

Ginsburg, "Di tragedye fun a yiddisher froy," in his *Historishe verk* (New York: S. M. Ginsburg Testimonial Committee, 1937), 82–90.

17. Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter* (1919 ed.), 2:130–32. On Zak, see Hillel Noah Maggid Steinschneider, *Ir Vilna* (Vilna: Romm Press, 1900), 248–49; Simeon Kreis, "Zak, Avraam Isakovich," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 2:2110; Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 68; Brian Horowitz, *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 69, 89, 90; Bobruisk, *Sefer zikaron le'kehilat Bobruisk u'vnoteha*, 2 vols., ed. Yehuda Slutsky (Tel Aviv: Tarbut ve'hinukh, 1967); Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia*, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1944, 1951), 1:173.

18. Flachs-Fockschaneanu spent her childhood in Vienna and many years in Russia, where she studied Russian language and literature; see Sophie Pataky, *Lexikon deutscher Frauen der Feder* (1898), 217. Flachs-Fockschaneanu's translations from Russian to German include: Sof'ia Vasilevna Kovalevskaia, *Vospominaniia detstva*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Weimar: G. Kiepenheuer, 1963); Sof'ia Vasilevna Kovalevskaia, *Jugenderinnerungen*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Berlin: Fischer, 1897); Sof'ia Vasilevna Kovalevskaia, *Die Nihilistin*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Vienna: Wiener Mode, 1896); Mikhail Vasilevich Novorusskii, *Achtzehneinhalb Jahre hinter russischen Kerkermauern*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Berlin: B. Behr, 1908); Mikhail Vasilevich Novorusskii, *Zapiski Slissel'burzca 1887–1905: Memoiren eines Idealisten*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Berlin: Zehlendorf, 1911); Anton Chekhov, *Der Bär: Grotteske in e. Aufzug: Ein Heiratsantrag*, trans. Louise Flachs-Fockschaneanu (Leipzig: Reclam, 1948). See too, Rosina Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova: In Search of Beauty: A Literary Ambassador between East and West* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 150, 202n91.

19. Wengeroff's telegram, in her handwriting (apparently, a copy filled out at the telegraph office), is among her papers, PD. The correspondence with Solomon Schechter is in the Archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Solomon Schechter Collections, ARC 101, Correspondence Box 7. Warm thanks to my colleague Professor Sidney Rosenfeld for consulting with me about Wengeroff's letters to Schechter.

20. On Wengeroff's citation of, and failure to cite, other works, see my introduction to my edition of her first volume. I am quite convinced that no one edited Wengeroff's *Memoiren*; too many examples of discrepancies and inconsistencies exist for editing to have occurred (see my introduction to my edition of Wengeroff's second volume).

21. Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova*.

22. Cited in Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova*, 42 and 184–85n3.

23. Adapted from the translation in Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova*, 42.

24. The originals of this correspondence are in Wengeroff's papers, PD; copies are in the Karpeles collection, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, AR-B.8.

25. Shaul Ginsburg, "Di tragedye," 82.

[2]

Wives and *Wissenschaft*: The Domestic Seedbed of Critical Scholarship

ISMAR SCHORSCH

In his eightieth year, not quite a year after the death of his beloved Adelheid on August 18, 1874, a forlorn Leopold Zunz, who had spearheaded the turn to history in modern Judaism, confided to David Kaufmann, his aspiring young biographer, that "a reliable and skilled hand could compose a piece of Jewish history on the basis of the correspondence which I have conducted over sixty years."¹ Nearly fifty years before, Zunz had ascribed that same valence in a light-hearted reprimand of his wife. Shortly after she had arrived in Hamburg from Berlin in 1827 for a visit that would keep them apart for more than a month, she slipped in noting the date and location of one of her first letters back home. The error evoked in Leopold, always a stickler for precision, a flight of fancy full of bite and bluster:

Date your letters correctly, for a day will come when . . . our letters alone will have survived the flood to attest the existence in Berlin of cultured Jews, both male and female, who could rightly be angry that their mother married their father rather than the first good [gentile] lawyer, lieutenant or duke [to come along]. And if the notoriety does not beguile you, consider what our letters as autographs of famous Jewish men and women will one day go for in London.²

Whimsical though it was, that prescient sentiment to save their correspondence yielded a treasure trove of personal letters of unequalled immediacy. The first scholar to fully appreciate the value of this collection was Ludwig Geiger, the son of the Reform scholar and intellectual Abraham Geiger, and a prodigious historian of German literature as well as of German Jewry. In 1915–16, Geiger prepared a massive manuscript of Zunz letters to his paternal-like teacher Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg, to Samuel's son Philipp, who succeeded his father

at the helm of the Jewish school in Wolfenbüttel, and to Samuel's nephew Meier Isler, his sister's son, who eventually became the director of the Hamburg city library.³ While Geiger had already begun to mine Zunz's papers to publish some of his professional correspondence, he acknowledged in his introductory essay that reading the personal letters bordered on a religious experience.⁴ His manuscript included a number of postscripts by Adelheid and a brief discussion of her persona and significance.⁵ Unfortunately, his death in 1919 aborted the project.

When the work was revised, expanded, and completed by Nahum N. Glatzer in two precious volumes in 1958 and 1964, the presence of Adelheid loomed much larger by virtue of his inclusion of her letters to Philipp's wife, Julie.⁶ Still omitted, though, were the many surviving letters between Leopold and Adelheid, triggered by occasional separations.⁷ Nearly all written after their marriage, these lengthy exchanges, penned over several days, were on the order of telephone conversations chronicling the experiences and impressions since the last contact. It is the dialogue of a couple entirely comfortable with each other, marked by candor and mutual respect, feelings of affection and longing. A profusion of emotion, especially by Adelheid, often interrupts the narrative flow. Toward the end of a long letter from Prague in 1836, Adelheid closes with a dream that has the ring of daily life: "You embraced me from behind and pressed me so tightly that it hurt and awakened me. Did you think of me intently on Saturday night around eleven?"⁸

Leopold, indeed, thought of his *Mäuschen*, his little mouse, as he often endearingly called her in his salutations, all the time. Should a letter fail to arrive, he would become dispirited and perturbed. For a much-harassed scholar chary with his time, he composed expansive epistles that were a telling measure of his devotion and solicitude.

To focus on Adelheid, then, not only does justice to someone critical to his well-being, but also provides an alternative lens through which to view him, a subject not unworthy of my former student Paula Hyman, whose pioneering corpus of research in gender studies has inspired the expansion of my own scholarly horizon.

No third party arranged the engagement of Leopold and Adelheid on October 16, 1821, in Berlin. He was twenty-seven and she nineteen. They had met nearly two and a half years before, when neither was as yet a Prussian citizen, a status attained by Adelheid through the naturalization of her father on November 30, 1820, and by Leopold on June 8, 1821, a half year after his doctorate from the University of Halle. An official document executed by Julius Rubo, soon to become the syndic of the Berlin Jewish community, attests that the engagement took place in the home of the merchant Levy Moses Beermann, Adelheid's father, and stipulates the terms of the agreement. The couple agreed to be married

in Berlin in half a year according to Jewish law and to share equally the costs of the wedding. Most importantly, Beermann promised a trousseau to the groom, consisting of dresses, undergarments (*Wäsche*), linens and beds, and a dowry of 1000 talers, to be transferred three days before the wedding. Considering that an annual salary between 150 and 600 talers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century would have put one in the middle income strata of Berlin society, the dowry was not ungenerous. On May 9, 1822, the day of the wedding, Leopold signed another document to the effect that Levy Moses had in fact fulfilled the terms of the dowry.⁹

That valuable dowry quickly proved its utility, for on September 13, 1822, Leopold dramatically resigned his post as *Prediger* (preacher) of the liberal Beer temple in Berlin, when the emerging gap between his religious intensity and the congregation's apathy threatened to lead to his dismissal. The newly married couple surely drew on their dowry until Leopold found employment on January 1, 1824, as the editor of foreign news for one of Berlin's two daily newspapers, where he would toil daily from eight to one for the next eight years.¹⁰ Germany offered slight comfort to that first cohort of Jewish university graduates who felt impelled to recast Judaism as a historical phenomenon. Tormented by the indifference of wealthy Jews, the contempt of German academics, and his own aversion to the rabbinate, Leopold had little choice but to eke out a living in an array of taxing jobs, mostly but not always related to the field of Jewish education. Had Adelheid not fully shared the cause of her husband, their home would hardly have been a haven. In her domesticity, she would prove to be an exceptional woman.

Leopold and Adelheid enjoyed a romantic, companionate, and childless marriage. Indeed, their letters never allude to nor lament the absence of offspring, though Adelheid did seem to find a surrogate daughter in Julie Fischel, who as the teenage bride of Philipp Ehrenberg in 1847 quickly became a family intimate. Philipp's father, Samuel, a modern pedagogue conversant with the classical texts of Judaism, had rescued Leopold from the shipwreck of an outmoded Jewish educational institution. Orphaned as an adolescent, Leopold flourished under Samuel's wise tutelage to become the first Jew to graduate from the local *Gymnasium* and then to teach a wide range of subjects in the Samson Schule for five years, before heading off to attend the newly founded University of Berlin.¹¹ The shared joys and travails of the following decades only strengthened the bonds. When Philipp came to Berlin to study, he found a home-away-from-home at the Zunzes. Years later a heartfelt condolence letter after the death of his daughter moved Samuel to thank Leopold and Adelheid "who love me like their father and spare no effort to bless my old age."¹² At Philipp's request upon his father's death in 1853, Leopold authored a biography worthy of the man in just three months.¹³

Not only did Leopold, along with his fellow scholar Solomon Judah Rapoport, officiate at the wedding of Philipp and Julie in Prague on August 11, 1847, but he had personally arranged for the couple to meet after the breakup of Philipp's first engagement.¹⁴ Leopold had befriended Julie's father, David Gabriel Fischel, a privileged Prague manufacturer, during his aborted stint as the Prediger of Prague's Reform association in 1835–36.¹⁵ At nearly twice Julie's age (thirty-five as opposed to eighteen), Philipp needed some convincing before agreeing to meet.¹⁶ So did Julie's father, who, unannounced and disguised as a Viennese educator, visited Wolfenbüttel to finagle from Philipp a tour of his school.¹⁷ Prior to Philipp's subsequent trip to Prague to meet Julie and her family, Adelheid sensitively counseled her not to be stampeded:

Don't enter a relationship to which your heart is not drawn. You are still unattached. There is nothing to break off or answer for. . . . Don't be unjust toward yourself or your Creator. You may not connect immediately, but the impression you make will linger. They will sense the depth you have to offer, your disposition which is always sunny, the knowledge and spirit behind your modesty. Always stay as you are, nothing else, that is, don't force yourself to do anything. . . . Be proud in your humility.¹⁸

Only once the coupling took hold could Leopold reveal to Julie the deeper resonance of the match for him: "What affects the Fischels and Ehrenbergs affects me also. Now since the two of you have become one, I will sink into a sea of love. Except for my soul mate Adelheid, I know of no other heart in which I would rather live than in the Ehrenberg-Fischel hotel."¹⁹ Frequent correspondence, periodic visits, and mutual affection nurtured these bonds of extended family over several generations and surely enhanced the Zunzes' diminutive nuclear family.

Leopold and Adelheid were very much in love, intimately compatible, and content with little.²⁰ They both took great pleasure in their pet canary and could afford the services of a Jewish maid, one of whom stayed with them for seventeen years.²¹ Leopold reported to Samuel in 1847, "Our life is as simple as ever. We do see people outside our home. But what we find most agreeable for body and soul is to be at home by ourselves. That is the good fortune of being in deep concord."²² According to Adelheid, at day's end after having gone their separate ways, the two of them would talk well into the evening. She describes for Julie shortly after her wedding the following scene: "I much prefer to be busy during the day, so that I can stretch twilight into evening as I tuck my Zunz snugly into his easy chair—for otherwise he would yell 'it is too soft'—and myself on the footstool nearby, after which we listen to words of wisdom and sometimes even utter them ourselves."²³

With Zunz often reading to her out loud, they discussed and digested German, French, and English books of fiction, letters, history, science, philosophy, and religion, well beyond the normal fare.²⁴ To Samuel, Adelheid confessed that "a good book is the purest joy I know, especially if I can then talk about it candidly with a friend."²⁵ For a change of pace, Leopold would teach her chess and even geometry. With a twinkle, Adelheid relates to Julie what she learned from the latter: "What delights me is that I grasp quickly, yet still can't prove a thing or even carry on a conversation. All women and girls should study geometry, for then gossiping would soon cease. The subject allows for nothing extraneous."²⁶

The Zunz friendship circle complemented the emotional harmony and intellectual level of their companionship. Nor was the presence of Christians a rarity. In 1834, Adelheid informs Philipp that her current icons are Goethe and Herder, in whose *Faust* and *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, she finds unimagined stimulation. It is a Christian friend who poses for her a challenging interlocutor:

My Zunz helps me faithfully. But it is in my friend that I find resonance in the application. She is more systematic and pious than me. She's a Christian brought up religiously, yet whose intelligence breaks through the limits set by orthodox faith and contests ingrained habits. You can imagine how often we disagree, since my greatest happiness comes from approaching God without an intermediary. There is a mine of feeling, intelligence and spirit in this woman and I must exert myself to be her friend.²⁷

From her correspondence it is abundantly clear that on social occasions Adelheid did more than serve coffee and cake. On an October afternoon in 1847, Adelheid hosted a clutch of her female friends for a gathering at which conversation moved effortlessly from politics to literature to music.²⁸ By 1851, the group, slightly altered, was still convening periodically at Adelheid's. That year she also invited a mixed company to meet Karl Gutzkow, one of Germany's acclaimed literary firebrands. A close friend of his recently deceased wife, Adelheid found him "milder and nicer than before. He spoke appreciatively and with deep feeling about his departed wife, while showing me the kind of warmth befitting a former friend."²⁹

Gutzkow, to be sure, was no stranger to the Zunz household. From 1824 to 1841, he had frequented their famous Saturday soirées, and when Leopold went to Hamburg in 1841, he did not fail to visit him.³⁰ It was the force of Leopold's unique persona with its quick wit and acute mind, its radical politics and messianic fervor, its command of Jewish scholarship and intimate familiarity with general culture, that sustained this belated and exceptional salon off and on for some twenty-five years from 1825 to 1850.³¹ New friends replaced the old

as they left town or became estranged: "You should only see," Adelheid writes Philipp in 1834, "how many new members our Saturday evenings now have. You would not recognize them any more. The old have left us. . . . My guests, however, remind me that I must feed them and my domestic calls me to help her prepare a dish."³²

At first intended only for Leopold's friends, even after they converted like Eduard Gans, the well-known legal scholar and disciple of Hegel, the salon increasingly attracted Christian savants and intellectuals, so that by 1835 Leopold could boast to Philipp that it was now largely populated by Christians.³³ There can be little doubt that this corner of cosmopolitanism held aloft the ultimate vision of integration that Leopold harbored for German Jewry, even as it offset ever so slightly his own unrelieved sense of isolation at the frontier of critical Jewish scholarship. In 1843, Adelheid vividly conveyed to a restless young Moritz Steinschneider in Prague the extent of Zunz's academic loneliness: "You know that here [in Berlin] they are all idiots, Sophie Schroeder-Devrient sings her hymns but for *selihot* [the penitential poems that Zunz was collecting and studying] they have no ear, let alone interest. Where will we find the young people who have the understanding, knowledge and love to appreciate and support path breaking scholarship and my Zunz."³⁴

Adelheid had a keen eye for the character of the people who crossed her threshold. She served as Steinschneider's confidant no less than her husband, as the immensely talented Moravian cast about for a niche that would allow him to pursue his love of scholarship. During his first stay in Berlin from November 1839 to October 1841, Moritz often visited them. In 1842, Adelheid warmly recalls the times the two of them sat at the piano in midwinter as Moritz introduced her to the beauty of Italian music. She signs her letter "your student."³⁵ Yet Adelheid faults him for often assuming an off-putting cerebral exterior that belies the intensity of his inner feelings.³⁶ She values his poetic side.³⁷ To counter her judgment, Moritz responds with an exuberant epistle announcing his decision to leave Prague: "I am actually not an uptight rationalist and have never wished to be taken for one. I simply prefer to keep my mouth shut when my heart opens wide. But here (in Prague) both run the risk of rusting on their hinges."³⁸

Meier Isler was another early member of the Zunz salon, who by 1831 had settled in Hamburg, where he befriended the physician, poet, and aspiring theologian Salomon Ludwig Steinheim. The fact that Isler's father had married Samuel's sister led to a lifelong correspondence with the Zunzes.³⁹ Several years before the appearance of the first volume of Steinheim's *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge* (Revelation according to the Teaching of the Synagogue), Adelheid incisively cautioned Isler not to exaggerate his theological prowess: "I understand what you expect from Steinheim: that he might become

your anchor to steady the tossing ship of your beliefs. On the basis of what I know of the doctor, I doubt it. Setting aside his good will and other virtues, he seems to me too much of a poet, who gives voice to the nicest theories, but leaves life untouched. Search for faith within yourself and work it through, only then will it be yours."⁴⁰ When that much-awaited volume did appear, it occasioned a vigorous articulation in a letter to Isler by Leopold of a basic postulate of his own faith:

I can't go along with that antagonistic dichotomy between revelation and paganism. I see rather everywhere the emanation of one and the same world spirit, opposites in the phenomenal world, even contradictions, which are, however, reconciled by philosophy. Away with all existing and exclusive hostility! I dare say that in our despair to ascribe some positive content to Judaism, we juxtapose it to its opposite, non-Judaism, that is, an apple does not taste like a non-apple. Nor do I acknowledge any act of providence that would restrict the evolution of the human spirit or ever wished to. A belief in revelation forged in a sense of exclusive aristocracy craves to project a polar opposite that must be eradicated.⁴¹

Adelheid left Leopold as little as possible, even when Julie needed her.⁴² Her presence calmed his sensitive and excitable temperament. When she did, though, her almost daily letters humored him with memorable aperçus. On a two-month trip to Teplitz, Bohemia, in 1847, where she stayed with Leopold's cousin Rosa, Adelheid was visited by Zacharias Frankel and his wife. On an earlier trip in 1836, Adelheid had described for Leopold Frankel's triumphant departure from his rabbinic post in Teplitz to his new one in Dresden.⁴³ Though his grateful new community showered him with an attractive apartment within the bounds of his rental allowance, sundry gifts, wreaths, and poems, he told Adelheid that he still envied Leopold for having extricated himself from working in the Jewish community.⁴⁴ Destined to fray over their divergent conceptions of Jewish scholarship, the relationship was still intact in 1847.⁴⁵ This time the Frankels heedlessly overstayed their welcome. At ten in the evening, after a seven-hour visit, Adelheid finally declared herself spent. Yet the next day she wrote Leopold that neither was bad company: "She is a splendid rogue and made us laugh often, and he is a lot more solicitous of women than I would have imagined from seeing him in your company. He spoke with me about his books and their reception or non-reception. And then about you, saying among other things that I respect Dr. Zunz not only as a great scholar, but still more as a great human being, who makes his way, irrespective of what might happen to him."⁴⁶

The lead figure, of course, in Adelheid's script was Leopold, whom she loved beyond words and cared for with every fiber of her being. To Moritz, whom

she was trying to woo back from Prague, she avowed that "the most interesting person in her circle is always my husband. If there were only another, that would make for a life!"⁴⁷ While away, she would often imagine their nightly séances, a mixture of talk and tenderness. From Teplitz in 1847, she delicately described for Leopold what pleasure distance denied them:

The above events constituted my outer life. My inner life came from your anticipated letter. It led me straight to your feet, putting my head on your lap, your hand on my forehead and listening to your beloved words, which you have uttered now for years and whose truth and applicability, alas, still remain relevant. Indeed, that I can hear all this from you, including truths that gladden my heart, that lift my confidence, that give me courage to face the present and submit to the future—that is my good fortune. How hard do I lean and still harder press the hand which draws back the curtain from before eternity and the future. How readily would I jump over, if only I could rely on that hand—? But you declare: "What is, that is real!" and I am quieted.⁴⁸

A few years later, Adelheid sketches yet another scene of their intimacy and interdependence. They had been away from Berlin for a full month in Dresden, Nuremberg, and Wolfenbüttel. When they returned, Adelheid was in pain and exhausted. In a letter to Julie in Wolfenbüttel, she conveyed what happened next:

After much tossing and turning, I fell asleep, though toward eleven I awoke and because of my pain couldn't find a comfortable position. Zunz heard my groaning, got up and bent over my bed and held me tightly in his arms till I fell asleep. May God reward him for his love. He is so sad himself that tears often pour forth from his eyes. He has no one but me. We understand each other, we weep together over our bird (that just died), we lament being separated from you and the clear pure air of your garden and the love which surrounds us there. Don't breathe a word of this to anyone. I intend from now on to part from him, to leave him alone, even less than before.⁴⁹

Adelheid appreciated like few others, despite her minimal Jewish knowledge, the degree to which Leopold stood apart from and ahead of his contemporaries. To be peerless meant a lonely existence, punctuated by requests of Zunz from the leadership of the Berlin *Gemeinde* to aid it in time of need or enhance its celebration of an anniversary. In 1865, Zunz obliged with a stirring address honoring the community's renowned choir director Louis Lewandowski, on the jubilee of his twenty-fifth year in office. He spoke broadly of the importance of music in worship but concluded on a cautionary note: "An improved service in the synagogue is not the cause of progress but its effect. Accordingly, a more beautiful life does not spring from an enhanced liturgy, but rather a stronger

faith leads to a better rite. If Israel's history is unknown and Jewish literature is neglected, if the Hebrew language is forgotten and Judaism devalued, then neither ancient texts nor new melodies will do much good."⁵⁰ In her comment on the event to Philipp and Julie, Adelheid highlighted the depth of Leopold's performance: "Zunz spoke again so nicely. A deep perspective gave the man (Lewandowski) his proper due. Zunz's thoughts are so lofty and all-encompassing that everyone is able to sense their nobility and prophetic quality. Yet very few are able to fathom their source, which alone leads to full comprehension."⁵¹

Among those elite few, Adelheid stands out. Her range of interests, if not her body of knowledge, blessed Leopold with a soul mate. In addition to those already mentioned, the authors whose works surface in her correspondence include the theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher⁵² and August Theodor Stamm,⁵³ the New Testament critic David Friedrich Strauss,⁵⁴ the scientist Alexander von Humboldt,⁵⁵ the English biographer of Goethe George Henry Lewes,⁵⁶ the poets Lord Byron⁵⁷ and Alphonse de Lamartine,⁵⁸ and the salonière Rahel Varnhagen.⁵⁹ In 1850 Adelheid toured Berlin's newly opened and stunningly beautiful Neues Museum, with its impressive exhibition of Egyptian antiquities, and took in a lecture by Germany's most famous Egyptologist, Karl Richard Lepsius.⁶⁰ Five years later she accompanied Leopold on a long-yearned-for research trip to the British Museum and the Bodleian Library. In London she happened to be visiting Sir Isaac Lyon and Caroline Goldsmid, while Leopold was at the British Museum, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert dropped in unexpectedly to admire the flowers of the Goldsmid greenhouse. With her command of English up to the task, Adelheid impressed the royal couple in the rather intimate hour-long conversation that ensued.⁶¹

Her exceptional degree of political engagement surely owes much to Leopold's years in journalism and to her own reading of such acerbic cultural and political critics as Börne, Riesser, Gans, and Heine.⁶² In 1827, just five days after the sudden death of George Canning, England's short-lived liberal Tory prime minister and eloquent advocate of abolition and Catholic emancipation, Adelheid writes of her dismay to Leopold from Hamburg:

What do you say to the terrible news, which circulated here yesterday, that Canning is dead? Kley [Eduard Kley, the Prediger of the Reform Temple in Hamburg, in whose home she was staying] related it at dinner and my desire to eat simply vanished. What will become of the hopes of the Catholics, the hopes of England itself? I was overcome with consternation. I believe the king must now act with a measure of independence.⁶³

Leopold's distress matched hers and suggests just how congruent were their radically liberal views: "On my way home I learned of Canning's death, which

utterly shattered me. Few of the people who sit on thrones or stand near them have touched me as deeply as this man, and now fate has snatched him away in mid-life, amid a thousand plans and looming wars, while thousands of knaves, monks and rotten judges stuff their fat bellies."⁶⁴ Zunz often vented his agitation in cynical barbs. In this selfsame letter to Adelheid, he returned twice more to the tragic loss. That she did not let it go unmentioned, indeed, that she was the first to raise the subject, pleased him to no end.

Adelheid's religious sentiments also fell under the influence of Leopold, even as her entrance into his life manifestly strengthened his resolve to link his destiny to the welfare of his people. With a doctorate and fiancée in hand, Leopold left Berlin in the late summer of 1821 with two like-minded friends to spend a few weeks in Hamburg in the Kley household. The visit turned out to be transformative. As he recounted to Adelheid in a letter flush with exuberance, he was inspired by the economic profile, intellectual ferment, and religious vitality of the city's Jews to rededicate his life to the reform of Judaism and the re-formation of its Jews:

I am firmly convinced that no salvation can arise from the Jews until the present sclerotic and cowardly generation dies out, and one born in freedom awakens to fight for its heavenly kingdom. I hope when I return to Berlin to be active in behalf of the Jews. Don't be puzzled, dearest, that in my letters I touch on this matter so often. My entire life is a text to this unending theme, though the world hardly realizes it as yet [. . .] It seems to me that the more eager I become to work for the salvation of my brethren, the more deeply do I love you.⁶⁵

Leopold's inspiration then stemmed from two sources, and Adelheid's quick affirmation of his career choice tightened the linkage between his calling and his marriage: "I take up my quill again today to describe to you the satisfaction I felt at your enthusiasm for the reform of the Jews. I do hope that you, who are endowed with such courage, will, with God's help, contribute modestly to alleviating the immense needs that prevail here and motivate those affected to be more sympathetic and active."⁶⁶ In the course of a fifty-two-year marriage, Adelheid's infinite solicitude would nurture Leopold's celebrated steadfastness in an era fraught with stress.

A pronounced universal thrust that is nevertheless averse to Christianity characterizes Adelheid's expressed religious views. As the quotient of Jewish specificity fades, a resilient residue of ethnicity remains. In 1854, she gives Julie a taste of what she garners from Leopold in their daily coffee-hour confab:

My doubts get resolved, my objections corrected. Religion and politics, the toughest of topics, are given preference. You ask "What is religion?" Believe me neither Judaism nor Christianity nor any "ism," because as the purest and holi-

est of feelings take on a firm exterior, they breathe their last and are replaced by missionary zeal, despotism and hypocrisy. But enough for today. I don't have enough paper to analyze these evil spirits. Form deadens the spirit even as it deadens love! Thus between us no forms.⁶⁷

For Adelheid it is the beauty of nature that supplants the ritual forms and theological claims of Judaism:

My window is open [she writes to Julie three months later] and the wind wafts the aroma of orange blossoms my way. How beneficent is nature. How lovely is the reward that comes from being immersed in it. Since captivated by its wonders, I find my religion therein, my God in every leaf. I am finished with abstract faith, doing and believing are one. I no longer know how to revert to fanaticism. I am a child of the world and feel only the heaven that surrounds me.⁶⁸

On her Teplitz trip in 1847, Adelheid took long walks daily into the countryside. An unobstructed vista from a mountain top on a late Friday afternoon induced the following reverie: "This magnificent quiet [she tells Leopold], this Sabbath celebration in nature, this holy cathedral! And all for us tiny human beings? To pray we must climb mountains, for in beholding such grandeur our hearts expand and the divisions that still preoccupy us in the synagogue fade away. Here we love God and through him humanity."⁶⁹

And universalism entails for Adelheid a shift toward religious tolerance and mutual respect. In a letter some seven months later to the still grieving widow of Immanuel Wohlhill, Leopold's erstwhile comrade in arms, Adelheid contends, in referencing a mutual Hamburg friend, "who still believes that the Jewish religion is the only one that is true, which is a view I hardly share. Rather I regard every religion as true for its adherents, for the divine manifests itself in all of them."⁷⁰

At times, though, Adelheid finds Leopold's cynicism excessive. One of his cleverest epigrams fails to reconcile her to Strauss's utterly negative theological swan song of 1872, *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (The Old and New Faith). To Julie she trashes the book on hearsay: "Zunz always asserts that we know nothing and that all faith is superstition (*Glaube ist Aberglaube*). But I dare say that my ancestor was an ape troubles me deeply! Yet Strauss, a theologian, embraces this theory. What would Ewald say to this?"⁷¹

Contrastingly, it is for ethnic reasons that the celebrated letters of Rahel Varnhagen, which began to appear shortly after her death in 1833, induced Adelheid to criticize the author to Philipp in a letter:

Her religion is the weakest part of her book and quite contradictory. The feelings elicited in her by certain scenes in the Gospels reflect a sick disposition rather

than a pious soul. The image of Mother Mary at the suffering of her son moves her [Rahel] to tears, while the degradation of her own people eludes her. How much better would it have been if she had never left them, thereby giving less credence to the fashion of the day. Please don't regard me as a fanatic that I give voice to this wish. Don't we betray ourselves when we become estranged from that which we took in with our mother's milk? In consequence, our strength and fervor are diminished and no amount of spirit can fill those gaps.⁷²

A noticeable laxity in the couple's practice accompanied the erosion of traditional belief. To be sure, the epistolary evidence is slight and incidental, but cumulative. Thus while Leopold himself seems never to have traveled on the Sabbath,⁷³ he did plead with Adelheid in 1827 to leave Hamburg on a Saturday so that she would arrive back in Berlin by Monday.⁷⁴ She eventually departed on a Wednesday, but not for religious reasons.⁷⁵ Many years later in a letter to Julie, Adelheid made light of an excursion the two women took on a festival Sabbath.⁷⁶

On intercity trips when traveling by postal coach and circumstances permitting, Adelheid set aside religiously dictated dietary restrictions. Without compunction, she related to Leopold that on her 1836 journey to Teplitz she treated herself to a nonkosher meal at the inn where the coach had stopped for the night: "I did not at first come to the dinner table. But considering that the night might be too long for my empty stomach, and there were neither monks nor Jews around, I ordered a piece of meat and bread, though I didn't touch the butter."⁷⁷

After his mishap as Prediger in Prague in 1835–36, which inoculated him against the rabbinate for good, Leopold took a cure at a spa in Franzenbad to settle his nerves before returning to Berlin. The absence of Jews at the Berliner Hof, where he stayed and took his meals, which often included a meat dish, suggests that the facility was not kosher.⁷⁸ Still, it seems that Leopold preferred to eat kosher outside the home whenever possible.⁷⁹ And given the employment of a maidservant who would not go to the theater during the nine days of mourning before the fast day of Tisha B'Av, the dietary laws surely prevailed in the Zunz kitchen.⁸⁰

As Leopold auditioned for the post in Prague, he became self-consciously more observant. He announced to Adelheid proudly that he had begun to wear a cap (*Käppchen*) daily, with another for the Sabbath.⁸¹ The meticulous dating of their letters, often penned over several days, readily confirms that in their early years at least, they did write each other on the Sabbath.⁸²

An offhand remark by Adelheid implies rather clearly that she attended synagogue infrequently and then at least partially out of ethnic reasons. For Rosh Hashanah in 1852, she told Julie that she had gone alone to a branch syna-

gogue in Berlin, where its rabbi, Michael Sachs, usually did not preach, "in part out of feelings of thankfulness and in part to remind me that I still belong to the Jews." The Zunzes had grown disdainful of Sachs's insufferable sense of self-importance. To her utter surprise, however, a sermon by one Mr. Landsberg captivated her so that she brought him home and had him read it to Leopold, who liked it no less.⁸³

In the face of an intermarriage in the family, Leopold espoused a viewpoint that privileged the present. In 1850, his cousin Rosa sought his advice in the matter of her son, who sought her approval to marry a Christian woman. Her anguish elicited a quick and humane response:

You write that if she were Jewish you would gladly give your approval, from which I deduce that you have nothing against the girl and would even now give your approval, since both sides seem quite serious. I would not let this so-called Christian girl cause you to err. Drop any idea of coercion, any promise of a future conversion. Ecclesiastical coercion has already made humanity miserable enough. If you, however, do give your approval, give it fully and lovingly. To tell your son get married and leave me alone, actually amounts to withdrawing your love, making both of you miserable. When confronting a situation that runs counter to our wishes but is unavoidable . . . it is always preferable to work together in harmony and love to better it than to pull out and sulk in dissatisfaction, embittering yourself as much as those you love.⁸⁴

In sum, Leopold belonged to no party. He wanted nothing more than to be himself.⁸⁵ He respected Abraham Geiger, but detested Samuel Holdheim⁸⁶ and scoffed at the undemocratic character of the rabbinical conferences of the 1840s.⁸⁷ For the escutcheon of the Reform movement, he proposed a lit cigar with the word "Shabbes" inscribed on its wrapping,⁸⁸ and for Frankel's seminary in Breslau no doubt he would have drawn a tree sprouting the fruits of dogmatic scholarship (*Glaubenswissenschaft*).⁸⁹ He realized sooner than most that the project of assimilation (to use Paula Hyman's apt phrase)⁹⁰ would require a transformation of communal structure, rabbinic education and authority, Jewish education and synagogue worship,⁹¹ but guided always by the insights of critical scholarship, his tool for interpreting the content of ongoing revelation.⁹² He lamented the doleful fate of Hebrew as a harbinger of the eventual demise of Judaism, and read the modern Hebrew weekly *Hamaggid* (published in Lyck, Prussia, 1857) to stay abreast of the efforts to revive it in his day.⁹³

Above all, his fierce loyalty to Judaism was rooted in his tragic view of its history: "The entirety of Jewish history consists of compulsion, resistance and suffering. And the more this is brought out, the more clearly is manifested

the color of the religion of love."⁹⁴ His reaction to Gerson Wolf's 1863 book on conversions in Austria was visceral: "I admit my abhorrence of this literature on the Jew-hatred of bigoted bureaucrats and clerics. As much as I value bringing these documents to light because they are part of the church history of that religion of love, you can't expect me to stay long in these halls. Maimonides got it right. The gradual elimination of this illusion was the purpose of its existence."⁹⁵

The cost in human suffering paid by Jews over the millennia to establish the right to be collectively different is what denied emancipated Jews the freedom to denigrate Judaism. It was that deeply held conviction that moved Leopold in 1843 to publish his rousing defense of phylacteries. Questioned by Philipp, he explained: "I know full well that I cannot restore the laying of tefillin. In fact, do I even want to? Rather it was to silence the scoffers that I wrote, it being always better to embrace [anbinden] tefillin than heretics."⁹⁶

To formulate this composite and nuanced conception of Judaism was Leopold's singular achievement; to help him sustain and disseminate it was Adelheid's. Without her, his stability and stamina would never have endured. She divined his thoughts, eased his hurts, and buoyed his spirits to keep his talents focused on a noble cause. Thanking his many well-wishers in 1864 when he turned seventy, Leopold saw fit to enunciate Adelheid's untold contribution to his revolutionary enterprise:

I have been inwardly stirred and overjoyed by the overwhelming expressions of affinity and love that have come to me in tribute. Not least because of my dear wife, my beloved Adelheid, who for 42 years in joy and sadness has been my pillar and helper. Her insight, nobility and contentedness have enabled me to devote my life to scholarship.⁹⁷

Her death ten years later revealed pitifully the full extent of Leopold's indebtedness. His creative drive collapsed, never to revive. The entry in his diary recorded for posterity his inconsolable grief: "Adelheid first complained on March 14, went to bed on the afternoon of April 4 and died on Tuesday August 18 at 8 AM. For 3/7th of a year she could not turn in bed. She has left me impoverished and orphaned, without any consolation. I have never known anyone like her."⁹⁸

In a less distraught moment, Leopold simply entered in his diary in Hebrew God's promise to Moses: "I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place [that I have made ready]" (Exodus 23:20). Decoded, the Hebrew letters for angel (*malakh*) stood for Adelheid. By implication, as God had not abandoned Moses after Mount Sinai, so too had God provided Leopold with a guardian angel to realize his destiny. Bereft of her, he was fated to wander aimlessly in the wilderness for the last twelve years of his life.⁹⁹

NOTES

1. Markus Brann, "Mitteilungen aus dem Briefwechsel zwischen Zunz und Kaufmann," *Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (hereafter *JJGL*) 5 (1902): 171.
2. Leo Baeck Institute New York (hereafter LBINY) Archives, Leopold and Adelheid Zunz Collection, Leopold to Adelheid, August 11, 1827.
3. Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem (hereafter JNUL), ARC, 4° 792, V 2.
4. *Ibid.*, Einleitung, 28.
5. *Ibid.*, 46.
6. Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, London: East and West Library, 1958 (hereafter Glatzer I); *idem*, ed., *Leopold Zunz. Jude-Deutscher-Europäer* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1964) (hereafter Glatzer II).
7. LBINY, Archives, Zunz Collection.
8. *Ibid.*, Adelheid to Leopold, June 10, 1836.
9. The pertinent documents are in JNUL, ARC, 4° 792, C 9, C 16, while the income figures are drawn from Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), 58. As to when Leopold and Adelheid first met, see Glatzer II, 461. On the determinative role of dowries among German Jews more generally, see Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85-116.
10. S. Maybaum, "Aus dem Leben von Leopold Zunz," *Zwölfter Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin* (Berlin: Rosenthal, 1894), 10, 12; Glatzer II, 133. The paper was *Die Haude und Spenersche Zeitung*.
11. JNUL, ARC, 4° 792, C 1. Leopold Zunz, "Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel," *JJGL* 30 (1937): 131-40; Isaak M. Jost, "Lebensabriss," *JJGL* 31 (1938): 224.
12. Glatzer I, 177.
13. *Ibid.*, 256-57, 263-64.
14. *Ibid.*, 187-88.
15. Glatzer II, 208.
16. Glatzer I, 145, 147, 148-53, 167.
17. *Ibid.*, 165.
18. *Ibid.*, 167.
19. *Ibid.*, 173.
20. Glatzer II, 128.
21. LBINY, Archives, Zunz Collection, Leopold to Adelheid, July 20, 1847. The correspondence abounds with references to their canary, for example, Glatzer I, 140, 147, 225, 229. On the employment of Jewish servants prior to 1850, see Steven M. Lowenstein in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan (New York: Oxford: 2005), 108.
22. Glatzer I, 195.
23. *Ibid.*, 192.
24. *Ibid.*, 62; Glatzer II, 178.
25. Glatzer I, 76.
26. On learning chess, see Glatzer I, 231. The quotation is on page 277.
27. *Ibid.*, 82-83.
28. *Ibid.*, 192-93.
29. *Ibid.*, 233.
30. Glatzer II, 176, 215.
31. Glatzer I, 233. On the high-water mark of the salon in early-nineteenth-century Germany, see Hertz. More generally, Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, eds., *Jewish Women and Their Salons* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).

32. Glatzer I, 83.
33. Glatzer II, 181. See also *ibid.*, 138–39, 141, 151, 176, 177. Gans converted in Paris on December 12, 1825 (Hans Günther Reissner, *Eduard Gans* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1965], 113). Zunz reacted to the news with disdain in a letter to his friend the Viennese Prediger Isak Noa Mannheimer: “Dr. Gans came back from Paris 23 days ago, and is still the same open, congenial and clever person, except that he is now wholeheartedly taken by that which he used to regard as his greatest nemesis” (M. Brann and M. Rosenmann, “Briefwechsel zwischen Isak Noa Mannheimer und Leopold Zunz,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, neue Folge, 52 [1917]: 295). But the friendship survived. In 1833 when Zunz was driven to consider a rabbinic post in Darmstadt, Gans, by then a full professor at the University of Berlin, sent its lay leadership a glowing letter of recommendation in which he dared to aver “that if the views regarding the appointment of Jews were not so shallow and mean spirited, as they generally are, Dr. Zunz would long ago have found recompense for his unselfish efforts in a university career” (Maybaum, “Aus dem Leben von Leopold Zunz,” 28). In June 1836, Gans would be the first of their friends to happily welcome Adelheid back to Berlin from Prague, while Leopold tarried at a spa (LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, June 10, 1836).
34. Alexander Marx, “Zunz’s Letters to Steinschneider,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Research* 5 (1933–34): 119. Though she was also an opera singer, Sophie Schroeder-Devrient’s (1781–1868) fame derived mostly from the tragic roles she played in the theater.
35. *Ibid.*, 116.
36. *Ibid.*, 143.
37. *Ibid.*, 119.
38. JNUL, ARC, 4° 792, G 23, letter no. 6.
39. Glatzer I, 382n78.
40. Glatzer II, 147.
41. *Ibid.*, 186.
42. Glatzer I, 248.
43. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, June 1, 1836.
44. *Ibid.*, Adelheid to Leopold, June 6, 1836.
45. Glatzer II, 217, 223.
46. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, July 29, 1847.
47. Marx, “Zunz’s Letters to Steinschneider,” 126.
48. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, July 16, 1847.
49. Glatzer I, 241.
50. Leopold Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Louis Gerschel Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1875–76), 2:142.
51. Glatzer II, 442.
52. Glatzer I, 300; Glatzer II, 178.
53. Glatzer I, 294.
54. *Ibid.*, 333.
55. *Ibid.*, 196.
56. *Ibid.*, 287.
57. *Ibid.*, 76.
58. *Ibid.*, 236.
59. *Ibid.*, 75.
60. *Ibid.*, 231.
61. Immanuel Bernfeld, “Zum Andenken an Leopold Zunz,” *JJGL* 31 (1938): 233–34 (a description of the event in Adelheid’s own modest voice).

62. Glatzer II, 157.
63. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, August 13, 1827.
64. *Ibid.*, Leopold to Adelheid, August 18, 1827.
65. *Ibid.*, Leopold to Adelheid, August 31, 1821.
66. *Ibid.*, Adelheid to Leopold, September 4, 1821.
67. Glatzer I, 268.
68. *Ibid.*, 270–71.
69. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, July 16, 1847.
70. Bruno Italiener, “Briefe von Leopold Zunz an Immanuel Wohlhill,” in *Festschrift zum hundertzwanzigjährigen Bestehen des Israelitischen Tempels in Hamburg, 1817–1937*, ed. Bruno Italiener (Hamburg: Lessmann 1937), 60.
71. Glatzer I, 333. Heinrich Ewald was a professor of Oriental languages at Göttingen for most of his academic life. A political liberal but religious conservative, a prolific scholar but highly combative personality, he was a bitter critic of Strauss. Zunz despised him for his disdain of Jewish scholars.
72. *Ibid.*, 75.
73. *Ibid.*, 303–304; Glatzer II, 110–11.
74. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Leopold to Adelheid, August 20, 1827.
75. *Ibid.*, Adelheid to Leopold, August 24, 1827.
76. Glatzer I, 305.
77. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Adelheid to Leopold, May 31, 1836; also Adelheid to Leopold, June 9, 1836.
78. *Ibid.*, Leopold to Adelheid, June 20, 1836.
79. Glatzer II, 458.
80. LBINY Archives, Zunz Collection, Leopold to Adelheid, July 20, 1847.
81. *Ibid.*, Leopold to Adelheid, May 13, 1835.
82. *Ibid.*, Leopold to Adelheid, May 13, 1835: “When you write me again, date nothing on Shabbat.” At the time Leopold was being considered for post of Prediger in Prague. Also *ibid.*, Adelheid to Leopold, June 10, 1836 and Leopold to Adelheid, June 25, 1836.
83. Glatzer I, 243.
84. Glatzer II, 320.
85. *Ibid.*, 301.
86. *Ibid.*, 174, 209.
87. *Ibid.*, 238.
88. Glatzer I, 192.
89. Glatzer II, 364, 379.
90. Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 31.
91. Glatzer II, 163, 339.
92. *Ibid.*, 280.
93. *Ibid.*, 163, 180, 233, 399.
94. *Ibid.*, 420.
95. *Ibid.*, 425; G. Wolf, *Judentaufen in Oesterreich* (Wien: Verlag von Herzfeld and Bauer, 1863).
96. Glatzer II, 226.
97. JNUL, ARC, 4° 792, C 9.
98. Glatzer II, 461. See also his anguished letter to Victor Ehrenberg, Philipp’s and Julie’s son, in Glatzer I, 341.
99. JNUL, ARC, 4° 792, C13, 36.

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