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# SOLOMON SCHECHTER

M.A., LITT.D.

*A Bibliography*

BY

ADOLPH S. OKO



CAMBRIDGE

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1938

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*To*

THE MEMORY OF  
FRANK ISAAC SCHECHTER

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## PREFATORY NOTE

THE aim in the subjoined record of the writings of Dr Solomon Schechter was “absolute” completeness, an ideal seldom or never achieved and but rarely approached. No such attempt was made as regards the Appendix. The list was prepared by me in the winter of 1915–16, soon after the death of the scholar, for inclusion in the Solomon Schechter Memorial Number of the *Hebrew Union College Monthly*. However, its publication there and then did not prove feasible; only the Preface, now much abridged and entirely rewritten, appeared in that journal. For various reasons, the work was laid aside and not taken up again until the summer of 1935. Some material was added in the meantime, and the whole recast. A number of titles were put before my notice by Professor Alexander Marx, of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. To him, too, I am indebted for helpful criticism at the early stage of the work—for all of which I render grateful thanks. It is also my pleasing duty to pay an old debt of gratitude to my former Secretary, Miss Sarah Belle Grad (now Mrs Moses Ades, of Louisville, Kentucky), for much help in connection with the initial preparation of the list. Finally, it would be a failure in gratitude not to mention the name of Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Chicago; my debt to him is very great.

The material here gathered is ordered under chronologically arranged dates forming headings, thus: (1) separate works; (2) contributions to the works of others and to collections; (3) articles in periodicals—irrespective of their being studies, reviews of books, “communications”, etc.—arranged alphabetically under

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the names of the periodicals, the articles themselves following each other in the order of their appearance. Reprints of a given article follow the entry; the title, if not changed, is not repeated. They are provided with sub-numerals, but are counted as separate items if new matter has been added to their re-publication in book form. Translations, regardless of their date of publication, follow the original. Reviews or criticisms of a work listed follow that work, and, if signed, are arranged alphabetically under the names of the reviewers; anonymous reviews precede those signed. No apology is necessary for the inclusion of communications to the Press, remarks on papers read at the Jews' College Literary Society, testimonials or congratulatory letters. These chips from the scholar's workshop may help to round the one or the other of his essays or articles into completeness. They are, besides, full of autobiographical parentheses.

Notes accompany most of the entries. Their purpose is to group and bring together scattered details into some sort of orderly arrangement. They are bibliographical in nature, and represent a bibliographer's effort to co-ordinate his material and thus add perhaps to the usefulness of the list. Quotations from a book or article described are often given. These serve to indicate the contents of an entry, or else to illustrate the author's point of view. They are not intended as "samples" of erudition. Press notices of his publications are also recorded. They may be interesting as a piece of *Culturgeschichte* of the time. The Jewish scholar had a "good Press". In the field of Jewish learning nothing like it, or similar to it, has happened before or since.

The Appendix was not contemplated at first. Doubtless, there is more material scattered in periodicals and

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newspapers touching upon Dr Schechter's career than was available, or readily accessible to me at the time of its redaction; but it is not likely that important articles have been overlooked. Here the alphabetical order could be maintained only in Section I. The arrangement of Section II and its more or less overlapping divisions is chronological.

The Index is quite full, and comprises in a single alphabet entries of names and topics.

Lastly, that this record of Dr Schechter's writings bears the imprint of the Press of his (adoptive) Alma Mater, will be a source of no little gratification to the circle of those who cherish his memory.

A. S. O.

August 1938

[The following abbreviations may be noted here:

<i>Am. Heb.</i>	<i>American Hebrew</i> (New York; weekly).
<i>J.C.</i>	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i> (London; weekly).
<i>J. Comment</i>	<i>Jewish Comment</i> (Baltimore; weekly).
<i>J. Exponent</i>	<i>Jewish Exponent</i> (Philadelphia; weekly).
J.P.S.A.	Jewish Publication Society of America.
<i>J.Q.R.</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> (old series, London; new series, Philadelphia).
<i>J. Standard</i>	<i>Jewish Standard</i> (London; weekly).
J.T.S.A.	Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
<i>M.G.W.J.</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i> (Breslau).
<i>R.E.J.</i>	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i> (Paris; quarterly).
<i>Z.A.W.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</i>
<i>Z.D.M.G.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.</i>

Other abbreviations explain themselves.]

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## SOLOMON SCHECHTER: AN ESSAY\*

IN the foremost rank of Jewish scholars of his day stood Solomon Schechter (1847?–1915). The great modern exponent of rabbinic teaching did not himself inaugurate the study of post-Exilic and Talmudical theology. The foundations of its critical treatment had already been laid, and its investigation had been fitfully pursued for some decades by Jewish and Christian scholars—as an independent entity by the former, and as an appanage to Christianity by the latter. Nor did he produce comprehensive systematic treatises, or standard works of ready reference. Rather, keen perception and profound spiritual insight were the marks of his special genius; and his *Studies in Judaism* and *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*—remarkable equally for their great learning, their aphoristic wisdom and arresting literary qualities—have retained the authority of classics. Schechter's fame, however, does not rest on his books alone. In personality also he towered above his compeers. He had a sparkling, even a malicious wit, and a caustic humour. He was a man of many moods and not a few idiosyncrasies. He could scowl and hate like Carlyle, and laugh and love like Voltaire. But he had a stubborn philosophy of life, and one could always tell on which side he stood. There was the magic of revelation about the man—an elusive and

\* First published in *The Menorah Journal*, Vol. xxv, No. 2 (April–June, 1937); now revised and somewhat enlarged.

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mysterious object of the biographer's interest. We shall not pursue it or attempt to resolve it. The stray strands of character will not yield up the "secret".

Solomon Schechter was no intellectual Melchizedek. In the annals of learning the scholar will be provided with an intellectual pedigree, lineal and collateral. His paternity will be fixed on his teachers, Meir Friedmann and Isaac Hirsch Weiss, with N. Krochmal, Leopold Zunz, J. L. Rapoport, M. Steinschneider and Abraham Geiger as godfathers. Schechter did not hail from a new and unexpected quarter. He came from the *Yeshibah*—the scholastic hinterland that surrendered its best minds to the *Haskalah*, the New Jewish Learning, and the university. During his early maturity, however, Friedmann was the dominating influence. Perhaps he was never displaced by any one. In any case, his influence was decisive in setting the young brilliant *Maskil*, who was flirting with satire and parody, to work on Hebrew manuscripts. Henceforth he dreams of variants and interpolations.

We know nothing of his youth, and but little of his early studies. Schechter, we surmise, was never young. He began to live fifteen years earlier than other men; or, in another sense, he began to live fifteen years later than other men. He had no mother-country. For to be born a Jew in Rumania was to be born in void space. The *Bahur* may have been a miracle of learning, but his studies were not systematic. He early attained intellectual maturity; but he was hardly an all-informed man of culture. There was nothing of the outstanding author or editor in his start. And he was advanced in years before he became an influence.

It was in England—whither he came, by fragile chance, in 1882, by way of Vienna, by way of Berlin—that Schechter found his opportunity: a grateful en-

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vironment, a more or less secure home, and a congenial companion. Not that the satirical mocker and intellectual spendthrift became complaisant or contented. The personal incorporation of the scholar-gypsy into the safe and normal London Jewish community of the time was never complete. In truth, he did not want to be respectable, as yet. But his coming to England was the central incident of his life, and it coloured his whole thought. John Keble was soon joined to Moses Nahmanides and Mark Pattison was added to Nachman Krochmal. Not a little of Schechter's ideals and over-beliefs runs on a logic of personal and spiritual traits, qualities, and relations manifest in English religious thought of the latter half of the nineteenth century; they are not to be sought for alone in Hasidism and Maimonides. Schechter felt the after-effects of the Oxford Movement and of the *Essays and Reviews* not less than did Mr Claude G. Montefiore. Both seized their fighting terms from the arsenal of English thought, tradition and society, in addition to those taken from the repository of the Jewish past. "Catholic Israel", like "Liberal Judaism", has an English ring. The analogous facts in English society are easily recognizable. "Low Synagogue"—"High Synagogue"—"Universal Synagogue": these notions were not conceived in the Jewish communities of Lemberg, Vienna, Berlin, or Safed; they are, logically and theologically, of Oxford and Cambridge ancestry. Not that Schechter's Judaism was therefore less Judaeo-centric. But he was wont to insist that Jews should write their own (theological) love-letters, even if they did it badly. . . .

To resume. Schechter soon uses the English tongue with rare felicity. The Jewish scholar—rare event!—can address himself both to the specialist and the general reader. He wins the reputation of great learning.

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He obtains the post of Lecturer, and soon that of Reader, in Rabbinics at the University of Cambridge. He travels. He investigates. He makes discoveries. The English Press acclaims his great, and even romantic, finds. He conquers fame. He is titled Magister—yea, Doctor even. He is appointed Professor of Hebrew at University College, London. He is surrounded by erudite and congenial companions. True, he differs from them fundamentally; in norm and form, in training and mode of living they hail from different races, different religions, different societies. Cambridge, however, marked another important cycle in his life history. Here he became a revered—never a detached—authority. Here his social mien was fixed. In Cambridge Schechter became conscious of his powers.

His mode of thought was already fully formed during his stay at London. Essay upon essay and study upon study poured out from his pen. They attracted wide attention also among Christian scholars and theologians in sympathy with history or with Jewish study, their subject-matter alone inviting all sorts of comparisons; for human history is one. The range and depth of his attainments touched both Jewish *Wissenschaft* and Jewish life: pre-Talmudic literature and sects, Talmud and Midrash, law and legend, history and liturgy, mysticism and ethics, Karaite polemics and Gaonic apologetics; the social life of the times of Ben-Sira; the communal life of the Egyptian Jews in the Gaonic period; the intellectual and spiritual activity of the Jews in Palestine in the sixteenth century; the domestic concerns of the German Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the theological notions of English Jewry at the close of the nineteenth century—a range extraordinary indeed.



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The *Hasid* brought a warm glow to his theme, which gave his work vitality and a personal note. From the start Schechter discarded the whole apparatus of polysyllables. There is nothing officious about his introductions to the “outlandish” manuscripts which he edited; and there is nothing official about his essays and studies. He wrote as a rebellious apologist rather than in the submissive spirit of historical research: the Jew rebelled against being a problem: the Jewish scholar took the offensive. His writings, indeed, are essentially illuminative rather than systematic: they are studies and aspects—suggestive syntheses rather than elaborate demonstrations. Schechter is never timid in reaching conclusions, and never indefinite in his judgments. Even his mistakes are stimulating. He exposes cant, if he does not reveal “the truth”. Facts are extolled or condemned; to merely state them does not suit his temperament. He always takes sides. He is not arbitrary; he is only “partial”. But his partiality was not “politic”; it was not a part of a “system”. He hated, above all, finality. There is a good deal in Schechter that belongs to the category of “Table Talk”—the mode of teaching of the Hasidic *Zaddik*. But, however eclectic his material, however tangential his direction, his Hasidism was *sui generis*. His personal idiom exerted perhaps more influence than his impersonal ideas.

Little philosophy and less science are mirrored in his work. Schechter’s erudition was greater than his capacity for abstract thought. Nor is there discernible any change or development in his central ideas; but we perceive an ever greater awareness of their implications. Schechter was an intuitive thinker. His thought was not atomic, and he did not advance his argument step by step. He was no more a sharp theologian than

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the philosophical essayist Ahad HaAm was an acute logician. Strictly critical or logical inference did not satisfy them. Ahad HaAm's deep concern was the thought, or idea, or *Tendenz* of the historical phenomenon called Judaism. Schechter was wholly solicitous about the Jewish Tradition, conceived and interpreted as a living instrument of the nation rather than in any sharply defined theological sense. Tradition was the collective national wisdom and virtue. Tradition was nation-bound. "The Synagogue was a part of the Nation, not the Nation a part of the Synagogue." The history of the Synagogue was a biography of Jewish ideals. Judaism was not a complete (Sinaitic) revelation, but a complex of ideas and tendencies which developed gradually. It was the achievement of the nation. Jewish history was the story of Jewish lives as much as the development of dogma and institutions. His preoccupation was the beauty and fragrance of the dedicated life. His biographical studies of Jewish worthies were also intended as an instrument of personal edification. He preferred the saint to the statesman, the pious scholar and the mystic to the man of action or legislator—or, Midrash and Haggadah to Halakah and Novellae. He was at best in dealing with individuals and almost at worst in tracing the development of ideas. The most influential Jewish theologian of his day was and remained a *Hasid*.

Modern study, no doubt, involved him more or less in a struggle with orthodoxy—and perhaps also with himself. The conception of historical development is irreconcilable with the traditional idea of revelation. Concerning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch Isaac M. Wise was more "traditional" than Schechter. Nevertheless, Schechter was self-consistent on the whole. Tradition was for the sake of life. The inheritor of that

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tradition accepted its normal doctrines: they were wise and of vital importance. He accepted much and discarded little of the ritual; the subtleties of the Rabbis in the sphere of observance made for a fence around Tradition. It was no prison wall. He loved it, and would not distinguish between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of "belief". The age-old hopes of the nation were also a part of Tradition; hence his later adherence to Zionism. As the promise of a cultural and social unity of the nation, purged of antisemitic and assimilationist pollution, Zionism would help to preserve and enrich that depository of the nation's achievement. To be sure, Schechter no more succeeded in being "traditional" or conservative in every particular thing than his erstwhile English friends succeeded in being "liberal", or orthodox, in every particular, or his subsequent American good neighbours—"His Majesty's Opposition"—have succeeded in being "reform" in every particular. His own pietism (in the ritual sense) was not perversity or spite—he was not a צדיק להכעיס.

Schechter loved the old, yet was not averse to the new. He wanted a reformation from within, without schism—not a synthetic manufacture of old forms with new. The Dreamer of the Ghetto was now dreaming of a "Catholic Israel": he was to be its High-Priest. He was not refractory to the discipline of prolonged and exact research in his chosen field. But he had since felt that the editing of texts did not fulfil his mission, and he added studies in Jewish thought and ideals. He soon found that speculative thinking, too, did not end what he considered his duty. The Torah was not a legal or historical document, to be interpreted and annotated, but a moral and social force. Action was now in order. He would add the peculiar task of leader. His English

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(not Rumanian) individualism was not timid. But English Jewry was standing still under the burden of a Chief Rabbinate. American Jewry, on the other hand, was surging. America should be his base of operation; the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York should be his tribune. Certainly, he must have an organization. Organization is natural and necessary. The soul needs a body.

The scene shifts from England to the United States—from Cambridge to New York (1902). Schechter fascinates the public. He exercises no less an influence as a teacher than as a writer. His lectures and addresses not only breathe enthusiasm for his subject but inculcate a Jewish attitude towards life. He is stimulating. His clear pointed comments produce the desired effect. His observations lend themselves to quotation. Students and public repay him with enthusiastic devotion. No figure among Jewish scholars is thought more attractive than that of Solomon Schechter. Jewish study has had more critical methods. Scholars may prefer a Steinschneider, or a Bacher. But Schechter reveals its living interest. He makes his appeal to all Jews. He is the first great instructor of the Jewish youth in America—as Ahad HaAm is that of the Jewish youth in Russia—as Martin Buber was to be that of the Jewish youth in Germany. Jewish students at American universities feel that they have discovered a fresh, living Judaism. Schechter's Conservative Judaism seems less complacent, and also less dogmatic, than Reform Judaism, and his conception of "Catholic Israel" less archaic than the "Mission" idea which had fallen to pieces in the American scheme of life. He gives them not formulas but ideas. Attempts are made (by Dr J. L. Magnes and, later, by Dr M. M. Kaplan) to translate his "Catholic Israel" into equivalent

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terms of institutions and action. Schechter himself breathes new life into Jewish study. The Genizah becomes a programme for the work of his colleagues. He inspires some of his students with enthusiasm to enter the dusty world of "research". His epigrammatic phrases are seized upon alike by Conservative and Reform pulpits as fighting terms—supplanting the vocabularies of Benjamin Szold and Marcus Jastrow, of Isaac M. Wise and Kaufmann Kohler. Schechter makes Conservative Judaism fashionable among the Lords of Life in New York.

But—the "spiritual honeymoon" was soon at an end. The great teacher turned administrator. He exchanged the task that was intellectual and spiritual for one that was worldly and ecclesiastical. The religious mystic shaped pragmatic policies. Incidental problems absorbed his interest. Learned controversies gave way to parochial contentions. Orthodoxy or Reform; Synod or Congregationalism; the Compatibility of Zionism with Americanism—these were the burning questions. Solomon Schechter, willy-nilly, became involved in what he hated most: "red-tape and platform Judaism". And the noise of the battle was disturbing to him. No philosophical movement followed. The "school" of the new Hillel only reproduced his own opinions. Antagonisms flourished.

Fate is ironic. And the climax of irony is capped by the fact that the prophet of Catholic Israel was mourned in England as "the great American Rabbi".

*In magnis voluisse sat est.*