German Jewry as a Mirror of the Modern Jewish Experience (?)

A. The *Hashkalah*

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786)

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781)

Idem., "The Jews" (1749, 1754)

G.E. Lessing, "Nathan the Wise" (1779)

M. Mendelsohn, *Jerusalem* (1782)

B. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Modern Jewish Studies)

Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), "On Rabbinic Literature" (1818)

Idem., "Scholarship and Emancipation" (1832)

Samson Raphael Hirsch, "A Sermon on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*" (1855)

C. The *Rabbinical Seminaries and Jewish Studies*

Das Jüdisch-Theologische Seminar (1854) – Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875)

Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums (1872) - Abraham Geiger (1810-1874)

D. Patterns of Religious Adjustments to Modernity

Reform (Liberal) Judaism
(The Coalesence of "Orthodox" Judaism: Hatam Sofer [1763-1839]
Historical-Positive Judaism (=Conservative Judaism)
Neo-Orthodoxy ("Torah-True Judaism")
"Haradi" Judaism

D. *Emancipation and the Jewish Question*

E. *Racial and Political Antisemitism*

F. Dissimilation: Jewish Theological and Cultural Renewal

Hermann Cohen (1842-1918)

Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929)

G. The *Shoa*

F. The Reconstitution of the Jewish Community of Germany

earlier scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums,* Geiger endeavored to demonstrate the inseparable and ever-fruitful link between Judaism and European culture and to point to the dynamic, developmental aspect of Jewish thought. In stern opposition to Orthodoxy, which he rejected as ossified by an anachronistic legalism and as lacking in aesthetic sensibilities appropriate to cultured Europeans, he emphasized the prophetic dimension of biblical faith and the corresponding universal mission of Judaism.

In this letter to the French Jewish educator and Orientalist Joseph Naphtali Derenbourg (1811–1895), Geiger argues that religious reform must be grounded in critical historical scholarship. He unapologetically emphasizes the historicist presupposition of such scholarship, namely, the methodological requirement of positing a human authorship to the sacred texts of the tradition. Only such an approach, Geiger explains, will effectively serve to free Judaism of its anachronistic elements.

9. A SERMON ON THE SCIENCE OF JUDAISM (1855)

SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH[1]

We who have fully imbibed the spirit of modern Judaism, we do not fast, do not pray *Selihot,*[2] do not say *Kinot*[3] on *Tisha beav* [the ninth of Av][4] anymore. We would be ashamed of the tear in our eye or the sigh in our breast for the fallen Temple; we would be ashamed to feel the slightest longing for this scene of "bloody sacrificial rites." For us, alas, all this has become a myth. With our feelings "refined" by a cool reality, and with our unbiased scientific insights, we understand and evaluate all this very differently. Moses and Hesiod, David and Sappho, Deborah and Tyrtaeus, Isaiah and Homer, Delphi and Jerusalem, the Pythian tripod and the Sanctuary of the Cherubim, prophets and oracle, psalm and elegy—for us, all this has been peacefully encased and buried in our mind, reduced to one and the same human origin. For us, all this has received an identical meaning, human and transitory and of a by-gone age. The fog has lifted; the tears and sighs of our fathers do not fill our breasts anymore. They fill our libraries. The warmly pulsating heart of our fathers has become our national literature, their ardent life-breath has turned into the dust of letters. On *Tisha beav,* we let the old Jews pray *Selihot* and cry *Kinot;* we, however, know much better than they do in which centuries these "poets" flourished, in what meter they wrote their "verse," at whose breast they fed when they were sucklings. We adore Jewish antiquity so much that we raise all the dust in the libraries and collections in order to verify the dates of birth and death of these authors and to register correctly the inscriptions on their tombstones. We take care that now, as the old Judaism is carried to its grave, at least its memory is kept alive in histories of literature, and that now and then the evergreen around its grave sheds a few of its needles upon our scholarly temple. Our simple-minded fathers did not believe in the death of these authors at all. They—their song, their lamentation, their solace, their prayer—lived

Source: Samson Raphael Hirsch, "Die Trauer des 9. Av," *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1902), vol. 1, pp. 130–31. Trans. by J. Hessing.

on in the breasts of thousands of Jews. While their weather-worn tombstones were crumbling in the graveyards, every Jewish heart was their mausoleum and ensured them the only kind of immortality they desired, that the song might obliterate the poet, the prayer its author and the thought the man who had given expression to it. What they had thought and felt and sung and lamented became the living property of the nation; its origin—the mortal individual, the accidental organ by which these national feelings and thoughts had been voiced—could now step back into the shadow of oblivion.

Will these deceased spirits delight in the literary gratitude of our generation? Whom will they recognize as their true inheritors? Those who prayed their prayers and forgot their names, or those who forget their prayers, but remember their names?

NOTES

1. Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), foremost exponent of Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany. He looked askance at the Science of Judaism which, because of its historicism, failed, in his view, to contribute to the preservation and strengthening of Jewish life. On Hirsch's concept of Judaism, see chapter 4, document 15. This selection is taken from a sermon Hirsch delivered on *Tisha beav* (see note 4) in 1855.
2. Penitential prayers recited on the days of fast in the Jewish liturgical calendar, especially in the month preceding the Day of Atonement.
3. "Dirges" is the Talmudic designation of the biblical book of Lamentations, which is read in the synagogue during the evening and morning services of *Tisha beav* (See note 4 below).
4. The fast-day commemorating the destruction of the first and second Temples.

10. LEARNING BASED ON FAITH (1860)

SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO[1]

Padua, Sivan 15, 5620

To the glory of the rabbis and the crown of the priests, preeminent among scholars and leader among wise men, [Rabbi Rappoport, chief rabbi of Prague],[2]

May the Lord who has brought you to ripe old age prolong your life in goodness and serenity, and may you continue to be a light unto the diaspora... may you strengthen the righteous... may the wicked bow down before you and bite the dust of your feet, Amen.

I am like a mouse, half flesh, half earth; half rotten and worn out like a garment that has been eaten by moths and worms, and half strengthened in the Lord and in the labor of the Torah, to bring its mysteries to the light and to silence those who speak evil.

And now, friend of my soul, hearken and let your servant speak a word before you.... Why do you refrain from spreading your wisdom in Israel?

And why should two or three wicked men prevent you from doing justice and goodness with the Torah and with the many who love the Torah and love you, who honor the Torah and honor you? By your silence you give pleasure to your enemies and the enemies of the Torah, for their one aim is to silence a righteous man and slacken the hand of a valiant warrior, that they may behave arrogantly and entrap souls....

For surely you know that a people living in its own country can exist even without faith, but the Sons of Israel, dispersed to the four corners of the earth, have

Source: Samuel David Luzzatto to Salomon J. Rappoport, June 5, 1860, in *Igrot Shadal* (Premsl, 1882), pp. 1366–67. Trans. by L. Sachs.