

Ze'nah Ur'enah: The Story of a Book for Jewish Women

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The last decade has seen a growing interest in religious self-expression on the part of Jewish women. As Julius Carlebach here reminds us, there is a rich literary tradition to draw on. In the later Middle Ages, a distinctive Jewish women's literature emerged. It included special women's prayerbooks (*tehinot*), semi-secular romances, moralist tracts, and above all the 'Chumash for women' known as *Ze'nah Ur'enah*.

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There was a time when every Jew in Europe knew about the book called *Ze'nah Ur'enah*¹ and remembered his mother or grandmother reading it. This is no longer true today. In this paper I shall try to set out the context in which this great Jewish classic was published, give a brief history of the book and try to identify those elements of its contents which might explain its extraordinary success.

Literacy, Women and Torah

It has been suggested that the advent of printing in the fifteenth century had a greater effect on the Jews than on any other identifiable social group². At the time, literacy was in the main a virtue of the clergy, some aristocrats and a few city merchants, while the broad masses of the people remained illiterate. Amongst Jews, however, adult literacy was the norm. In Europe the ability to read and write Hebrew and/or Yiddish was almost universal. The introduction of printing was itself a consequence of social and economic changes which swept through Europe, challenging accepted and traditional values and orientations. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the position of Jewish women in European communities.

There is a well-known ambivalence regarding the education of women in rabbinic Judaism, which has its roots in the dual interpretation of Exodus 19:3, and in a famous Mishna³. Both these primary sources led to a broad assumption that, while women would need to be familiar with those tenets of halakhah which are essential for the execution of wifely and maternal duties, there was no requirement for them to learn Torah, even where it was accepted that they were capable of doing so.

Maimonides was firmly opposed to the study of Torah for women, commenting sourly on their "poverty of comprehension", especially in relation to the oral law⁴. The *Sefer Chassidim* was also opposed to any study for women beyond a knowledge of their religious duties. Even if a father personally supervised the instruction of a girl by a male teacher, the danger of immorality would remain⁵. One direct consequence of this attitude was that Jewish women, by and large, lost

contact with the Hebrew language which, even if they could read it, they no longer understood or used⁶.

The Social Context

The late medieval and early modern period was, as has been indicated, marked by considerable economic change. Jews, restricted to petty trade and moneylending and confined to special Jewish quarters, had to range widely to maintain themselves and their communities, and women played a decisive part in commercial and productive activities. They were active in the market, produced garments and hats and often acted as book-keepers and organisers for fathers and husbands whose trading kept them from home for long periods.

The important economic functions of women are reflected in changes in halakhah and rabbinic ordinances⁷. The status of women increased, not least because they had consumer power and made use of it. If the position of all women, including Jewish women, remained nevertheless identified with their wife-cum-mother roles then this was due to the stark reality that life expectancy was somewhere between thirty and forty years. The average Jewish girl married at fifteen to eighteen years, could expect to be married for some twenty-two to twenty-five years and to be able and likely to have children. Her social role was thus so completely tied up with her total life situation that a separation of the two was inconceivable⁸.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish religious education for girls was non-existent or, at best, a rare exception. Given the ambivalence in rabbinic thinking and the restricted lives of Jewish women, it was generally assumed that the experience of Jewish family living, with mothers and other close relations acting as role models, would provide for the growing girl most of the information she would be likely to need to take over the wife-mother role when the time came.

To reinforce what was learned by experience, short texts on the 'Duties of Women' were published by many rabbis⁹. There seemed to be no particular reason why the education of girls should be especially consid-

ered. Those with a strong urge to learn were always able to do so through their fathers, brothers and boys attending Yeshivah and enjoying *Freitish* (free meals) in a family. Indeed, there was always an elite of learned Jewish women, who acquired great learning and were recognised in many cases as teachers and sometimes as writers¹⁰. This led the Maharil to argue that, if women desired to be educated, it would have to be through their own initiative, a view which Israel Abrahams dismissed as naive¹¹.

Women and Books

Girls were taught to read and write Yiddish, they were often involved in printing and publishing and women traded in books and also bought them¹². The combination of factors we have listed – women active economically, able to commission and to buy books, deprived of formal modes of educational and intellectual activities and independent of the requirement to study specific texts – made them eager clients for anything which would fill the void created for them by male exclusivity.

Once printing had become commercially viable, many books appeared, intended mainly or entirely for Jewish women. There were, as we have already mentioned, books instructing women in the three main areas of their duties, *Niddah*, *Challah* and *Hadlakat ha-Ner*. There were collections of prayers especially for women, all in Yiddish, the *Techinot*, and there were *Mussar* books so typical of this period which called for ever higher standards of moral and social behaviour¹³.

But there were also less elevating and genuinely populist books which found ready and eager audiences. Pioneered by the famous scholar, Elia Levitas (Bachur), a wide range of medieval romances were translated into Yiddish¹⁴, adapted marginally to the needs of a Jewish audience (for example, a heathen queen becomes a faithful Jewess, where in the original she had become a faithful Christian)¹⁵.

Elia Levitas' translation of the adventures of Sir Bevis of Hampton was based on the Italian version of Buovo d'Antona which then became the *Bovobuch*, published in Isny-Wurtemberg in Yiddish in 1541. He also translated *Paris un'Vienna*, which was published in Verona in 1549. Other well-known titles which became available included such works as *Sigenot* (Dietrich von Bern, 1597) and *Kaiser Octavian* (1580). These tales found a ready market but also caused concern among some rabbis who saw in them a potentially dangerous invasion of foreign cultures into the Jewish family.

A Chumash for Women

To counter the influences of such alien material, no less than to take advantage of the promising marketing opportunities in the books-for-women trade, attempts were made to translate the Pentateuch for the benefit of uneducated men and women (or, in the code of the period, "for big and small")¹⁶. The book which was to transform Jewish women, and indeed Jewish history, was one such version of a Yiddish Pentateuch, *The Five Books of Moses*, of Rabbi Yakov ben Isaac Ashkenasi, who subtitled his volume, *Ze'nah Ur'edah*¹⁷, a title which was destined to become a household word for a *weiber-chumash* printed in *weiberschrift* and a bestseller among Jewish women for over three hundred years.

Very little is known about Rabbi Yakov ben Isaac Ashkenasi. It seems likely that he was born in or around 1550 and lived in an East Polish town, Yanov or Yanowya. He published a number of books in addition to the *Ze'nah Ur'edah*, notably *Melitz Yosher*, *Hamagid* and *Shoresh Yakov*. He died most probably in 1623, in the knowledge that his *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was a tremendous success¹⁸. Nor do we know exactly when the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was published for the first time. The oldest extant edition, printed during the lifetime of R. Yakov, is the Basle edition of 1622. The fly-leaf of that edition mentions three earlier ones, the first one published in Lublin and a further two published in Krakow.

Although opinions vary, the first Lublin edition probably came out in 1590¹⁹. The book was printed continuously, first in Western Europe only, but from 1786 the main source for new editions moved to Eastern Europe. Many editions were commissioned and sometimes printed by women, for whom the book rapidly became their own compendium and companion. By the beginning of this century there had been more than two hundred editions, ranging from small cheap one-volume issues to handsomely bound and handsomely printed luxury editions for the better off. A way of life evolved around the usage of the book. It was standard reading for Jewish women on Shabbat afternoon, when it was read singly or in small groups. Women also used the book to read to their children²⁰.

Reactions

As the use of Yiddish declined in Europe several attempts were made to translate the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* and these continue to the present day. To give a few examples, Julius Fuerst mentioned Latin excerpts published in Helmstaedt in 1660 and a French translation in Paris in 1847²¹. The pioneering Jewish feminist, Bertha Pappenheim, transcribed the first part (Genesis) and published it as a "Frauenbibel" for the Juedische Frauenbund in Frankfurt am Main in 1930. A non-Jewish scholar, Norman C. Gore, published an English version of the second part of *Ze'nah Ur'edah* (Exodus) in New York in 1965. More recently, a complete Hebrew translation in four volumes was published by S. Hirschkowitz in Bnei Brak (1973-1975) and a three-volume translation in English by Miriam Stark Zakon was published in the Artsroll Judaica Classics Series in New York and Jerusalem (1983-1984)²².

Inevitably a work so popular and so profitable was bound to attract criticism and opposition. In the 1780s when Moses Mendelssohn produced his German translation of the Pentateuch (albeit in Hebrew letters), the use of Yiddish was frowned upon among sophisticated Jews of Western Europe. *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was seen as a corrupting influence, a barrier to Jewish emancipation²³.

In 1806 Gotthold Salomon published a series of "Letters to a Respectable Female of the Jewish Faith" in which he tried to offer a modern version of Judaism to "better off" Jewish women who had no knowledge of it, unlike the "older, uneducated women who had some learning from their *Ze'nah Ur'edah*"²⁴. In 1810, a more subtle and telling critique of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was issued. *Sekel Aharon*, a well-known publisher in Sulzbach who had himself published a number of

editions of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah*, produced an unidentified translation of the Pentateuch in Hebrew letters with a preface in which he acknowledged the value of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* for "married women", but argued that "for half grown girls it is unsuitable" because the language of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* is "too corrupt", the "presentation contains too many casuistic explanations and many references are too crude for delicate feelings of morality (*Sittlichkeit*)"²⁵.

Emancipation Sensibilities

It was a characteristic of the Victorian era that it stipulated a delicate sensitivity for and of women which made it necessary to protect them from the coarser realities of daily life. The traditional lack of prudery and false modesty in rabbinic writing thus became the target for the main criticism of opponents of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah*.

By 1861 David Schweitzer had abandoned an attempt to "modernise" the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* because it was "highly unsuitable and even obscene". Instead, he constructed a new book to "elevate and entertain" but he still called it *Ze'nah Ur'edah*. A similar publication was prepared by Emanuel Hecht a year later²⁶. The last West European edition of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was published in Sulzbach in 1836; the printing and distribution of it now went to Eastern Europe, where in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, some important changes were made. The famous *weiberschrift* of the early editions was abandoned in favour of punctuated square Hebrew and a variety of commentaries were added to many editions²⁷. The Judeo-German of earlier editions was replaced by a Yiddish which had a much higher content of Hebrew words or roots and a less accurate rendering of German words and grammatical forms.

The distaste for some of the more earthy passages which had been found to be so offensive in Western Europe also had an impact in the East, and in the later editions of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* much of the vigour and robustness of the original text was toned down²⁸. For all the changes which took place, the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* retained its massive popularity as the companion of Jewish women, especially in Eastern Europe. In fact the constant attempts to add, detract or change the text bear witness to the tremendous influence which the book exercised over the minds and hearts of Jewish women²⁹.

What the book contains

It is important to emphasise that there is nothing 'new' in the *Ze'nah Ur'edah*. It is essentially a brilliant anthology of the mainstream of Jewish religious literature, from biblical times to the sixteenth century, intertwined with 'science' of the time and a broad spectrum of contemporary and commonsense knowledge.

If we know next to nothing about the life of the author, we certainly know that he must have been an outstanding scholar, with an exceptional command of Jewish sources. He drew heavily on the commentaries of Rashi, Rabbenu Bechay (ben Asher Ibn Halawa) or *der Bechay*, but he also utilised the Talmud, Midrashim (*Rabbah*, *Tanchuma*, *Yalkut Shimoni*), Ibn Ezra, Rambam, Ba'al ha-Turim, Imrei Noam,

Toldot Yitzchak and others, right up to the *Gur Aryeh* of the Maharal. The effect of a regular and continuous study of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* would thus ensure a broad and systematic introduction to Jewish thought and exegesis, so that perhaps for the first time Jewish women were enabled to understand and appreciate the discussions and examinations which are likely to have been conducted at the family table by their menfolk.

It would be reasonable to argue that this alone must have strengthened and increased the cohesion of the Jewish family quite dramatically, not least because women were now much more secure in evaluating the education which was provided for their sons. Nor did it threaten *Limmud Torah* (Torah learning) as the traditional preserve of men because the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* has as its constant motif an unswerving *Yirat Shamayim* (fear of Heaven) which cleverly subverted the common hostility to religious education *per se* for women³⁰.

Morality and Style

The style of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* has a unique charm. It flows smoothly without punctuation and paragraphing in a continuous narrative which moves from story to instruction, to reasoned argument, always setting out alternative explanations, always mentioning the source of an interpretation. There are constant cross references to other parts of the Pentateuch and to *Nakh* (the other Biblical books).

In accordance with Jewish tradition current and past concerns are not divided chronologically³¹ and the language is always informal, easy: a 'schmuss' which does not tire the reader. It entertains as it instructs and uses a personal, direct mode of address. For all that, it is always and deliberately an educational text which uses many devices to sustain its didactic momentum.

The entire work is built around questions and answers. Where possible, rationally based questions are answered both rationally and at moral levels. Also, where possible, answers are structured simultaneously around universalist and Jewish particularistic concerns. Thus, for example, the sun was created bigger than the moon because:

- (a) the sun is an indicator for all mankind while the moon is especially for the Jews;
- (b) if there was only the sun, men might treat it as a god;
- (c) sun and moon were created initially of equal size but the moon questioned the need for the sun and was reduced in size as a punishment;
- (d) the moon, taking its light from the sun, argued that people might say that God did not have the strength to give equal light to both – as a punishment, even via the sun, the moon has less light;
- (e) if both lights were equal men could not tell night from day, would work day and night and die quickly;
- (f) night is needed for peace and quiet to learn Torah³².

A Process of Education

It is not suggested that all the materials set out in the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* are reasonable or rational. It is after all a late medieval text which has incorporated a fair amount of the superstition and folklore of its period. But it is always striving for a reasoned (if not reasonable) view of the universe.

Being built around fundamental rabbinic assumptions that all things in the Torah have meaning and that the elucidation of meaning is a process of learning and learning to comprehend, through analysis and experience, the constant reader of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was not necessarily educated in the modern sense, but she would be literate and numerate and probably more secure in a baffling world than those who had gone before her.

This is due mainly to the extremely skilful way in which traditional Jewish sources are interwoven with worldly wisdom and social concerns. We might briefly consider this feature under three dominant headings, the transmission of social norms, the centrality of women and the use of appropriate 'sciences' to reinforce a Jewish world view.

Social Standards

Communal interests are foremost when rules of social behaviour are emphasised. Thus, humility is the greatest virtue (428a) and compromise is the best justice (553a). To be publicly defamed and not to respond leads to great reward (458b) and giving charity extends one's life expectancy (208a). One should never boast of one's wealth (458b) and one should conduct one's business with great honesty because robbing one's fellow man is a greater sin than robbing God (373b) while cheating a gentile is the worst form of dishonesty (430b). Even a hostile gentile authority must be treated with respect (214a), a rule to which in earlier editions a comment is added that showing respect costs nothing. Trade is essential and the basic reality is "*Nit Kein S'cheuro nit Kein Tuero*" (no trade – no Torah) (639a).

Not only are such practical rules constantly enumerated, but larger issues are discussed in starkly realistic terms. Thus, the need for Jews to maintain a separate lifestyle and identity are discussed in explaining Leviticus 20:26, while Deuteronomy 32:4 carries the longest commentary to explain the vexed problem of human suffering and divine justice. The most frequently repeated discussion concerns the two sons of Aaron who died in the service in the tabernacle. There are two alternative views in the Jewish tradition: that the two sons died because they were especially good or that they died because they did wrong. In a world in which premature death was a commonplace, this was obviously a central issue, and the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* refers to it again and again, now elaborating one view, now another (369b, 384a, 386-388, 403-406, etc.).

Women's Roles

The *Ze'nah Ur'edah* is unique in classical Jewish religious literature in its strong emphasis on the centrality of women. Although it does not deviate in the slightest from the accepted halakhic definition of the female role, it manages to elevate it and to give it a significance which in other texts is at best only implicit. Interestingly enough, the role of wife receives much greater attention than the role of mother and, certainly in the earlier texts, the social and economic roles of women receive continuous emphasis.

It is acknowledged that women often show a number of negative qualities, in that they are liable to be greedy (like Sarah), curious (also like Sarah), jealous

(like Rachel), idle (again like Sarah), intolerant (Sarah), and talkative (Miriam) (611a and b). More important is the *Eshet Chayil*, the 'clever' woman, who labours day and night to maintain her home, enables her husband and children to study and gives money to charity (33).

Apart from such broader discussions of the role of women, there are constant references and reminders which emphasise the importance of women. Thus, a mother has a greater influence on a person than a father because each one shares the mother's blood, the child grows inside the mother's body and then suckles her milk (426b). The relationship between husband and wife is like that between man and Torah: the Torah is like the wife and the wife is like the Torah (648a and b).

For all that, the facts that women are not obliged to observe many of the mitzvot and that their task is not primarily the study of Torah, is seen as a disadvantage which is expressed by repeated references to Jacob's blessing (Genesis 49:13-15). There, Zevulun is blessed before Issachar in reverse chronological order, because the younger makes it possible for the older to study, and the reward of those who facilitate the study of Torah and who feed students is greater than the reward of those who actually study (217b, 443a, 625b). Even so, when the Messiah finally comes, all men, women and children will be able to devote themselves to the study of Torah (218a).

A Scientific World View

More striking than the emphasis given to women in *Ze'nah Ur'edah* are the continuous attempts to add extraneous 'scientific' and anthropological material, sometimes quite deliberately in support of biblical and rabbinic teachings. This applies particularly to areas such as health and education. Some of this knowledge is taken from rabbinic sources, some is drawn from the medieval world of R. Yakov ben Isaac.

The four Aristotelian elements (water, air, fire, earth) are discussed, albeit without reference to Aristotle (389a), but so is the salamander, which is created when a chalk oven (*kalkofen*) has been burning continuously for seven years, day and night (389b). There are many references to the world of nature. Thus, leaves of trees are intended to protect fruits from the sun (639a). South winds are good winds because they bring dew and good rains (443a). Lions hunt early in the morning (443a), wild horses kill domestic animals (255b), an ass has big bones but little muscle (217b), a bee dies when it has used its sting (553b) and fish with scales and fins live in the upper part of the sea while those without live at the bottom (389b). There are seven types of locusts (large, small, red, black, white, green, brown) (252a) and sea-water contains salt (371a).

Of particular interest also are the many observations on the human body and on health, many again drawn from traditional sources, others belonging to the author's own time. The heart is said to operate like a set of wheels in perpetual motion (380a). The spine is a hollow tube with a marrow-like substance which is the seat of intelligence, while thought is located in the kidneys (424b)³⁴. Eating in moderation is essential for good health (417a) while over-indulgence will lead to ill health and premature death. Worry and anxiety hamper breathing and women tend to die earlier than men (421b).

A discussion of *Lashon Hora* (evil speech) leads to a fascinating classification of medical conditions. There are firstly, serious but not life-threatening conditions like toothache and miscarriage, secondly, diseases where the cure is worse than the disease, thirdly, diseases where cure is known but not available and, fourthly, progressive conditions but the victim is not aware of them (402b). Equally insightful is the comment that the doctor who explains a condition to his patient is better than one who merely instructs (405b-406a).

Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of information on woman's health issues. Prior to the onset of menstruation a woman is liable to have headaches and "heavy limbs" (395b) and even heathens observe menstrual taboos (396a). A child is formed in the womb for forty days (613a). The mother has extra blood during pregnancy which, on birth, enters the breasts and becomes milk. The child is, however, very reluctant to leave the womb, which is why it cries when it is born (395a). Girls are born with more moisture and mucus than boys, and women kneel to give birth to a child (396b)³⁵.

The child is likened to a tree. Until it is three years' old it cannot speak properly, but in the fourth year it should learn to become holy, be taught blessings and to praise God. In the fifth year, he should learn Torah (416b). The greater responsibility for the child rests with the mother because "she is with him in the house, and gives him good food and talks nicely with him . . ." (414a).

Advancing the Position of Women

We mentioned earlier that the Mahari³⁶ expressed the view (in 1560) that women would only achieve *Limud Torah* (Torah learning) through their own initiative. The view was brilliantly endorsed by the response of Jewish women to the *Ze'nah Ur'enah* and the remarkable influences it has exercised on them.

Not only did it help them to acquire basic Jewish learning, but its popularity and eventual status transformed the attitudes of many rabbis to that when, early

in our own century, a devotee of the *Ze'nah Ur'enah* set out to create a movement for the religious education of Jewish girls, she was able to do so with the full support of leading rabbis, including the *Chafetz Chaim* and the Agudas Yisroel organisation. But that is another story.

Notes

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1 An ordinary copy of the Yiddish version of the *Ze'nah Ur'enah* contains some seven hundred double-column pages, organised around the weekly portions of the Torah. Modern editions are in square print with vowels. Parts of Hebrew sentences from the Sidrah selected for comment are usually in smaller print and often in brackets. There are one and two volume editions and copies of this work are often to be found in many synagogue stores and family homes.

Basic information on the book and the period may be found in three famous works: Mayer Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*, (6 vols.), Vol. 2, New York and London, 1960; Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, translated and edited by Bernard Martin (12 vols.), Vol. 7, New York and Cincinnati, 1975; and the occasionally incorrect but still available, Max Gruenbaum, *Juedischdeutsche Chrestomathie*, Leipzig, 1882. Also of interest is I. Epstein, "The Jewish Woman in the Responsa" in Leo Jung (ed), *The Jewish Library 3rd Series*, New York, 1934. For references to the *Ze'nah Ur'enah*, the widely distributed two-volume Jerusalem 1965 edition has been used, given page numbers and column numbers (a) or (b), reading from right to left.

2 Raphael Posner and Israel Ta-Shema (eds.), *The Hebrew Book: A Historical Survey*, Jerusalem, 1975, especially Ch.5.

3 The *Mekhilta* says: "Tell the women the main things (*rashai ha-devarim*) in a mild tone and tell the sons of Israel – and be strict with them". In another interpretation it was argued that "God commanded that the women be told first and only then the men" (Zinberg, *op. cit.*, Vol. 7, p.126). In Mishna, Sotah 3:4 – the divergent views of Ben Azzai and R. Eliezer – the ambivalence referred to found its classic expression. Maimonides mentions only the negative expression of R. Eliezer.

4 *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 1:13. Maimonides argued that the majority of women had poor minds and would trivialise the study of Torah.

5 *Sefer Chassidim*. Jerusalem, 1969, (after 1924 edn.) Sect. 835.

6 Cecil Roth has claimed that "every woman could read (Hebrew); most could understand it; and a few could write it with the utmost fluency". ("Outstanding Jewish Women in Western Europe, 15-17 Centuries" in *The Jewish Library – Third Series*, edited by Leo Jung, New York, 1934, p.260). This is unlikely to be true. We have a better indication from a remarkable collection of letters, all written in November 1619, sent from Prague to Vienna, intercepted by military guards and abandoned in the Royal Archives in Vienna, until they were discovered and published some three hundred years later by two Jewish scholars. Twenty-one letters were written by women (in Yiddish, i.e. in Hebrew letters) but the way Hebrew words were written makes it clear that women wrote Hebrew phonetically (e.g. *Ovois* for Avot and *Sholem* for Shalom). See Alfred Landau and Bernhard Wachstein, *Juedische Privatbriefe aus dem Jahre 1619*, Wien und Leipzig, 1911, especially p. xxxix.

7 Z.W. Falk. *Jewish Matrimonial Law in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1966, described changes in family law as expressions of "a new concept concerning the status of women" (p.144). Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish*



Procession with the Holy Scrolls

- Self-Government in the Middle Ages*, Westpoint, Connecticut, 1972 (orig. 1924) is even more explicit. He described changes in Jewish law concerning women, as a movement towards "women's rights" which "had its origins and compelling force largely in the fact that women began to occupy a prominent position in the economic world" (p.379).
- 8 In contrast to the position today where a Jewish girl, married at twenty-five, with two children before she is thirty, would be left with an expectancy of some forty-five to fifty years of life, with virtually no demands made by her children.
- 9 In the David we are considering (i.e. late sixteenth, early seventeenth centuries) such books of instruction were widely available, viz:
Mitzvat Nashim, Venice, 1552;
Mitzvat Nashim, Venice, 1588;
Mitzvat Ha'Nashim, Hanau, 1627;
Seder Nashim, Prague 1629.
- 10 See the article by Cecil Roth already referred to in note 6. See also Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, Berlin, 1845, p.172; M. Kayserling, *Die Juedischen Frauen in der Geschichte, Literatur und Kunst*, Leipzig, 1879; Nahida Remy, *Das juedische Weib*, Leipzig, 1892.
- 11 Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, London, 1896, p.342, where he quotes a Responsum of the Maharil (Cremona, 1560) whom he described as a "medieval rabbi".
- 12 M. Kayserling, *op. cit.* has a small chapter on "Typesetters and Printers".
- 13 e.g. *Brantspigel*, Basle, 1602 and *Zuchtspigel*, Frankfurt a/M., 1680.
- 14 For a review of this genre, see Arthur Posner, "Literature for Jewish Women in Medieval and Later Times" in Leo Jung (ed.), *The Jewish Library 3rd Series*, New York, 1934. A scholarly analysis of some medieval texts in Meir Schueler's "Beitraege zur Kenntnis der Alten Juedisch-Deutschen Profanliteratur" in *Festschrift zum 75 Bestehen der Realshule . . . der Isr. Religionsgesellschaft Fr. a/M.*, Fr. a/M., 1928. Broader descriptions are to be found in Zinberg (*op. cit.*) esp. Vol.7; Waxman, *op. cit.* esp. Vol.2; and Gruenbaum, *op. cit.*
- 15 M. Schueler, *op. cit.* p.83.
- 16 Two such translations of the Pentateuch with Haftarat appeared in 1554, one by Michael Adams published in Constanz, the other by Paulus Amelius in Augsburg. Judah Leib ben Naftali Bresl published a further translation (based mainly on Adams) in Cremona in 1560.
- 17 *Song of Songs*. 3:11.
- 18 The only systematic attempt at a biographical study of R. Yakov ben Isaac is in M.M. Kusak's scholarly introduction to the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* in a Hebrew translation which, however, did not go beyond the first twenty-five chapters of Genesis. Kusak assigns to R. Yakov the family name, Rabino. His book was published in Jerusalem in 1974.
- 19 For a detailed study of the many editions of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* see Hone Shmeruk, "Die Misrach-Europaeische Nuschaot fun der *Ze'nah Ur'edah* 1786-1850" in *For Max Weinreich on His Seventeenth Birthday*, Hague, 1964. This paper is reprinted (together with a number of other useful essays) in Schmuel Rososchanski (ed.) *Ze'nah Ur'edah Mustern*, Buenos Aires, 1973 (both volumes in Yiddish).
- 20 The late Chief Rabbi Brodie told me that there was a distinctive way of 'leining' from the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* which he had heard his grandmother use, though I have not been able to trace this further.
- 21 Julius Fuerst, *Bibliothica Judaica*, Leipzig, 1849, Vol.II, p.19.
- 22 It seems to me unlikely that any translation can capture the charm and popularity of the Yiddish version, partly because the style of the original is quite unique and not replicable, and partly because particularly the more recent versions are only one possible source of learning amongst very many others, whilst the original *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was virtually the only source of knowledge in its early years.
- 23 See the Introduction to Norman Gore's translation of Exodus, *op. cit.*, p.26.
- 24 P. Philippson, *Biographische Skizzen III – Gotthold Salomon*, Leipzig, 1866, pp.40-41.
- 25 *Sefer Etz Chaim*, Das ist ein Deutsch-Chumasch aus der Beruehmten und schon bekannten Uebersetzung (i.e. Moses Mendelssohn), Sulzbach, 1810.
- 26 David Schweitzer, *Zeenah Ureehnah – Kommet und Schauet*, Ein Erbauungs- und Unerhaltungsbuch, Fuerth 1861.
 Emanuel Hecht, *Der Pentateuch Ze'nah Ur'edah in lehrreichen und erbaulichen Betrachtungen . . .* Berlin, 1862.
- 27 E.g. Nachlat Zvi, Nofeth Zufim, *Sefer Ha'Yashar*, Sheloh Hakadosh, etc.
- 28 To give one brief but typical example: in the older versions, it is said that Miriam spoke *loshen hora* about her brother Moses "dos er war mit mekayem Piryo Ve'Rivjoh mit seinem Weib". In the new texts this has been reduced to "er hot sich oggescheid fun sein Weib" (611b).
- 29 The *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was not entirely banished from Germany where it continued to be used by religious women in spite of the contentious criticisms to which it was exposed. Thus in the second half of the nineteenth century the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was still "die Lektuere der juedischen Frau" who would use it also to instruct her children. Cf. Kopi, Joel Gern – *Der Werdegang einse juedischen Mannes*, Frankful a/M., 1912, p.18.
- 30 A similar approach, derived from the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* was to be used in the 1920s and 1930s by the indomitable Sara Schnierer in creating the Beis Yakov movement.
- 31 *Ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah* (B. Pesachim 6b).
- 32 *Ze'nah Ur'edah* 4a-5b. (The 'method' of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* is clearly demonstrated if this discussion of sun and moon is compared with its original source in B. Hullin 60b).
- 33 The *Ze'nah Ur'edah* is, among other things, an extremely valuable guide to social changes which occurred during its long history. Broadly speaking, texts from 1850 describe different social situations from earlier texts and the role of women is a case in point. Our earliest extant edition of 1622 describes an *Eshet Chayil* as follows: "A clever woman is prepared to work day and night or to trade day and night to maintain her home, and to give charity to the poor from what she has produced or earned (*was sie dararbeit oder gewint*).“ By 1877 when the Victorian housewife was the preferred model, the text reads: ". . . she works day and night to maintain her home and gives charity to the poor . . ." (cf. 648a). In addition to the social changes revealed by changes in the text of *Ze'nah Ur'edah*, the book also has a wealth of material on linguistic developments in the Yiddish language, but these cannot be discussed here.
- 34 Compare the German expression, *Herz und Nieren* which also carries a link with thought.
- 35 Later editions of the *Ze'nah Ur'edah* do not repeat that women kneel in childbirth.
- 36 See Note 11.