



# Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity (Jewish Culture and Contexts)

*Ismar Schorsch*

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In 1818, with a single essay of vast scope and stunning detail, Leopold Zunz launched the turn to history in modern Judaism. Despite unending setbacks, he persevered for more than five decades to produce a body of enduring scholarship that would inspire young Jews streaming into German universities and alter forever the understanding of Judaism. By the time of his death in 1886, his vision and labor had given rise to a historical discourse and intellectual movement that devolved into vibrant sub-fields as it expanded to other geographic centers of Jewish life.

Yet Zunz was a part-time scholar, at best, in search of employment that would leave him time to study. In addition to his pioneering scholarship, he was as deeply engaged in ending the political tutelage of German Christians as the civil disabilities of German Jews. And to his credit, these commitments did not come at the expense of his loyalty to the Jewish community, which he was ever ready to serve.

Zunz once quipped that "those who have read my books are far from knowing me." To complement his books, Zunz left behind a treasure trove of notes, letters and papers, documents that the distinguished scholar of German Jewish culture, Ismar Schorsch, has zealously utilized to write this, the first full-fledged biography of a remarkable man.

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