

The “third force” to which MOSSE (one of the preeminent historians of German nationalism and antisemitism) refers in his subtitle is the 19th-century “Volkish” tradition in German nationalism that defined nationality on the basis of traditional links to the land and to the language, emotional ties, and later race and blood—as opposed to a conception of belonging based on civil rights, civic participation, and tolerance. This important force in German nationalism tended to exclude Jews, since German nationalists often associated Jews with the capitalism, liberalism, and materialism of modern, rather than traditional, society. Mosse argues that Jews were blamed by many German nationalists for the ills of modernity. Specific essays in Mosse’s book develop variations on this theme. The chapter on the image of the Jew in German popular culture explores the stereotype of the Jew as greedy, dirty, and dishonest. Nevertheless, the German Volkish idea that a nation possessed a mystical folk soul influenced German Zionists and even Martin Buber, one of the preeminent Jewish theologians and cultural Zionists of the 20th century. Mosse’s essays “Conservative Revolution” and “Fascism and the Intellectuals” illustrate how a deeply held antisemitism became fully integrated into German nationalism and prepared the way for the extremes of Nazism. The last essay in the book deals with left-wing Jewish intellectuals in the period of the ill-fated Weimar Republic. Many German Jews were attracted to the ethical idealism of humanitarian socialism, but this did not succeed in saving German democracy. Writing the book in the late 1960s, Mosse draws a parallel between these German-Jewish intellectuals and the young American “new left” radicals of the 1960s, who could be as impractical as their German counterparts and who similarly faced a society in turmoil that was turning to conservative solutions.

STERN is a British-born, American-educated Jew who has been living in Germany for more than 20 years. She exemplifies the kind of younger activist intellectuals who are participating in the new German-Jewish dialogue. She has edited an important collection of essays by 20 prominent German Jews. The unifying theme of the book explores the ways in which leading German Jews struggle to come to terms with themselves and their environment in the light of the recent past and of the new reunified Germany. For Ralph Giordano, a survivor and eminent novelist, the question, “Why have I remained,” is crucial. Although critical of the problems of Germany, Giordano is hopeful that Jewish life will continue in a democratic framework. The historian Julius Schoeps deals with the guilt that some Jews feel for living in Germany, while other intellectuals and scholars affirm their ties with Germany. The problem of antisemitism is a recurrent theme in the book, and while leaders such as Ignatz Bubis are aware of the increasing respectability of antisemitism, others note the philosemitism of some Germans who look upon the Jews as a community of victims who can do no wrong, again creating a distorted image of Jews. Then there is the question of the transplanted Jews from the former Soviet Union, who comprise half of the 50,000 Jews living in Germany today. How will they come to define their Jewish identity? The final essays deal with the revival of Jewish religious and cultural life in Germany. Stern concludes that “there is Jewish life in contemporary Germany, and that this life is becoming ever more firmly established,” both in the eyes

of Jews and of non-Jewish Germans. The great value of this book is in the variety of perspectives it offers on the problems and the strengths of Jewish life in Germany today.

LEON STEIN

See also Germany: Medieval

## Gershom ben Judah c.960–1028

Pioneer rabbinic authority and teacher of German Jewry

Agus, Irving, *The Heroic Age of Franco-German Jewry*, New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1969

Finkelstein, Louis, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (Abraham Berliner Series), New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1924; revised edition, New York: Feldheim, 1964

Grossman, Avraham, “The Historical Background to the Ordinances on Family Affairs Attributed to Rabbenu Gershom Me’or ha-Golah (‘The Light of the Exile’),” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, edited by Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven Zipperstein, London: Halban, 1988

Kanarfogel, Ephraim, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages*, Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1992

Roth, Cecil (editor), *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 11: *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, and London: Allen, 1966

Talmudic thought in medieval Ashkenaz effectively begins with Gershom ben Judah, or Rabbenu Gershom as he is usually called. He headed the academy at Mainz and composed a talmudic commentary (embellished by his successors at Mainz) as well as liturgical poems and many responsa. Rabbenu Gershom is perhaps best known, however, for the series of ordinances attributed to him, which deal with a wide variety of issues including polygamy, personal privacy, and communal government.

AGUS traces the economic, social, and intellectual history of the Rhineland in the pre-Crusade period, utilizing the responsa and comments of Rabbenu Gershom and other rabbinic figures. Rabbenu Gershom dealt with the structure, parameters, and efficacy of *ma’arufiyya* (acquaintance), a monopolistic relationship in which a Jew had quasi-exclusive rights to business dealings and transactions with certain gentile clients. A great deal of trust between Jews was necessary in order to sustain this form of livelihood in early Ashkenaz, and the same can be said for Jewish involvement in moneylending at this time.

Rabbenu Gershom functioned as the leading scholar in his academy, to which students came from a very wide geographic area. At the same time, Rabbenu Gershom apparently decided matters of ritual and communal policy in consultation with a group of senior scholars and teachers. Agus notes that the

writings of Rabbenu Gershom also suggest that at least one group of students in the academy consisted of adults who were already responsible for earning a livelihood for their families. The absence of a professional rabbinate, coupled with the goal of pursuing lifelong study nonetheless, typified early Ashkenaz in the pre-Crusade period. Agus also outlines the approaches of Rabbenu Gershom to domestic issues such as childlessness, divorce, and the payment of the ketubah.

Many of these and other related issues are discussed briefly throughout the collection edited by ROTH. In addition, two chapters contributed to this volume by Agus, "Rabbinic Scholarship in Northern Europe" and "Rashi and His School," describe in some detail the rabbinic writings of Rabbenu Gershom and their place within the transmission of the study of the Oral Law. Included in this discussion are also a listing and a description of the ordinances (takkanot) attributed to Rabbenu Gershom. In the view of modern scholarship, these ordinances were not the product of one person. Several may have been enacted before Rabbenu Gershom; others were probably enacted in later centuries. The ordinances fall into three categories: regulation of marriage and divorce; the relationship of communities to nonmembers, new settlements, or other communities; and personal status (e.g., an ordinance against insulting penitent converts and another that protected the privacy of a person's letters). These ordinances were enforceable by means of anathemas or bans (such as *herem beit din* and *herem ha-yishuv*), procedures also attributed to Rabbenu Gershom. Rabbenu Gershom's contributions to the writing and interpretation of liturgical poetry and hymns are referred to in A.M. Habermann's chapter on the beginnings of Hebrew poetry in northern Europe and France.

FINKELSTEIN delineates the wide scope intended by Rabbenu Gershom's ordinances, the legal underpinnings of enacting ordinances, and the nature of the synods that promulgated them. He describes the provisions of the ordinances and reviews their attribution to Rabbenu Gershom. The best-known ordinance of Rabbenu Gershom forbade a man to marry more than one wife and was accepted throughout Ashkenaz and beyond. Bound to the ordinance that prohibited polygamy was another that prohibited contested divorce. The synods convened by Rabbenu Gershom became a model for supercommunal government throughout the Middle Ages. Finkelstein records the extant Hebrew versions of Rabbenu Gershom's takkanot and provides annotations and an English translation. Despite original publication some 75 years ago, this book remains a valuable textual resource.

GROSSMAN seeks to confirm that those ordinances that deal with familial issues were composed in 11th-century Ashkenaz, and in all likelihood by Rabbenu Gershom, by demonstrating that the social and religious milieu of this period comports quite well with the historical realia implicit in the ordinances. Grossman reviews and evaluates the factors that caused some historians to doubt even the attribution of the ordinance prohibiting polygamy to Rabbenu Gershom. He then demonstrates that monogamy was the accepted rule among Jews in Germany in the second half of the 11th century and that Ashkenazi sources from the mid-12th century explicitly mention Rabbenu Gershom as the author of the ordinance. Grossman discusses the historical motives and

developments that may have prompted this ordinance. Jewish husbands were often absent from their homes for long periods of time due to their involvement in trade and business. Grossman argues that this development also may have been a factor in the ordinance that prohibited divorcing a woman against her will and in the ordinance against reading another person's mail without permission. He further discusses the historical factors that support an 11th-century date for the ordinance concerning the breach of a betrothal.

KANARFOGEL includes a number of formulations by Rabbenu Gershom that relate to Jewish education and academies of higher talmudic studies. He reviews Rabbenu Gershom's rulings concerning the payment and support of the elementary-level tutor (*melammed*) and the teacher of older students. Kanarfogel also notes that pre-Crusade academies were typically identified with the city in which they were located rather than with a particular teacher, as was the case in the 12th century and beyond. References to Rabbenu Gershom and the academy at Mainz clearly reflect this distinction. In addition, Rabbenu Gershom and other pre-Crusade rabbinic scholars typically are shown issuing halakhic rulings based stylistically on biblical verses, another convention that was discontinued in the period following the First Crusade.

EPHRAIM KANARFOGEL

## Ginzberg, Asher *see* Ahad Ha'am

## Ginzberg, Louis 1873–1953

Lithuanian-born American scholar and interpreter of talmudic literature

- Finkelstein, Louis, "Louis Ginzberg," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 56, 1955
- Ginzberg, Eli, *Keeper of the Law: Louis Ginzberg*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966
- Golinkin, David, "Introduction," in *The Responsa of Professor Louis Ginzberg* (Moreshet, vol. 16), New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1996
- Heller, Bernhard, "Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 24 and 25, 1933–1934 and 1934–1935
- Shargel, Baila R., "Louis Ginzberg as Apologist," *American Jewish History*, 79, 1989–1990
- Spiegel, Shalom, "Introduction," in *Ginzberg's Legends of the Bible*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968

FINKELSTEIN's portrait of Louis Ginzberg is representative of several short laudatory biographical sketches that eulogized the scholar of Jewish "Law and Lore." Finkelstein reflects upon the pious and intellectual life of the great talmudist, characterizing Ginzberg's five decades at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York as a life devoted to the translation of both the Talmud and talmudic culture "into a philosophy of life capable of guiding the modern world." Finkelstein then

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