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Author.

# Half a Century of Progress

IN

THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE  
OF JUDAISM.

A Farewell Discourse,

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. A. LÖWY

AT THE

BERKELEY STREET SYNAGOGUE,

ON

SATURDAY, THE 29TH OF OCTOBER, 1892.



Printed by direction of the Elders.

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## I DEDICATE

MY PARTING WORDS TO THE FRIENDS WHO ACTED TOGETHER  
WITH ME IN MY PUBLIC CAREER.

SOME of these friends might be induced to elaborate the theme on which I have touched in the first section of my discourse. Many others, the staunchest supporters of our charitable organisations, will perhaps not shrink from making an attempt to settle the burning question, as to the diminution of the annual deficits which are pointed out in the appended Statistical Data. In these Tables it will be noticed at a glance what an immense amount of good is being done by members of our Community; as also what enormous sacrifices have to be made by generous donors to defray the unavoidable expenditure which in 1891 involved a deficit of £25,418.

The actual minority of well-wishers and well-doers must in the near future become the nucleus for a co-operating and commanding majority of benefactors. Experienced workers must determine whether there shall be employed in every congregation, or in every district, large committees to enrol new subscribers and permanent donors; or whether recourse should be had to other alternatives. But all who have given a thought to this subject are agreed that the contributions to our public charities require to be re-adjusted in wider and more equitable proportions.

Happily it is in the power of many honoured Jews and Jewesses so to influence their brothers and sisters, as to uphold the genuine claims of charity, and to secure the increasing prosperity of our communal institutions.

A. LÖWY.

LONDON, *December*, 1892.

# Half a Century of Progress in the Knowledge and Practice of Judaism:

A FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

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ON retiring from my public position as Second Minister of this Congregation, it is opportune to place before you some of those bright aspects of Judaism which have presented themselves to observant minds within the last half-century. We have to notice two grand subjects which constitute the substance and the life of our religion. On the one hand, we must take into account our literature, which commenced with the Bible, and has assumed immense proportions in our own days. On the other hand, we have to estimate the force we have acquired within the last half-century in the fields of Jewish philanthropy, whereby we Jews hold our rightful place in the sphere of humanity. During the last fifty years—whilst science, the future handmaid of pure religion, has advanced with gigantic strides in every department of research—the fundamental knowledge of Judaism has been enriched, and is being ever more enriched by a vast amount of literary material, which hitherto had been inaccessible. Thanks to this growth, we are enabled to comprehend our history infinitely better, and to value our unchangeable moral teachings and our power to improve physically, intellectually, and practically, the hopeful condition of the rising generation; and at the same time to remove, as much as we can, a great number of those undesirable usages which sprang up like rank weeds in the darkness of the Middle Ages. These usages are continually taken as the indication of Jewish

orthodoxy. In reality, they have not the remotest connection with our ancient religion. They must disappear in the daylight of intelligent culture. For the time has come when sound reflection is re-awakened amongst all classes, and when we can once more, as in days of old, freely adore our Maker according to the dictates of our hearts.

On this progress of the living generation I will speak to-day. It is characterised in the wonderful declaration put forth in the Book of the great Seer of all ages, in the Book of Isaiah, xxxiii. 6: "VEHAYAH EMUNAT NGITTECHA CHOSEN YESHUNGAT CHACHMAH VADANGAT: YIRAT ADONAI HI OTZARO." The correct rendering is as follows: "And the faith of thy time shall be a reliance on the help of wisdom and knowledge, and the fear of the Lord shall be the divine treasure thereof."

**Wisdom  
and  
Knowledge.**

Our reliance on the help of wisdom and knowledge shall be fortified by a humble submission to an all-sustaining Providence. This is the soul and essence of our ancestral teachings, and the guiding line to a well-spent life. This is our imperishable heirloom: this is our conquering power, whereby we may overmaster the prevailing indifference in religion. Indeed, the canker of indifference can last only so long as we allow a variety of abuses to stifle and strangle the vital parts of Judaism.

## I.

If we read our history by the light of our text, it will bear witness that in the saddest times we have been kept together by our hereditary love of knowledge, which is identified with our love of religion. Jewish parents have always urged their children to learn as much as could be learnt; and in consequence we have been united by the strongest bonds of religious sympathy, while we endeavoured with might and main to emerge from intellectual servitude, and

**Knowledge  
as a  
Communal  
Tie.**

to arrive at social independence, notwithstanding the many interposed obstacles. Thus we have succeeded, in this age of studious pursuits, in opening up a fairer prospect for posterity; and we have found that our history, with its proclamation of Divine Unity and of Human Unity, has become ever more intelligible in the onward course of researchful science.

**Religion aided by Scientific Progress.** The historical interest in our ancient race and religion has been incidentally aided by the same marvellous discoveries, "the lines of which have gone forth to the ends of the earth"; whereby the speech of man can be carried along with the speed of lightning, and can be fixed for ever. Through labours which will never end, and which constantly gather fresh contributions for life's comfort and for the enlightenment of the living, we have in the last fifty years learnt more from year to year about Israel's national experiences than could be ascertained in all the bygone generations of the exile. Many of the ancient monuments and records which illustrate Israel's former history were before this half-century, in the most literal sense of the Bible-words, "hidden and buried under the sand." But now they supplement in a great many instances the Biblical narratives, or relate them according to the notions of alien chroniclers. They clearly depict and describe the fate and the frequent struggles of our ancestors. Thus we see in

**Monumental Testimonies.** the Monuments of the Nile the Egyptian taskmaster uplifting his hand, and punishing the helpless bondsmen, and then we read the account he gives of the quality of the task-work done by the enslaved labourer. The official report often corresponds with that which is concisely stated in the Book of Exodus. In short, the Egyptian text amplifies the Bible-words with suggestive details.\*

\* In a funeral chamber at Thebes, dating from the time of Tothmes III. are seen persons of a foreign race who do such work as is named in the early chapters of Exodus. Overseers are armed with long rods. The

In the Egyptian stone-chronicles we meet with the lifelike portraiture of Israel's oppressors and of cruelly treated Semites. The scenery of past ages reappears; and we are indebted to Brugsch and other eminent Egyptologists of this half-century for having laid before us, in the recovered records of Egypt, fascinating illustrations of the Bible.

**Engravings  
on  
Rocks.** Noteworthy facts in the drama of Israel's vicissitudes are skilfully chiselled and engraved as rock-pictures. They are chronicled in sandstone, marble, or granite, as well as in well-preserved leaves of the papyrus plant. The pyramids, as well as the ruined palaces, and mausoleums with coffins within them, yield up their resuscitated inscriptions, and disclose their long-concealed secrets to the ingenious decipherer. These discoveries afford us a valuable insight into the relations existing between our ancestors and surrounding nations. We may look upon the early books of the Bible from a new point of view when we observe that there are parallels between Egyptian and Biblical traditions. We actually have the copy of a unique record on stone concerning a seven years' famine in Egypt.\*

**Seven Years'  
Famine.** That calamity is described on a huge rock in the island of Shehel, which is situated within the range of the first cataract of the

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wall-inscription there states:—"The overseer thus speaks to the workmen, 'The rod is in my hand, be not lazy.'" An ancient papyrus tells us, on the same subject, "They make their bricks from day to day without intermission." (Brugsch "La sortie des Hebreux d'Egypte," p. 14, *et seq.*) Specimens of bricks as described in the Biblical and the Egyptian records were brought by Lepsius from Egypt, and are deposited in the Royal Museum of Berlin. I may here add, as a noteworthy fact, that a sun-dried brick, intermixed with straw fibres, has recently been brought from the ruins of Babylon by Mr. Edward Livingstone, of Manchester, who kindly gave me an opportunity to inspect that brick. Further particulars of this remarkable find, which is of especial interest to the student of the Bible, I will communicate to the Society of Biblical Archaeology.

\* See H. Brugsch, "Die biblischen sieben Jahre der Hungersnoth nach einer altägypischen Felseninschrift, 1891."

Nile. Here is related, in touching terms, the misery which befell the old and the young dwellers on the banks of the Nile; because during seven years the inundating river had not risen to the normal height of 28 cubits, so that the cultivated soil became barren, and men and cattle perished. Such relics, whatever be their date, corroborate the old opinion that our Bible-literature presents to us an inexhaustible element of interesting and far-reaching studies. If this were the appropriate occasion I might also advert to the newly recovered information which the abundant Babylonian and Assyrian records, in stone and clay, furnish to the searcher after the fate of our fathers when these were carried away from the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

**Babylonian  
and Assyrian  
Records.**

But some conception of the wealth of increasing information may be formed from the simple fact, that in the British Museum alone there are at present seventy-two thousand Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions, in many of which we Israelites are most deeply concerned. One day this will be fully proved by our eminent scholars both in England and abroad, and they will surely illustrate the contents of the Bible by using the accumulating materials of the history and the allied sciences in unspeculative commentaries.

**Our Champions  
of Literature.**

The growth of wisdom and knowledge is favoured by another brilliant phase in our progress. I refer to the modern champions of Jewish literature. These thinkers of wise thoughts have risen to renown, while a multitude of others follow timidly and slowly, but they *do* follow. To this great movement may be applied the words of the Psalmist, "The high mountains are for climbing gazelles; the rifts of the rocks are a refuge for burrowing coney." Our modern leaders in Jewish literature have in every enlightened land provided food for universal intellectual sustenance, and especially for the good of their co-religionists. Some of them have founded journals for the science of Judaism, and they have very circumspectly treated of numerous sections and



specialities of knowledge, which serve to promote the regeneration of our race.

**Abundance of  
Literary  
Productions.**

Here we can point with grateful satisfaction to a host of Jewish writers who in the last half-century have presented their bountiful tribute of public instruction, as an offering in the Temple of Jewish culture. The foundation of this Temple was laid by Moses, and the rearing of the edifice has been better encouraged in our own time than we are generally prepared to recognise. From more than thirty thousand Jewish publications which have been issued in the last fifty years, the teachers and preachers and students of Israel may gather and distribute attractive buds and blossoms; together with the ripe fruit of knowledge.\* The greater portion of Jewish literature has tended to impress upon us the opinion, that our individual worth, our claim to an honourable treatment, our chances of unequivocal success, and our hope of enjoying the sunshine of happiness, are vested in those high precepts which are just as ancient as patriarchal virtue, and withal they are so suited to our daily work and so close at hand, that they can be studied by all well-trained children in the lives of their upright parents.

**Our Social  
Regeneration.**

In no time has it been more fully believed and demonstrated than in our age, that the prosperity of our community rests on the widest possible increase of wisdom and knowledge. This confidence in the effect of progressive enlightenment has been sustained in many Jewish households, where the voice of the

\* The bibliographical merits of the late Joseph Zedner deserve to be here remembered. He was the author of the masterly Hebrew Catalogue of the British Museum Library. Owing to his unwearied efforts that library was gradually enriched to the extent of more than 10,000 Hebrew volumes. At the present time this figure has been raised to 14,000. Of Hebrew MSS. the British Museum contains 1,250 works; and of Hebrew, Samaritan and Phœnician inscriptions, 213. As to non-Hebraic Jewish works, it can only be stated that thanks to the activity and circumspectness of the authorities of the British Museum, the collection can well vie with any other Library in the world.

persecutor is no longer heard, and where the calamities proceeding from intolerance have totally ceased. Hence we witness the dawn of a new era throughout all civilised countries where the Jew has been settled for several generations, and where he enjoys the mighty influence exercised by the various ranges of science and literature.

## II.

### Religious Duty.

I now come to the second portion of my discourse. Wisdom and knowledge may always be prized, when sweetening the inevitable bitterness of changeful circumstances. Wisdom and knowledge may be so associated with practical pursuits as to give an endless variety to the comforts and achievements of our quickly ebbing days on earth; but the intrinsic value of all we think, of all we learn, and of all we do, consists in the effective application of wisdom and knowledge to the demands of religious duty. These demands are expressed and centred in the word Philanthropy.

**Philanthropy.** We do not understand by philanthropy a dreamy love, an idle platonic love of humanity. We mean by philanthropy, by our Jewish philanthropy, the unselfish exercise of well-planned and well-performed deeds for the benefit, first of our nearest neighbours, and then of our fellow-mortals in general. Such useful labours have progressed during the last half-century in a manner which brings joy, courage, and hope into many hearts.

### Jewish Patriotism.

Fifty years are a comparatively short period in the annals of Judaism. Yet in this space of time it has been proved for all ages to come, and throughout many parts of the world, that the Jew is impelled by inherited virtuous ideas in the discharge of his social duty. These ideas have become his indisputable religious convictions. They reveal to him that man is destined to be an instrument of Providence in the

performance of beneficent work. Therefore, he can be, and very often is, a distinguished participator in the service of his country's Government, in the constitutional representation of his native land, in the representation of social sections; in the defence of national independence; in the forum of public justice; in high civic duties; in the furtherance of useful undertakings; in the proper training of children; in the cultivation of science and arts; in the glorious republic of letters, and in other elevated pursuits; and—what concerns us very much as a community—in the exemplary support of Benevolent Institutions. In such support rests a vital element of the strength and honour of Judaism.

**Practical  
Benevolence.**

Through the efforts of all classes of Jewish men and women, the reality of philanthropy has been tested in the creation and the opening of numerous Jewish and general schools and colleges; in the rescue and the settlement of suffering co-religionists (and here the sorrows of the Russian Jews come vividly before us); and if we confine our view to this Metropolis of the world, we dwell with the utmost sympathy upon the unwearied work of the old and the young in our powerful Board of Guardians, our Free Schools and kindred schools, our Orphanage, our Hospitals; our organisations for promoting self-help by handicrafts and other occupations; our charitable Loan, Visitation, and Emigration Societies; and many other local institutions for acts of mercy.

**Anglo-Jewish  
Association.**

With blessings in our hearts, we carry the reviving power of instruction and the spirit of self-reliance even to the Jewish children in Eastern lands, where the Anglo-Jewish Association devotes itself with the great Parisian Alliance to the education in the present year of 14,000 children, among whom Christians and Mahomedans are admitted for secular training.

This identification of wisdom and knowledge with religion takes the blissful shape of practical philanthropy. It is this mighty activity which adorns the Jewish community of our glorious epoch.

**Benevolence an  
Hereditary  
Duty.**

Will this lustre of true religion ever be tarnished? Will it endure? The answer rests on our sense of duty. Not for the sake of empty praise, but for the sake of life itself, we have to continue and to increase our efforts; we have even to go a step further; and I wish that my opinion were heeded.

OUR CHILDREN MUST BE TAUGHT TO JOIN US IN THE EXERCISE OF JUDICIOUS BENEVOLENCE WHILE THEY ARE STILL YOUNG; AND THEY MUST LEARN TO LOVE THE WORK WHICH THE SILENT REVELATION OF INBORN AND INBRED RELIGION HAS INDUCED US TO UNDERTAKE FOR THE WELFARE OF THE ENTIRE FLOCK.

What we are thus striving to do for the benefit of those by our side, and for the benefit of aftercomers, may be called the modern method of perpetuating Judaism by means of systematic and united good action.

Religious duty does not live in the exercise and exhibition of mere meaningless forms. It lives in good action. This duty of good action is venerably ancient, but never loses its freshness. It was first whispered by divine faith into the heart of the Patriarch, who left to his children and to his house after him "the testamentary injunction," to practise diligently ZEDAKAH UMISHPAT, which means "The children of Abraham shall be consistent in the performance of justice and charity." In this golden precept the soul of Judaism lives its immortal life. Jewish ministers after ministers, and laymen after laymen, are bound to expatiate on the same theme; and no one can hide from himself the fact, that in regard to religious justice and religious charity we have still far more to learn than we have learnt already.

We have still to recall the numberless wayward followers of selfishness. They are still lingering behind; there are still hosts of well-to-do persons who are extremely

lethargic. It is they who leave to their kindlier neighbours the arduous work of covering the insufficiency and the deficits that lie as heavy loads upon the prosperity of our

**Prevention  
of  
Apathy.**



Charitable Institutions.\* In consequence of these cankering evils the best well-wishers of our community will have to adopt new energetic measures to arouse their ungenerous or less generous co-religionists.

**Charitable  
Tithe  
Offerings.** A tenth part of all annual savings should be offered by true friends of humanity as liberal gifts to our public charities, independently of those contributions which are ordinarily given from year to year. Such free-will offerings would improve the religious condition of the donors, and the prospects of the community. Hard-hearted persons will find this opinion very eccentric and impracticable. Let us so educate our children that they be not hard-hearted.

**Justice  
and  
Charity.** And now I sum up my review of Communal Progress. In the end it is always found, that OUR EXISTENCE ON EARTH IS INTENDED TO INSTIL INTO EVERY SOUL A LOVE OF JUSTICE UNTO ALL MEN, AND A LOVE OF CHARITY IN ITS TWO-FOLD SIGNIFICATION. Charity in the sense of overlooking the foibles of our neighbours; and charity in its all-important demand that we shall make a wise and appropriate sacrifice of our available means, in order to remove or alleviate the distressing dangers which besiege the body and mind of struggling fellow-mortals.

I fervently wish that this farewell discourse may be taken as an appeal to Jewish love of wisdom and knowledge; and that, by consistent benevolence, the practice of religion may be demonstrated in the midst of our congregation, and in the midst of every other congregation. Such a practice will be the most solid token that the community can be saved from the blight of inaction and indifference; and that wisdom and

\* See the appended "Statistical Data," which delineate the excellent results of our principal Jewish institutions in London. They also demonstrate that we should devise a proper system for grappling with the oppressive deficits, and for increasing throughout the Metropolis the number of adequate subscriptions, instead of depending overmuch on the generosity of the comparatively few and select donors.

knowledge, with the true fear of God, will be bequeathed to our children whom we bless by day and by night, in life and in death.

With the same devout feelings I now bless the congregation in which I was young and in which I grew old. A multitude of varied events have bound my soul to the souls of my communal friends. With them I have felt "the blasts which in the autumn season stripped the tree of life of its foliage," when the leaves were scattered over the grave-yard; but the light of heaven has always gleamed through the denuded branches. Also to me sorrows often came in crowds, and sympathy followed them as a rearguard; but happiness likewise illumined my path. These divergent remembrances now press upon me. With deep emotion I regard those who sympathised with me, and who cheered me on in my public career. They are members of our congregation and of many other congregations. To all of them I address my farewell greetings, with words that are few, and with wishes that extend "to the everlasting hills" I pray in the loved Scriptural benediction:—

"May the Lord bless you and keep you.

"May the Lord cause His countenance to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.

"May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and grant you peace." Amen.

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# STATISTICAL DATA OF THE PRINCIPAL JEWISH INSTITUTIONS IN THE METROPOLIS IN 1891.

TABLE A.—CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

I. DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTION.	II. NO. OF BENEFITED PERSONS.	III. NO. OF SUBSCRIBERS.	IV. SOURCES OF INCOME. (a) from Subscriptions. (b) from Funded Pro- perty.	V. DEFICITS. [Have to be made up by Collections.]
1. Aged Needy Society ... ..	97	1,500	1. { <i>a</i> £700 } { <i>b</i> 260 }	1. <b>£350</b>
2. Board of Guardians ... ..	{ 4,722 cases, equal to } { 16,300 persons. Also } { 369 apprentices. }	1,273	2. { <i>a</i> 1,497 } { <i>b</i> 1,790 }	2. <b>16,000</b>
3. Hand-in-Hand and Widows' Home ... ..	38	650	3. { <i>a</i> 330 } { <i>b</i> 195 }	3. <b>470</b>
4. Jewish Home ... ..	50	1,100	4. { <i>a</i> 490 } { <i>b</i> 48 }	4. <b>600</b>
5. Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter...	1 548	216	5. { <i>a</i> 180 } { <i>b</i> 60 }	5. <b>700</b>
			Deficits in Jewish Charities	... <b>£18,120</b>

# STATISTICAL DATA OF THE PRINCIPAL JEWISH INSTITUTIONS IN THE METROPOLIS IN 1891.

## TABLE B.—EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

I. DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.	II. NUMBER OF PUPILS.	III. NUMBER OF SUB- SCRIBERS.	IV. SOURCES OF INCOME. (a) from Subscriptions. (b) from other sources.	V. DEFICITS. [Have to be made up by Collections.]
1. Anglo-Jewish Association (28 Schools) ... ..	6,910	3,000	1. { a £1,837 } { b     79 }	1. <b>£330</b>
2. Bayswater Jewish Schools ...	237	260	2. { a     301 } { b     373 }	2. <b>90</b>
3. Borough Jewish Schools ...	212	187	3. { a     173 } { b     246 }	3. <b>310</b>
4. Jewish Assocn. for Diffusion of Relig. Knowledge (Sabbath and Board Schools) ... ..	3,774	{ General...     79 } { Board Schools... 94 }	4. { a     287 } { b     430 }	4. <b>266</b>
5. Jews' College ... ..	19 pupils, 18 students	174	5. { a     284 } { b     737 }	5. <b>63</b>
6. Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home...	29	281	6. { a     308 } { b     417 }	6. <b>383</b>
7. Jews' Free School ... ..	3,450	300	7. { a     260 } { b    7,515 }	7. <b>2,800</b>
8. Jews' Hospital and Orphan } Asylum ... ..	258	{ 1,330 and 565 Life Governors }	8. { a     1,813 } { b     4,669 }	8. <b>903</b>
9. Jews' Infant Schools ... ..	2,000	200	9. { a     230 } { b    1,850 }	9. <b>800</b>
10. Stepney Jewish Schools ...	783	134	10. { a     207 } { b    1,002 }	10. <b>458</b>
11. Westminster Jews' Free School	544	185	11. { a     176 } { b     710 }	11. <b>895</b>
	<b>Total</b> 18,234	<b>Total</b> 6,789		
		Deficits in Jewish	Educational Institutions	... <b>£7,298</b>
		"           "	Charities ... ..	... <b>18,120</b>
	<b>Total Deficits</b>	<b>of Charities and Edu</b>	<b>catational Institutions</b>	... <b>£25,418</b>

