been expelled in the year 1492. Gordon wrote that twice before overtures had been made but that strings had been attached. There would be innumerable difficulties in an attempt to settle in Spain. The language of the people would be strange to the Jew. They would not understand the Spaniards just as the Spaniards would not understand them. In



many of the countries in Europe the Jews had not been woven into the life of the country. There were no Jewish settlers in Spain who could help newcomers over the hurdles until they could provide for themselves. Gordon warned that not only was Spain far away but it had a tradition of oppressing Jews. There was no guarantee that the king or his advisors would not have a change of heart and would not once again persecute the Jews.

Gordon held a favorable attitude toward the United States as a haven for Russian Jews.<sup>113)</sup>

While it was true that some of the same obstacles that existed in Spain were to be found also in the United States there was a tradition of religious freedom in the latter country. There were organized Jewish communities and Jewish charities to help the immigrants. Jewish schools and institutions had been established. Many immigrants spoke Yiddish and



would be able to help the new settlers learn the English language and make satisfactory adjustments to their new home. The United States had a tradition of humane behavior toward minority groups and had attempted to alleviate the sufferings and oppression of the Russian Jews<sup>114)</sup>. Thus it was to this country that Gordon directed his hopes for the spiritual reawakening and development of the Jews not as the permanent answer to the Jewish question but for a temporary solution until such time that the Jews could settle Eretz Israel<sup>115)</sup>. At that time Eretz would be not only a physical refuge but a spiritual <sup>center of</sup> redemption. Gordon was aware that many of the Jews who settled in America would grow roots but he looked to the rabbis to direct the thoughts and the desires of their people towards their homeland. He hoped that when they had dwelled in the States for awhile that they would be prepared to settle Eretz Israel and make their permanent homes there.



Gordon wanted a permanent dwelling in Eretz Israel only under favorable conditions. He advocated cultural attainments and he wanted men of culture to settle the land <sup>116)</sup>. There were many stumbling blocks in the path of this goal. Nearly everyone was aware of the lack of friends that the Jews had in Eretz Israel and of the antagonisms of the other inhabitants. There was also the need for cultivation of the land by trained farmers. But there was one additional stumbling block that was hidden and that had not been taken into consideration. This was the personality of the Jew. He had been stepped on, persecuted, and despised by men. Self rule and self government were not a part of his immediate background and therefore he would not know how to rule or govern the country. This fact Gordon believed to be the most important reason that should have prevented the Jews from settling on their own land at that time.



Gordon wanted neither rabbinic dogmatism and legal rigidity nor did he want only secular pursuits to be typical of Eretz Israel. He feared that the rabbis with their adherence to clericalism, and narrowmindedness, would gain control of the country 117). He desired that the Russian Jews first learn to live as freemen so that they would be prepared for spiritual and physical redemption that would help their country prosper and become firmly rooted.

#### GORDON'S CONCEPTION OF JEWISH LIFE IN ISRAEL

Whereas Gordon urged preparation for spiritual sacrifice for those who wanted to settle in Eretz Israel he was concerned and interested in those settlers and those settlements that had already been established in Israel. He desired that the Israeli immigrant should find peace and safety. While Gordon would not direct the thoughts of his people towards immigrating to Eretz Israel he would not condemn those who had already settled there. He would be interested in them and in their activities.



He wanted the colonies that the Jews had developed to prosper and to reflect credit upon the Jews. When unfavorable events erupted he became perturbed and expressed his anxiety.

With Jewish settlers once again in their homeland it was necessary to collect money for them. Sometimes a question arose regarding the expenditures and the honesty of those involved with funds. This could lead to bitter quarrels. The overseers of one of the charity funds were suspected of irregularities in its disbursements. They in turn, to discredit the critics, claimed that many writers criticized Eretz Israel, her scholars, and her leaders because of their desire to call attention to themselves in order to be regarded as important and honored men. Gordon refuted the argument of the fund overseas and said that the authors were desirous of indicating the abuses that existed. These evils had to be corrected



and the management of charities and public funds had  
118)  
to be above reproach .

After the uprisings against the Jews in Israel Gordon reminded the Russian Jews that it was imperative that they continue to support the moshavoth in Eretz Israel. He recalled the tie that existed between the Jews of Eretz Israel and those of Russia and he looked forward to the time when the colonies would be self sufficient and important. To achieve this Gordon wanted the Jews to contribute according  
119)  
to their means .

Another problem facing Russian Jewry with relation to Israel was the fear that the various factions that existed in Russia (maskilim, mithnagdim and chasidim) would be transplanted or else would develop in the homeland . It was stated that even when the Jews lived in fear in many countries they were always able to find a resting place. The threat that



faced the Jews was the break up of the unity of the people. It was bad enough that there were quarrels in other lands between the Jews but that this should occur in Israel was shameful. This was the land that had been held up as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment. Thus the outbreak of quarrels in Rishons Le Tzion troubled the Jews <sup>120A1</sup>. The only punishment was to withhold for a time the wages of those who were found to be the troublemakers and their overseer. When the overseer was fired due to the outbreak of violence Gordon realized that it was ~~possible that his dismissal may have been~~ for expediency rather than because his guilt was established. He refused to indict the supervisor or to acquit the leader of the rebellious faction. When he learned that sixteen of the settlers had attempted to prevent the quarrel from erupting he was very pleased. The writer wrote that the Jews should not make any mistakes on holy soil. Gordon was very concerned with the behavior of the Jew and he desired that



they should act properly and righteously in order that the goyim should not and would not criticize them. (This attitude might well be expected in a society where a minority group attempted to become accepted by the majority and meets with oppression and suppression. Rather than seek the causes in the ills of the society they turned their aggression inward, and even while they disproved false allegations made against them they subconsciously identified themselves with the very criticisms that they were openly rejecting.

The misfortunes that developed and that affected the Jews in the Jewish piece of land brought Gordon great sorrow. The uprising in Jerusalem spilled innocent blood, <sup>caused much unhappiness</sup> Gordon <sup>120)</sup> lamented them. He wrote that these uprisings occurred because the Jews were seeking justice, <sup>and</sup> truth, ~~and~~ ~~food~~ as well as knowledge for their youth. One might be amazed to learn that Gordon ascribed the difficulties of the Jews to the dark paths that the Jews pursued and to the slaughter



that was within their hearts. They were not able to recognize good from bad and therefore crying would continue in Eretz Israel until God would be ready to accept not only their gifts of money but also their ideas, and until the dwellers of the land would learn who sought to corrupt them and their children and who sought to lead them in straight paths<sup>121)</sup> .

Gordon as a leader in the Jewish community had to discuss the problem of Zionism. Since many were forced to choose Israel as a refuge and since the going up to Israel was so important Gordon would do what he could to prosper these settlements. Thus it was that he wrote a propaganda article highlighting the good points about the "delightful land the most important and popular land, the gateway to heaven"<sup>122)</sup> . Even in dispersion the thoughts of the Jews were for the Restoration of Zion with Jerusalem as her capital. It was believed that this era would be ushered in by



the Messiah. Many considered using the land as a refuge for those who saw no prospect or no future for their work in their own country. Gordon informed his readers that there were ten moshavoth thanks to those who were concerned with this endeavor. "The youths have provided an opportunity for many besides themselves and have saved themselves from assimilation." He was thankful that there were well known rabbis who were concerned with the undertaking.

#### GORDON'S CONCEPTION OF AMERICAN JEWISH LIFE

Gordon was pleased that the Russian Jews had and were continuing to emigrate from Russia to America. He praised them for having the courage to go there and find a place of refuge. He did not understand the problems in forming an American Jewish life and he was intolerant of the changes that had been instituted in Judaism. He would praise and condemn the same practices when they were cloaked



in different garb. Gordon believed that many Jews were attempting to return the crown of Judaism to its former status.. He also believed that the reformers were destroying Judaism by their desire to correct and change practices, customs, and ideas. He felt that they (the reformers) were attempting to reverse the order and make religion fit their lives rather than having life conform to religion<sup>123)</sup>.

Gordon did state that the reformers aimed at returning those who had left the ways of God. The Jew who arrived in America alone was 'lost' he wrote. A Jew needs more than faith. Ritual objects and a mi<sup>124)</sup> minyan are needed to fulfill the commandments. The adjustment and fitting of religion into everyday life were necessary so that many Jews would not become estranged from Judaism. If this were not done then they and their children would be lost to Jewish life. While orthodoxy <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ threatened by the reformers yet it <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ not separate them from the community for



this would mean adding another enemy<sup>125)</sup>. The orthodox ~~must~~ accept them and help them so that they ~~will~~<sup>would</sup> continue to live as Jews.

Gordon hoped that the American Jews would develop and interest in religion and worldly knowledge. He was opposed to those whose only interest was in faith and to those whose only interest was in reason<sup>126)</sup>. He wrote that he did not want his people to be too righteous (interested only in religious matters) nor too intelligent (interested only in secular matters). The older generation was too limited and narrow in its scope and the younger generation has swung too far in the other direction and had concentrated on increasing its knowledge and explaining everything rationally. The predominant theme in America was rationalism and our author laments that this tendency had progressed so far that the rabbis had been correcting the Torah and transgressing the mitzvot.



In one of his articles<sup>127)</sup> Gordon agrees with two men who complained that there was a religious gap in the life of American Jews. "One wondered who the future generations would follow, from whom would they seek guidance, from the American rabbis who had given up the hope for the Restoration of Zion?" Gordon stated that the one sidedness of these Jews, which he was combatting, was a reaction against the over zealousness of the parents. Gordon envisaged a strong Jewish life that would concern itself with current topics and problems.

The large number of Russian Jews who settled in this country in addition to the earlier Jewish settlers created a need for Jewish communal organizations.

Between the Civil War and the new Russian immigration of the eighties the growing Jewish communities developed an unprecedented number of philanthropic and educational institutions which became a permanent feature of American Jewish life. Organizations.... grew up within a generation...America was



thus partly prepared to receive the tremendous new wave of immigration... 128)

The earlier settlers had come dribbling into the country in small groups and had become easily assimilated. The new-comers migrated, not by families, but by communities and by provinces, with a well developed group consciousness, desiring to live together, forming huge ghettos in the metropolises of the East. 129)

With the development of Jewish communities the Jews were awakened to a desire for organization and unity among Jewish groups. When the orthodox group voted on a babbi to head the orthodox community Gordon indicated that there was too much disagreement about this leader<sup>130)</sup>. Gordon wrote that the time for discussing his merits had passed and once he was elected it was necessary to cooperate with him and then to evaluate his actions and his works. He hoped that he would be a good influence on his followers and that he would bring respect to the Jews.



One of the things that pleased Gordon was that large sums of money were made available for learning and for community purposes in America. In this way the children would learn the ways of God and eventually American Judaism would be a symbol for all the world.

Religion at that period was in a state of chaos. There was no organization, only individual congregations. New conditions and a new type of life militated for new forms.

... a sturdy religious life was being developed in the United States. Most of the immigrants were brought up in the tradition of rabbinic Judaism but the new conditions in America often made changes necessary... The movement for reform gained headway after 1848, the impetus coming from the German liberals, who poured into the country when their revolution was crushed... The father of American Reform Judaism was Isaac Mayer Wise.... a firm believer of adaptation and despite the opposition of conservative elements he introduced a great number of reforms in ritual and service... He was primarily an organizer. Early in his American career he began an agitation



for a union of reform congregations, and his efforts were crowned with success in 1873, when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was organized. He felt the need also for a seminary to train native born ministers... After a campaign of twenty five years the Hebrew Union College was opened in 1875 and eight years later its first ordained rabbis came from its halls. 131)

It is this background that helps us to understand the interest of Gordon in American Jewish institutions and particularly in the Hebrew Union College. These institutions were developing during the period when the Jews in Russia had to turn their attention elsewhere. The first American rabbis graduated from the College were ordained at a time when Russian Jewry was persecuted and frustrated.

Gordon discussed the work of the college and its subject matter <sup>132)</sup>. The course he informed his readers was an eight year one four years of preparatory work and four years of rabbinical work. There was an integrated program which aroused much interest



in the minds of the Jews. Gordon stated that this was important for Jewish education. Thirteen rabbis had graduated when Gordon discussed this school <sup>133)</sup>. These rabbis reflected their training as evidenced by their preaching good sermons and their intelligent learning and knowledge. Gordon was pleased with the school and its works and he considered it a good school. Another reason that he took pride in the school was that a few years before it was not believed that American children could become rabbis. There were then a number of American rabbis.

The curriculum of the school consisted of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, in the university. Tanach with translations, Mishnah, Midrash, Talmud, Philosophy, History, introductions to the Mishnah and Talmud, Methodology, homiletics and Rabbinical terminology were taught in the Rabbinical department. There were tests, given by examiners, in each field. At the time that Gordon wrote his article on the



school there were thirty five students. One received a rabbinical certificate and six received teacher's certificates. The building and its books were valued at thirty thousand dollars. There were from ten to fifteen students on scholarships and about twenty were given books and other out of the school privileges.

Rabbi Kalisch who was a student there from 1879 to 1887 received the 'smicha' that year. Speeches and songs marked the festive occasion. After the speech by the head of Congregation Jeshurun, Rabbi Kal'sch was blessed by Rabbi Adler. The latter placed his hands on the newly ordained rabbi when he pronounced the blessing. Rabbi Kalisch then spoke of his obligation as a Rabbi. There was another speech by still another rabbi and then the benediction was pronounced over all who were assembled. Gordon further wrote that all left agreeing that Rabbi Kalisch would in all probability have a



successful career.

Although there were many practices and developments in America that Gordon criticized he was very pleased with the program of this school. He desired that the Russian Jews should learn from the American Jews that it was necessary to build the schools according to the way of the place and the land. If this would not be done the children would grow up ignorant of Torah, of wisdom, and of manners <sup>134)</sup>.

All of the topics that Gordon discussed grew out of the background in which he lived. The subjects he treated were important at that time. If a Russian Jewish life could have developed free from <sup>the</sup> such restrictions ~~as~~ were placed upon it, it is questionable whether Gordon would have been so concerned with Israel and America. Not only his political, social and economic background were important but the cultural and intellectual aspects were also very important. The forms that he could draw from and the



(82)

spade work that preceded him help to explain his  
writings, ideas and attitudes.



FOOTNOTES

- 1) Social change takes place when the values of the society change. Since societies are not static social change is a continuous process. When drastic social change is occurring within a society it is a result of instability.

The reader is referred to the following article for an understanding of societies such as nineteenth century Russia:

Hopper, Rex D. "The Revolutionary Process" Social Forces. Volume 28, No. 3, pp. 270 - 279. March, 1950.

- 2) Social reorganization is the process whereby new values gain ascendancy and acceptance over the old values of the society.
- 3) Achorn, Erik. European Civilization and Politics Since 1815. New York 1938. p.9.
- 4) *ibid*, p. 111 ff.
- 5) *Ibid*, p. 121
- 6) *ibid*, p. 197
- 7) local communes
- 8) An attempt to appease the populace followed by a desire to retain full power often results in first granting, and then rescinding, benefits. This is characteristic of periods of drastic social change.
- 9) Vernadsky, George. History of Russia. New Haven, 1951. p.118.
- 10) Maynard, Sir John. Russia in Flux. New York, 1948 p. 29.



- 11) Pinson, Koppel S. Essays on Antisemitism.  
"Antisemitism in Tsarist Russia" by  
Mark Vishniak, New York, 1946. p.121;  
"Russian antisemitism was nourished from  
three sources: (1) religious prejudice  
against an alien faith; (2) economic  
ag opposition to the business competitor  
and rival; (3) political animosity to  
all who were opposed to the autocratic  
system."
- 12) *ibid*, p. 121.  
" In the last years of the Romanov dynasty  
antisemitism developed greater manifestations  
of cruelty, indicating the convulsions  
8 of a decaying and doomed regime".
- 13) Russo - Jewish Committee. The Persecution of  
the Jews in Russia. London, 1890. p. 30.
- 14) The Pale of Settlement was an area in Western  
Russia to which Jewish settlements were  
restricted.
- 15) Errera, Leo. The Russian Jews. London, 1894  
p. 10.
- 16) Pinson, *op. cit.* P. 133, 124.
- 17) Errera, *op. cit.* p. 113.
- 18) Dubnow, S. M. History of the Jews in Russia  
and Poland. Philadelphia, 1920. Vol. II  
p. 324.
- 19) Thus all shades of opinion were reflected in  
the Jewish population.
- 20) Realizing That Russian Jewry would not be per-  
mitted to develop the Russian Jews direct-  
ed their attention to other areas where  
their attention to other areas where  
Jews dwelled.



- 21) That is, that Gordon as a maskil arose out of the Haskalah which was a product of Russian Jewish life etc.
- 22) A full discussion on leadership in a revolutionary period will be found in:  
Hopper, op. cit.
- 23) 1886 נחמ'ס י"ד . דבר דבורה  
Vol. 44 pp. 681-685
- 24) Ha-Meliz was a literary magazine that usually reflected the views of the Haskalah writers. It was published from 1860 to 1902 with some interruptions.
- 25) The bibliography of Gordon's articles was published in 'Kiryat Sefel' Vol. VIII,  
1 pp. 248 - 262.
- 26) The hope for citizenship placed a premium on a merging of religious and secular values.  
בין קרע סחוף . נחמ'ס י"ד 1888.  
Vol. 94 pp. 1011-1012.
- 27) דין ודשון עם נחמ'ס י"ד ברוס'יה ונפדו  
נחמ'ס י"ד 1887, 418-428, 369-361 pp
- 28) נ"י ונ"י נחמ'ס י"ד 1880  
Vol. 4, pp. 61-68.
- 29) סימני דרכה . נחמ'ס י"ד 1887  
Vol. 216, pp. 2295-2296.
- 30) Dubnow, S.M. op. cit. Vol II, p. 116.
- 31) ibid, p. 124, 126.



- 32) בירור דבריו. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 213, pp. 2263-2266.
- 33) נחמן נחצ'ה מצדק יצ"ו. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 124, pp. 1553-1556.
- 34) קצרות כס'. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 2143-2144, pp. 202.
- 35) באין חזון ופרץ ע"פ. נמ"ל 1886.  
Vol. 144-148, pp. 10, 133-139, 8.
- 36) ש"ח נחצ'ה נחצ'ה. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 14, pp. 260-262.
- 37) עזר ירחק חוק. נמ"ל 1883.  
Vol. 405-409, pp. 36.
- 38) מוס' דור ודור נחצ'ה. נמ"ל 1888.  
Vol. 19, pp. 184-181.
- 39) דבריו ודיוט. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 161, pp. 1703-1704.
- 40) חשון נחצ'ה. נמ"ל 1886.  
Vol. 1521-1527, pp. 121.
- 41) א"ל תג' אחרים. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 17-21, pp. 2, 4-1, 1.
- 42) עניני קיומא. נמ"ל 1882.  
Vol. 37, pp. 737-741, 1882.  
Vol. 12, pp. 209-216, 1882.  
חנני באספמ"א. נמ"ל 1881.  
Vol. 25, pp. 517-521, 1881.  
נחצ'ה נחצ'ה נחצ'ה. נמ"ל 1887.  
Vol. 208, pp. 2128-2131.



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- 43) 1881. תרנ"א. חלקי נאמן. נאמן  
Vol. 3 pp. 45-48.
- 44) Gordon was annoyed that the French government had restricted religious education from the educational program.
- 45) Vol 90 pp. 1455-1458, 1885. תרנ"ה. חלקי נאמן.
- 46) This commission did not ~~allow~~ <sup>alleviate</sup> the troubles that beset the Russian Jewish community.
- 47) 1883. תרנ"ג. חלקי נאמן. חלקי נאמן  
Vol. 14 pp. 209-211.
- 48) Even though Gordon bitterly attacked unprogressiveness in Judaism he did not have any quarrel with orthodoxy per se.
- 49) op. cit. ... חלקי נאמן
- 50)
- 51) op. cit. חלקי נאמן
- 52) Vol 10 pp. 85-90. 1888. תרנ"ח. חלקי נאמן
- 53) Ibid
- 54) Ibid. Vol 12 pp. 109-114. חלקי נאמן
- 55) Ibid.



- 55) 1880 רב מנחם מנדל. כנסת גדולה. כנסת גדולה.  
56) Vol. 26, pp 543-548.
- 57) It was through the diffusion of knowledge that the maskilim sought to effect changes in the Jewish community.
- 58) 1880 רב מנחם מנדל. כנסת גדולה. כנסת גדולה.  
Vol. 7, pp. 127-130.
- 59) חורבן בית המקדש. 1880 רב מנחם מנדל. כנסת גדולה. כנסת גדולה.  
Vol. 5, pp 85-90.
- 60) They were wary of any and all changes.
- 61) The maskilim believed in the immediate necessity for change.
- 62) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 63) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 64) 1881 רב מנחם מנדל. כנסת גדולה. כנסת גדולה.  
Vol. 1, pp. 1-7.
- 65) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 66) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 67) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 68) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 69) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.
- 70) חת"ק קדש'א. חת"ק קדש'א.



- 84) Ibid.  $\gamma^N \gamma - \gamma^N \gamma$



85) *ibid.* קמ"ב - 10

86) *ibid.* שומרות יבם קמ"ב-קמ"ג  
ושמרת אה"ק-קמ"ב-קמ"ג

87) סוף נכבדוק עבא. ק.ט.

88) מוסרי עור ועור תקומת. ק.ט.

89) ענוותנותו של ר' כר"ב קמ"ב-קמ"ג  
1888 יב"ש 144 pp. 1538-1542

90) קמ"ב א. ק.ט.

91) *ibid*

92) קמ"ב א. ק.ט.

93) שמעון מנחם בער יב"ש 1886  
Vol. 124 pp. 1553-1556

94) A quarrel broke out between the overseer of the work in the colony and some of the workers. Apparently some of the workers thought that the overseer was unfair and self important.

95) סוף מעשה ב"ש 1887  
Vol. 103 pp. 1078-1080

96) בירור עבדים. ק.ט.

97) קמ"ב א. ק.ט.



- 98) ארץ חסדים . נחמ'ל . 1888  
Vol. 189 pp. 1987-1988
- 99) קצרות כסף - op. cit.
- 100) קצות בי'לק - op. cit.
- 101) נחמ'ל . 1882  
Vol 152 pp 1611-1612
- 102) Gordon favored immigration to the United States as a matter of expediency but he did not want the Jews to give up their loyalty to Eretz Israel as the "true" homeland of the Jews.
- 103) The position of the Jews in Russia was very insecure and the laws seemed only to restrict them but not to protect them.
- 104) ביאליק ח.י. - כמ כתבי ח.י. ביאליק  
צביר תל אביב תש"ז  
ג'ק-ג'ק.
- 105) Hopper, op. cit.
- 106) Rhine, op. cit.
- 107) op. cit. גאולה ופזות נשג
- 108) Ibid
- 109) Ibid
- 110) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. X, "Russia" by Herman Rosenthal. pp. 523 - 527.
- 111) op. cit. גאולה ופזות נשג
- 112) op. cit. חרות באספמיה
- 113) op. cit. גאולה ופזות נשג
- 114) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, "United States" by Joseph Jacobs. pp. 356 - 358.



- 115) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 116) Ibid
- 117) Rhine, op.cit.
- 118) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 119) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 120) .1887 ה'תקל"ח .הערה 1371  
vol. 83 pp. 871-874.
- 120A) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 121) In almost the sme breath Gordon would praise the  
Jews and blame the non Jews for the hardship  
of the Jewish people, and lay the blame for  
the plight of the jews at their own doorstep.
- 122) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 123) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 124) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 125) op. cit. .הערה 1371
- 126) Ibid
- 127) Ibid
- 128) Sachar, Abraham L. A History of the Jews.  
pp. 306 - 307.
- 129) Ibid. p. 307.
- 130) op. cit. .הערה 1371



131) Sachar, op. cit. P.308a.

132) op. cit.

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133) (year 1888) Ibid

134) Ibid



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