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IN THE CITY

By ISRAEL ZANGWILL

Sudden amid the slush and rain,
I know not how, I know not why,
A rose unfolds within my brain,
And all the world is at July.

A trumpet sounds, green surges splash,
And daffodillies dance i' the sun;
Through tears fair pictures flit and flash
Upon the city's background dun.

Women are true and men are good,
Concord sleeps at the heart of strife.
How sweet is human brotherhood,
And all the common daily life!

-From "Blind Children"

(Written for The Jewish Exponent.)

RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

In Honor of the Centenary of His Birth

(Born June 20, 1808; Died December 31, 1888)

By RABBI BERNARD REVEL

The nineteenth century is the most momentous in the history of the Jews and Judaism, and no century since the destruction of the Temple and the birth of Christ equalled it in importance. At the beginning of the century the position of the Jews in all countries of Europe, except France and Turkey, was degrading and anomalous. The Ghetto, originally an Italian invention, had been naturalized in the German-speaking countries. The German nation was split up into many independent States, all these petty governments inventing daily new regulations and prohibitions against their Jews. There was no step in the material and intellectual life of the Jews which was not regulated by the State. They had to live in a limited area—the Pale—prescribed by the authorities; they had to earn their livelihood by restricted means; the censor kept watch over any intellectual attempt by them, and there was no hope for the future.

With the triumphal march of Napoleon's victorious armies all the barriers were swept away, and the Jews were transformed in the twinkling of an eye into full-fledged citizens. Fresh air and light were let into the Ghetto. Words, thoughts and ideas, until then only in the domain of philosophy, were propagated largely and found an echo in the hearts of many.

The Jews were always children of their time, and were in all the periods of their history influenced by external events and by the surrounding life. They were always susceptible to the changes going on around them, and whenever it was permitted they took the foremost part in the religious, social and intellectual movements of the people among whom they lived. The checks which were put upon them with the purpose of excluding them from such participations proved always ineffective. Throughout Jewish history many a Jew aspired to reconcile in some way the elements and doctrines of the predominant theories which were in conflict with the teachings of Judaism. Those foreign ideas they sought to identify and harmonize with the ideas and conceptions of Judaism. But there were always a majority who did not believe in or did not care for such a reconciliation of the faith of their fathers and its practice with the new doctrines and philosophies which came from without, and preferred to live only in their religion. Indeed, it has become the custom to speak of these in terms of condemnation as the lovers of darkness and enemies of knowledge, and the time is still to come when it will be understood how meagre such epithets are, and the ideas and deeds of these struggling parties in Judaism will be seen in their real light and they will have their true place in the history of Israel. In the great movements of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the outcome of which was the Reformation, the foundation of modern science

and philosophy and the passing of mankind to a new life and development, the Jews took very little part. The oppression, especially among the German-speaking nations, was of such a nature that the confines in which the Jews were kept apart from the world by their enemies were blessed by them, because only they afforded them shelter from violence, which surpassed in scope and cruelty even their sufferings in the Dark Ages. They found satisfaction in living up to their duties and the will of God; it armed them with patience and endurance and made their isolated position tolerable.

But the nineteenth century threw open to the Jew the gates which were closed so long. Issues which had previously crossed the threshold of the Ghetto were now brought home to the Jews. They had taken up with zeal the new opportunities and entered the contest for intellectual superiority, distinction, wealth and fame. But this opportunity did not last very long. From the moment Napoleon was defeated a reaction set in. All the old boundaries were restored, the old disabilities were again imposed. But having once tasted the sweets of a free life they now felt the burden of isolation more keenly than before, and many began to look at Judaism as the only cause of their despised state. They therefore disowned all connections with their religion and saw in their identification with the people among whom they lived the only means of freeing themselves from such a state. Baptism became the order of the day, so that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century many of the members of the Jewish communities of Berlin and other large cities of Germany were converted to Christianity. Even the Jews who still bore in their hearts a love for the religion and traditions of their fathers left the Ghetto, and adopting the new ideas and views of the world felt the need for reconciling those new teachings in some way or another with Judaism and its traditions. In the previous struggles the ideas and teachings from without, the different systems of philosophy, where the contrast between them and Judaism could not be reconciled, had to yield. Now, in accordance with the prevailing spirit and tendencies, it was the most fundamental principles of Jewish tradition that had to yield. Believing, then, that religion must be the result and outcome of reason, religious conviction had to adjust itself to the ideas of the time. Every one had to make the dogmas of Judaism appear to flow naturally from his philosophy. Judaism was considered effete and with the exceptions of a few fundamentals—now the possession of all cultures—was to be destroyed. The leaders of the so-called Reform Judaism forced Judaism to adapt itself to the limits of the synagogue, reducing it to hymns and sermons in the vernacular. Various as were the tenets of reform in different places and with its different leaders, their fundamental and general principle was to reject everything from without. This Reform

Judaism being predominately of a negative character became, as Zangwill expresses it, a half-way house for persons of feeble faith and feeble logic. To save Judaism from the chaos and the dangerous state resulting from its remodelling and distortions by its "reformers" the time called for a powerful man to steer Judaism through the rough waters.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch was the man. A disciple of Rabbi Isack Bernays, the "great chacham" of Hamburg, Rabbi Hirsch further developed the latter's teaching and theory. To quote him: "No influence from without, but only his own determination from within, made him choose the position of rabbi. He was scarcely 22 years of age when he was graduated from the University of Bonn and became rabbi of Oldenburg and "Land-rabbiner" of the principality, and from that time he devoted all his life to putting his ideas and teaching into action. Imbued with the highest modern knowledge, filled with endless love for Israel and Judaism, he applied to Judaism the scientific methods of his time. In all his literary productions, as "Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel," "Eoreb," "Translation and Commentaries of the Bible" and "Jeshurun," the monthly edited by him, and in his critical and polemic writings, we see the logical acuteness of a highly philosophical mind, penetrating keenness, glowing enthusiasm and loving devotion to humanity, Israel and his religion. He indicated the method and laid down the rules according to which Judaism is to be understood and applied them in tracing the truths which are symbolized in the precepts of the Torah. Thereby he gave to the Jewish mind a new direction which it should retain for ages. But he devoted his life as well to gain recognition of these truths and principles and secure their adoption by the Jews. He founded graded schools for both sexes in the true Jewish spirit, and the most celebrated of these, the Gymnasium in Frankfort-on-the-Main, is still in existence. By his power of organization and administration, by his eloquent writing and personal conversation he exerted a most powerful and lasting influence upon German-speaking Jewry.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch also was in favor of reform, but with him it was the reform of the Jews, not of Judaism. He wished to raise life to the exalted standard of the faith, not to reduce the faith to the exigencies of daily life. To quote his words: "Education, elevation of the age to the Torah, but not leveling the Torah according to the time; when the spirit of life is wanting we can never call it forth by polishing the outer forms." His idea of critical study of religion he expresses as follows: "Let us forget the conceptions and misconceptions about Judaism. No longer shall we try to obtain the solution of the question, 'What am I as a Jew? What is Judaism?' from the chairs and writings of non-Jewish scholars, who often knew Judaism only from its reflections in a mirror of distortion, and who believe themselves obliged partly to destroy Judaism in order to construct that which is their own. Let us take up the sources of Judaism, to study and comprehend them for practical use. Let us learn to know Judaism from itself, to raise it to a science of practical wisdom, and then we will learn to raise ourselves to the light of truth, to the ardor and height of life. Our children, the future of the nation, must be educated to be Jews, to be sons and daughters of theirs. Let them master the language of the Bible as they master the language of the country in which they live. Let the Bible and the tradition become for them the book teaching life, and let them be able to perceive its words through life. Let their eyes be opened to view the world around them as God's word and themselves as God's servants therein. Then let them learn from the written and traditional law in its practical consequences to comprehend, to respect and to love their life as such spiritual service of God."

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch applied this method in his research for the truth and principles of Judaism. He took up all the sources of Judaism and drew from them his conceptions. It was he who was the bulwark of true Judaism against the waves of agitation and disbelief, and to him Judaism in Germany, indeed Judaism the world over, owes a debt of gratitude.

His long and holy life, rich in lasting achievements, is the best proof of the truth and excellence of his method, and if any man was deserving of being termed divine, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch was that man.

Philadelphia, June 16, 1908.