The hundreth anniversary of the death of Samuel David Luzzatto has witnessed a resurgence of interest in the pioneering achievements of this celebrated scholar. TRADITION's Summer issue contained a selection from his writings as well as a brief resumé of his major contributions to Jewish scholarship. In this essay, Professor Rudavsky presents in historic perspective a detailed account of Luzzatto's life and work. The author is Associate Professor of Hebrew Culture and Education at New York University and Chairman of the National Education Committee of the Zionist Organization of America. The following article forms a chapter of Dr. Rudavsky's forthcoming book, "Emancipation and Adjustment," scheduled for publication this winter.

SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO
AND NEO-ORTHODOXY

I. The Emancipation and Religious Judaism

Brands of Judaism

As is commonly known, there was only one brand of Judaism in Europe before the struggle for Emancipation started in earnest in Germany during the turbulent early decades of the nineteenth century. This, of course, was traditional Judaism, described as "Orthodoxy" since the final years of the eighteenth century. This term, it should be observed, is a misnomer when applied to Judaism, for it is derived from the Greek and means correct belief or opinion. It may be a suitable adjective when used in connection with Christianity, in which creed and dogma play an important role; but not so in Judaism which is essentially a praxis, consisting of mitzvot and stressing action and conduct. The idiom "Orthodox Judaism" appeared for the first time, it seems, in a Berlin periodical in 1795,¹ as a pejorative term alluding to the majority

21
of Jews adhering to traditionalism, whom the liberals regarded as backward and obscurantist.

Reform Judaism was an outcome of the clash between so-called Orthodoxy and Haskalah or Enlightenment. Reform represented a rebellion against what it charged was staid Orthodoxy. The latter ideology, too, did not emerge unscathed and unaltered from the conflict. Several types of Orthodoxy resulted, their differences revolving primarily about the pivot of secular culture. The ultra-pietist wing insisted that true Judaism was opposed to the Haskalah, which advocated the blending of Judaism with secular culture; the more liberal elements, however, believed that Judaism could be harmonized with it.

The staunch, extreme Orthodox segment in German Jewry that opposed the intrusion of modernism and worldly ideas was also dubbed by the Reformers as the Altglaübigen or “Old Believers.” The latter continued to live as they did in the ghetto, in a milieu dominated entirely by Talmudic concepts and precepts, refusing to make any concession to the Zeitgeist, the rationalistic spirit of the times. They regarded the culture of the outside world as hostile to Judaism and inconsistent with it, and, therefore, to be rejected and shunned. This fundamentalist view was shared by like-minded Jewish pietists in other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe.

A leading protagonist of the rigorous outlook was Moses Sofer (1763-1839), who in his Tzavoat Mosheh forbade his children to read the works of “Moses of Dessau”, i.e., Moses Mendelssohn, the progenitor of the Enlightenment in Germany. He also exhorted them not to acquire a general education, attend the theater, or engage in worldly pursuits. “Nor may you contend” the eminent sage declared, “that times have changed, for we have an Ancient Father, Blessed be His Name, who has not and will not change.” Yet among the devout there were also more moderate attitudes towards secular culture.

Neo-Orthodoxy

The faction in Orthodox Judaism opposing the ultra-pietist viewpoint was initiated in Germany by a younger contemporary
Samuel David Luzzatto and Neo-Orthodoxy

of Moses Sofer, the Chacham Isaac Bernays (1792-1849), who adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Enlightenment. The fact that Bernays was a graduate of the University of Würzburg prompted the Hamburg Jewish community to elect him as its rabbi in 1821, in the hope that a man of his progressive temperament and education would succeed in winning back to orthodoxy the errant youth that had been straying away to the Reform Temples. It was left, however, to Samson Raphael Hirsch, an ardent disciple of Isaac Bernays, to formulate the basic rationale for the neo-Orthodox sector which deviated from old Orthodoxy in that it accepted secular culture. Actually, neo-Orthodoxy was not a new phenomenon in Jewish life, but merely a reversion to the pattern of Judaism prevailing in Arab and Christian Spain, where Jews participated actively in secular life and affairs. The supporters of this new trend in traditional Judaism in nineteenth century Germany did not, of course, capitulate to the Enlightenment; they merely came to terms with it.4

Luzzatto and Hirsch

Neo-Orthodoxy in Judaism thus implies acceptance of the totality of Jewish law and practice within a framework of modernism. In Italy, its chief exponent was the brilliant and versatile Jewish scholar, Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), who, with the other ideologues of the movement, shared an a priori belief in the divine character of the Pentateuch. According to them, the basic doctrines of Judaism fall outside the realm of reason, which is the product of human perception alone and not as reliable a guide as divine revelation. On this account, too, no one can question the miracles or supernatural events related in the Mosaic books, for they are beyond nature and experience. In general, the neo-Orthodox, like the Orthodox, followed the teachings of Judah Halevi (1085-1140), who extolled religion and faith over philosophy and logic.5 Luzzatto warned that anyone who does not subscribe to the Sinaitic revelation and the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch undermines Judaism.6

Italian Orthodoxy, unlike that of Germany and other parts of Europe, did not have to wrestle with the problem of secular
education, for among Italian Jewry worldly knowledge was taken for granted. Moreover, Luzzatto, unlike Hirsch, was closely associated with the Wissenschaft des Judentums or Jewish Science movement, with which he came in contact by reason of the fact that his native Trieste was a part of Austria, where that tendency had gained a foothold. Luzzatto, who regarded the Pentateuch as sacrosanct, employed the critical method of Jewish Science in the investigation of only some of the externals surrounding its text. But, in the analysis of other Biblical books, he applied critical procedures. Hirsch, however, denounced the evolutionary approach of Jewish Science as doing violence to the basic principles of Judaism. He adopted a policy of noli me tangere toward the whole religious tradition, maintaining that the method of Jewish Science "pretends that the later authorities (in Judaism) did not understand the earlier, nor the latest, the later . . . and so insinuating that the basis on which living Judaism rests at the present day . . . is nothing but one deception built on another by guides stricken with blindness and ignorance."

Luzzatto also differed from Hirsch on the question of Jewish nationalism, the mission theory, and related issues. Luzzatto, though not a Zionist in the modern sense of the term, may be said to have been a forerunner of Zionism. He was an ardent Jewish nationalist who regarded the survival of the Jewish people as an end in itself. Hirsch believed that the chief aspect of Jewish distinctiveness was religious in character and motivation, while Luzzatto regarded the Jewish people as a nationalistic entity and their survival as such, a prime and vital objective. He, therefore, advocated an intensification not only of the religious but also of the nationalistic consciousness.

II. Life and Works

Biography

Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865) was born in Trieste, when that city was still under Austrian rule, to an old Italian Jewish family that descended from the noted Jewish scholar, poet, and mystic, Moses Chayim Luzzatto of Padua (1707-47), who, with
Samuel David Luzzatto and Neo-Orthodoxy

his dramas and other works, is often considered to have been the founder of modern Hebrew literature. Samuel was also descended from Ephraim Luzzatto (1739-93), a Hebrew poet and physician, who, in 1768, published in London a volume of Hebrew songs and poetry. Chezekiah, Samuel’s father, was a deeply religious man, inclined toward mysticism, and though only a wood turner by trade, possessed considerable Jewish and general learning. A Lufts-mensch by temperament, Chezekiah was continually preoccupied with grandiose plans and schemes for constructing a perpetual motion machine and similar contrivances. As a result of these distractions, he found it difficult to concentrate on earning a livelihood for his family. Because of his poverty and also in keeping with numerous rabbinic injunctions, Chezekiah taught his son a trade, but the latter from his early youth preferred a scholarly career.

Samuel was a precocious and gifted lad. He received his basic education at the Trieste Talmud Torah, a liberal institution organized along the progressive principles laid down by Mendelssohn’s disciple, Naphtali Wessely (1725-1805), which called for a combined program of Jewish and general studies. After completing his formal schooling in Bible, Talmud, general science, ancient and modern languages at the local school, young Luzzatto continued to acquire further learning through his own efforts and also with the aid of his father. He earned his livelihood as a tutor. In 1829, Luzzatto left his native city to accept a professorship in the newly-established Collegio Rabbinico in Padua, the first modern rabbinical seminary in the world — a post he occupied for the rest of his days. His academic career gave him an opportunity and motivation for study and writing.

Luzzatto managed to exhume numerous dust-covered manuscripts from archives and libraries, thereby saving them from oblivion. One of his most important works was the publication, with an introduction, annotations, and corrections, of some eighty-six religious poems of Judah Halevi, in the Divan (1864), a work which helped to open the portals of medieval Hebrew poetry to the Jewish scholarly world. Some years earlier, he prepared his Mavo (1856), a historical and critical introduction to the Machzor, or festival liturgy, according to the “Roman” version. He com-
posed the first Jewish critical commentaries on a number of Biblical books and translated into Italian the Pentateuch, the Haftarot, and the Hebrew daily prayer book. His vast literary activity, which covered a period of five decades, contributed much to the revival of Hebrew belle lettres. He was not only the author of Hebrew grammatical and philological treatises and of theological studies, in Italian as well as in Hebrew, but his articles are found in practically every Jewish scholarly periodical of the period, in Hebrew, German, French or Italian.

Chief among his prolific writings are his "Iggrot Shadal", consisting of some 700 letters written to a large circle of scholars on a wide range of subjects. Published posthumously (1822-1894) in nine volumes, they attest to the extensive erudition and great encyclopedic learning of its author. Luzzatto's sons selected some 90 of these letters and compiled them in a collection called Peninei Shadal. Luzzatto's thought is not organized in any volume or group of volumes, but is scattered throughout his books, essays, and letters.

III. Faith and Reason

Romantic Influences

Luzzatto was influenced by the Romantic spirit that engulfed nineteenth century Europe, especially Germany, France, England, and Italy. The new trend marked a shift from the rationalistic currents of the earlier era, which brought on the French Revolution. While rationalism reverted to classical pagan thought, Romanticism was based on the Christian world view of later centuries. In the case of the Jewish scholars and literati of that age, including Luzzatto, the Romantic tendency was evinced in the return to Jewish tradition, the regeneration of Jewish learning, the Hebrew language, literature, and poetry. It stimulated the study of the evolution of Judaism which lay the foundation of the Jewish Science movement. Not only the European but also the Italian Romantic movement affected Luzzatto. He specifically refers in one of his letters to the impact which the outstanding Italian Romantic writer, Alesandro Manzoni (1785-1873), had upon him.

26
Two centuries before Shadal,* Blaise Pascal (1628-62) espoused the emotional approach to religion, declaring that “the heart has its own thoughts, which reason does not know.” Several of Shadal’s contemporaries influenced his attitude toward religion, especially Rousseau (1712-1778), whom Luzzatto mentions frequently and who, like Luzzatto, gave expression to conflicting rationalistic and Romantic viewpoints. Rousseau had started out as a rationalist, a disciple of Voltaire and the French Enlightenment, but in his later years he became its most violent opponent; accordingly, he at first challenged tradition and later defied the Enlightenment. Luzzatto did not evince both tendencies at successive periods, but he did so simultaneously, disapproving, for example, of the critical investigation of the Pentateuch on the ground that the sacred text was too carefully guarded to permit errors to creep in, yet unhesitatingly assailing the traditional view that the Hebrew diacritical signs are of Mosaic origin, and contending — as did Elijah Levita (1469-1549) almost four centuries earlier — that they were devised during the Gaonic period. Because of his contradictory tendencies, Luzzatto was regarded as a Maskil (an adherent of the Enlightenment) by the ultra-Orthodox, and as a fundamentalist by the Maskilim.

The Intellect and Emotions

Actually, one could easily attack the notion that because reason is an essential criterion in many aspects of life, it must be the sole test in all. We are equipped with sentiments and emotions that we should at times exploit in preference to logic. In the area of religion and conduct, as Rousseau already pointed out, it may be better to rely on sentiment and feelings rather than on syllogisms. In a similar vein, Luzatto held that religion should direct man’s emotions towards the good and the right. If philosophy should presume to guide religion, both would perish.11

Another philosopher who exerted considerable influence on Shadal was Etienne Condillac (1715-1780), whom Luzzatto called his master and teacher.12 A disciple of John Locke, Con-
dillac held that all conscious mental activities derive from sense perception. The mind is a *tabula rasa*\(^\text{13}\) (clean slate) on which sense impressions are recorded. Both Condillac and Locke regarded personality as an aggregate of sensations.

These inferences, however, lead logically to atheism and determinism. To forestall them, Condillac appended a treatise to his main psychological work, *Tracte des Sensations*, in which he repudiated anti-religious conclusions and upheld the doctrine of free will, as well as the substantive reality of the soul, as a sort of sixth human sense. Luzzatto not only accepted the religious principles outlined by Condillac, but in line with the latter's Sensualism asserted that what cannot be attained through sense perception cannot be investigated.\(^\text{14}\) Consequently, abstract questions, such as the existence of the Deity or the soul or immortality, or even the problem of Biblical miracles, fall outside the realm of human inquiry. Nevertheless, Shadal, in one of his Italian works, attempted to prove on the basis of the rationalistic argument from order, harmony, and the laws in nature that there is a divine guiding force in the universe.\(^\text{15}\)

Luzzatto was a strange combination of critical and Romantic ideas — a sort of Janus head, each of whose two faces looked in an opposite direction. This accounts for his numerous inconsistencies and for his failure to develop a systematic philosophy. On the one hand, he follows a rationalistic course when he rejects mysticism as a current of thought foreign to Judaism; he does so again when he declares that the Zohar could not have been a creation of Simeon Bar Yocheai, the second century sage, since it discusses the Hebrew diacritical marks and accents\(^\text{16}\) which, as previously observed, he regarded as representing the product of a considerably later age.* Despite this attitude toward mysticism and the Zohar, he nevertheless believed that the dead appearing in dreams confirm the existence of another world.\(^\text{17}\) We discern another logical incongruity in his stance on the Book of Isaiah. Though Shadal did not insist on the absolute incorruptibility of the texts of the Hebrew prophetic books, he, like other Traditionalists, found sufficient reason to uphold the unity of the book of Isaiah, includ-

\* Luzzatto's view, however, runs counter to the Talmudic position. Cf. *Nedarim* 37a, *Berakhot* 62a and *Eruvin* 53a. — Ed.
Samuel David Luzzatto and Neo-Orthodoxy

ing the latter portion beginning with chapter 40, which Krochmal and most Bible critics since the nineteenth century had attributed to one or more later prophets; in fact, he broke with his friend, Solomon Judah Rapoport, a noted Hebrew scholar, on this issue. Luzzatto simply maintained that the same author could employ various styles of writing; moreover, that it would be an insult to earlier generations to charge that they did not accurately transmit so important a work as the Book of Isaiah. This opinion, however, did not deter him from making corrections in its text, as he did in non-Mosaic books of the Bible.

Shadal adopted the critical approach when he attributed the Book of Ecclesiastes to a much later date than the traditional one. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that the Book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Sacred Scriptures, he opposed its pessimistic outlook. However, he upheld in the main the traditional view that the Psalms were the work of King David, though he admitted that there were some later Psalms. He believed, too, that the Book of Job was of Mosaic authorship and not a product of the post-Biblical period as Biblical scholars generally held. Though he regarded the Torah as being letter perfect and insisted that it “does not dread the light nor does it fear true criticism,” he nevertheless maintained that it should not be exposed to question and scrutiny.

Scriptural Truth

The Jew, Luzzatto urges, must accept on faith the fundamental doctrine of the divine origin of the Torah and its corollary, the existence of One God, as the sole binding dogma in Judaism. From this belief the sanction for all religious laws and observances is derived. There may be other principles in the Torah, but they are not considered as primary in Judaism. For this reason, Luzzatto points out, as did Mendelssohn before him, Jews could differ among themselves on a host of religious matters without being considered heretics, as illustrated by the case of Hasdai Crescas (1340-1410), or his disciple, Joseph Albo (1380-1440), who took issue with Maimonides for failing to distinguish in his Thirteen Articles of Faith between fundamental and derivative doc-
trines. Crescas even questioned the doctrine of free will, while Gersonides (1288-1344) subscribed to the theory of creation from primordial matter and not creation ex nihilo; yet the piety of these men was not impugned, for Judaism does not lay stress on man's beliefs and opinions, its major emphasis being placed on practice. The Torah aims to lead man into paths of righteousness; to improve his ethics through obedience to its laws, rather than to insure a correct and uniform faith.

Luzzatto is firmly convinced of the truth of the miracles recounted in the Bible, as well as of prophecy, for he declares that all natural laws are of necessity the consequences of God's will, since the natural forces are not self-propelling. Man knows only the laws of cause and effect, which are merely a matter of the sensations and experience - but supernatural events are beyond these domains. It is not impossible that something may take place outside the area of sense perception or experience. Prophecy, too, falls in this category; it contradicts experience and experience cannot, therefore, be invoked to confirm it. Like Judah Halevi, Shadal regarded the miracles associated with the Exodus as historical, since they were confirmed by 600,000 living witnesses on their way from Egypt.

Though he is firmly convinced of the truth of the Bible, Luzzatto asserts, nevertheless, that the main function of the Torah is to foster better human behavior. The search for pure truth is the domain of philosophy; the purpose of religion is to teach virtue and direct people in the righteous path. The Deity cannot always employ perfect truth in His communication with man, for it is beyond the latter's power to grasp it. Accordingly, society cannot be sustained on the basis of genuine truth; it depends on the kind of illusion that nature itself occasionally resorts to in performing God's will. Nature, for example, conceals the underlying biological purpose of marriage and wedlock, procreation and its attendant responsibilities and burdens of parenthood, behind the overpowering emotion of romantic and parental love. Similarly, the Bible hides the true reason for sacrifice and worship behind the simple notion that the Lord is concerned with these rituals, when their prime purpose is actually the psychological effect on the worshipper who is to be impressed by the ritual with a sense of hu-
mility and reverence.

*Ethics of Judaism*

Luzzatto regarded Judaism in this light, as a religion of the heart rather than of the intellect; its doctrines, he observed, give evidence of the spirit of compassion with which man is naturally endowed, and which impels him to do good for its own sake. This sense of pity is an outgrowth of the normal human tendency of self-love projected to another being. This impulse animates, Luzzatto indicates, many of the Scriptural and rabbinic precepts, exemplified by the Biblical provision for the return at night of the pledged garment (Ex. 22:25), or the institution of the Sabbatical year (Deut. 15:9) which cancels all debts and relieves the poor man of a paramount financial burden. Characteristic of this trait, too, is the rabbinic law prohibiting an employer from depriving the porters of their wages, because they accidentally broke the barrel of wine they carried, (*Bava Metzia* 83a). The attitude toward the widow, orphan, and stranger, so often stressed, exemplified the quality of mercy in the Mosaic and Talmudic laws. It is for this reason that even the pagan people, in ancient times, acknowledged the high morality of Israel, for even the royal sinners among them, like Ahab, extended forbearance and kindness (I Kings 20:31).

The Bible, of course, also includes precepts which may appear to us as brutal — for example, the commandment, “thou shalt not suffer any soul to live” (Deut. 20:16) from among the Canaanites condemned to annihilation. But Shadal draws a parallel between this kind of Biblical injunction and various natural catastrophies. Both nature and Torah are manifestations of God. There is no point in questioning inevitable natural disasters. Shadal’s unshakeable faith in divine mercy, kindness and justice is especially moving in view of the many tragedies he experienced. His first wife died in 1841 following a protracted siege of melancholia which continued for eight years after the death of a young child, and his other children were constantly ailing. His eldest son, Oheb Ger (Philoxenus), a highly gifted and promising young scholar, died at twenty-five; his only daughter, Miriam,
who was very talented linguistically, passed away unexpectedly at the age of eighteen. Yet Luzzatto remained steadfast in his faith despite his numerous adversities.

**Abrahamism and Atticism**

Western civilization, Luzzatto explains, is composed of two antithetical forces: Atticism, the culture of ancient Greece or Athens, and Abrahamism, the religious thought of the Jews, which originated with Abraham, chosen of God, because he rejected polytheism. God had charged Abraham and his descendants with the duty of preserving both Judaism and universal ethics for posterity. As a means of setting them apart from other peoples, the Jews were given special precepts regarding diet, circumcision, laws of purity and sacrifice. It is only in the distinctive rites essential to Jewish group coherence and survival that Judaism differentiates between Jew and Gentile. Unlike other faiths, Judaism promises salvation to the righteous of all people. Accordingly, all men are God’s children, but the Jews are His Chosen People, for they are a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6) and as such must bear special ethical and ritual responsibilities and obligations. Their selection is thus merely the application of the idea of “noblesse oblige.”

According to Luzzatto, mankind is indebted to Israel for morality. Such notions as justice and uprightness were received as divine gifts at Sinai. On the other hand, Greece gave to the world philosophy, science and art. Our predilection for the beautiful and pleasant over the good and beneficial, our preference for delightful rhetoric over genuine truth, for theoretic abstraction over integrity and honesty, and generally, the pursuit of pleasure, pride, and wealth, Luzzatto attributes to Athens. He sees no virtue in technocracy; he points up the moral lag in our culture to which Rousseau and others made reference; and this, too, he charges to Athens and its rationalistic doctrines. “When were there as many great inventions as in this generation, yet have these new discoveries eliminated war, murder, robbery, poverty, disease, envy, hate, oppression, and untimely death?” Shadal challenges. He reproaches man for having improved his machines
but not himself.

The Greek elements in our civilization, Luzzatto complains, have produced a meaningless intellectuality, suitable for philosophers but not for the masses who require the vitamins of morality. The exaltation of reason, according to Luzzatto, is foreign to Judaism. He therefore criticizes Maimonides and Ibn Ezra for their rationalistic inclinations, which were prone to divert Judaism from its true course into alien channels of thought. Maimonides is attacked for not citing the Rabbinic sources for the decisions in his Code; but even more so for having advocated Aristotle's Golden Mean instead of the uncompromising path of the deity. Ibn Ezra is assailed for his leanings toward Hellenistic rationalism which leads to speculation and not to concrete action toward the goal of human betterment. After centuries of contemplation philosophers have as yet failed to agree on any one system of thought; they have, however, made pessimists of people. On the other hand, Judaism demands of an individual that he follow the divine precepts, in order to attain the lofty heights of the righteous, who, according to the Talmud, are even greater than the heavenly angels. To achieve true progress, civilization must strengthen its religious and ethical moorings, while combatting and countering its immoral, atheistic Greek foundations. This attitude prompts Luzzatto to proclaim feelingly, "My God is not the God of Kant, but the God of the Tanakh."

Luzzatto and Spinoza

Luzzatto regarded Baruch Spinoza as the epitome of the philosopher. A son of Marrano parents, Spinoza received a good Jewish education, on which he later drew for some of his philosophical theories.

Spinoza, the Jew steeped in monotheistic thought, diverges from the dualism of his master, Descartes. For Spinoza there is only one single substance — God, Who is not a separate independent Being, but Deus sive natura: God is nature; the natural order and God are one. Everything that exists or occurs in the world is an aspect of one of the two attributes of God—thought and extension. The spiritual or mental life of man is as much a part of God as the sands and the waters of the sea.
This view of God led the German mystic and Romanticist Novalis to describe Spinoza as “God intoxicated,” while others like Shadal branded Spinoza an atheist. Spinoza’s God is not Luzzatto’s Creator of the universe, the ethical God of Judaism or its daughter religions, which are predicated on a belief in a living, loving, moral Deity who is concerned with the conduct and welfare of His creatures. Spinoza’s God lacks a moral purpose in the universe. Spinoza, too, is a rigid determinist, in the tradition of the ancient Stoics. He maintained that “all things which happen, happen according to the fixed law of nature.” One’s selection of a course of action or behavior is, it follows, the product of pre-conditions, psychological, or other natural factors; there is then no free choice or free will. Nothing is inherently good or bad in the world; good and bad is always relative to a given situation. The two qualities are, therefore, not opposing concepts. Man must learn to surrender to the natural sequence of events, not to react to them emotionally but rather free himself from the shackles of his normal sentiments and live as sub specie aeternitatis (under the aspect of eternity). The highest goal of man should be the intellectual love of God, which one can achieve through a better knowledge of the world, which will endow him with greater power and control over his environment.

Without attempting to scrutinize the fallacies in the reasoning or assumptions of Spinoza, we shall touch merely on some of their implications. Spinoza’s God is too detached from humanity to have any moral influence upon it. He is not the God of Revelation or the God who inspired the Hebrew prophets to protest against iniquity and injustice and who, when catastrophe struck their people, brought them solace and comfort. Spinoza’s doctrine of resignation would make the sacrifices of the Jewish martyrs—in fact, the entire struggle that is Jewish history—meaningless. His attitude, too, toward good and evil deprives men of the motivation and clarity of choice that religion offers; moreover, it nullifies the message and purpose of the teachers and sages in Judaism and their lofty ideals. With his beliefs, Spinoza had read himself out of Judaism; by his own admission, he did so even before his formal excommunication in 1656.
Samuel David Luzzatto and Neo-Orthodoxy

Spinoza's fundamental philosophy and metaphysical outlook were thoroughly repugnant to Luzzatto. His extreme rationalism clashed sharply with Luzzatto's Romanticism. It is logically pointless for anyone to assume an attitude of piety or worship of a Divinity that represents merely the fixed and immutable order of nature or a mechanical process. Luzzatto, moreover, extolled the human emotions, which Spinoza claimed merely enslaved man and from which man had to liberate himself, in order to achieve true happiness, for one who does not love or hate, Luzzatto maintained, is not human, but a flint of rock. Luzzatto assumed further that compassion was the source of Judaism while Spinoza regarded this emotion as a weak, feminine virtue. Luzzatto, too, cherished the Jewish precepts and rituals, while Spinoza failed to see any intrinsic sanctity in them. The doctrines of the Torah which Luzzatto considered eternal, Spinoza saw only as having been designed for the government and survival of the ancient Jewish State.

These differences in viewpoint led Luzzatto to denounce Spinoza and to carry on a polemic war with the latter's disciples. Luzzatto regarded Spinozaism as the confirmed enemy of Judaism. "Only he whose heart is stone can see merely determinism in the miracles of nature," Luzzatto wrote. He further declared that one who believed as Spinoza did was bound to be an immoral person, for a doctrine that there is no moral law or moral judge in the world, leads to ethical chaos. Luzzatto's opinions were thus entirely irreconcilable with those of the seventeenth century philosopher.

IV. Jewish Nationalism

Nationalistic Influences

To the extent that Romanticism focused on the history of a people, it gave further impulse to the growth of its nationalistic spirit. Romanticism concentrated on the early centuries and the primitive stages of the group, when it was relatively free from the shackles of law, custom, and conventions of later ages. It held the tribal or ethnic unit in high esteem and sought out its dis-
tinctive traits and characteristics. Romanticism thus became a vital stimulus in European nationalism.

The nineteenth century was marked by the nationalistic revolt in European countries. It was particularly intense in Italy, which had enjoyed a brief taste of national unity under Napoleon. The example set by the Italian heroes in their battle for unification could not but have impressed Shadal. The nationalistic atmosphere of his time doubtlessly affected Luzzatto's Jewish nationalistic outlook. It may be observed in passing that though he often shifted in his research and thought from the Romantic to the rationalistic approach, he was entirely consistent and unflagging in his Jewish nationalistic zeal.

**Jewish Particularism**

Shadal emulated Judah Halevi (1085-1140) in his nationalistic as well as religious outlook. In Judah Halevi who regarded the Jewish people as a select group, the heart among the nations, Shadal saw a kindred spirit. His love for the nationalistic poet led him to publish Halevi's Zionides in 1840 in a special volume which he titled *Betulat Bat Yehudah* (The Virgin Daughter of Judah) after the Biblical phrase referring to Jerusalem, which was considered inviolate. It was Luzzatto's nationalism that prompted him to devote his life to an intensification of the Jewish consciousness through an exploration and interpretation of Judaism's great classical and medieval literature.

Luzzatto referred to his conception of Judaism as Abrahamism, thereby stressing its ethnic element. The special precepts given Israel were a means of guarding the group's distinctiveness, but the universal ethical principles of justice, righteousness, and morality were designed for the protection of society and humanity generally. Thus Jewish nationalism is not a narrow chauvinism; it serves humanity as a whole. Accordingly, in surrendering his particularism and uniqueness, the Jew does violence not only to Judaism but deprives mankind of an important ethical force. The moral temperament which has characterized Judaism is, however, a psychic, not a racial trait; accordingly, it is not transmitted to Jews in their genes, but is an important element in their religious teachings.
Shadal's nationalism is evident also in his attitude toward Jewish Emancipation. In pursuing the spirit of modernism, many Jews in his day, Luzzatto complains, have surrendered their Jewish individuality and distinctiveness in an attempt to be “alike unto the nations” and earn their approval, in return for which they expected to be granted civic equality. In fact, these Jews, Luzzatto insisted, are prepared to surrender their national values even for a mere shadow of egalitarianism, let alone complete liberty. Such equality, however, he could not regard as true emancipation; it spells bondage and servility. The principal goal of the Jew should be to achieve inner freedom, which is the only kind worth striving for.\(^3\)

Emancipation, Luzzatto stresses, is not a panacea for all the ailments of Judaism. The survival of the Jewish people depends far more on the creation among Jews of an esprit de corps, a feeling of brotherhood and kinship. Their major goal should not be the attainment of parity with their neighbors, but rather the development of a sense of national pride, which should stimulate the study of the Torah and the Hebrew language and should discourage the spread of the spirit of Atticism among them. Nor is Emancipation an unmitigated blessing; in France, Belgium, and Holland, where Jews have been completely enfranchised, Jewish creativity declined, Jewish religious growth was stunted, and the Torah and Hebrew language forgotten. The freedom in these countries was an invitation to fusion\(^4\) and assimilation. In one of his poems Shadal inveighed against those Maskilim who neglected their own heritage, preferring Goethe and Schiller to the Hebrew prophets and sages:

"Perish he who shames his mother
And ridicules his father's old age
Who makes of Emancipation a fetish.

May my tongue cleave to my palate
May my right eye be dimmed
May my right hand wither, if I forget thee, Oh Zion."\(^3\)\(^5\)
Shadal pleaded for the emancipation of Judaism from foreign cultural influences, in the conviction that one of its crucial problems was to maintain its pristine purity. He had little use for philosophers generally and took up the cudgels as we have seen, particularly against Spinoza, whom he regarded as the embodiment of the anti-religious tendencies in philosophy. Because Maimonides sought to blend Judaism with Aristotelian philosophy, he was attacked by Luzzatto as a "stumbling block" and "the source of our troubles." In borrowing from Aristotle, he charged, Maimonides converted Judaism from a religion of the heart to one of the mind. It is not possible to fit Judaism into the Graeco-Arab mould of thought without distorting its original nature. Maimonides' venture in this direction led him to curb freedom of thought among Jews by fixing thirteen definite articles of faith.

Maimonides was not the only medieval Jewish sage with whom Luzzatto clashed. He criticized Abraham Ibn Ezra for his inclinations toward Hellenistic rationalism and charged him with concealing his true anti-traditional views. By contrast, he alludes to Rashi as "a humble and wholesome personality." Shadal carried his opposition to the infusion of foreign currents in Judaism to an extreme, when he censured the noted Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz for asserting that the Babylonian Talmud was superior to its Jerusalem counterpart. This viewpoint brought Luzzatto into sharp conflict with the Maskilim, among them Nachman Krochmal, who advocated a synthesis of Judaism with European culture, and a bitter dispute ensued between them and Luzzatto on this issue.

The debate on the intrusion of alien elements into Judaism raises the question of cultural cross-fertilization, whether Judaism should remain monolithic and exclude the cultural ingredients of its environment, or should adapt itself to them. It must be conceded that Judaism could hardly have survived if it had lacked the vitality to adjust to the dominant cultures among which it lived, or if it had failed to absorb some external ideas congenial to it while rejecting others. For that matter, Shadal himself yielded to the rationalistic and secular currents, though he vigorously stressed the danger that if outside thought were to unduly influence
Samuel David Luzzatto and Neo-Orthodoxy

Jewish doctrines and principles, Judaism was bound to be submerged and disappear.

Jewish Science

Leopold Zunz, the initiator of the Jewish Science movement in Germany, and his followers aimed to construct a suitable monument to the rich Jewish past and its cultural achievement, which they believed was coming to an end with the advent of the Emancipation. They aspired for the recognition of Jewish culture as a part of world culture, and also to introduce it as a discipline to be taught in the universities. This, they believed, would raise the prestige of the Jews in the eyes of their neighbors, who would, in consequence, be moved to grant them equal human, civil, and political rights.

The pursuit of this objective brought in its wake apologetic tendencies on the part of scholars engaged in Jewish Science, who underscored the humanistic rather than the nationalistic and distinctive values in Jewish literature and lore. Shadal objected strenuously to these efforts and urged that Jewish Science be made an instrument for Jewish survival. He denounced those who were concerned with the Jewish past in the manner of antiquarians, whose paramount interest in exhuming ancient civilizations was primarily academic and little more. Luzzatto, however, saw the Jewish past as a current in an ever-expanding stream of Jewish cultural creativity. Any other type of Jewish learning is bound to die out, he warned. The function of Jewish Science, he insisted, is to train scholars imbued with a love and reverence for Judaism, who will dedicate themselves to the task of fostering and extending Jewish knowledge as a phase of an ongoing and burgeoning Jewish life. Shadal reproved Abraham Geiger for concentrating primarily on the Jewish past, with relatively little regard for its present and future.

Reform Judaism

From his early days, Luzzatto was an implacable opponent of Reform. In 1818 he wrote the “Vision of the Seduced Cities,”...
a poem denouncing the offenses of the Reformers against tradi-
tion, notably their attempt to replace Hebrew by the vernacular
in synagogues in Berlin, the very city in which Naphtali Wesseley
and Mendelssohn had done so much to revive it. “Today, Israel
abandons its sacred language,” the poet predicted, “tomorrow, it
will surrender its Torah!” He also protested vigorously against
the attempt by the Frankfort Reform Society in 1843 to abolish
the rite of circumcision and other time-honored Jewish practices.

Luzzatto ridiculed the mission theory of the Reformers as an
empty dream and a “vain comfort.” It was the Jewish belief in
Revelation and Torah, Luzzatto averred, not the Reform doctrine
of the Jewish mission,42 that inspired the Jew to undergo sacrifice
and martyrdom. That the mission theory has little practical sig-
nificance may be judged from the fact that the Bible which had
been disseminated among civilized nations for over 1800 years
had by far not yet brought perfection to humanity. There is
less reason to believe that the religious liberals with their inclina-
tion toward Atticism will succeed in doing so.

To achieve the Utopian state envisaged in the concept of the
Jewish mission, Shadal maintained, the human heart will have to
undergo a fundamental reconstruction bordering on the miracu-
lous. Furthermore, the Messianic ideals expounded by the He-
brew prophets, unlike the mission theory of the Reformers, did
not call for an absolute universalism; the Hebrew Prophets viewed
the Messianic era merely as an epoch of just nationalism in the
world, in which Israel, a paragon of justice, will live on its own
soil and will assume the role of judge among the nations (Isaiah
2:2-4). To attain this ideal, Jews should cling to their faith with
greater devotion and loyalty and not whittle it down, as the Re-
formers were doing.

Hebrew

Luzzatto acquired a mastery of Italian, French, and, to a lesser
extent, German, Oriental tongues, Greek and Latin, but his favor-
ite medium was Hebrew. He described his attachment to Hebrew
as the “love of the sacred tongue that burns within me.”43 Jewish
literary and cultural enterprises, he advocated, must be carried on
in their natural medium, the Hebrew language. He refused to have his commentary on Isaiah translated into German lest that militate against its publication in Hebrew, declaring that "my chief desire and aim is the resuscitation of Hebrew."44 Little wonder, then, that Luzzatto took occasion to chide his colleagues in the Jewish Science circles in Germany for writing in German rather than in Hebrew. Previously, he pointed out, Jewish scholars wrote in Hebrew because they wrote for an intimate audience of readers and they expressed their thoughts freely. Now that they wrote German, French, and English, they "must reckon with what the gentiles will say," and so they adapt their writings and often give them a Christian flavor.45

For many years Luzzatto devoted himself to the advancement of the Hebrew language. He composed Hebrew poetry, much of it quite stultified. He expressed the hope that all his writing would eventually be published in Hebrew46 and urged the establishment of a special Hebrew publishing house.47 Religious education, he felt, should be carried on in the original Hebrew and rabbinic texts and not in translation. To him, the Hebrew language was a bridge between the classical and modern cultures of the Jew, and the only means by which Hebrew literature could be revived and a love for Judaism sustained.48

The Jewish Homeland

In a letter written to Rabbi Nachman Nathan Coronel of Jerusalem, Luzzatto advocated measures "to endeavor to bring back the Jews of the Holy Land to their ancestral occupation, agriculture, and thus support themselves by the toil of their hands as do other peoples, who also take pride in doing so. If they should succeed with such a plan, they will not only rehabilitate themselves, but they will restore the Jewish homeland into a land flowing with milk and honey. Farming, too, could thus become the core of a productive economy, and would stimulate its growth."49 Shadal proposed that instead of financing the migration of Jewish boys from Asia to Europe, to be corrupted by Western civilization, egotism, and atheism, philanthropic effort should be directed toward bringing them to Palestine, where they
should engage in rewarding enterprise. The land of Israel, if worked by Jews, could be restored in time to its original state of productivity, particularly if the effort enjoyed government protection.

But Luzzatto was not only concerned with the economic regeneration of the Jewish homeland, but also with its cultural aspect. If Judaism stood for justice and righteousness, the Jewish homeland must become a center from which these ideals could flow forth to the entire world. He proposed that competent judicial authorities be trained in the Holy Land to dispense true justice to all who would come before them for judgment from every part of the earth—Jews and non-Jews alike. This idea is suggestive of the broader objective later advocated by Ahad Haam, of creating in Palestine a Jewish cultural and spiritual center to serve the Diaspora.\(^5\)

In sum, we see the prominent role that Jewish nationalism played in Luzzatto's pattern of thought. In his attitude toward Emancipation, the preservation of Hebrew culture, the place of Jewish science, Hebrew, and the question of the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland, Shadal distinguished himself as a staunch Jewish nationalist and forerunner of Zionism. In his religious views he generally concurred with his contemporary, the founder of neo-Orthodoxy in Germany, Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), who valiantly defended traditionalism against both the Reformist and the more moderate Historical School launched by Zacharia Frankel (1801-1875), out of which grew the American Conservative movement. Hirsch, however, believed that the chief aspect of Jewish separateness was religious in character and motivation, while Luzzatto, an originator and exponent of modern Jewish nationalism, regarded the survival of the Jewish people as a national group, as a paramount objective. To Luzzatto, Jewish nationalism was the nexus of Judaism. In this opinion, Luzzatto may be said to have been closer to Frankel's school of thought, which stressed the idea of Jewish peoplehood in its ideology.
NOTES

1. *Berlin Monatschrift*, Vol. XXV, p. 30. See H. D. Smith, “The Terms of the Emancipation,” 1781-1812, in *Yearbook I*. Leo Baeck Institute 1956, 6, 30. The common notion has been that the term was coined by Furtado, President of the French Assembly of Notables in 1806.

2. See Testament of Chatan Sofer in Eliezer Katz, *HeChatam Sofer*, Jerusalem, Mosad Harav Kook, 1960, p. 131 ff. The extreme pietists still object to a secular training for their sons, since they regard general culture as Judah Halevi (1085-1140) described it, “only as an ornament, not fruit but flowers.” Some ultra-Orthodox Jews even today allow only their daughters but not their sons to engage in secular study, insisting that the latter must not waste precious time on such frills, but should devote themselves only to Torah.

3. Bernays generally used the Sephardic title of *Chacham* (sage) rather than the Ashkenazic “Rabbi” as a means of pointing up his secular educational attainments, which distinguished him from the typical rabbis of his day.

4. West European and American Orthodoxy today generally subscribe to this outlook.

5. *Kuzari* IV; 13, 15, 16.


8. It is told of the elder Luzzatto that in order to avoid the penalty for violating this injunction, he wrote a letter to his son, urging him to take up a vocation. The father was said to have arranged to take a copy of this letter with him to the grave as proof in the next world of his good intentions.


11. Igrot Shadal, VI, 780.


18. The Talmud in another passage (*Bava Batra* 15a) gives later dates ranging from the time of the Judges and the Babylonian exile to the period of Ahasuerus (5th century B.C.E.). R. Samuel ben Nachmani also disputes the Mosaic authorship of the Book of Job maintaining that it was only a parable (*Bava Batra* 15a). Hai Gaon (939-1038) agreed with this view.


21. As proof of the supernatural origin of the Torah, Luzzatto argues quite naively that writing was not widespread in Mosaic times.

22. The Hebrew root rachem, pity, is associated with rechem, or womb, and thus implies maternal tenderness and love. This derivation probably had no bearing on Spinoza's classification of this emotion as a feminine virtue, but it indicates a striking coincidence.

23. Yesodei Ha-Torah, p. 48.

24. So named because the year his son was born (1829), he completed a work by that name, dealing with Targum Onkelos, an Aramaic commentary on the Pentateuch. Oheb Ger, or lover of the proselyte, is Philoxenus in Greek. The phrase is an allusion to Deut. 10:18.


27. Here Luzzatto reverses the order of the letters of the name Kant, to produce the term “Tanakh”; see also Peninei Shadal, p. 115.


29. Loc. cit.

30. Igrot 1405.

31. Kuzari II:36.

32. As previously noted, he also published Judah Halevi’s religious poetry in the Divan (1864).

33. This thought is reminiscent of Asher Ginzberg’s (Ahad Haam) views in his essay, “Slavery and Freedom,” written in 1904.

34. Igrot V, 660.


36. Mechkerei ha-Yahdut II, 164.


38. Igrot V, 701.


40. Kerem Chemed 132, ff.


42. This doctrine regards the dispersion of the Jewish people not as a punishment for their sins, but rather as a blessing designed to enable them to disseminate the teachings of ethical monotheism to all mankind (Pesachim 87b).

43. Igrot VIII, 1246.

44. Ibid., 1139, Epistolario II, 819.

45. Hapardes III, 120.

46. Igrot VIII, 1249.

47. Ibid., I, 143 ff.


49. Igrot VII, 1071.