

# Cultural Receptivity vs. Ethnic Pride in Early Modern Times: “Ḥakham Zevi” Hirsch Ashkenazi and Rabbi Jacob Emden

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Throughout the Middle Ages, Ashkenazim in Franco-Germany and Sephardim in Spain constituted two separate Jewish cultural and ethnic entities. Although contacts between them always existed and neither tradition developed in total isolation from the other,<sup>1</sup> they remained relatively self-contained and geographically distinct. Following the expulsion of both these Jewries from their respective centers in the fifteenth century, they continued to flourish primarily in two different areas: Poland and the Ottoman empire; but substantive contacts between them became more widespread. These contacts were intensified during the next two centuries as growing numbers of Ashkenazim found their way to Turkey and as both groups began to settle in large numbers in major cities of Western Europe. London, Amsterdam, and Hamburg boasted large Ashkenazi and Sephardi populations living side by side, each growing in numbers and prominence until well into the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Thus, one and the same Jewish community afforded opportunities for the comparative study of customs, which heretofore had necessitated extensive travel.<sup>3</sup>

These intensified geographic contacts, however, brought about contradictory results. While they led to a growing cultural cross-fertilization that tended to blur the distinctions between the two groups, they also forced leaders of both Ashkenazim and Sephardim to struggle even harder to maintain the ethnic and cultural identities of their followers. This tension between cultural objectivity and receptivity on the one hand, and ethnic pride and independence on the other, was widespread throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and figured prominently in the lives and works of many of the most illustrious rabbis of the time.<sup>4</sup> Outstanding among these were “Ḥakham Zevi” Hirsch Ashkenazi (ca. 1660–1718) and his son, Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697–1776). (The title *ḥakham* is used by the spiritual leaders of major Sephardi communities.)

Born in Moravia to a prominent Ashkenazi family, young Zevi spent his formative years in a Sephardi environment: as a young boy, he had moved with his family to Buda (Ofen), Hungary, which was then under Turkish occupation and hence under Sephardi influence.<sup>5</sup> Encouraged by his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Ephraim ben Jacob ha-Kohen (1616–1678), head of the beth din of Buda, to become familiar with Sephardi traditions, Zevi studied with Rabbi Elijah Covo (d. 1689) in Salonika<sup>6</sup> and traveled extensively in the East, visiting the Jewish communities of Adrianople, Belgrade, and Constantinople.<sup>7</sup> According to one

view, Zevi received his rabbinic ordination from the Sephardi rabbi Hayyim ben Israel Benveniste (1603–1673).<sup>8</sup>

Ḥakham Zevi's first rabbinic position was in Sarajevo (Serbia),<sup>9</sup> a Sephardi community; and even later, when he held leading rabbinic positions in the Ashkenazi "Triple Community" of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck (ca. 1688–1710), he established close contacts with the Sephardim of his new constituency, who looked to him for guidance.<sup>10</sup> For the first few years of his tenure as chief rabbi of Amsterdam's Ashkenazi community (1710–13), he enjoyed such a close relationship with the Sephardim there that "he was considered by them to be a Sephardi as well."<sup>11</sup> After leaving Amsterdam in the winter of 1714, Ḥakham Zevi visited London at the request of that city's Sephardi community, which had already approached him several years earlier to become its rabbi.<sup>12</sup> He was received with such great honors and splendor that the Gentiles there were prompted to ask, "Perhaps your Messiah has arrived?"<sup>13</sup> However, he declined the call from London and ended his career as rabbi of the Jewish community in Lemberg (Lvov), Galicia, where he died.

Ḥakham Zevi's collection of responsa reflects the high esteem in which he was held by members of various Sephardi communities, especially that of London. His very first printed responsum, written in 1696, records a highly respectful exchange with Rabbi Solomon Ayllon, then *hakham* of the Sephardi community of London. Another responsum was addressed to a group of London Sephardim who inquired whether it would be permissible for them to violate a congregational ban and secede from the city's Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in protest against its policy of conferring honors on members who were blatant violators of Jewish law.<sup>14</sup> The most famous issue on which the Sephardim of London sought Ḥakham Zevi's advice was the alleged heresy in a sermon on Divine Providence delivered by their chief rabbi, Ḥakham David Nieto, in 1705.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Ḥakham Zevi's familiarity with Sephardi custom is demonstrated by his knowledge of Spanish, Italian, and Turkish<sup>16</sup> and by his use of the Sephardi script in writing Hebrew.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, while Ḥakham Zevi spent an entire lifetime in very close contact with Sephardim and showed considerable respect for their traditions, he insisted upon maintaining his own Ashkenazi identity. He rejected two very lucrative rabbinic offers from the Sephardim of London and Livorno, declaring, "I am an Ashkenazi and I desire that my progeny and descendants should be reared and instructed in the ways of the Ashkenazim."<sup>18</sup> He may even have chosen "Ashkenazi" as his family name for that reason.<sup>19</sup>

A similar dynamic can be identified in the works of Ḥakham Zevi's eldest son, Rabbi Jacob Emden, probably the most intellectually multifaceted, polemical, creative, and complex Jewish figure of the eighteenth century.

Jacob was the first son born to his parents in Altona, Germany after three

daughters and, as he himself informs us, was a spoiled, sickly, and precocious child.<sup>20</sup> Shortly before his twelfth birthday his family moved to Amsterdam, where his father was appointed chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community. From the day he assumed this new post, Ḥakham Zevi became embroiled in a series of communal conflicts.<sup>21</sup> These made a great impact on young Jacob, who spent the next four formative years of his life in a household permeated with tension and stress. The most bitter controversy, which left a particularly lasting impression on Jacob, was over the Sabbatean writings of the halakist Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayyun (ca. 1655–1730). As a result, Ḥakham Zevi and his family were forced to leave Amsterdam in 1714.<sup>22</sup>

After traveling with his father through Europe for over a year, Jacob was married in 1715. The next three years, spent with his wife's family in Ungarisch-Brod (Uherský Brod), Moravia, were unhappy ones; he had only his studies, and a few students' of his own, as a consolation.<sup>23</sup> Upon hearing of his father's death in Lemberg (Lvov) in 1718, Jacob traveled there and, a few months after his arrival, delivered his first major public Talmudic discourse at his father's grave. This address reflected the high level of intellectual sophistication and breadth of knowledge already achieved by the young man, who was then only twenty years old.<sup>24</sup>

In the summer of 1719 Jacob returned to Ungarisch-Brod, but he did not remain there long. Soon he began an extended series of travels with the purpose of collecting his father's outstanding loans and selling the latter's printed collection of responsa. Later, Rabbi Emden was to describe these years as filled with bitter personal, emotional, and economic frustrations. He was frequently rebuffed by his father's debtors, cheated by business acquaintances, and stricken with recurrent illnesses and mental depressions. It was also during this period, on a visit to Prague in 1722, that he first saw the man who was to become his mortal enemy, Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz.<sup>25</sup>

Rabbi Emden's travels ended in 1729, when he accepted the invitation of the Jewish community of Emden, Germany to serve as its rabbi, the only formal position he was ever to hold. In the four years he spent in that city, he wrote commentaries on the Mishnah and Talmud, composed responsa, delivered sermons of which he was very proud, and became involved in communal affairs, often finding himself at odds with some of the community's most influential lay leaders. Although, for the first time in a decade, Rabbi Emden's livelihood was assured and he may very well have enjoyed the respect of the community (as he claimed), his years in Emden were not pleasant. In addition to his communal disagreements, he and all the members of his family constantly suffered from illnesses. He maintained that these ailments, along with his general "hatred" for the rabbinate, were responsible for his leaving the community in the summer of 1733. He decided to return to Altona, his home town.<sup>26</sup>

Although it was quite brief, this rabbinic interlude in Rabbi Emden's life left

its mark. Years later he was still referred to as “the rabbi of the holy community of Emden,”<sup>27</sup> and after thirty years he was even able to remember his stay there with some nostalgia. Most significant is the fact that these few years were responsible for the surname by which Rabbi Emden became known to posterity—contrary to his own explicitly stated request.<sup>28</sup>

The next eighteen years of Rabbi Emden’s life were marked by personal tragedies, communal quarrels, financial insecurity, and, in spite of it all, intensive and creative study. In 1740, his first wife having died, he remarried. When his second wife also died, in 1743, Rabbi Emden married yet a third time. The family continued to be plagued by serious illnesses, which killed several of his children. Although he occupied no communal position, the Jewish community allowed Rabbi Emden the privilege of maintaining a private synagogue in his home. Yet virtually from the time he arrived in Altona, he quarreled over matters of Jewish law with Rabbi Ezekiel ben Abraham Katzenellenbogen, chief rabbi of the “Triple Community” of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck from 1714 to 1749, for whom he had little respect.<sup>29</sup> He also aroused the ire of Altona’s financial community by making a derogatory reference to their profession in a parenthetical note in his edition of the *Siddur* (daily prayer book).<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Emden struggled for a livelihood, becoming involved in business ventures that invariably ended in failure.

Despite all these tribulations, Rabbi Emden’s creativity reached a peak during this period in Altona. His total literary oeuvre, much of which was completed during that time, includes almost all the genres of Jewish literature. He wrote a commentary on the Bible, on all six orders of the Mishnah, and on the Talmud. He also compiled a compendium of Jewish law (which has been lost), over 350 responsa, the new edition of the *Siddur* already mentioned, and a work on Hebrew and Aramaic grammar with special emphasis on the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew liturgical prayer text. Rabbi Emden compiled an anthology of medieval Jewish writings on various aspects of ethics and later wrote a work on the dating of the *Zohar* and a dictionary of kabbalistic terms.<sup>31</sup> His writings discuss not only matters of halakah, kabbalah, philosophy, grammar, and ethics, but also comparative religion, history, geography, medicine, and politics. His works contain references to numerous subjects, among them surgery, alchemy, shooting stars, clocks, crocodiles, opium, the game of chess, microscopes, volcanoes, magnets, solar eclipses, cannons, and hot water bottles. He had some familiarity with Greek, Latin, and possibly English; he quoted Aristotle, Avicenna, Jesus, and even Confucius. In his halakic works, Rabbi Emden dealt with such diverse topics as the nature of sound, the importance of sleep and exercise, the process of making vinegar, how to pull a tooth, the width of the Jordan river, the pleasures—and the physical as well as psychological benefits—of sexual intercourse (he claims that it can be a cure for insanity), why the head of a baby emerges first from the womb, the importance of perspiration, why flames tend to rise, the relative merits of various laxatives, how wine was prepared along the Rhine, various types of tools

and soaps, and the direction in which goldenrod grows. Indeed, the breadth of knowledge amassed by this man who was essentially an autodidact in Jewish as well as secular matters is nothing less than astounding.

Throughout his works, Emden showed a familiarity with and respect for the Sephardi traditions and practices, but nowhere is this more apparent than in his *Siddur*, where the wide-ranging nature of his interests is most clearly reflected. In a most significant postscript to the first volume of this work, Rabbi Emden discussed the relative merits of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions from an historical perspective. In seeking to account for the existence of textual variants in the prayer book, he noted:

Because we have no precise knowledge as to who has the authentic and original tradition, each group maintains its own [customs], for which it seeks authentication as best it can. . . . As R. Asher noted in a responsum,<sup>32</sup> the Ashkenazi Jews upheld their tradition much more fully than did the Sephardim, although the origin of the latter could be traced to those exiled from Jerusalem. The [Ashkenazim] also possessed Babylonian sages, guides and teachers like R. M[oses] and his son R. H[anokh] [in the tenth century].<sup>33</sup> It was [only] from then on that they produced great Torah scholars; previously they had been very ignorant. The Talmud was not at all widespread among them before that time. Contrast this to Ashkenazi Jewry. From the days of the destruction [of the second Temple in 70 C.E.], Torah study never ceased [among the Ashkenazim] generation after generation. They offered their very lives for the complete and proper knowledge of the Torah and its observance. Therefore, they were certainly more advanced in the correct knowledge of its details. However, subsequently, many tragic hardships befell them [to the point] where Torah was almost forgotten in Germany.<sup>34</sup>

But Rabbi Emden's cultural objectivity went even further. Not only did he recognize that the Sephardi tradition was no less legitimate than that of the Ashkenazim but, on occasion, he even gave it preference over his own Ashkenazi practice. Rabbi Emden pointed this out explicitly in his programmatic statement at the end of his commentary on the *Shemoneh Esreh*:

Behold, you see how exact are the texts of these nineteen blessings in our Ashkenazi tradition and how very accurate and precise they are. . . . [I say this] not because we tend to observe the Ashkenazi customs, naturally following them from our very birth. For, verily, we are bound only by that which is proper from all that we have received, seen, heard and practiced. *In many matters we follow the Sephardi customs when the law is completely on their side.* However, in this matter, our ancestors are entirely correct.<sup>35</sup>

Rabbi Emden's objectivity, expressed here in principle, is clearly evident in his careful and selective evaluation of these two traditions regarding the pronunciation and vocalization of Hebrew consonants and vowels in the daily prayers. In the

course of stressing how crucial both are, Emden censured the Ashkenazi practice of blurring the distinction between the letters *'aleph* and *'ayin* and between the soft *tav* and the *samekh*. However, in the realm of vowel vocalization as well as accents: "We are fortunate; goodly is our portion . . . goodly our strength is greater than theirs, how pleasant is our lot in that we are different from them." In this case, the Sephardi tradition is in error for totally disregarding the *ḥolam* and for not differentiating between the *kamaṣ* and *pataḥ* and between the *segol* and *zereh*.<sup>36</sup> It is in this connection that Rabbi Emden wrote elsewhere, "Therefore I rejoice and thank the Lord with all my heart that He has made me pronounce [Hebrew as] an Ashkenazi Jew."<sup>37</sup>

The cultural cosmopolitanism of this work is evident even in matters of ritual behavior, in which Rabbi Emden often rejected his own Ashkenazi practice in favor of the Sephardi one.<sup>38</sup> However, he was not so flexible when it came to the actual text of the prayer book. Even where Rabbi Emden explicitly stated his theoretical preference for the Sephardi text, he was not sufficiently bold to repudiate his own tradition; he insisted upon printing the Ashkenazi version in his prayer book. As he wrote in connection with one passage: "I did not permit myself to erase it and characterize all the prayer books of our forefathers as being in error."<sup>39</sup>

In addition to his lifelong interest in rabbinic literature, Rabbi Emden was deeply involved in a bitter struggle against all contemporary manifestations of Sabbateanism—an area that transcended all differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. In February 1751, he accused Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz (1690–1764), the newly elected chief rabbi of the "Triple Community," of being a secret follower of Shabbetai Zevi. This startling accusation precipitated one of the most explosive controversies in all of Jewish history.

In May 1665, Shabbetai Zevi, a native of Smyrna, Turkey, had claimed that he himself was the Messiah and launched a messianic movement that had profound repercussions. Masses of Sephardi as well as Ashkenazi Jews across the world, from London to Livorno and from Poland to Persia, were swept up in the frenzy and excitement of the imminent messianic era. Even Shabbetai Zevi's shocking conversion to Islam some fifteen months later did not dampen the fervor of some of his more ardent followers. Their feeling that they had actually lived through messianic times was so overwhelming that they rejected the obvious implications of the "messiah's" apostasy and developed various doctrines to harmonize their inner experience of redemption with the reality outside that seemed to contradict it. Even long after Shabbetai's death in 1676, the movement that bore his name continued to exist in Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities.

However, most of those who had initially believed Shabbetai's messianic claim found themselves unable to accept the paradox of an apostate messiah and painfully concluded that it had all been a terrible and cruel mistake. Shabbetai Zevi

was branded an imposter, those who continued to believe in him were attacked as heretics, and all Sabbatean writings were considered heretical. Throughout the eighteenth century a great deal of effort was expended in eliminating from the Jewish community what was considered a most terrible, revolting aberration.<sup>40</sup>

As a consequence, Rabbi Emden's claim that the chief rabbi of his community, one of the greatest rabbinic figures of his generation, belonged to the Sabbatean movement was a most serious charge. Rabbi Emden declared that several amulets written by Rabbi Eybeschütz to ward off evil forces contained unambiguous references to Shabbetai Zevi as the messiah and clearly indicated that Rabbi Eybeschütz was a follower of the Sabbatean movement.<sup>41</sup>

This claim caused a major dispute that split the Jewish community. Personal insults and physical fights became common between members of the contending groups. Local secular authorities—even the king of Denmark—were drawn into this rapidly escalating conflict, as were leading rabbis from other Jewish communities, Ashkenazi as well as Sephardi. Hamburg's police were summoned to quell disturbances, and newspapers carried accounts of what was becoming a cause célèbre for Jews and non-Jews alike. The violence even spilled over into the Jewish cemetery and synagogue and onto the floor of the stock exchange. Excommunications and counter-excommunications were bandied back and forth throughout Europe. Rabbi Emden himself was placed under house arrest and then forced to flee Altona and spend fourteen months in Amsterdam. Proclamations, insults, denunciations, and bans were hurled by one faction against the other as the Jewish community was caught up in this controversy, which continued to rage even after Rabbi Eybeschütz's death in 1764.<sup>42</sup>

While Rabbi Eybeschütz continued to maintain his position as chief rabbi of the "Triple Community" until his death and may therefore be considered as having emerged as the victor from this wrenching dispute, there is no question that Rabbi Emden's challenge and the resulting protracted conflict dealt a major blow to the rabbinic authority and prestige of Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike. Having shared their enthusiasm for the movement in the 1660s, these two groups were equally affected by its repercussions over a century later as they began to confront those newer phenomena that were to become characteristic of modern Jewish life.

#### NOTES

1. For examples of this interaction, see Simḥa Assaf, "Halifath She'eloth u-Teshuvot ben Sepharad u-ben Zarefath ve-'Ashkenaz," *Tarbiz* 8 (1937): 162–70, reprinted in Simḥa Assaf, *Mekorot u-Mehkarim bi-Toledot Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1946), pp. 119–29. See also H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (London, 1976), pp. 12–20.
2. See, for example, Max Grunwald, *Portugiesengräber auf deutscher Erde* (Hamburg, 1902); Salomon Rosanes, *Divrei Yemei Yisrael bi-Togarma*, 6 vols. (1914–45; vols. 2, 4–6 are entitled *Korot*

- ha-Yehudim bi-Turkiyah ve-Aratzoth ha-Kedem*); Herbert I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, 1937); Albert M. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England* (London, 1951); Hermann Kellenbenz, *Sephardim an der unteren Elbe* (Wiesbaden, 1958).
3. For information about Rabbi Abraham b. Nathan ha-Yarḥi (ca. 1155–1215), see Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 240–44; Itzhak Raphael, ed., *Sefar ha-Manhig I* (Jerusalem, 1978), introduction, pp. 11–86; Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 32–35. For Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (ca. 1250–1327), see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 3 (1971): 706–08; Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, pp. 21–35; Elyakim Elinson, “le-Heker Kavei ha-Pesika shel ha-Rosh,” *Sinai* 93 (1983): 234–44.
  4. See Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, passim.
  5. See David Kaufmann, *Die Erstürmung Ofens und ihre Vorgeschichte* (Trier, 1895), pp. 18–19; reprinted in idem, “Isak Schulhof, der Zeuge und Geschichtsschreiber der Erstürmung Ofens,” *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1910): 300–01; Aharon Fuerst, “Budapest,” *'Arim ve'Immahoth bi-Yisrael*, ed. Judah Leib Fischman (Maimon), 2 (Jerusalem, 1948): 124f.
  6. Jacob Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, ed. D. Kahana (Warsaw, 1896), p. 8. Rabbi Ephraim ha-Kohen was the author of *She'eloth u-Teshuvoth Sha'ar Ephraim*. Rabbi Elijah Covo wrote *'Aderet Eliyahu*, printed in Constantinople (1739) together with the responsa of Rabbi Joseph Handali and collectively entitled *Shenei ha-Me'orot ha-Gedolim*.
  7. See *She'eloth u-Teshuvoth Hakham Zevi*, nos. 7, 41, 168; Hayim Yosef David Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem* 1 (New York, 1965): 84a. It was during this visit to the East that the Sephardim conferred upon Zevi Ashkenazi the honorary title of *hakham*. See Salomon Buber, *Anshei Shem* (Cracow, 1895), p. 187; E. Duckesz, *'Ivah le-Moshav* (Cracow, 1903), p. 12.
  8. See Joseph Loewenstein's notes to Salomon Buber's *Anshei Shem*, p. 247. Cf. Bleich, *Hakham Zebi*, p. 14, n. 36.
  9. Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, pp. 8–9; *She'eloth u-Teshuvoth Hakham Zevi*, introduction.
  10. Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, pp. 13, 25.
  11. *Ibid.*, pp. 107–08. See also pp. 25–26, 30–31.
  12. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–37; Jacob Emden, *She'elath Yavez* 1: 170; David Kaufmann, “Rabbi Zevi Ashkenazi and his Family in London,” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 3 (1899): 116–17.
  13. Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, p. 36.
  14. *She'eloth u-Teshuvoth Hakham Zevi*, no. 38. This entire issue is discussed in Isidore Epstein, “The Story of Ascama I of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Congregation of London with Special Reference to Responsa Material,” *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman* (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 170f.
  15. *She'eloth u-Teshuvoth Hakham Zevi*, no. 18 and p. 35. See also Bleich, *Hakham Zebi*, pp. 40–47; Israel Solomons, “David Nieto and Some of his Contemporaries,” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 12 (1931): 10f.; Jakob Petuchowski, *The Theology of Hakham David Nieto* (New York, 1954), pp. 15–17 and the literature cited there. For other evidence of Hakham Zevi's close ties with the Sephardim from his responsa, see nos. 13, 14, 42, 95, 111. See also *Rosanes*, *Divrei Yemei Yisrael* 4: 253.
  16. Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, pp. 16, 25; Jacob Emden, *Mitpahath Sefarim* (Lvov, 1870) 9: “although my revered father was an Ashkenazi, he spoke the Spanish language (*leshon Sephardi*) like one of the Sephardim born in that country. . . .”
  17. Emden, *Megillath Sefar*, p. 8. For background information, see Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, pp. 91–97.



18. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, p. 35.
19. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 3 (Berlin, 1929): 484.
20. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, p. 56. Modern scholarship has dealt extensively with various aspects of Rabbi Emden's life and works, but a comprehensive biography has yet to be written. The two existing book-length studies of Rabbi Emden suffer from serious drawbacks and fail to do justice to their subject. See Mortimer J. Cohen, *Jacob Emden: Man of Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1937) and Avraham Bick-Shauli, *Rabi Ya'akov Emden* (Jerusalem, 1974).
21. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, pp. 27–34 and 57–58. See also Bleich, *Hakham Zebi*, p. 50f.
22. For a discussion of the Ḥayun controversy, see Bleich, *Hakham Zebi*, p. 105f., and Menahem Friedman, "Iggeroth bi-Parshath Polmus Nehemya Hiyya Hayyun," *Sefunot* 10 (1966), pp. 485–619. For the intellectual issues at stake, see Yehuda Liebes, "ha-Yesod ha-'Ideologi she-bi-Polmus Iḥayyun," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 3 (Jerusalem, 1982), Heb. Section: 129–34.
23. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, pp. 42–43, 61–62, 100; Jacob Emden, *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 1 and 2, introductions.
24. It was later published as *Yeziv Pitgam* (Altona, 1740).
25. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, pp. 71–99.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 99–114; Jacob Emden, 'Eduth bi-Ya'akov (1755), pp. 10b, 13b–14a, 29a.
27. See, for example, Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, p. 163; 'Eduth bi-Ya'akov, p. 15a; Emden, *She'elath Yaveẓ* 2:1, 53, 54, 55; Jacob Emden, *Sefer Hith'avkuth* (Lvov, 1877), p. 75a.
28. Emden, *She'elath Yaveẓ* 2:24.
29. Emden, *Megillath Sefer*, pp. 114–77; *Eduth be-Ya'akov*, pp. 14a–b; Jacob Emden, *Shevirath Luḥoth ha-Even* (1756), pp. 41b–42a.
30. Jacob Emden, *Siddur* 1 (*Amudei Shamayim*; 1745–47); 269a. For references to this dispute in Emden's works, see *Megillath Sefer*, pp. 168–74; *Eduth be-Ya'akov*, pp. 5b, 15b–16a; *Shevirath Luḥoth ha-Even*, pp. 39b, 42a; *Sefer Hitabbekuth*, pp. 4b–5a, 9a; *Mor u-Keziya* 1: introduction, end; *She'elath Yaveẓ* 2: 17, 71; *Sefer Shimmush* (1758–62), p. 26, 172. Rabbi Emden wrote a polemical tract about this controversy entitled *Zikkaron ba-Sefer-Ma'ase 'Amalek*. An extant fragment of this work was printed by A. Bick, "Rabbi Ya'akov Emden u-Milhamto bi-Shulḥanei Altona," *Tarbiz* 42 (1973), pp. 461–68.
31. For a comprehensive bibliography of Rabbi Emden's entire literary oeuvre, see Itzhak Raphael, "Kitvei Rabi Ya'akov Emden," 'Areshet 3 (1961): 231–76.
32. Emden is probably referring to *She'eloth u-Teshuvot ha-Rash* 20: 20. See also Elinson, "le-Heker Kavei ha-Pesika," pp. 234–35, and Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, p. 25, n. 3.
33. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 12 (1972): 417–18 and the bibliography cited there. In addition, see Abraham Ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah: The Book of Tradition* (Gerson Cohen, ed.) (Philadelphia, 1967), index, s. v. "Moses, R., the captive."
34. *Siddur* 1: 411b–412a.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 139a.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 4a. See also *Siddur* 1: 36a, where Rabbi Emden sadly admits that "due to the tyranny of habit," he is unable to pronounce the soft *tav* properly. For the Ashkenazi lack of distinction between 'aleph and 'ayin, see also *Siddur* 2 (*Sha'arei Shamayim*), p. 85b. Other references in Emden's works to the inadequacy of Sephardi vowel pronunciation can be found in *Luah Eresh* 1 (Altona, 1769); 22b (#118), 42a (#198), 47b (#252), 55b (#302), and *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 1: 52d.

37. *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 1: 35b. There is an extensive literature on the various traditions of Hebrew vocalization. See, for example, Hanokh Yalon, "Hagayah Sefaradith bi-Tzarefath ha-Tzefonith bi-Doro shel Rashi u-ve-Dorot shele-'aḥarav," *Inyane Lashon* (1942): 16–31; Yehiel P. Gumpertz, "Hagayath ha-'Otiyoth bi-Tzarefath ve-gilgula le-'Ashkenaz," *Inyane Lashon* (1943), pp. 12–30; Irene Garbell, "The Pronunciation of Hebrew in Medieval Spain," *Homenaje a Millas-Valllicrosa* 1 (Barcelona, 1954): 647–96; Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, pp. 82–88; Ernst Ehrentreu, "Ashkenazi and Sephardi Pronunciation," *Ateret Zvi: Jubilee Volume Presented in Honor of the Eightieth Birthday of Rabbi Dr. Joseph Brewer* (New York, 1962), pp. 216–35, and Max Weinreich, "Reishith ḥa-Havarah ha-'Ashkenazith bi-Zikata le-Ba'ayoth Kerovoth shel ha-Yiddish ve-shel ha-'Ivrith ha-'Ashkenazith," *Leshonenu* 27–28 (1963–64): 131–47, 230–51, 318–19.
38. For several cases in point, see Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, p. 122.
39. *Siddur* 2: 116b–117a. These issues will be discussed more extensively in my treatment of Emden's *Siddur* in my forthcoming dissertation.
40. A detailed presentation of the Sabbatean movement until the death of Shabbetai Zevi can be found in Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* (Princeton, 1973). For aspects of post-conversion Sabbatean theology, see "Redemption Through Sin," in Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), pp. 78–141.
41. The texts of the amulets were reproduced by Rabbi Emden in his *Sefat Emet* (1752). They, as well as the Sabbatean work alleged by Rabbi Emden to have been written by Rabbi Eybeschütz, *Ve-'avo Hayom 'el ha-'Ayin*, are discussed in Moshe A. Perlmutter, *R. Yehonathan Eybeschütz ve-Yahaso 'el ha-Shabbeta'ut* (Tel Aviv, 1947). For a list of Rabbi Emden's more than a dozen polemical tracts dealing with the controversy, see Raphael, "Kitzvei Rabi Ya'akov Emden," n. 32.
42. The controversy is described in Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* 10 (1897): 375f; Max Grunwald, *Hamburgs deutsche Juden* (Hamburg, 1904), pp. 89–124; David Kahane, *Toledot ha-Mekubalim, ha-Shabbeta'im ve-ha-Hasidim* (Tel Aviv, 1927), pp. 13–64; Cohen, *Jacob Emden*, pp. 118–242; Bernhard Brilling, "Der Hamburger Rabbinerstreit im 18. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 55 (1969): 219–44. See also Chimen Abramsky, "The Crisis of Authority Within European Jewry in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, ed. Siegfried Stern and Raphael Loewe (Alabama, 1977), pp. 13–28.

## *Christian Hebraists*

The humanist movement, which emerged during the Renaissance, created a great interest in the languages and literature of the classical era. Hebrew was considered one of the classical languages along with Greek, Latin, and Arabic. This liberal attitude on the part of the humanists generated an interest in the study of Hebrew among Christian scholars, including some members of the nobility, and among the clergy, including highly placed members of the Catholic Church hierarchy. This development led to Christian contacts with Jews on a new level: Christians were studying Hebrew with Jewish teachers.

The Jewish philosopher Elijah ben Moses Delmedigo (1460–1497) taught Hebrew to the Italian Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), an avid student of philosophy, who helped make Elijah well known among philosophical circles in Florence. Della Mirandola's writings show considerable breadth of Jewish knowledge and mark the beginnings of the study of Hebrew by Christians as an academic discipline rather than as an instrument of theology. It was at della Mirandola's suggestion that the German humanist Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) began to study Hebrew. Reuchlin became a staunch defender of Hebrew literature, especially the Talmud, against Christian attacks.

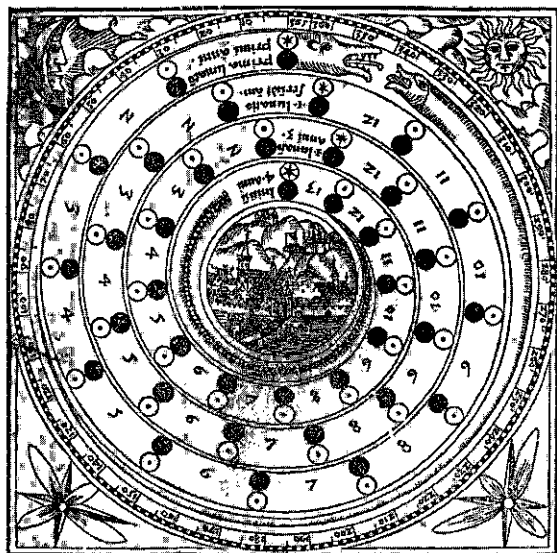
Another early Jewish teacher of Hebrew to the Christians was the noted German-born translator and grammarian Elijah Levita (known as Eliyahu Baḥur; 1468–1549). Among his students were Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo of Italy, general of the Augustine Order, and Sebastian Münster (1489–1552), editor of *Hebraica Biblia*, the first Protestant translation of the Hebrew Bible into Latin (1534–35). The author of grammar texts for Aramaic and for Biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, Münster translated Levita's grammatical works into Latin.

*DE ACCENTIBUS ET ORTHOGRAPHIA LINGUAE HEBRAICA* (THE ACCENTS AND ORTHOGRAPHY OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE). Author: Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522). Hagenau, 1518. Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*An important treatise on the Hebrew language containing twelve pages of musical notation, including an ancient synagogue chant arranged for four voices. The music is accompanied by the Hebrew text.*

BIBLE WITH COMMENTARIES AND TARGUM YERUSHALMI. Introduction by Johannes Buxtorf I (1564–1629). Basel, 1665. Yeshiva University Museum, gift of Vera and J. Wilner Sundelson.

*A detailed description of this edition, which includes the Aramaic Targum, Masoretic text, and most important Jewish commentaries, is given in the Latin introduction by Johannes Buxtorf I, professor of Hebrew at the University of Basel. Buxtorf's Biblical research first introduced him to rabbinic scholarship and brought him into correspondence with Jewish scholars in Germany, Holland, and Istanbul. In preparing this edition of the Bible, Buxtorf employed two Jewish scholars, for whom he had to obtain official permission to live in Basel, since Jews were not permitted to reside there at the time.*



[illustrated above left and above right]  
**HOKHMATH HAMAH (WISDOM OF THE SUN).**  
 Author: Sebastian Münster (1489–1552).  
 Basel, 1527. Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*A treatise dealing with the historical and astronomical aspects of the Hebrew calendar. Münster, a grammarian, student of Hebrew, and editor of the first Protestant translation of the Hebrew Bible into Latin, was also a mathematician, cartographer, and cosmographer.*

“THE BIBLE WITH HOLLOW LETTERS.” Prefaced and annotated in Latin by Elijah Hutter. Printed in Hamburg, 1587. Yeshiva University Museum, gift of Daniel Sundelson in memory of Mrs. Ray Wilner Sundelson.

*Two different typefaces were used to print this Bible in order to indicate the roots of the Hebrew verbs. The root is in a solid face, while the additional letters are in a hollow or open one.*

**SYNAGOGA JUDAICA.** Author: Johannes Buxtorf I (1564–1629). Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig, 1738. Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*The Latin version of Buxtorf’s Juden Schuel, published in 1603. Here Buxtorf discusses the laws,*

*customs, and ceremonies of the Jews. One illustration shows a Jew forced to swear a legal oath while standing on the skin of a dead pig (see page 306).*

**BIBLIA HEBRAICA.** Edited by Johann Heinrich Michaelis (Germany; 1668–1738). Based on an edition by Johannes Buxtorf I (1564–1629). Halle in Magdeburg, 1720. Courtesy of William Loewy.

*This edition, with extra wide margins and Latin side notes, was printed by Moses ben Abraham, a convert to Judaism, together with his son, Israel, of Amsterdam.*

**JÜDISCHE MERKWÖRDIGKEITEN (JEWISH PECULIARITIES).** Author: Johann Jacob Schudt (1664–1722). Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig, 1714. Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*A general Jewish history that combines a description of Jews from all over the world, particularly in Frankfurt am Main, during the author’s time.*

**FOUR SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH.** Engraving, embroidered with silk and gold. Artist: Martin Engelbrecht. Germany, ca. 1640. Courtesy of Gloria Abrams.

### Three Famous Aḥaronim (Latter-Day Sages) of the Old School

RABBI MEIR SCHIFF (MAHARAM OF FULDA,  
OR MAHARAM SCHIFF) (1605–1641)

Rabbi Meir ben Jacob ha-Kohen Schiff was born in Frankfurt am Main. He became one of the outstanding Talmudic scholars of Germany in his time. When only seventeen years old, he was appointed rabbi of the renowned Jewish community of Fulda (Hesse, West Germany), where he also served as *rosh yeshiva* from 1622 to 1640. His notes on the Talmud are distinguished by their brevity and depth.

Unfortunately, some of Rabbi Meir's writings were lost in the fire that destroyed almost the whole Jewish quarter of Frankfurt am Main in 1711. His Talmudic novellae, *Hiddushei Maharam Schiff*, published in 1737 and 1741, are held in high regard by Talmudic scholars to this day. As the spiritual head of his community, Rabbi Meir displayed a strong personality and was not afraid to rebuke any of his members if he deemed it necessary.

Rabbi Meir died in Frankfurt while on his way to Prague to accept the rabbinate of that community. His descendants include the family that produced the American Jewish philanthropist and leader Jacob H. Schiff (1847–1920).

RABBI AKIBA EGER (1761–1837)

Rabbi Akiba Eger ben Moses Güns was considered one of the greatest Talmudic scholars of Central Europe during his age. Born in Eisenstadt, Austria as Akiba ben Moses Güns, he adopted the name of his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Akiba Eger (Rabbi Akiba Eger the Elder, 1720–1758), rabbi of Pressburg (Bratislava). Rabbi Eger first lived with his father-in-law in Lissa (Leszno), then served as rabbi in Märkisch-Friedland, Pomerania, where he established a yeshiva. In 1814 he accepted the invitation to become rabbi of Posen (now Poznan, Poland), where his reputation as a scholar and spiritual leader grew and hundreds of disciples sought his opinion in all areas of halakah. Among his students was Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), an early forerunner of modern Zionism.

A staunch opponent of the Reform movement, Rabbi Eger often spoke out bluntly against the religious innovations the movement sought to introduce. At the same time he was widely known and admired for his benevolence, humanness, and extraordinary humility.

During the cholera epidemic in Posen in 1831, Rabbi Eger enacted a number of takkanoth intended to ease religious strictures for the sick. He wrote a number of books and responsa, some of which were published only after his death. Among his best-known works are *Hilluka de-Rabbanan* (1822), notes to the Prague edition



[illustrated above]

PORTRAIT OF RABBI AKIBA EGER (GÜNS) (1761–1837). Engraving. Artist and date unknown. Courtesy of William Loewy.

LETTERS OF RABBI AKIBA EGER (GÜNS) (1761–1837). Handwritten and bound. Sent from Lissa (Leszno), Posen (Poznan), and Gnesen (Gniezno). Bernstein collection, Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University.

*These letters in Rabbi Eger's own hand are replies to questions posed by other rabbis on ritual matters and answers to laymen's personal problems*

*The letter exhibited was written by Rabbi Eger from Posen to his former congregation in Lissa (Leszno). In the letter, he asks them to accord to their*

*new rabbi the same respect they had always given him. Rabbi Eger frequently signed himself Rabbi Akiba Güns, his actual name.*

RABBI AKIBA EGER (1761–1837) IN A PAINTING OF THE MARKETPLACE IN POSEN. Artist: Julius Knorr. Published by Arthur Kronthal, Berlin-Leipzig, 1921. Ca. 1836. Courtesy of Prof. Rachel Wischnitzer.

*From Werke der Posener Bildenden Kunst (Works of Pictorial Art in Posen). The original painting is the work of Julius Knorr, a non-Jewish artist who had admired Rabbi Eger. To the right of Rabbi Eger is the dayyan of Posen, Rabbi Moses Landsberger. The man behind Rabbi Landsberger is probably Rabbi Eger's personal attendant.*

of the Babylonian Talmud (1830–34) and later to the Vilna edition, and *Hiddushei Rabbi Akiva Eger*, Talmudic novellae, published posthumously in 1858. One of his daughters married Rabbi Moses Sofer (Schreiber, known as the *Hatham Sofer* (1762–1839)). His (and the Hatham Sofer's) descendants included numerous well-known rabbis, scholars, and writers.

צו יד גרמניאל מיט דער הינדשיגל  
די דאךטווד מיט איינמאל מיט דער  
צווייטן דיגאל נאך יפוסיא.

דיגאלן אינעם דער קאנגרואט  
נאכגעצויגט מיט זינעם דיגאל אד פלוי  
אין נאכצויגט אד בלייבט שטובן, ארויפצאל  
מיט דער שולדען געליינד.

די קאנגרואט אד ל. מיט דער  
געברעכענע דין מיט דער דאךטווד  
אין דיגאל אד בלייבט שטובן מיט אלע  
דער ברענע מיט זינעם דיגאל  
מיט ארויפצאל די דאךטווד.

דער גאלען, נאכגעצויגט מיט אונטער  
אין דיגאל.

Abraham Eger

W. Schiff

Prepatkowski

Benstedt. Suttlinger.

דערמיטליך מיט דער צווייטן דיגאל  
מיט

דער דער גאלען אד בלייבט שטובן  
דיגאל אד בלייבט שטובן  
November 1837.

דערמיטליך מיט

אד בלייבט שטובן

N<sup>o</sup> 87

אד בלייבט שטובן

Ausfertigung

דער  
אין דיגאל אד בלייבט שטובן  
Jacob Moses Eger

№ 49770 C.C.

[illustrated above]

PROBATED WILL OF RABBI AKIBA EGER (1761–1837). Handwritten. Posen, November 20, 1837. Courtesy of William Loewy.

When Rabbi Akiba Eger was near death, representatives of the district court called on him at his home to record his last will and testament. The district court judge and the clerk of the state supreme court signed their names to the document, which the rabbi was too ill to sign. They then deposited the will with the court. Rabbi Eger died on October 12, 1837.

The will appoints five of Rabbi Eger's older children to administer the estate on behalf of four minors. Rabbi Eger's son-in-law is instructed to receive the money owed to Rabbi Eger by the Beth Shlomo Hospital at the time of his death and to distribute it among needy yeshiva students.

This is the only known estate will, as distinct from an ethical will (see page 216), left by an important rabbi of the time.

HERR AKIBA EGER (1761–1837). Author: Saul Isaac Kaempf. Lissa (Leszno), 1838. Courtesy of Malka Krausz.

A biography of Rabbi Eger, with an eulogy, written the year after his death. The author, Saul Isaac Kaempf (1818–1892), a native of Lissa (Leszno), had been a disciple of Rabbi Eger there. Kaempf later became a preacher in Prague and professor of Semitics at the University of Prague.

AKIBA EGER AUSSTELLUNG (AKIBA EGER EXHIBITION). Author: Max Lessmann; introduction by Rachel Wischnitzer. Jewish Museum. Berlin, 1937. Courtesy of Prof. Rachel Wischnitzer.

A catalogue featuring portraits and ritual objects from the collection of Rabbi Akiba Eger exhibited on the one hundredth anniversary of his death. The curators of the exhibition were Prof. Rachel Wischnitzer and Dr. Eugen Pessen.

RABBI MOSES SOFER (SCHREIBER; *HATHAM SOFER*; 1762–1839)

Rabbi Moses Sofer (Schreiber) was a noted halakic authority and the recognized leader of Austrian and Hungarian Orthodox Jewry of his time. Born in Frankfurt am Main, he was a devoted student of Rabbi Nathan ben Simeon ha-Kohen Adler (1741–1800). He served as rabbi of Dresnitz (Moravia) and Mattersdorf (Mattersburg, Austria) until 1806, when he was appointed rabbi of Pressburg (Bratislava), then one of the most important and influential communities in Austria-Hungary.

Rabbi Sofer served the Pressburg community for 33 years and established a large yeshiva there, which became known all over Europe. During that period, the controversy between Orthodoxy and the Reform movement increased in intensity; Rabbi Sofer vigorously took the lead in Orthodoxy's fight against all religious innovations. In his famous ethical will, he instructed his descendants, male and female, in detail concerning the life style he expected them to follow; among other things, he forbade them to go to the theater.

Rabbi Sofer's second wife was the daughter of Rabbi Akiba Eger (1761–1837); the couple was the progenitors of a well-known Orthodox rabbinic dynasty. Rabbi Sofer's great-grandson, Rabbi Akiba Schreiber, transferred the Pressburg yeshiva to Jerusalem in 1940.

Most of Rabbi Sofer's writings were published by his family after his death. They include seven volumes of responsa entitled *Hatham Sofer*, by which he has become known and which were published between 1855 and 1912.

### *Emancipation and Enlightenment*

The emancipation of the Jews in Western and Central Europe began with the French Revolution and continued until the end of the nineteenth century. The process took so long because the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 led to the creation of many separate German states, each governed by its own ruler. As a result, emancipation did not come to all German and Austrian Jewish communities at the same time but extended over a period of approximately 100 years.

The first German ruler to set an example in granting civil rights to his Jewish subjects was Frederick II (Frederick the Great; 1712–1786), in the year 1750. Thirty-two years later, Emperor Joseph II of Austria issued his Edict of Toleration, which gave the Jews certain rights but at the same time ordered them to establish "normal schools," where they would learn German and receive the elements of secular education so they might become integrated into the Hapsburg empire.

Meanwhile, also during the second half of the eighteenth century, the En-





DE A. K. M. A. L.  
 Von dem Besten und Größten Kaiser  
**JOSEPH II**  
 in seinen Staaten errichteten und den 17. October 1782 publicirten.  
**T O L E R A N Z E .**

---

Ihre Majestät der Königin  von Frankreich und Navarra  
**MARIA ANTONETTA**  
 Ertz-Herzogin von Oestreich



[illustrated preceding page]  
 ENGRAVING COMMEMORATING THE ENACTMENT OF THE EDICT OF TOLERATION. Undated. Inscription: "I have anointed him . . . and My arm shall strengthen him." Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Rosen.

*Commemorating the enactment of the Edict of Toleration by Austria's emperor, Joseph II, on January 2, 1782. A beam of light shines down from heaven directly upon a silhouette of the emperor. The beam is inscribed with a German rendering of Verses 21 and 22 of Psalm 89, which refer to King David but are applied by the artist to Joseph II. Actually, in issuing the Edict, the emperor was not motivated entirely by liberalism or love of democracy. He and his advisors hoped that, given better opportunities to obtain an education and earn a good living, the Jews would be able to produce more revenue for the state and at the*

*same time cease to be a foreign element in his empire.*

*The engraving also shows Joseph's mother, Empress Maria Theresa, who shared her power with her son after he had become emperor in 1765. Surrounded by dignitaries, she is looking down from heaven in approval of Joseph's act. (In actuality, the empress was no friend of the Jews.)*

*Theresienstadt (Terezin), the infamous Nazi ghetto of the Holocaust, was originally a garrison town built by Joseph II in 1780 to honor Maria Theresa's memory.*

[illustrated above]  
 HANUKKAH LAMP. Brass, cast. 1782 or later. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Rosen.

*The profile of Emperor Joseph II of Austria on the back plate of this Hanukkah menorah commemorates the proclamation of the Edict of Toleration in 1782.*

lightenment (or Haskalah) movement took hold among the Jews of Western Europe. The first goal of this movement was to break down the walls of the ghetto—not only physically, but also spiritually and intellectually—and to promote worldly education among the Jewish masses. The adherents of Haskalah felt that secular education would be the key to communications between Jews and their Gentile neighbors as equals. The second objective of the Enlightenment was to teach Jews how to apply the critical methods of secular scholarship to the study of Jewish knowledge. Unfortunately, in their zeal for secular “culture,” many Jews discarded their religious heritage and were rapidly assimilated into the mainstream of German life and culture without any reference to their Judaism.

Of course, emancipation and Enlightenment brought important positive results. The opening of high schools—and eventually also of universities—to Jewish enrollment made it possible for Jews to obtain a higher secular education, and admission to vocational schools afforded them an opportunity to learn manual trades, which had been denied them during the Middle Ages. In addition, Jews in Central Europe now had to learn the German language well enough to be able to use it in their daily lives; as a result, they became acquainted with the German literary contributions to world culture.

In 1812, as a further step toward their integration into their environment, the Jews of the Hapsburg empire were ordered to adopt surnames. One year later (1813) Austria’s Jews became subject to conscription into the army—just in time to participate in the Napoleonic wars.

### *Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786)*

Moses Mendelssohn was the foremost philosopher and intellectual of the Enlightenment era in German Jewry. Born in the central German city of Dessau, he received the Talmudic education typical among Jews in his day. When in 1743 his teacher, the rabbi of Dessau—to whom he was devoted—moved to Berlin, Mendelssohn followed him there in order to continue his religious studies. In the Prussian capital, where he was to reside for the rest of his life, he also acquired a broad secular education and in time became part of Berlin’s liberal intellectual circles. He formed a close friendship with the dramatist and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), the Christian champion of religious tolerance and author of the drama *Nathan the Wise* (1779). Lessing encouraged Mendelssohn in his debate (conducted by correspondence) with the Swiss clergyman Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), who attempted to persuade Mendelssohn to embrace Christianity. Mendelssohn frequently had occasion to defend not only Judaism but also his own loyal adherence to Jewish religious law.

A disciple of classical rationalism in the pre-Kantian mold, Mendelssohn saw Judaism as based on a Divinely revealed law and at the same time as thoroughly

grounded in rational foundations. He set forth these views, and his ideas on the relationship between church and state, in his most famous work, *Jerusalem: über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (Jerusalem: On Religious Authority and Judaism), which appeared in 1783.

Also in the early 1780s Mendelssohn published a German translation of the Pentateuch (written in Hebrew characters and with a Hebrew title, *Netivoh ha-Shalom*, “Paths of Peace”) accompanied by a Hebrew commentary designated as *Biur*. Mendelssohn’s Bible translation served thousands of young Jews as their first introduction to the German language and culture. The *Biur* was based on traditional rabbinic sources but emphasized the rational approach and contained some novel ideas that set off a storm of controversy. The followers of the Enlightenment praised both the translation and the commentary, but fierce opposition, especially to some of the ideas expressed in the *Biur* with regard to Talmudic law, came from such prominent Orthodox rabbinic authorities as Rabbi Pinḥas ben Zevi Hirsch ha-Levi Horowitz of Frankfurt am Main (1730–1805), Rabbi Ezekiel Landau (Noda bi-Yehuda) of Prague (1713–1793), and Rabbi Moses Sofer (Ḥatham Sofer; 1762–1839).

Among Mendelssohn’s followers who also helped him prepare his Bible commentary were the Hebrew poet Salomon Dubno (1738–1813), the Hebraist Naphtali Herz (Hartwig) Wessely (1725–1805), the educator Naphtali Herz Homberg (1749–1841), and the teacher Aaron Jaroslaw. Dubno, influenced by his friends in Eastern Europe, later regretted his collaboration in Mendelssohn’s Bible commentary and left the project.

Scholars to this day debate the role of Moses Mendelssohn in Jewish history. Some argue that he did Judaism a great service by helping introduce Jews to Western culture, defending the Jewish religion against Gentile ideological opponents, speaking up for Jewish rights, and demonstrating in his personal life that one could be a modern philosopher and at the same time an observant Jew. Others hold that Mendelssohn was instrumental in paving the way for assimilation and for the dissemination of non-Orthodox ideas among Jews. It is a sad fact that two of Mendelssohn’s daughters left Judaism and converted to Christianity.

MOSES MENDELSSOHN (1729–1786). Engraving, 1786. Inscription below portrait: “Most humbly dedicated to King Frederick William II by the Jewish Free School in Berlin, 1787.” Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*The year before the portrait’s dedication saw the death*

*of both Mendelssohn and of Frederick William’s predecessor, Frederick the Great, who, though a free thinker, an advocate of tolerance, and a liberal devotee of art and literature, initially needed considerable persuasion to give Mendelssohn the privilege of Schutzjude.*

*Naphtali Herz Wessely* (1725–1805) became one of the pioneers in the revival of Biblical Hebrew. Born in Hamburg, he received a Talmudic education at the

yeshiva of Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz. Wessely was known as an important poet. His *Shirei Tifereth* (Songs of Glory; 1789–1802) is considered one of his outstanding literary works.

Wessely considered it the duty of Jews to acquire a secular education. In his epistle, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emeth* (Words of Peace and Truth; 1782), he appealed to the Jewish community to comply willingly with the edict from Emperor Joseph II and open schools for Jewish children in which German would be taught. This plea was addressed particularly to the Orthodox, who feared that students in the government-sanctioned schools might be forced to do or study things not in conformity with Jewish tradition.

### *The Jewish Response to Enlightenment*

The response of Jews and Jewish thinkers in the German culture area to the phenomena of emancipation and Enlightenment initially took the following forms: assimilation; classic Reform; the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Scientific Study of Judaism) movement; and neo-Orthodoxy.

#### ASSIMILATION

As Jews in Germany became attracted in ever-increasing numbers to the German language and culture, they began to assimilate the ways and values of their host country. In its extreme form, assimilation led to conversion to Christianity. Some Jews took this step with hopes of social and professional advancement; others did so because they considered what seemed to them the “universalism” of German Enlightenment superior to the ethnic and religious “parochialism” taught by the Jewish “faith.”

For many others who wished to remain Jews, assimilation meant a personal or official dilution of halakic observance and a rejection of Jewish nationhood. (A classic example of this trend was the early Reform movement.) The advocates of assimilation in Europe no longer considered the ultimate restoration of Jewish nationhood in *Erez Israel* as part of their religious aspirations. Many of them preferred to call themselves “Germans [or Austrians, Frenchmen, etc.] of the Mosaic faith.” “Mosaic” seemed to them less “parochial” and less reminiscent of past oppression than “Jewish.” They considered their host country as their true Fatherland, to whose welfare they were ready to give priority above all else.

#### JEWISH CONVERTS

/ Among the most prominent German Jews of the eighteenth and nineteenth cen-

turies to convert to Christianity were the political writer Karl Ludwig Börne, the historian and jurist Eduard Gans, the poet and essayist Heinrich Heine, and the statesman Friedrich Julius Stahl.

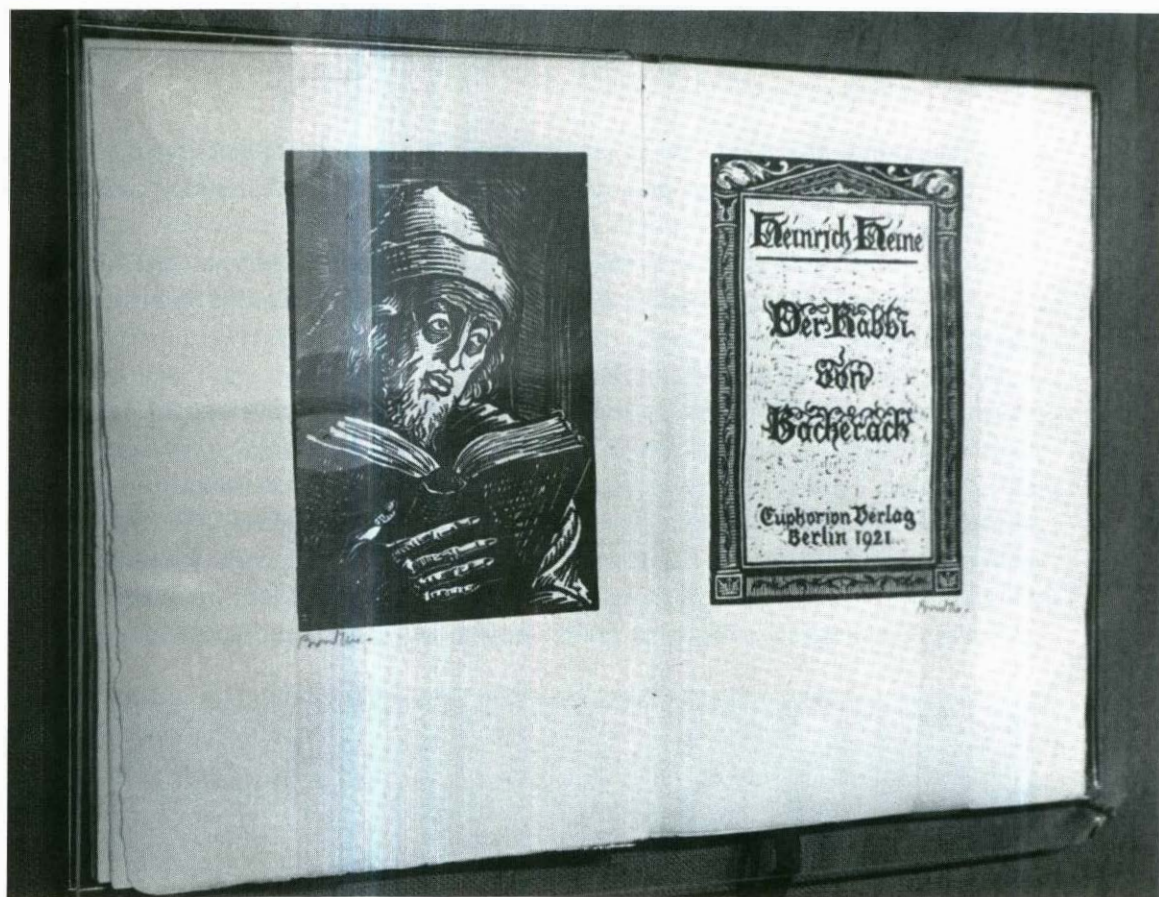
*Karl Ludwig Börne (1786–1837)* was born as Loeb Baruch into a prominent Frankfurt family. In 1816 he converted to Lutheranism and assumed the surname Börne. As an editor, essayist, and critic—first in Frankfurt and later in Paris—he became widely known for his espousal of liberal causes, often through the medium of wit and satire. The Börneplatz in Frankfurt, named after him, became the address of Frankfurt’s communal synagogue, built on the initiative of the Orthodox leader Rabbi Marcus Horovitz (1844–1910; see page 110).

*Eduard Gans (1798–1839)* wrote a number of important works on history and law. He advocated the reform of traditional Jewish philosophy and the assimilation of Judaism to European culture. In 1819 he helped found the shortlived *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Association for the Culture and Scientific Study of Judaism), a forerunner, in certain respects, of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement. After the dissolution of the *Verein* in 1824, Gans, in order to keep his position as lecturer at the University of Berlin, converted to Christianity.

*Heinrich Heine (1797–1856)*, one of the best-known German lyric poets and essayists, converted to Christianity but felt most uncomfortable in his new religion. His writings, including his unfinished novel, *The Rabbi of Bacharach*, reflect Heine’s own religious turmoil. It seems that, in the end, he returned to Judaism, which he claimed he had “never left.” Like Eduard Gans, Heine, too, was briefly a member of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, serving as its secretary.

*Friedrich Julius Stahl (1802–1861)* was born as Julius Jolson in Munich and raised in an Orthodox home. In order to advance himself professionally, he converted to Lutheranism in 1819 and was appointed professor of law at the University of Würzburg in 1832. He became a prominent spokesman for conservative causes. As a member of the Upper House of Prussia’s parliament he led the opposition to the emancipation of the Jews, emphasizing the gap between Judaism and German nationhood.

*David Friedlaender (1750–1834)*, a friend of Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin, was among those who came close to conversion but did not take the final step. Friedlaender came under the influence of radical Reform Judaism, and at one point he—along with other like-minded individuals—offered to join the Lutheran church, providing they would not be forced to accept Christian dogmas that



DER RABBI VON BACHERACH (SIC) (THE RABBI OF BACHARACH). Author: Heinrich Heine (1797–1856). Woodcuts by Joseph Budko (1888–1940). Berlin, 1921. Private collection.

*This unfinished novel is the most Jewish of Heinrich*

*Heine's works. It deals with the blood libel and its effects on a medieval Jewish community. The illustrator, Joseph Budko, a native of Poland, lived in Berlin until 1933. He then settled in Jerusalem, where, in 1935, he revived the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, serving as its principal until his death.*

seemed to them “incompatible with reason.” While Friedlaender himself did not convert, his family adopted Christianity — some of them during his lifetime.

#### REFORM

Early Reform Judaism sought to adapt Jewish thought and observance to the concepts of modern Western culture. Early “classic” Reform considered Talmudic law irrelevant. It therefore abrogated most of the laws and rituals of traditional Judaism and rejected the concept of Jewish nationhood, defining Judaism as a religious “creed” no different from Catholicism and Protestantism.

The first Reform temple was founded in 1810 by Israel Jacobsohn (1768–1828) in Seesen, Brunswick. It was housed in the chapel of a private school for poor children, which Jacobsohn had established and to which Gentiles were also admit-

ted. The service at the Jacobsohn chapel featured many rituals borrowed from the German Protestant church: sermons, prayers and hymns in German, and confirmation for boys and girls. In 1815 Jacobsohn moved to Berlin, where he set up a Reform temple in which the ritual included a mixed choir and an organ.

Among the most prominent leaders of early classic Reform in Germany were Samuel Holdheim and the more moderate Abraham Geiger.

*Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860)*, a native of Kempno near Posen (Poznan), received a traditional Orthodox education. After marrying a woman with a modern education, he, too, began to study secular subjects. Subsequent to his divorce, he moved to Prague and eventually assumed a pulpit in Frankfurt an der Oder. In 1847 he became spiritual leader of a new Reform temple in Berlin, where he inaugurated radical reforms. In addition to introducing mixed seating for men and women, along with a new Reform prayer book, he abolished the tallith and head covering

[illustrated below]

PORTRAIT OF ABRAHAM GEIGER (1810–1874). Mezzotint. Germany, 19th century. Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute.

CALLING CARD OF LUDWIG GEIGER (1848–1919). Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute.

*Ludwig Geiger was the son of the Reform leader Abraham Geiger. A German literary historian, he*



*was an outspoken anti-Zionist and assimilationist. The card identifies him as "Professor at the University of Berlin."*

RABBI'S STOLE. Velvet, embroidered. Late 19th century. Hebrew inscription: "For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge and they should seek the Law at his mouth" [Malakhi 2:7]. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Rosen.

*A velvet stole, worn by a Reform rabbi, modeled on church vestments of the period.*

[illustrated right]

CONFIRMATION CEREMONY. Engraving. Germany, late 19th century. Courtesy of the Moldovan family collection.

*A confirmation ceremony for five young men and five young women in a Reform temple.*

CONFIRMATION MEMENTO. Vienna (?), undated. Artist: Joseph Floch. Inscription: "A Memento: A gift to the confirmand on the path through life. Presented by the Board of Directors of the Israelite Synagogue Association for the 19th District." Yeshiva University Museum.

*Reform in Vienna never assumed the radical dimensions that characterized some Reform temples in Germany. Confirmation for girls became widespread also among more conservative synagogues.*

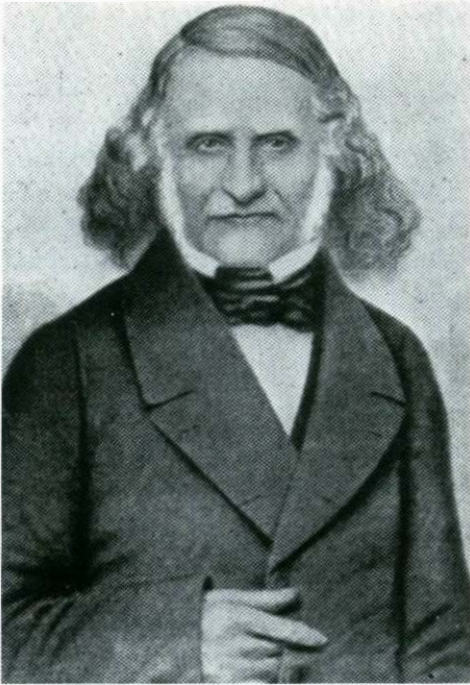


for men, abrogated the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and replaced the traditional Sabbath service with Sunday morning worship.

*Abraham Geiger (1810–1874)*, a native of Frankfurt am Main, had an impressive background in Talmudic studies but also attended the University of Bonn, where he was friendly for a time with fellow student, Samson Raphael Hirsch, the future leader of neo-Orthodoxy (see page 119). In his first rabbinical post, in Wiesbaden, Geiger attempted to institute ritual reforms that ultimately resulted in his being forced to leave. He held a pulpit in Breslau from 1840 to 1857 and thereafter occupied positions in Frankfurt and Berlin.

In 1837 Geiger convened the first conference of Reform rabbis in Wiesbaden. Like Samuel Holdheim, he considered the Talmud an antiquated body of laws but regarded it as an important part of the Jewish past, worthy of study. He also did not accept some of Holdheim's more radical departures from traditional Judaism.





LEOPOLD ZUNZ (1794–1886). Photograph. Courtesy of Zionist Archives and Library.

Along with Leopold Zunz, Geiger was a founder of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement. His chief scholarly works dealt with the Bible and its translations, the history of Judaism, Mishnaic Hebrew, ancient halakah, Maimonides, and Ibn Gabirol.

#### WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS

*Wissenschaft des Judentums* is a term signifying the application of scientific, critical methods to the study of the history, literature, religion, languages, and sociology of Judaism. The movement toward this approach had its beginnings during the early nineteenth century in Germany, where it had a profound impact on the young Jewish intellectuals who comprised the second generation after Moses Mendelssohn. From Germany, the movement spread to other countries. The scientific method of studying the Jewish past brought about a revival of Jewish pride and self-respect among the “moderns,” who hoped that their way would enhance the status of Judaism in world culture even as it would ensure the survival of the Jewish heritage.

*Leopold Zunz (1794–1886)* was the founder of the *Wissenschaft* movement. Along with Eduard Gans and others, he had initiated the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums* that had lasted only from 1819 to 1824. Born in Detmold, northwest Germany, and educated in Berlin, Zunz began his scholarly work in 1817 with his study on the *Sefer ha-Ma'aloth*, a treatise on various degrees of intellectual perfection by Shem Tov ben Joseph Falaquera (ca. 1225–1295), who had been active in Spain. The work that established Zunz's fame was *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der*

*Juden*, a monumental history of Jewish homiletics. His later works include a history of Jewish literature, a history of Jewish liturgy, and three volumes on medieval piyyutim and their authors.

Among other scholars active in the early phase of the *Wissenschaft* movement were Abraham Geiger, Isaac Marcus Jost, Zacharias Frankel, and Moritz Steinschneider.

*Isaac Marcus Jost (1793–1860)*, an educator and historian, was active as teacher and principal at various Jewish schools in Frankfurt. A school friend of Leopold Zunz, he published several textbooks including a Pentateuch for young people (1823) and a German translation and vocalized text of the Mishnah (1832–34). He edited the *Israelitische Annale* (1839–41) and a Hebrew journal, *Zion*, and collaborated with other scholars in the publication of the *Jahrbuch für Geschichte der Juden und des Judentums* (Yearbook for the History of the Jews and Judaism; 4 volumes, 1860–69).

His most famous work is his *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsere Tage* (1820–47), which covers the entire period from the days of the Maccabees until the nineteenth century. This was the first comprehensive history of the Jews to subject its sources to a critical, scholarly examination. Though it was criticized by other historians for concentrating on political history while neglecting the cultural and religious development of Judaism, Jost's pioneering work is important because of the groundwork it provided for the studies of later historians, including Heinrich Graetz.

Though an ardent supporter of Reform (who helped prepare the second conference of Reform rabbis in Frankfurt am Main in 1845), Jost was opposed to radical innovations and vigorously defended the use of Hebrew at synagogues and in Jewish education.

*Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875)*, a native of Prague, received a traditional Talmudic education. His first position was in Teplitz, Bohemia; he was the first rabbi in that province to deliver sermons in German. From 1836 to 1854 he served as chief rabbi of Dresden. Frankel's fields of research included the historical development of halakah and Talmudic exegesis.

In 1854 Frankel played a key role in the establishment of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, the first institution of higher Jewish learning where the scientific, critical method was applied to every aspect of Jewish studies. The Breslau seminary, which was intended for the training of rabbis and teachers, and over which Frankel presided for two decades, became a model for similar institutions in other countries. It is considered in many respects a spiritual precursor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. Frankel's religious position was somewhere midway between Orthodoxy and moderate Reform, so

that he and his “positive-historical school” are also regarded as ideological forerunners of the Conservative movement.

*Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907)*, a native of Prossnitz, Moravia who settled in Germany and died in Berlin, is often called the “father of Jewish bibliography.”

*Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891)* wrote one of the most impressive works in the field of Jewish history to be produced by an adherent of the *Wissenschaft* movement, the eleven-volume *Geschichte der Juden* (History of the Jews). Graetz, who was born in Xions (Ksiaz), Posen, served as a lecturer in Bible and Jewish history at Frankel’s theological seminary in Breslau.

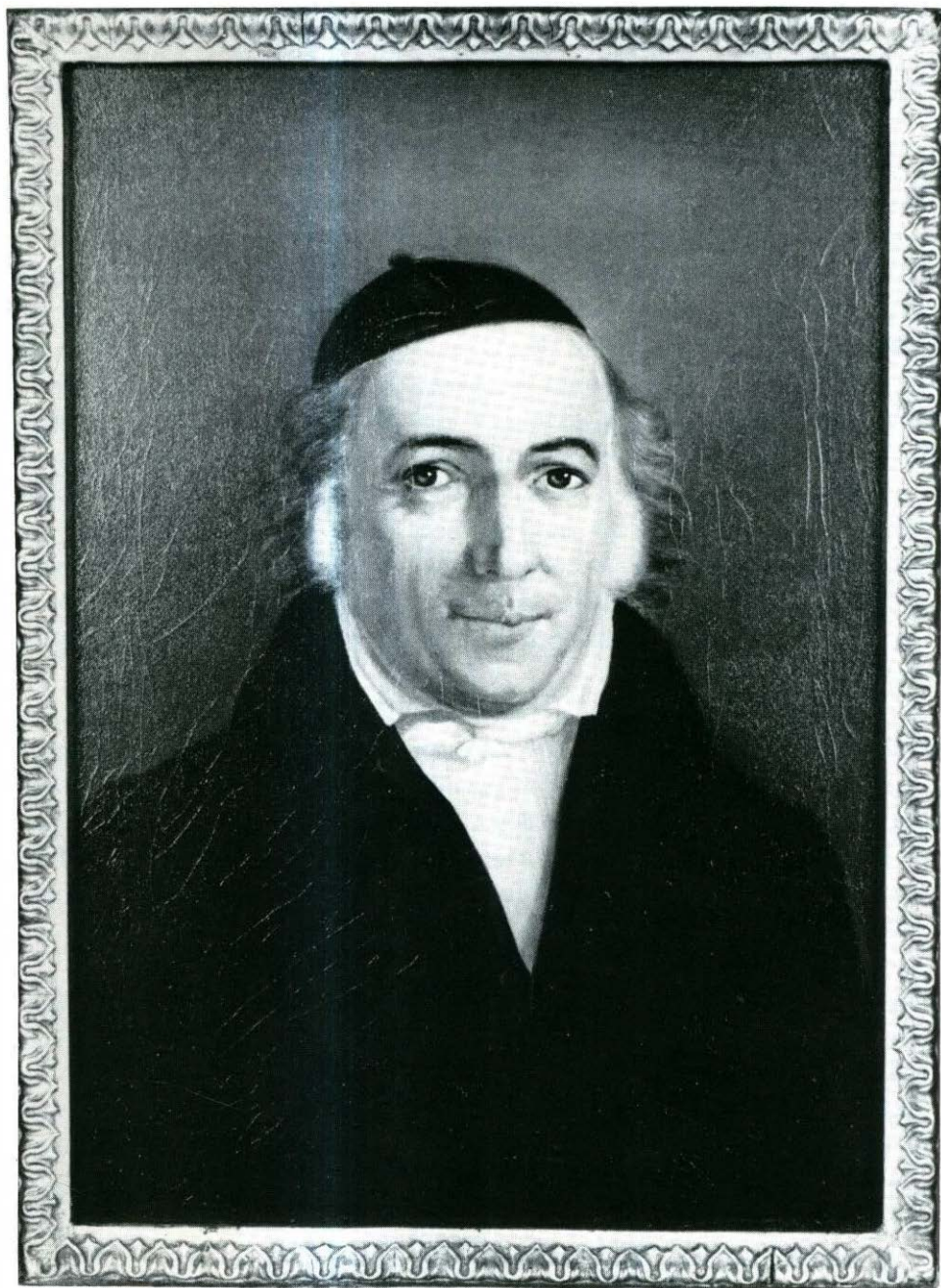
In later years, the methods of the *Wissenschaft* approach came to be applied in various degrees to all areas of Jewish learning and by scholars of various Jewish ideologies.

*Salomon Munk (1803–1867)*, a native of Glogau, Silesia, published studies on Hebrew and Arabic literature during the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry.

*Rabbi Michael Jehiel Sachs (1808–1864)*, another native of Glogau, did research in Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and liturgical poetry. After serving as a preacher in Prague, Sachs was called to a rabbinate in Berlin but retired to private life because, while favoring moderate reforms, he would not permit the use of an organ in the synagogue.

*Abraham Berliner (1833–1915)*, born in the province of Posen, was an Orthodox scholar with a vast knowledge of rabbinic literature and ancient and modern languages. He prepared the first critical edition of Rashi’s commentary on the Pentateuch and a vocabulary of foreign words used by Rashi in his commentary. The first professor of Jewish history at the rabbinical seminary founded by Azriel Hildesheimer (see page 127) in Berlin, he also published studies on the Targum Onkelos and the geography of the Talmud.

An organization that published many previously unpublished medieval Hebrew works (and included Jews of varied religious ideologies) was the *Mekizei Nirdamim* (“Awakeners of the Sleeping”), which was founded in 1864 in Lyck, East Prussia, by E.L. Silbermann (1819–1882). In 1885 the society moved to Berlin, where it remained until 1934, when it transferred its activities to Jerusalem. Among the prominent members of *Mekizei Nirdamim* was Prof. Aron Freimann (1871–1948; see page 116).



[illustrated above]

PORTRAIT OF WOLF HEIDENHEIM (1757–1832).  
Oil on canvas. Artist: Moritz Oppenheim  
(1799–1882). Courtesy of Ernest and Erica  
Michael.

*Although Moritz Oppenheim is best known for his scenes of Jewish life, he was a portrait painter as well. Here, he focuses on Heidenheim's features, which stand out from the dark background and undifferentiated clothes.*

SEFER KEROVOTH (PASSOVER MAHZOR).  
Roedelheim, 1800. Private collection.

*This festival prayer book is part of Sefer Kerovoth, the nine-volume set of mahzorim published by Wolf Heidenheim in Roedelheim according to the German ritual. Note the unusual handwritten title page and Heidenheim's autograph.*

/

*Translator of Prayers: Wolf Heidenheim (1757–1832)*

Benjamin Wolf (Binyamin Ze'ev) Heidenheim, Hebrew grammarian, commentator on Jewish liturgy, and Masoretic scholar, was born in Heidenheim, near Frankfurt am Main. He studied with Rabbi Nathan ben Simeon ha-Kohen Adler (see page 66). In 1798 he obtained a license to set up a printing press in Roedelheim, where he began the publication of his most famous work, a nine-volume edition of the Maḥzor, *Sefar Kerovoth* (1800–02). This work included the first pure German translation (in Hebrew characters) of the piyyutim recited on the festivals, along with a Hebrew commentary and a historical introduction. Many prominent rabbis of the time endorsed Heidenheim's work and contributed notes and commentaries to his translation of the piyyutim. Heidenheim gave painstaking attention to such external details as typographical layout and attractive covers. He was careful to print the prayers in an accurate version and to provide the text with the correct vocalization, drawing on manuscripts and sometimes on old printed texts.

Among Heidenheim's other contributions in the field of liturgy are *Sefiath Emeth* (1806), a small edition of the daily prayers, noted for its typographical beauty and freedom from errors; *Safah Berurah* (1825), a larger prayer book with a German translation in Hebrew characters, and *Siddur li-Venei Yisrael* (1831), the first Orthodox prayer book with a translation in German rather than Hebrew characters. This last work, intended to make the traditional prayer book understandable to the younger generation, incurred the disapproval of some ultra-Orthodox circles.

Heidenheim's major contributions to Masoretic studies included *Mishpetei ha-Te'amim* (1808) on Biblical accents and an edition of the Pentateuch containing material important to the Masoretic text and commentaries.

The "Roedelheim Siddur" and the "Roedelheim Maḥzor," the names by which Heidenheim's editions of the daily and festival prayer books are known, are still in print, since their liturgical order (particularly that of the piyyutim) is used even now by a significant number of Orthodox congregations founded by German Jews throughout the Western world and in Israel.

# ASHKENAZ

*The German Jewish Heritage*

EDITED BY GERTRUDE HIRSCHLER

*Yeshiva University Museum*