

# **MEMORABLE DATES OF JEWISH HISTORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649452644

Memorable Dates of Jewish History by Gotthard Deutsch

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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OF

## JEWISH HISTORY

BY

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NEW YORK  
BLOCH PUBLISHING CO.

1904



To the Honorable Bernhard Bettmann,  
President of the Board of Governors  
of the Hebrew Union College since its foundation,  
these pages are dedicated  
on the occasion of his seventieth birthday,  
August 7, 1904,  
as a token of friendship and admiration  
by the author.







## MEMORABLE DATES.

### INTRODUCTION.

AMONG the various attempts to explain the complex phenomenon called Judaism, the historical explanation will necessarily be the least disputed. The definition of Judaism as a racial entity is strongly denied by a great many of its followers, as mistaking the accidental for the essential. The definition of Judaism as a creed is derided by a great number of men, who not only allow themselves to be called Jews in spite of their indifference or even hostility to the religious question, but even by such who zealously work for its future destiny. The definition, however, that the Jews of the present age are such by descent, that is, through historic forces, be those forces racial or religious, cannot be denied. The worst that may be said against it is that it is not complete.

This assertion is strongly supported by the fact that the interest in Jewish history is manifested in our age as it never has been before, by publication of documents, of tombstone inscriptions and monographs, by the founding of societies devoted to the furtherance of Jewish history, and by the frequent celebration of centenaries, or similar events, recalling important turning points in the history of our past. This consideration prompted me to collect memorable dates in Jewish history, arranged according to the days of the month. Such a collection will be, in the first instance, a brief list of memorable persons and facts in the history of Judaism. It will suggest occasionally the celebration

of centenaries, and so furnish for the home and for the school proper means for bringing home vividly the memories of the past. The first one to attempt such a task was the immortal founder of "Jewish science," Leopold Zunz, who, in 1871, published his "Die Monatstage des Kalenderjahres. Ein Andenken an Hingeshiedene." His list is based on the traditional piety, manifested in the celebration of the "Jahrzeit." He was followed by Kayserling, who, in 1892, published short sketches under the title "Gedenkblaetter hervorragender juedischer Persoenlichkeiten des 19ten Jahrhunderts." The index, arranged according to the dates, serves the purpose which I attempted with my list. Since that time a Hebrew pamphlet of the same character has appeared, but I have not seen it. Rabbi Heppner, in Koschmin, published a block calendar, with the memorable dates from Jewish history on every leaf, and various papers, like the *Juedisches Volksblatt*, of Breslau, the *Juedisches Volksblatt*, of Vienna, the *Generalanzeiger fuer die gesammten Interessen des Judenthums*, have published weekly such lists. My own collection, however, has been from various sources, and I always tried, wherever it was possible, to go back to the original source of information.

The difficulties of such an attempt are numerous. 1. The first important question is: Who shall be included, and who shall be excluded? Zunz' work was severely criticized by his colleague, F. Lebrecht, who pointed out amongst other things that Zunz had omitted the name of the mint-master, Veitel Heine Ephraim, who had founded the institute in which Zunz taught. (See *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 1872, p. 477 and 687. See, also, Geiger, *Juedische Zeitschrift*, Vol. X, p. 184.) From an American point of view it may be sufficient to know that Zunz omitted the names of Isaac Leeser, Juda Touro, and Mordecai Manuel Noah. An especial difficulty is presented in the question of including the names of people who have left Judaism. That they are not altogether to be omitted, Zunz has proven by the fact that he included the names of Heinrich Heine and M. G. Saphir. Graetz devoted, in the last volume of his history, a whole chapter to

Heine and Ludwig Boerne, and has also devoted a lengthy chapter to Benedict Spinoza. And no one who understands Jewish history will blame either Zunz or Graetz for it. Heine had learned to think as a Jew and to feel as a Jew, and, in spite of his conversion, he was made to suffer as a Jew.

2. Another difficulty arises from the differences in the reports. While Kayserling states that Leopold Dukes was born January 17, Meyer's *Conversationslexikon* has January 25. There is no positive way of finding out the truth, because the old Jewish congregation did not keep exact records of the birth of children born in their midst, and even an investigation of the papers reporting the celebration of Dukes' eightieth birthday, which, in my case would be exceedingly difficult, would not prove anything. While Kayserling reports that Akiba Eger was born Nov. 2, 1752, according to the biography written by his great grandson, Solomon Schreiber, he was born on Nov. 8, 1761. There is only a degree of more or less probability about one or the other of these dates. For the sake of curiosity I wish to add that in one and the same number of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* the death of David Kaufmann is reported differently on the cover and in the body of the paper.

3. A special difficulty is due to the fact that dates of Jewish history in former times were given according to the Jewish calendar. This not only increases the possibility of an error, but it makes it absolutely impossible to avoid a difference with regard to one day, the night being counted with the next day of the month, while up to midnight it belongs to the preceding day of the general calendar. Isaac M. Wise died March 26, 1900—Adar 25, 5600. Had he died an hour later, it would have been Adar 26, and any one not informed about the general date would calculate it to have been March 27. This is a small matter, although a difference in a ledger of one cent remains just as grievous as if it were a matter of \$100,000. Another difficulty is the frequency of error in changing the date from the Jewish to the general calendar. Finally, error, and slip of the pen of the