

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. Describe *Sulamith* and its connection to the *Haskalah* movement.
2. Describe three “reforms” that were instituted in the Batavian republic by congregation “Adas Yeshurun” of Amsterdam.
3. How did Israel Jacobson amass his great wealth?
4. What was Israel Jacobson’s official position within the Consistory of Westphalia?
5. Describe the curriculum of the schools founded by Israel Jacobson?

This and much more will be addressed in the eighth lecture of this series:
"Israel Jacobson and the Beginnings of Reform".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

This lecture is dedicated to the merit and honor of the Zuroff family.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XVIII Lecture #8

ISRAEL JACOBSON AND THE BEGINNINGS OF REFORM

I. *Sulamith, Haskalah*, and the Emergence of Reform Judaism

A. Religion is the essential intellectual and moral need of a cultured man. It is the purpose of *Sulamith* to expose this religion to the brightest light. *Sulamith* desires to arouse the nation to a respect of religion, that is, of those truths which alone are worthy of the name religion. It wants to revitalize the urgent need for religious sentiment and concepts, but, at the same time, it wants to point up the truth that the concepts and commands contained in the Jewish religion are in no wise harmful, either to the individual or to society. - Further, it desires to bring the Jewish nation back to its native level of education. It will demonstrate thereby that this education is entirely pure - and that our religious concepts and teachings, **as long as they have not been disfigured through superstitious additions, would never be an obstacle to any political constitution**, but would rather be part of it, and that in those countries where total integration is not taking place, at least brotherly integration is possible.

Finally, Sulamith wants to sort out truth from falsehood, reality from illusion, the useful from the corrupt. It wants to enlighten the Jewish nation about itself. It wants to strike the dry and hard rock and bring forth from it a spring of goodness which will then, by its own power, flow forth in its pristine clearness and purify the sap of the tree. **In no wise do we desire, by vain artifices, to graft foreign fruit upon this tree** which could not grow by itself. - Only in this manner do we believe that we can utilize for the best purposes the happy atmosphere which **enlightenment and education** have brought to the souls of men and spread blessing and well-being to the whole Jewish nation.

Therefore, we issue an invitation to all those who want to take part in the spread of useful truths, in the advancement of general human welfare, in a pleasant and tasteful conversation amongst the readers; and we hope that they will participate with fitting contributions to this magazine in a manner adequate to its plan. Every truth, every inquiry which stems from pure intention, regardless from which pen it comes, will be welcome to *Sulamith*. **Content, Purpose, and Title of This Journal (Joseph Wolf) *Sulamith* Vol. 1 p. 9**

B. Let the educated and the uneducated set forth in a thousand sophisms that reason has neither the right nor the capability to raise its voice in regard to matters of faith-G-d Himself taught us otherwise! The essence of our religion is no incomprehensible mystery, but rather a discernable truth; it is an object of reflection; it need not shrink from examination or fear the verdict of reason. *Reason is its element! Learn and know, perceive and examine!* its teachers call out to us. Its greatest truths are to be *perceived, grasped, understood*. Go ahead and play with the word *faith*-for us there is no *faith* without *perception*; play with the word *feeling* - for us there is no *feeling* - for us *feeling* without *discernment* is no certain guide; assert that there is no religion without *reverie* - *reverie* without understanding fashions dreamers and fanatics. **Sermon delivered by Gotthold Salomon in 1820 in the Hamburg Temple**

C. *Religion* means to us the holy awe and reverence with which the Infinite fills us, which surrounds us on all sides, revealed to the eyes but ever hidden from the understanding; it means to us that conviction and that way of thinking with which the human being expresses his own relation and that of all finite beings to the entire All of Creation with which he feels himself closely bound up. Religion means to us a clear surmise of the Most Holy, the Unseen, the Incomprehensible, who cannot be *grasped*, but only *experienced*, only *felt*. Therefore the seat of true religion is in the heart of the earthly creature - inside of him; for visible signs can never proclaim the invisible. We can only *feel* the infinite, *believe* and not perceive - man shall not see *Me and live* (see Exodus 33:20). **Sulamith II I (1808) p. 223-224**

II. The Seesen Temple

A. *Seesen, 1810 - DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE OF JACOB*

The many hundreds of persons who had been invited came from Brunswick, Kassel, Halberstadt, Göttingen, Goslar, Helmstadt, and all surrounding places. Most of them had arrived in Seesen on the previous day, the sixteenth day of July, some of them lodged in the ample buildings of the president [Jacobson], and others, for whom there was not enough room, were put up in the inn, and all costs were borne by Mr. Jacobson. In the evening, he entertained everyone for dinner.

On the day of the dedication itself, on the seventeenth of July, at 7:00 A.M. in the morning, lovely music resounded from the roof of the temple (which was flat like a platform) and announced to the city the approaching festivities. At 8:00, all who had come to participate in the festivities assembled in the school hall of the well-known educational institution which President Jacobson had founded in Seesen. One could see persons of distinguished rank, scholars, Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic clergymen, officials, businessmen of all kinds, all walking together in complete concord, and uniform tolerance seemed to permeate all members of this numerous company. Here friends met, acquaintances and comrades from university days who had not seen each other for a long time and found each other unexpectedly here. The manifold and different groups in this large assembly were most interesting. Everyone found something to talk about.

At 9 :00, the ringing of bells announced that the ceremonies would begin. Someone explained in a loud voice how the procession from the hall into the temple would take place and what the celebration itself would consist of. Thereafter, everyone began the solemn processional under the ringing of bells. The procession was led by two flags and by the students of the Jacobson Institute and the teachers. Then followed President Jacobson, the Prefect of the Department of Oker, Mr. Hanneberg, and the clerics and lay members of the Israelite Consistory from Kassel. Then came all the rabbis present, walking in pairs, in their clerical robes, and the Christian clergymen similarly. The mayor of the town and the deputy mayor came in their robes, the Count of Brabeck, public officials of the kingdom who were present, and all the other invited persons appeared in their best clothes. Finally, there came many other people from all classes and all faiths, who had come from the entire surroundings to observe the festivities. In solemn silence the long procession went from the auditorium of the school into the halls, through the doors into the street, and again through the doors of another house, and through this house into the court to the temple. Special admission cards had been printed for this festival in order to preserve order, and they had been distributed amongst all the participants in the procession. After the procession had entered the temple proper, there came from the organ soft lovely music by sixty to seventy musicians and singers, and this put all hearts into the most solemn mood. After everyone had taken his seat, a cantata composed especially for this celebration by Dr. Heinroth, one of the teachers in the Jacobson Institute, was sung splendidly to the accompaniment of the rousing sound of the instruments.

The Jewish ritual now began, with Mr. Jacobson himself being the chief officiant and the rabbis assisting him. At the end, President Jacobson gave an address, which we print further on in excerpt. After the scrolls of the Torah, which were elaborately ornamented, had been taken from the Ark with great ceremony, they were carried around the temple seven times, preceded by boys with burning wax candles. Then several chapters of the Pentateuch were read, first in Hebrew and at once in German, publicly and with a loud voice. Mr. Schott, director of the educational institution, then mounted the rostrum and talked to the assembled multitude. Then came a chorale accompanied by organ and full orchestra, and this was sung first in Hebrew and then also in German. At the end of this song, in the singing of which the Christians and Israelites participated with deep emotion, Church Counselor Heinemann delivered an address befitting the occasion. After this address there were further songs by the choir.

The Temple was richly and tastefully illuminated. Its architectural beauty, its decorations and gilded pieces visible on all sides to the eye, the graceful columns and antique chandeliers, the flower garlands which hung everywhere, the colorful mixture of people, all this presented a most beautiful and interesting view. At the end of the service, President Jacobson elaborately entertained at a table of two hundred in the school auditorium, in adjoining rooms for his seventy musicians, and in other rooms for an additional one hundred persons. The students of the Institute ate in the open, in the courtyard.

The festivities were original and unique. Where would one have seen a similar day on which Jews and Christians celebrated together in a common service in the presence of more than forty clergymen of both religions, and even sat down to eat and rejoice together in intimate company?

B. *DEDICATION ADDRESS (Israel Jacobson)*

It has been left to the tolerance of our days to bring about and to make possible that which only a little while ago would have appeared impossible. In building this edifice, it has not been my intent to bring about a complete religious unification of all religions. One accomplishes nothing at all if one desires everything or too much at one time. **What is needed is gradual and slow development** as is demonstrated by nature itself, when it brings forth its greater spiritual and physical accomplishments. Any divergence from this wise procedure of our common mother Nature which human stubbornness or frivolity might suggest, would only be followed by failures or even by the very opposite of that which was desired. What I had in mind when I first thought about building this temple was your religious education, my Israelite brothers, your customs, your worship, etc. Be it far from me that I should have any secret intention to undermine the pillars of your faith, to diminish our old grand honored principles through the glitter of new opinions, or that, because of some hidden vanity, I should become a traitor to both our religion and you.

You know my faithful adherence to the faith of my fathers. I need not protest it. My actions will witness for me more than my words. But if I do seek here first some rapprochement between you and our Christian neighbors, I would ask more for your gratitude and honest help than for your criticism or even opposition. For your true and progressive enlightenment depends upon this rapprochement. On it depends the education of your spirit for true religiosity and, at the same time also, **your future greater political welfare.** Who would dare to deny that our service is sickly because of many useless things, that in part it has degenerated into a thoughtless recitation of prayers and formulae, that it kills devotion more than encourages it, and that it limits our religious principles to that fund of knowledge which for centuries has remained in our treasure houses without increase and without ennoblement. On all sides, enlightenment opens up new areas for development. Why should we alone remain behind?

Let us be honest, my brothers. Our ritual is still weighted down with religious customs which must be rightfully offensive to reason as well as to our Christian friends. It desecrates the holiness of our religion and dishonors the reasonable man to place too great a value upon such customs; and on the other hand, he is greatly honored if he can increasingly encourage himself and his friends to realize their dispensability. Our ecclesiastical office, the Israelite Consistory, is willing to help us, is greatly concerned with the improvement of our synagogues and schools, spreads more correct principles abroad, and will, without partisanship, do the best for us even if at the moment we cannot see the flowers or fruits of these efforts.

And you, my highly honored other friends, who in name and in some aspects are different from my faith, I hope I have the full agreement of your sympathetic hearts in the principles I have set forth of the intent of this temple building, and of the hope for a happier future for my compatriots. There is nothing in this intent that in any way contradicts the principles of pure religion, of the demands of general morality, of reason, or of your own humanitarian attitude. I trust, therefore, that you will be far from receiving my brothers coldly. I trust that you will not reject them, as did your forebears only too often, but rather, that **you will accept them with love into the circle of your society and business**; that you will solicitously stretch out your hand to us in that rapprochement which I have sketched in its ideological outline, and for the sake of which partially I have dedicated this temple. Accept, therefore, my deepest and most devoted thanks for your warm interest in this rare celebration which you have so obviously manifested for me and my friends through your precious presence and through the expression of your sentiments.

And Thou, O G-d, whose mighty hand has lifted up our people once again after such long debasement, just as it happened once after a long imprisonment; Thou, O G-d, whose goodness has made it possible to complete the work of several years and bring it to a happy ending - grant unto us further, we pray, that we might sense the glorious traces of Thy love, of Thy benevolence, of Thy protection, both in the faith of our compatriots as in the results of this temple building. But with this confidence let us not be guilty of the indolence of delay, of the embarrassment of indecisiveness, of the mystical hope of the superstitious, and merely hope for Thine assistance. May we, conscious of our dignity, never forget man, the high destiny of a being whom Thou hast gifted with reason and freedom, **that he might think for himself, act for himself**, and whom Thou didst destine not to be a soulless machine in the plan of Thy creation. Let us never despair of the good cause of religion and mankind. Let us not lose heart when new obstacles will be thrust across our path, when we find that any beginning, like the uplifting and **enlightenment of a dispersed people**, can proceed but slowly and with many difficulties, and can mature only after centuries. Above all, O G-d, make us vividly conscious that we are brothers with all the adherents of other Divine teachings; that we are descendants of one humanity which adores Thee as their common Father; that we are brothers who must learn love and gentle tolerance; brothers, finally, who under Thy guidance walk toward a common goal and who, in the end, when the mist will have been dispelled from before our eyes and all the errors gone from our spirit and all doubts removed from our reason, will meet each other on one and the same road. Amen. **Description of the Temple Dedication in Seesen published in Sulamith, 3rd year (1810) vol. 1 pp. 298 ff.**