

ליהודים היתה אורה :

17A

AN

ADDRESS ON THE POSITION

IN

# THE JEWS IN BRITAIN,

WITH REFERENCE TO

THEIR LITERARY, POLITICAL, CIVIL, AND  
RELIGIOUS CONDITION.

BY MOSES SAMUEL,

OF LIVERPOOL.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY J. WERTHEIMER & CO.,  
SOLD BY J. HATCHARD & SON, PICCADILLY.

W. GRAPEL, LIVERPOOL.—J. & J. THOMSON, MANCHESTER.  
J. ROBERTSON, DUBLIN.—A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH.

*Price One Shilling.*

[ENTERED STATIONERS' HALL.]

# AN ADDRESS TO THE JEWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

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BRETHREN,

HAVING seen in the "Voice of Jacob," No. 65, February 2nd, a Letter from M.,\* addressed to Sir Moses Montefiore, upon the position of the English Jews; I most respectfully beg to lay before you my opinion upon the subject which that letter endeavours to unfold, as interesting to yourselves, and gratifying to those who have your welfare at heart. Some years have elapsed since I put pen to paper for the purpose of appearing in print in relation to your spiritual and temporal state, a serious illness having for a long time deprived me of the will and of the means of addressing you; but having, with the blessing of God, recovered my health, and as the age in which we live is teeming with events extraordinary and interesting, I shall require but little apology in addressing you at present. I must first draw your attention to the gratifying accounts from abroad.

Mark the contrast between the pursuits of English and foreign Israelites—what are they doing in Leipzig, Prague, Lemberg, Brody, Berlin, and Hamburgh? Lay before our unfortunately neglected, yet knowledge-seeking Hebrews, the heart-cheering account of the exhumation of the splendid works of our poets and philosophers, which had been mouldering in manuscript for centuries in public and private libraries.

Behold our foreign brethren, as it were, raising to life a Jewish Shakespeare, in the works of Moses Luzzato,† a prince of poets, a name scarcely known here, whose genius soared aloft in majestic metre, rivalling all who before him, had launched into the higher regions of thought, and had chained their conceptions to expressions of sublimity in the sacred language.

Let us catch a spark from the poetic fire of his lately dis-

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\* On going to press, I learned, and have permission to state, that the talented writer of the letter is Mr. Mears Lawton, of Bristol.

† In coupling his name with that of our immortal English bard, it is not for the quantity and degree of his writings, but for the high rank which he holds amongst Jewish poets.

covered work, מגדל עוז "Migdol Oz," and deplore the long neglect of Israel, to seek his mouldering bones, and revivify them by the press.

His drama לישורים תהלה "Layshorim Tehilla," his לשון למודים "Leshon Limudim," or Biblical Rhetoric, and some other works long known and admired, have procured for him a renown for the classic beauties of his language; but this Hebrew poetic effusion מגדל עוז has raised a "strong tower," immortal to his genius and mental excellence.\* He flourished in 1750. His biography, attached to the work, is written by S. Luzzato and M. Letteris; as well as a most beautiful dissertation in Latin, upon our best modern Hebrew poets and their works.

Give us a translation of that superb sacred drama by a living author, Nachman Fishman, lately published at Lemberg, at the expence of the highly gifted and respected Joshua Schlesinger; "The Fall of Sisera, and Israel's Success through Barak and Deborah." The introduction is written by Jacob Budak. In the first act of the fifth scene; the poet gives the soliloquy of the mother of Sisera, on the report of her son's death, a few lines of which may not prove unacceptable:—

הָהָהּ מִלְחָמָה אֲכַזְרָהּ! תְּשׁוּקָה נִוְרָאָה!  
 לֵהֵב עֵז לָדָד • אֶת נִשְׁגָּבָה • נִפְלְאָה •  
 עַל כַּנְפֵי דַמְיוֹן תִּדְרָכְבִּי • בְּאַבְרוֹתָיו תִּדְאִי •  
 רַחֲבֵי לֵבָב אֲנוּשׁ • בְּחַזְיוֹן שׁוֹא תִמְלֵאִי •  
 מִשְׁאוֹת שׁוֹא וּמְדוּחִים • בְּרֶשֶׁת וּשְׁבָכָה  
 תִּכְרְשֵׁי לְרַגְלֵי • עַד תִּוְבִילֵיהֶן הַבְּכָא •  
 מָה יֵשׁ לְכִי? אֲשֶׁר אֶת כָּל תִּמְשׁוּכֵי •  
 תִּלְכְּדֵי לֵב נְבִיר־מַחֲשַׁבֹתָיו תִּחְפּוּכֵי?

Not being able to write poetry, or in any way to do justice to the lofty thoughts of the author, I shall attempt to give the

\* He was a native of Padua. Livy, the Roman historian, was also born and buried in this celebrated city. A copious biography of Luzzato is given in the *Kerem Chemed* for 1838, by Joseph Almantzi, well worthy the perusal of every lover of learning.

translation in prose, leaving it to poetic genius, to give the beauties, the graces, and the fire of the original.

“Tyrant war, mighty desire, fiercely burning, exalted!—rendered wonderful! Riding upon imagination’s wings, taking a lofty flight, thou fillest the hero’s expanded heart with vain—visionary schemes! With deceitful allurements thou spreadest a net for his feet, till thou bringest him to destruction. Wherein exists thy art to attract—to entrap the heart of man—to overturn his soul?”

The writer of the introduction, makes the following remark upon this beautiful apostrophe:—

מה גדול תקפו של השיר הזה! היוצא מקרב לב  
אשה קשת רוח • מלאה חרון וכעס על רוע מצבה • כי  
לא תדע ולא תשמע שום דבר מבנה אשר ירד למלחמה •  
ולכן מתלוננת וצועקת מרה על תשוקת כל אנשי חיל  
לצאת על שדי המלחמת • אף אם יצלתו וינצתו  
במלחמתם —

“How forcible is this poetic effusion! excited by the feelings of a broken-hearted woman, in the fulness of grief, lamenting her fate, not having before known, or heard any thing of her son, who had gone to war! thus bitterly reprehending the fondness of valiant men for entering the field of battle, notwithstanding their success and their conquests.”

The translator of the “Idyllia,” of Bion and Moschus,\* says in his preface, page 18, “They will go down hand in hand to future ages, as long as the beautiful language in which they wrote shall continue to be understood; as long as there are hearts that can feel, or there is taste that can appreciate the graces of pure writing.”

I trust the same will be said of Luzzato and Fishman. I hope that some of our literati will be induced to give us translations of the works of these poets, as well as of the “Hakoloth Yachdolun” of Rumenali; of the “Meluchoth Shaul”† of Efrathi; the

\* Two Greek Poets

† This sacred drama, “The Monarchy of Saul,” is a splendid piece of Hebrew writing. The description of the madness of Saul; the solemn heart-stirring prayer of old Kish, in blessing his grand-children under the nuptial canopy, show the elevated style and exalted thoughts of the poet.

ארבע כוסות "Arba Cosuth" of Poppenheim, &c. &c. In speaking of the laudable efforts of our brethren abroad, I beg to inform you of the discovery of some works of that eminent grammarian and illustrious commentator, Aben Ezra,\* in manuscript; one of which, שפת יתר "Sefas Jeser," was brought to light in Presburg, by Mordecai Bislechis, of Brody, with a beautiful introductory address, by the able scholar and philanthropist, M. Letteris, in 1838; in which he gives a delightful image of the destruction of Pompeii, buried for 1700 years, and its discovery some years since; to which he compares, in extraordinary fine language, the discoveries in the present age of the mental treasures of some of our illustrious authors. He says:—

הנה כן עוד משכיות חמדה ואבני חפץ אבדו מאתנו .  
לא יזכרו עוד ולא יפקדו ולא יעלו על לב . אף כי יקרו  
מפז ומפנינים . ובכתב אופיר לא יסולאו . הלא המה  
אנשי שם חכמי לב אשר הראו חכמתם ובינתם לעיני  
העמים : ספרי חכמי ישראל אשר לא יצאו עוד לאור בעט  
ברזל ועופרת . ואם לא פצתה הארץ את פיה לבלוע  
צבי תפארתם . הלא בבתי עקד ספרים . כבבתי כלאים  
החבאו . ולא אלינו נגה אורם . לכן זה היום עשה ה'  
נגילה ונשמחה בו . כי העיר את לב איש יקר ונכבד .  
אשר הקדיש הונו ורכושו ושלום ביתו . להיות נעונד  
בארצות נכריות ; אך למען הוציא יקר מזולל . ואבני  
קדש מכף אנשים לא ידעו ערכם . ה'ה אהב חכמה ותופש  
תורה . היקר מ' מרדכי ללב ביסלויכים . איש בראדי .  
סגלות יקרות אין על עפר משלם . כבר יצאו על ידו  
לאור בדפוס המפואר של אנטאן די שמיד בעיר המעטירה  
פרעסבורג . וכו' . ועוד ידו נשויה להוציא לאור ספרים  
חדשים לא שערום אבותינו . כי עודם בכתובים

"Some of the most delightful and brilliant works of the imagination having been lost (without having left a trace of

\*His "Annet Shabbath," upon Jewish astronomy, one of his lately discovered works, is given in the "Kerem Chemed" for 1839. The reader will learn that the principles upon which Herschel the celebrated astronomer founded his system of prognosticating the weather, by the observations of the quarterly changes, of the moon may also be seen in this work of Aben Ezra, who lived in the twelfth century.

their existence, although more precious than gold or precious stones) of our men of renown, who had manifested their wisdom to surrounding nations; being the productions of the wise men of Israel, which had never been published; and although no earthquake had swallowed up their beauty and their glory, yet have they been imprisoned in libraries, so that their light had never shone upon us until now, that the Almighty has caused it to be a day of rejoicing for us, in having roused the heart of a respected philanthropist, who has *consecrated his wealth and forgone the comforts of home to wander abroad* in search of that which is most estimable, to obtain works in our holy tongue from those unconscious of their worth; the lover of wisdom and of the law, the highly gifted Mordecai Bislechis, from Brody, by whose means some incomparable works have already been brought to light, by the famous press of Anton Schmidt, in Presburg; and who is desirous to give to the world other works unknown to our ancestors, being in manuscript," etc.

See the money thus expended abroad by our worthy brethren, to promote and promulgate knowledge and truth for the benefit of our people; in bringing to light the long-hidden treasures of Hebrew and Rabbinical learning, to gladden the hearts of the studious and the pious, and to confirm the opinions of the great (long departed) upon our holy faith, the foundation of the superstructure of our revered sages. Here we see Jarchi, Maimonides, Aben Ezra, and other renowned fathers of Israel, as it were, rising from their slumbers to illuminate again our literary hemisphere, and, conscious of some petty struggles in our camp, wafting through space to dispel darkness and self-sufficiency, and to solve doubt. At the very appearance of the symptoms of secession, they manifest their angelic sceptres to collect our partially-divided sheep into one fold in unity and brotherly love.

The present Samuel Luzzato thus writes to Goldenberg in 1841; the editor of כרם חמד "Kerem Chemed" at the end of one of his esteemed contributions, page 48, after telling him of some valuable manuscripts in his possession, grammatical and rhetorical treatises, dialectics, comments, etc.; his noble spirit is thus manifested:—

ומכל הספרים היקרים האלה • הנני מוכן ומזומן •  
 אם יחנני ה' בריאות ושלוה • לשלוח אליך לקושים, ככל  
 הפצך • לטעת אותם בכרמך הנחמד לכבוד המחברים  
 ז"ל • ולשמח נפש כל אהבי לשון הקדש; כבר שלחתי  
 פעמים הרבה לגדולי חכמי הדור ולצעיריהם • לקושים  
 ארוכים כמה שבידי • וממה שביד אהבי ורעי • בלא  
 כסף ובלא מחיר • כי לדעתי כך היא חובתנו • וכך  
 יפה לנו לעשות • קיו מן המפרכסות זו את זו • ומי  
 יתן והיה לבבי זה לכל, החכמים המפוזרים בארבע  
 כנפות הארץ —

“From all these precious books I am ready and willing, if  
 the Almighty spare my health and strength, to send you as  
 many extracts as you desire; to plant them in your vineyard  
 for the glory of the authors, of blessed memory, as well as for  
 the delight of all the lovers of the sacred language. I have  
 already frequently sent copious extracts to eminent, as well  
 as to less renowned men, from those works in my possession,  
 as well as in the possession of my friends, gratuitously; for I  
 think such is our duty, leading as it does to a greater mutual  
 excitement, and inducing a harmony of feeling in so doing. <sup>U</sup>  
 that such a feeling may influence all the wise, scattered through  
 the four corners of the earth!”—Astounding liberality! כמותו  
 ירבה בישראל

The editor, in his preface to the same magazine for 1841,  
 says:—

תקותי כי לא יארכו הימים ימי השלוה ואמת •  
 וחכמי וגדולי ישראל יתנו יד זה לזה • ויעשו כלם אגרה  
 אחת להאיר עיני בני דורם במושכלות • ולהוציא לאור  
 תעלומות חכמה • לבלתי היות עוד עם ישראל למשל  
 ולשנינה בפי הגוים

“I hope that those happy days are not far distant—the  
*returning days of truth and peace*, when the wise and the great  
 of Israel, will go hand in hand, and combine to enlighten their  
 brethren in all that is conducive to the refinement of mind,  
 and to usher forth works, illustrating what may be obscure,  
 that Israel may not be ‘a proverb and a bye-word in the  
 mouths of Gentiles.’”

I hope shortly to see this Jewish and philanthropic feeling, manifested amongst our brethren in Great Britain; that Jewish orthodox periodicals will be properly patronised with money and talent. I heed not who may be your editors, and whether of weekly, monthly, or quarterly journals.—Encourage them! By increasing the matter with versatile talent, seeking for, and finding some, who may aid in your glorious cause of *true reform* and *earnest regeneration*, you will increase the interest in your publications; and by increasing the consumption, you will have to offer them at low prices. Happy days, when the sons and daughters of Judah, after prayers and a comfortable repast on sabbath, forgetting all trouble and anxiety, will read their *own* periodicals; the composition of their *own* flock, breathing feeling in every line responded to by every Jewish heart.

Hebrew poetry, Hebrew biography, Hebrew learned controversy, Jewish history, pieces of Talmud copiously explained in good plain English, for the aid of students struggling with and stumbling over apparent obscurities, will, I hope, be comprised in our Jewish periodicals.

The time may come, when some of our thoughts upon *literature* in such periodicals, may be thought worthy of being extracted; translated into Hebrew or German, and inserted in the כרם חמד "Kerem Chemed," the בכורי העתים "Bikkuri Haithim," "The Orient," and into other esteemed works; so that the improvement, as well as the utility of the Anglo-Jewish press, will be made manifest.

A bond of unity must be made between our literary and influential men at home, and if possible, abroad; to combine genius, talent, zeal, and pecuniary means for our national good.

Your merchants, loan-contractors, stock-brokers, men of independent property as well as tradesmen, will, I trust, exert themselves to bring about a national *literary* change: to encourage Jewish learning, and to *support*, whilst they *enrich*, their national institutions. Shall we remain indolent whilst others are making a rapid march in science? Shall we neglect the cultivation of mental excellence, whilst light shines all around us? In the Augustan age in which the illustrious



