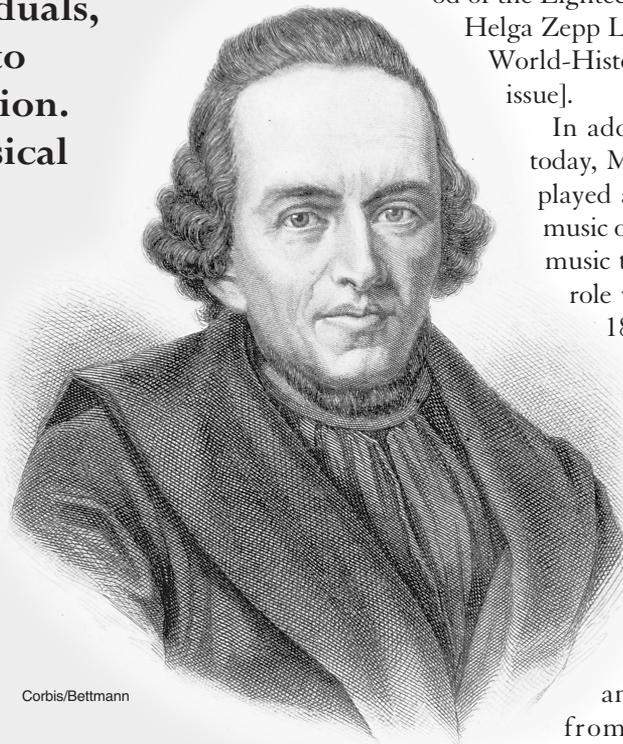
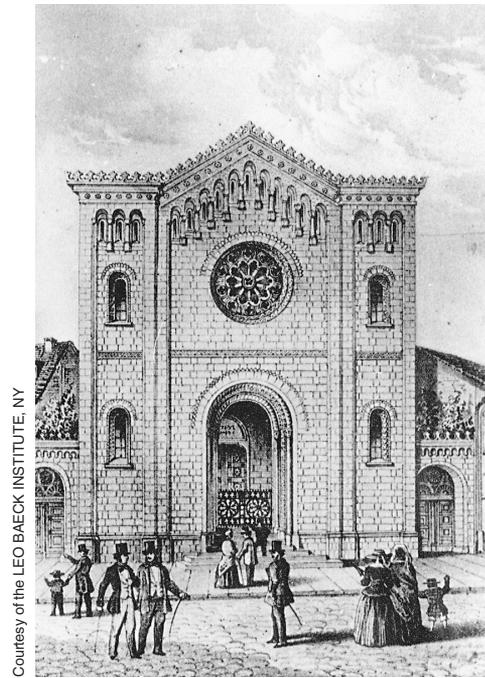


It was lawful that the Jewish liturgy would be rewritten in the Classical musical mode developed by the genius of the great composers Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Schubert, because the Jewish reform movement was an intellectual collaborator and heir of this Classical tradition. Moses Mendelssohn had been the father of them both. Lessing, Schiller, the Humboldt brothers, and other prominent individuals, had contributed to Jewish emancipation. The German Classical period and the Jewish reform movement were parts of the same whole.

**Right: Moses Mendelssohn.
Top: New Synagogue,
Mannheim, Germany.**



Corbis/Bettmann



Courtesy of the LEO BAECK INSTITUTE, NY

Modern history is indebted to Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the German philosopher and orthodox Jew, who was the singular individual whose work in reviving the ideas of Plato and Leibniz made possible the great German Classical period of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries [SEE Helga Zepp LaRouche, "What It Takes To Be a World-Historical Leader Today," page 14, this issue].

In addition, although it is little known today, Moses Mendelssohn and his family played a crucial role in keeping alive the music of J.S. Bach, and in transmitting this music to Mozart and Beethoven. It is this role which lies behind the well-known 1829 performance of the "lost" *St. Matthew Passion* by Moses Mendelssohn's grandson, the composer Felix, which revived interest in Bach's music in Europe in that period.

A true Renaissance individual, Mendelssohn played a pivotal role in keeping alive the Platonic tradition in philosophy, music, the natural sciences, and statecraft, which he inherited from Leibniz. As a young man, Mendelssohn and his lifelong collaborator Gotthold Ephraim Lessing entered the essay contest

Moses Mendelssohn And the Bach Tradition

by Steven P. Meyer

of the Berlin Academy of Sciences to defend the ideas of Leibniz, which had been under attack for more than a decade by the academy's director, Pierre-Louis de Maupertuis. Maupertuis' clear intent was to destroy continental science, by replacing the scientific authority and knowledge of Leibniz, with that of the untruthful, inferior Newton. Over the years, Mendelssohn wrote numerous essays promoting Leibniz's ideas.

Mendelssohn learned classical Hebrew as a child, and through the help of Jewish scholars associated with the Berlin Academy, later taught himself Greek, German, French, English, Italian, and Latin.

He was a scholar of the Hebrew Pentateuch (the Torah, or Five Books of Moses), the book of law upon which he based his belief in Judaism. As a young boy, he mastered the *Guide for the Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides, and later the *Theodicy* of Leibniz.

Mendelssohn studied Homer and Plato, and translated the first three books of Plato's *Republic* into German. Several of his philosophical treatises are written in Platonic dialogue form, and his famous work, *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul* (1767), is based upon the *Phaedo* of Plato. It was this work which catapulted Mendelssohn into the role of preeminent philosopher of Europe, earning him the appellations "Berlin Plato" and "Jewish Socrates."

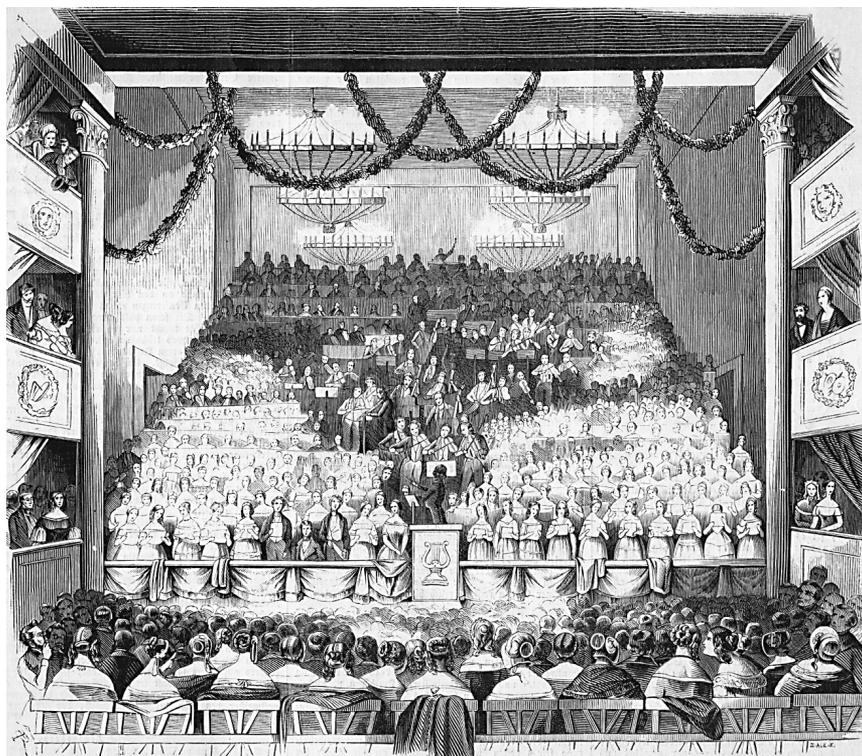
Lastly, he studied and recited the works of Shakespeare, and took a keen interest in the American Revolution and the nascent United States of America.

Mendelssohn's life activity directly shaped what would become the great republican minds of the day in Germany: the poets Gotthold Lessing, Heinrich Heine, Goethe, and Friedrich

Schiller, the great poet of universal freedom, and the scientist-statesmen Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, are among the most prominent.

During the last period of his life, Mendelssohn devoted himself to the emancipation, both civil and intellectual, of Europe's ghettoized Jewish community. The condition of the Jews, over the preceding several centuries, with few exceptions, had been horrendous. Jews were forced to live in squalid, crowded ghettos; special taxes were levied upon them, including taxes for celebrating the holy Sabbath and congregating for religious prayer service; they were banned from the skilled trades and most professions and could not own land. There was little secular education. There were even laws enacted to reduce their total numbers—only first-born sons were allowed to marry and have children. In effect, through religious, social, and financial oppression, there were efforts to exterminate Judaism. Any Jew could step away from this nightmare—but only by converting to Christianity.

*Lower Rhine Music Festival,
Aachen, Germany.*



Corbis/Bettmann

In *Jerusalem*—a work written for Christians, Moslems, and Jews alike—Mendelssohn detailed the separate roles of Church and State, and defined Mosaic law to be coherent with Reason as defined by Plato, a concept which was to revolutionize Judaism. He translated the Jewish Torah and other sacred writings, as well as the traditional daily prayer book, from Hebrew into German, so that Jews

From *Jerusalem*: On Church and State

The reasons which lead men to rational actions and convictions rest partly on the relations of men to each other, partly on the relations of men to their Creator and Keeper. The former are the province of the state, the latter that of religion. Insofar as men's actions and convictions can be made to serve the common weal through reasons arising from their relations to each other, they are a matter for the civil constitution; but insofar as the relations between man and God can be seen as their source, they belong to the church, the synagogue, or the mosque. . . . Public institutions for the moral development of man that concern his relations with God I call church; those that concern his relations with man I call state. By the formation of man I understand the effort to arrange both actions and convictions in such a way that they will be in accord with his felicity; that they will educate and govern men. . . .

Laws do not alter convictions; arbitrary punishments and rewards produce no principles, refine no morals. Fear and hope are no criteria of truth. Knowledge, reasoning, and persuasion alone can bring forth principles, with the help of authority and example, can pass into morals. And it is here that religion should come to the aid of the state and the church should become a pillar of civil felicity. It is the business of the church . . . to show then that duties toward men are also duties toward God, the violation of which is the greatest misery; that serving the state is true service of God; that charity is his most sacred will, and that true knowledge of the Creator can not leave behind in the soul any hatred for men. To teach this is the business, duty, and vocation of religion; to preach it, the business and duty of its ministers. How, then, could it ever have occurred to men to permit religion to teach and its ministers to preach the opposite?

—Moses Mendelssohn, from *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*'

would learn pure German as the gateway to other Classical subjects. He helped found the Berlin Free School, a secular school where impoverished Jewish children could learn the natural sciences, languages, and philosophy.

Reason and Mosaic Law

Although Mendelssohn's secular, philosophical, and religious works were coherent with the conception of orthodox Judaism he practiced, these ideas were rejected by the fundamentalist rabbis of his time, especially among the Hasidic Jews of Eastern Europe, who rejected the coherence of reason with Mosaic law. They dismissed Mendelssohn's notion that the marriage of religious training with the most advanced secular knowledge, was not only natural, but essential to modern life. They also refused to accept the related idea, that man's obligation to the whole of civil society—regardless of his individual religious beliefs—should be defined in a ecumenical way.

Mendelssohn's writings became the basis for the modernizing tendency within Judaism, known as the Reform Movement, which spread for several generations throughout Europe and Russia, and into the United States (it is known in the U.S. today as both Reform and Conservative Judaism).

Mendelssohn's Jewish collaborators, and those that followed his teaching, called themselves *maskilim* (intellectuals). Under the influence of Mendelssohn's legacy and the Humboldt education reforms of the early 1800's, young Jewish intellectuals who were studying to become rabbis, attended universities for the first time, and approximately sixty of these students received advanced degrees.

These rabbis were trained in philology, Platonic philosophy, astronomy, geometry, and other Classical subjects—a truly monumental accomplishment, as the traditional rabbinate which preceded them had little or no secular education! They used this university training in German Classical culture, to educate their Jewish congregants. Trained in the Greek Classics and Platonic method, they sought to bring reason to a reinvigorated Judaism. It was these rabbis who led the Reform Movement, and were bitterly opposed by elements within the entrenched orthodox rabbinate.

In the tradition of Mendelssohn, these Reform leaders considered themselves, first, to be men and women who shared the universal gift of reason from God. They saw themselves as participants in the life of their nation, with obligations for its present and future, and Judaism served as their moral guide. This was a major break with the orthodox rabbinate, who believed that the Jews were a theocratic nation in exile, awaiting their return to Zion.

Several exceptional reform rabbis stepped outside the traditional role of theological and educational matters, to

attempt to organize the entire population into republican forms of government throughout Europe.

One of the crowning achievements of the Reform Movement was the collaboration of Cantor Salomon Sulzer of Vienna and choirmaster Louis Lewandowski of Berlin with students of the Classical composers Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, and with Felix Mendelssohn and Franz Schubert themselves. This led to their setting the entire Jewish prayer service, or liturgy, to Classical music composition.

Mendelssohn and numbers of leading rabbis and *maskilim* collaborated with the leading Christian intellectuals of the day, to create a renaissance in science, music, and the arts. In the process, they mobilized a culturally and educationally backward population of Jews, and made them leading participants in the life of their nation, by elevating them through the highest, most universal ideals of mankind—rather than pandering to any narrow, ethnic self-definitions.

Thus, the Jewish minority was brought to play an extraordinary role in the development of German culture and the German nation in the Nineteenth century. Their story should be a lesson to all oppressed minorities, that their mission of self-development implies participating in the uplifting and development of the entire nation and the world overall.

The Bach Tradition

One of their most important, lasting contributions to modern civilization, was the successful effort of Mendelssohn and his collaborators to keep alive the music of J.S. Bach, and to further the work of the masters of German Classical music composition, including Beethoven.¹

Mendelssohn was a passionate lover of music all his life. He studied piano with Johann Philipp Kirnberger, one of Johann Sebastian Bach's close disciples, who was then the court musician of Princess Amalia of Prussia. Mendelssohn's work on Bach led, in 1761, to his anonymously publishing a treatise on the best method of constructing a well-tempered pianoforte. He included a treatise on "divine musical art" in his philosophical essay "On the Sentiments."

Mendelssohn's protégé and closest collaborator was the silk manufacturer David Friedländer, whose brother-in-law was the banker Isaak Daniel Itzig. Along with Mendelssohn and Friedländer, Itzig founded the Berlin Free School.

The Itzigs were a prominent Berlin banking family. The scion of the family, Isaak's father Daniel Itzig, a financier to King Frederick II (the Great), was an elder statesman of the Berlin Jewish community, and a spokesman for the emancipation of Prussian Jews. He

From Jerusalem: Judaism and Mosaic Law

Although the divine book that we received through Moses is, strictly speaking, meant to be a book of laws containing ordinances, rules of life and prescriptions, it also is well known as an inexhaustible treasure of rational truths and religious doctrines. . . . All laws refer to, or are based upon, eternal truths of reason, or remind us of them, and rouse us to ponder them. . . .

Among all prescriptions and ordinances of Mosaic law, there is not a single one which says: you shall believe or not believe. They all say: you shall do or not do. Faith is not commanded, for it accepts no other commands than those that come to it by way of conviction. . . . Whenever it is a question of the eternal truths of reason, it does not say believe, but understand and know. . . .

In truth, everything depends here also on the distinction between believing and knowing, between religious doctrines and religious commandments. To be sure, all human knowledge can be reduced to a few, fundamental concepts, which are laid down as the bases. The fewer these are, the more firmly the structure is fundamental. And in this regard we may rightly say: to us, all words of scripture, all of God's commandments and prohibitions are fundamental. Should you, nevertheless, want to obtain their quintessence, listen to how that great teacher of the nation, Hillel the Elder, who lived before the destruction of the Second Temple, conducted himself in this matter. A heathen said: "Rabbi, teach me the entire Law while I am standing on one foot!" Shammai, whom he had previously approached with the same unreasonable request, had dismissed him contemptuously; but Hillel, renowned for his imperturbable composure and gentleness, said: "Son, love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the text of the Law; all the rest is commentary. Now go and study!"

—Moses Mendelssohn, from *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*

had sixteen children. One of his granddaughters, Lea Itzig Solomon, married Moses Mendelssohn's son, Abraham. Their son was the composer Felix Mendelssohn.

Both Moses Mendelssohn and Daniel Itzig were direct descendants of the famous scholar, Rabbi Moses Isserles of Krakow (1520-1572). It was this extended family of Moses Mendelssohn and Daniel Itzig, along with two of



*Johann
Sebastian Bach*

The Granger Collection



*Wilhelm
Friedemann
Bach*

Corbis/Bettmann



*Carl Philipp
Emanuel
Bach*

The Granger Collection

J.S. Bach's sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emmanuel, who kept Bach's music alive, and provided the context for the famous 1829 revival of the *St. Matthew Passion* by Moses Mendelssohn's grandson Felix.

As a young girl, Daniel Itzig's daughter, Sara Itzig Levy (b. 1763) studied music with Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. She became his prize pupil and, later, his most significant financial patron. She also studied the music of C.P.E. Bach, and, at his death, she became the patron of his widow. Sara commissioned a bust of C.P.E. Bach which, years later, was placed in the concert hall of the Royal Theater in Berlin.

Other members of the Itzig family helped finance the Bachs as well. Four Itzigs were subscribers to the Bachs' music. (Music and literary compositions were, in this period, financed by individual subscriptions.)

Beginning in the 1780's, Sara hosted and directed family *musikabends* (house-concerts), where she championed the works of J.S. and C.P.E. Bach. These *musikabends* were famous, and friends from leading intellectual and music circles would always attend. (The family was so committed to the Bachs, that they were accused of running a Bach cult!)

This is all the more remarkable, since at that time Bach's music was rarely performed in public, and his scores were not widely available. Very few of Bach's works had been printed during his lifetime. With the exception of "A Musical Offering" (1761), not one complete work of Bach was printed between 1750 and 1800. The few copies available were usually rented out, or copies were made of an individual work by hand. Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel had divided between themselves the scores of the five yearly cycles of their father's cantatas, which had otherwise never been published.

Felix Mendelssohn's mother, Lea Itzig Solomon, was Sara's niece. She received piano lessons from the same Kirnberger who trained Moses Mendelssohn, and it was she who trained young Felix and his siblings in the rudiments of the keyboard, basing her instruction upon Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier." (Felix's sister Fanny had memorized the "Well-Tempered Clavier" by age thirteen!)

In 1791, Karl Friedrich Christian Fasch, also a well-known disciple of J.S. Bach and a collaborator of his son C.P.E. Bach, founded the Berlin Choral Society. Fasch was then the accompanist to Frederick II.

The Choral Society served a crucial role, as did Sara Itzig Levy's *musikabends*, in keeping Bach's music alive. Not only did the Itzig and Mendelssohn families fund the Academy, Sara Itzig Levy was its first harpsichord soloist, often performing the works of Bach. Most importantly, she donated her entire music library to the Acade-

my, including her original Bach manuscripts!

To honor the revered Moses Mendelssohn, director Fasch composed musical settings of Mendelssohn's texts and translations. He also set to music a Chanukah prayer for his Jewish friends, and there are indications that he may have written music for other Hebrew prayers as well.

Both Kirnberger and Fasch were the music teachers of Karl Friedrich Zelter. At Fasch's death in 1800, Zelter became the director of the Choral Society, where he, like Fasch, maintained a commitment to Bach by performing a significant number of his choral works.

Under Zelter's direction, the accomplished Sara Itzig Levy was the first soloist at the Choral Society; she frequently performed J.S. Bach concerti on the harpsichord.

It was she who recommended to her niece, Lea Mendelssohn, that Zelter become Felix's music teacher. So, as the noted biographer of Felix Mendelssohn, Eric Werner notes, Felix was really a great-grand-pupil of J.S. Bach!

The Mendelssohns and Itzigs were financial patrons of the Bach-centered Choral Society for several decades. In their early teens, both Felix and his sister, the composer Fanny Mendelssohn, were trained in voice at the Society, and were members of the choir. This training helped prepare young Felix to later conduct the *St. Matthew Passion*.

In 1823, Felix learned that Zelter owned a complete manuscript of the *St. Matthew Passion*, and his grandmother Babette Itzig Solomon was able to secure a copy from Zelter, which she passed on to Felix. By 1829, when Felix was twenty years old, with urging from his friend and collaborator, singer Edward Devrient, he approached Zelter with the proposition that he be allowed to conduct a performance of the *Passion* at the Choral Society. For Felix, not only was it the hundredth anniversary of the premiere of Bach's work, it was also the hundredth anniversary of the year in which his grandfather Moses, whom he revered, was born. Zelter finally agreed.

Mendelssohn, Zelter, and their circle knew the historical significance of reviving Bach's music. On March 11, 1829, Felix conducted a 400-person chorus, before a full concert hall. The event was so successful and historic, that ten days later, on the anniversary of Bach's birthday, the *Passion* was performed once again. This time, not only was the concert hall full, but the extra seats which were placed in the lobby and rehearsal room behind the orchestra, were full as well.

Felix was responsible for the systematic publication and subsequent performance of Bach's church music resulting from this historic performance. Through the performance of Bach's works, he raised enough money to erect a statue of the great master. It was dedicated in 1841, and at Felix's insistence, his aunt Sarah was able to

locate Wilhelm F.E. Bach, the only surviving grandson of Johann Sebastian, to attend the statue's unveiling.

Felix also maintained a relationship to his grandfather's heirs in the Jewish community. He collaborated with Rabbi Abraham Geiger, one of the most important Reform rabbis, on the text of the oratorio *Elijah*. In 1844, Felix wrote a cantata based upon Psalm 100, set for four-voice choir and small orchestra, for the dedication service of the new Reform synagogue in Hamburg.

Support for Beethoven

The Itzig family was similarly active in Vienna in promoting Moses Mendelssohn and the great German Classical thinkers and composers in Vienna.²

Fanny Itzig, the sister of Bach patron Sara Itzig Levy, who was married to *maskil* Nathan Arnstein, gave Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart a copy of Mendelssohn's *Phaedon* while he was writing *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. At the time, Mozart was lodging in the same house in Vienna as the Arnsteins.

Fanny's sister Cecilia Itzig was married to Bernhard Eskeles, who originally was the suitor of Dorotea Mendelssohn (Schlegel), Moses's daughter, who also lived in Vienna. Cecilia, while residing in Vienna, maintained

Music and Science

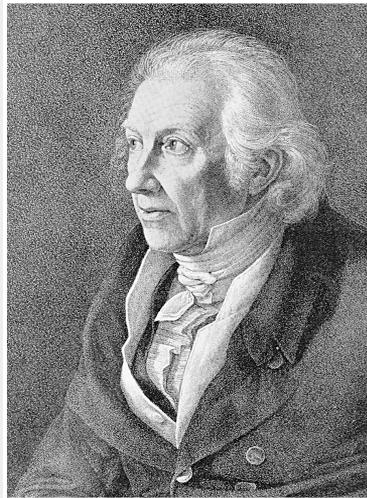
The Mendelssohn family were patrons of scientific, as well as musical, networks. Moses Mendelssohn wrote his last philosophical work, *Morgenstunden*, explicitly for his son Joseph and his friend, the geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, and his brother Wilhelm. Joseph Mendelssohn financed, among other ventures, Alexander's trip to the United States, where he was hosted by the American Philosophical Society. The two were lifelong friends.

Moses Mendelssohn's son Abraham gave Alexander von Humboldt the use of his garden, to carry out geomagnetic experiments which had been devised by Humboldt's collaborator, the mathematician Carl Gauss. At the same time these experiments were being conducted, in another section of the garden, Abraham's son Felix was rehearsing for the historic performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Humboldt invited the mathematician Lejeune Dirichlet to the experiments, and it was there, in the Mendelssohn garden, that he met his future wife Rebecca, Felix's youngest sister!



*Fanny Itzig
Arnstein*

Bildarchiv, ÖNB Wien



*Karl Friedrich
Zelter*

The Granger Collection



*Felix
Mendelssohn*

The Granger Collection

close friendship to the Humboldts and Goethe. The husbands of the two Itzig sisters were partners in the firm of Arnstein and Eskeles, one of the most prominent banking houses in Vienna.

Fanny Arnstein ran the most distinguished salon in Vienna, and her patrons included members of the nobility, government officials, and the intellectual and musical elite. Her salon also provided a forum to discuss the hoped-for legal emancipation of Prussian Jewry.

Like her sister Sarah Itzig Levy, who promoted Bach in her Berlin salon, Fanny also promoted Classical music. In 1811, she was the creator of the “Society of Music Lovers,” a charitable organization which regularly sponsored public Classical music concerts. It was the first organization of its kind. The organization included the financial support and collaboration of several women members of the nobility, including Princess Esterhazy (in whose honor Beethoven was commissioned to write the “Mass in C”), and Countess Dietrichstein.

The latter’s husband, Count Moritz von Dietrichstein, was “Music Count to the Court,” the director of the imperial court musical organization, and a close friend of Count Moritz Lichnowsky, one of Beethoven’s patrons. The two counts were both signers of the February 1824 letter to Beethoven urging that he give a public performance of the Ninth Symphony and *Missa Solemnis* in Vienna. That letter, signed by more than two dozen prominent individuals, was published as part of the political battle to allow the performance. Count Dietrichstein was also a prominent promoter of the legal emancipation of Vienna’s Jews, explicitly calling for an end to all special Jewish taxes.

According to A.W. Thayer’s biography of Beethoven, Bernhard Eskeles, who had the confidence of his sister-in-law Fanny Arnstein, was Beethoven’s banker and financial advisor, and it is reported that the two maintained a close personal friendship as well. There is mention of two stories in the Thayer biography which provide some details. In 1819, Beethoven received a grant from the Congress of Vienna, which he earmarked for support of his nephew, and which he invested on the personal advice of Eskeles. In 1826, it was the Arnstein and Eskeles bank that handled the proceeds of the benefit concert held by the London Philharmonic Society to help pay Beethoven’s medical and living expenses while he lay ill and dying. (Author Max Grunwald, who wrote about Jewish life in Vienna, noted that it was a leading Jewish banking house of Vienna that paid bills for Beethoven and his publisher, and it is likely that the reference is to Arnstein and Eskeles.)

One of the fruits of their friendship was that, in 1823, Beethoven composed a *lied* (art song) for Cecilia Eskeles,

which he wrote into her personal album. The composition for voice and pianoforte was set to the beginning of the last stanza of their mutual friend Goethe's "Das Göttliche" ("The Divine")—"Edel sei der Mensch, Hulffreich und gut!" ("Let man be noble, helpful, and good!").

It was lawful that the Jewish liturgy would be rewritten in the Classical musical mode developed by the genius of the great composers Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Schubert, because the Jewish Reform Movement was an intellectual collaborator and heir of this Classical tradition. Moses Mendelssohn had been the father of them both. Lessing, Schiller, the Humboldt brothers, and other prominent individuals, had contributed to Jewish emancipation. The German Classical period and the Jewish Reform Movement were parts of the same whole.

Vienna's Salomon Sulzer

The Arnstein and Eskeles families played prominent roles in attempting to secure emancipation from legal and social discrimination for Vienna's Jewish community. In 1815, they and a handful of other prominent Jews petitioned Prince Metternich to fulfill his 1797 promise to place Jews and Christians on an equal footing.

They were also financial patrons of Vienna's new Reform synagogue. In 1825, Beethoven was asked by Rabbi Izaak Noah Mannheimer, the protégé of Moses Mendelssohn's closest disciple, David Friedländer, to write the dedication cantata for the opening of the new synagogue, which was then under construction.

It appears that Beethoven did not write the cantata, and there is a controversy as to what actually occurred. Some researchers believe he accepted the invitation, studied Handel's religious oratorios, but was ultimately forced to decline because his health and time did not permit completion of the project.

Instead, the composer Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried wrote the cantata, which was performed at the inaugural service on April 9, 1826. Seyfried had been trained in piano by Mozart, was a friend of Haydn, and a close associate of Beethoven. Beethoven had personally called upon Seyfried to conduct the premiere of the last version of his opera *Fidelio*, whose theme is "*Freiheit*," universal freedom. It was therefore more than proper that he collaborate with the heirs of Moses Mendelssohn, who were fighting for the political, religious, and intellectual freedom of the Jews.

Beethoven subsequently did use the musical theme from the centuries-old Hebrew prayer *Kol Nidre*, for the sixth movement of his Quartet in C-sharp minor, which he composed the following year. *Kol Nidre* is the opening

prayer on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year in the Jewish religion.

Rabbi Mannheimer, who preached in German and recited the poetry of Schiller, Lessing, and Goethe in his sermons, recruited as his cantor for the new synagogue, the 22-year-old Salomon Sulzer, who had trained as a cantor in Hohenems and studied music theory at the music school of Karlsruhe. (The cantor leads the Jewish prayer service through song.)

Sulzer, who was a close friend of Franz Schubert, set out to write the entire year's liturgy in Classical form, for cantor and choir, with the explicit purpose of dignifying man's relationship to God. The introduction of Classical music to the Jewish liturgy was to be the crowning glory for the ideas that Moses Mendelssohn had set into motion, and it proved to be a revolution in Judaism itself.

For centuries, the prayer service had been chanted, in an oriental manner, often with each individual singing separately, with a cacophonous effect. Before Sulzer (and Lewandowski's) accomplishments, no four-part music had been written for the synagogue; there was no book which contained the modes and melodies of the liturgy; there were no musical settings for the texts. The entire musical service was transmitted orally from generation to generation. Cantors were not required to have rigorous musical training, and most of them had none. Each generation would personally train its replacement. Playing of the organ, which Lewandowski wrote into his compositions, was unheard of, since it was contrary to tradition to allow musical instruments in the synagogue. Near the end of his life, Sulzer also endorsed the use of the organ, and many of his works were later revised for its inclusion.

David Friedländer had been daring enough to use Classical music and the organ during the prayer service in the synagogue which he organized with Rabbi Israel Jacobsohn. In 1808 Jacobsohn used J.S. Bach's leading hymn, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," ("O head, covered with blood and wounds") from the *St. Matthew Passion*, and other German hymns, in his song book for the synagogue in Seesen!

Sulzer was unique in maintaining Judaism's ties to its historic roots, by utilizing melodic themes from Hebrew prayers which were thousands of years old, setting them polyphonically. This was not unlike what Brahms would do later with the German folk song, or Dvořák with the Negro spiritual.

Sulzer published *Schir Zion*, his liturgical compositions for the services of an entire year, in 1839. (A revised edition appeared in 1865.) It was an ecumenical project: For the first edition, Sulzer wrote 122 of the 159 pieces, and the remaining ones were written by Christian collab-

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*Ludwig van
Beethoven*



*Salomon
Sulzer*



Corbis/Bettmann

*Franz
Schubert*

orators, including Joseph Drechsler, the choral director of St. Stephen's Church; the noted composer Franz Schubert, whose musical genius had a lasting influence on Sulzer; Joseph Fischhoff, the music professor who collected Beethoven manuscripts and held two hundred Bach cantatas; and Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried, who had been Sulzer's early composition teacher. Sulzer also used thematic lines from Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert for his own compositions.

Sulzer was an intimate friend of Schubert, who at the former's request wrote a cantata, using the Hebrew text of Psalm 92, for the Sabbath service. The two worked closely on the project, which required that Sulzer provide Schubert with the Hebrew text, transliterated into German, along with its German translation. The final composition, written *a capella*, was first performed in July 1828, shortly after the new synagogue was completed. In later years, Schubert set other psalms for voice and piano, using the German text of Moses Mendelssohn's translation of the Old Testament.

Sulzer brought decorum and dignity to the synagogue with his music, and he instilled those virtues in the cadre force of cantors who studied with him over decades. Training them in the Classical mode, he established the tradition that cantors be accomplished musicians, and that they be trained in voice and capable of artistic singing. It was this tradition of cantorial training, and the singing of these Classically composed Hebrew prayers, which produced some of the greatest *bel canto* opera singers, such as the German cantor Joseph Schmidt and the American cantor Richard Tucker.

From approximately 1836 through 1876, all modern (non-Orthodox) synagogues in Western and Eastern Europe reorganized their music according to Sulzer's service, which was known as the Vienna Ritual. It was also adopted in the United States by Reform and later Conservative synagogues. Numbers of his compositions were even included in the Orthodox service.

Sulzer's superb baritone-tenor voice brought royalty, leading composers such as his dear friends Schubert and Robert Schumann, the poet Nikolaus Lennau, and other leading intellectuals, to regularly attend Sabbath services in the Vienna Reform synagogue, just to hear him sing. He also performed secular songs in public, and was famous for his renditions of works by Schubert, who thought that Sulzer's voice was perfect for his *lieder* compositions. His favorite Schubert *lied* was "Die Allmacht," ("The Almighty"), while Schubert most enjoyed hearing him sing "Der Wanderer." As the author Eric Warner notes in his groundbreaking research on Sulzer's life: "His magnificent voice, his imposing, indeed majestic figure, his innate dignity, reminded many of his listeners of Shakespeare's verse:

‘Grace seated on his brow, a combination and a form indeed, where every god did seem to set his seal.’”

Berlin’s Louis Lewandowski

Choirmaster and composer Lewis Lewandowski was trained in the Mendelssohn-Bach tradition. Born in 1821, Lewandowski joined the choir of the Community Synagogue in Berlin at the age of twelve. His musical aptitude was brought to the attention of Moses Mendelssohn’s grandson (and Felix Mendelssohn’s cousin), Alexander, who became the patron of young Lewandowski’s musical education. (Alexander Mendelssohn’s father, Joseph, lived until 1848. Joseph published a biography and the collected works of his father Moses, and played a critical role in furthering his father’s ideas. He was also the financial patron of Alexander von Humboldt.)

In 1835, Alexander Mendelssohn sent Lewandowski to the Berlin Choral Society for his initial music training, where he won a competition prize. Alexander also sponsored Lewandowski’s training at the University of Berlin under Adolph Bernhard Marx, who had been his cousin Felix Mendelssohn’s first music teacher, and who was steeped in the works of Bach and Beethoven. Marx had helped Felix Mendelssohn get Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* published after the historic 1829 concert.

In 1838, the cantor and *maskil* Hirsch Weintraub was a guest at Lewandowski’s synagogue. Weintraub and his choir travelled throughout Germany performing prayer services from Sulzer’s yet unpublished *Schir Zion*. Lewandowski heard in Sulzer’s chorales, the Classical music he was studying at the Choral Society, and this made a profound impression upon him.

Lewandowski became the music teacher at the Berlin Free School, the very school founded by Moses Mendelssohn, David Friedländer, and Isaac Daniel Itzig, as well as choirmaster of his synagogue. He composed secular music and, in 1846, published *lieder* that were deemed political in nature, for which the government launched an investigation of him.

In 1855, he and his cantor Abraham Lichtenstein went to Vienna to study with Sulzer. Cantor Lichtenstein was an accomplished musician who had studied music with Karl Leowe in Stettin. Leowe, a *lieder* composer and director of the music program in Stettin, was himself a friend of the Mendelssohns who, in 1827, had conducted an historic concert which included the world premiere of the Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the Second Concerto for Two Pianos in A-flat, both by Felix Mendelssohn, and the first performance in Northern Europe of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Lewandowski spent several decades in collaboration with Lichtenstein.

In 1871, Lewandowski published *Kol Rinnah*, which

contained recitatives for cantor, and two-part choral pieces. His innovation was that he wrote compositions that expressly included the congregation, either alone, or together with the choir and/or cantor.

From 1876 through 1882, he published *Todah W’simrah*, an entire year’s liturgy, which included four-part choral pieces (some for cantor and choir, others for choir alone) with organ accompaniment. This work established him as the leading German synagogue composer. He included musical ideas from Felix Mendelssohn in his compositions, including themes from the oratorio *Elijah*. His compositions dominated the German Reform synagogue until the Nazi onslaught. In the United States, Lewandowski’s compositions were joined to Sulzer’s, to dominate the Reform and Conservative liturgy.

Lewandowski composed secular music as well. At the celebration honoring Lewandowski’s seventy years of service to the Berlin Jewish community in 1890, Joseph Joachim, the great violinist and closest friend of Johannes Brahms, performed Lewandowski’s String Quartet No. 1 and String Trio No. 3, to everyone’s delight, since these works, composed in his youth, were rarely heard.

Rabbis in the Republican Tradition

One of the most important aspects of Moses Mendelssohn’s influence on this historical period is that it produced a generation of individuals committed to the idea of freedom; a freedom defined by the Platonic idea of universal truth and justice, a freedom defined by the highest ideal of a benevolent, universal God, and a freedom to practice the religion of one’s choice.

Four rabbis, Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, Ludwig Philippson, and Izaak Noah Mannheimer, who were adherents to the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn and who collaborated their entire lives, not only embodied these ideals, but their efforts uniquely reshaped the practice of Judaism in modernity. These rabbis were exceptional, in that they chose to step beyond the traditional pulpit, to actively campaign to make these ideals a reality, not only for the Jewish population, but for men and women of all religious faiths.

These four rabbis were the distinct product of revolutionary educational reforms which were made available to Jewish children by David Friedländer, Mendelssohn’s closest collaborator, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Prussian Minister of Education.

Friedländer was a unique individual, who took the ideas of Mendelssohn and Lessing and passionately applied them to both his religious life and the Jewish community at large, as well as to his civic activities.

He first met Mendelssohn in 1771, and it was reported that he spent a portion of almost every day with him,

which included accompanying him on his travels, until Mendelssohn's death in 1786. Through his long association with Mendelssohn, he met and befriended some of the most brilliant minds in Europe. He possessed an extensive library, which included manuscripts and first editions not only of Mendelssohn's works, but of those of Lessing as well.

In civic life, Friedländer was a true republican. A leading Berlin silk manufacturer, he wrote a memorandum for the Prussian state on the benefits of protective tariffs for generating wealth. His role as an industrialist allowed him to become an instructor at the college of manufactures and commerce and at the Berlin School of Trade, where he was appointed a member of the Board of Trustees. In 1792, he gained municipal citizenship in Berlin, and was immediately elected to the governing council of the city. These were extraordinary accomplishments for a Jew, and they helped pave the way for Jewish emancipation and participation in civil society.

Friedländer was the father of the Jewish Reform Movement. He was outspoken for Jewish emancipation, unlike other "protected" Berlin Jews, who thought that a public fight over Jewish rights would only lead to a diminution of their privileged status.

Like Mendelssohn, Friedländer thought that learning pure German was the gateway to general knowledge and German Classical culture. Under Mendelssohn's direction, Friedländer produced the first translation of the traditional Jewish prayer book into pure German, using Hebrew characters. It was published in 1786, and it soon appeared in standard German script as well. As a companion piece to Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah, it enabled Jews to pray in German, and its publication caused an uproar in the entrenched orthodox community, just as Mendelssohn's translations had.

In 1799, Friedländer called for reform of the orthodox prayer service. The first steps in this direction were taken by his associate, Rabbi Israel Jacobson, who introduced, for the first time in a synagogue, both hymns in German and the use of the organ in the prayer service. Rabbi Jacobson chose to use the music of the most prominent hymn of J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* for his songbook, two decades before the historic performance by Felix Mendelssohn. This would be lawful, for Friedländer's sister-in-law was Sara Itzig Levy, the student of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and the organizer of the Bach *musikabends!*

Most significantly, Friedländer was committed to the transformation of the Jewish community through secular education. In 1778, he established the Berlin Free School with his brother-in-law, Izaak Daniel Itzig, and he served as the director of the school for twenty years. He authored the textbook used at the school, to which Moses

Mendelssohn contributed a translation of Maimonides' "Thirteen Articles of Faith" and a prayer entitled "Devotional Exercise of a Philosopher." The curriculum included classical Hebrew, German, French, mathematics, geography, natural sciences, and ethics, both classical and Judaic.

The Torah (Five Books of Moses) was also taught. The school was oriented toward students seeking practical knowledge for business, as well as a general secular education. It aimed at educating boys from poor Jewish families, who could not afford to hire tutors—the only way to secure a secular education in the Jewish community. The school developed such a reputation, that Christian children soon began attending.

In 1782, with the success of the Berlin Free School, Naphtali Herz Wessely, a collaborator of Mendelssohn and Friedländer, published the Hebrew tract *Divrei Shalom Ve-emet*, which polemicized against the backward teaching of the orthodox rabbis, and which argued for a Classical secular education for Jewish children. The piece was circulated throughout Europe, so that isolated Jewish communities would have the basis to establish schools modelled on the Berlin Free School, or reform already existing ones.

Wessely argued that a child must first familiarize himself with secular studies before studying the Torah (which was a radical reform for Judaism); that it was fundamental for a child to learn the ways of morality and virtue first, and then elementary information for both practical life and for investigating the Torah and its laws, including the most important branches of science: history, geography, mathematics, astronomy, botany, chemistry, and medicine. Finally, only after mastering these subjects, should the child be taught the Torah of Moses, using, of course, only Moses Mendelssohn's translation. Originally written by Wessely in Hebrew, Friedländer translated the essay into German, French, and Italian.

The appearance of Wessely's essay caused an explosion in leading orthodox quarters, and prominent rabbis attempted to get it banned in their own country; leading rabbis even tried to ban Wessely himself from Berlin.

As a flanking maneuver, in 1783, Friedländer created and was the first editor of *Ha-Meassef (The Collector)*, a Hebrew literary magazine which took to the defense of Wessely, and which published articles on literature and the natural sciences for adults. The magazine was crucial, in that it gave the adult Jewish community access to the same Classical subjects Wessely proposed to use in educating their children.

Within a decade, new schools, modelled on Friedländer's Berlin Free School and the writings of Wessely, were organized in numbers of communities, including, Dessau, Frankfurt, Breslau, Koeningsberg, and Hamburg, while

numerous existing Jewish schools, like that in Wolfenbüttel, reformed their curricula accordingly. Even Jewish secular schools for young girls were established.

It was these elementary schools which Rabbis Zunz, Philippson, Mannheimer, and others of their generation, attended as children, and they fundamentally shifted the knowledge and identity of a section of the Jewish community. (Rabbi Geiger was schooled as a child by his family).

Classical secondary-school education was made available to these same rabbis and their associates through the extended personal efforts of Wilhelm von Humboldt for both Jewish legal emancipation and Prussian educational reform.

Humboldt was a lifelong friend of David Friedländer, who, in turn, introduced him to Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn played a crucial role in shaping young Humboldt's philosophical outlook. In 1785, both Wilhelm and his brother Alexander attended the philosophical "Morning Lectures" given by Moses Mendelssohn to his son Joseph in their Berlin home. From this early acquaintance, both Humboldt brothers established collaborative friendships with Joseph and with other members of the Mendelssohn and Itzig families and circle of friends, which they maintained for their entire lives.

As a student, Wilhelm von Humboldt attended the lectures of Wilhelm Christian von Dohm, who is often credited as one of Humboldt's early mentors. Dohm was a promoter of the American Revolution, and had published the works of America's Tom Paine in German for his republican networks.

In 1782, Dohm collaborated with Moses Mendelssohn to publish "On the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews," a treatise written at the request of the Alsace Jewish community, which argued for their emancipation. Dohm was then the registrar of the secret archives, and councillor in the department of Foreign Affairs of the Prussian government in Berlin. Dohm's treatise was historic, because it was one of the first published documents calling for the legal emancipation of the Jews by a prominent republican and non-Jewish citizen.

Humboldt followed in Dohm's footsteps, and, in July 1809, submitted a constitution to the Prussian government for the immediate and complete emancipation of Prussian Jewry. After three years of debate and revision, in March 1812, Chancellor Hardenberg issued an edict, which gave Jews limited rights, declaring them natives and citizens of the Prussian state. Special taxes and occupational restrictions were abolished. Jews were for the first time given the right to occupy academic positions, and were made subject to conscription. It was only a partial victory: numerous restrictions remained, including those forbidding Jews from holding state office.



*David
Friedländer*

© Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin



*Wilhelm von
Humboldt*

The Granger Collection



*Naphtali Herz
Wessely*

Not deterred by the partial outcome in Prussia, Humboldt organized a network of support in preparation for the 1815 Congress of Vienna, where he delivered a major address demanding Jewish emancipation.

Humboldt became Prussian Minister of Education in February of 1809. Like Moses Mendelssohn, he located the task of education in the concept of “*Bildung*,” the creation of moral character and classical knowledge in the individual student, which they based upon the training method of the Classical Greeks. They both thought that this method was requisite for successfully transforming Germany into an industrial and scientific nation.

Humboldt’s education reforms included the provision that Jewish students be allowed, for the first time, to attend university. After strenuous organizing on Humboldt’s part, this provision was accepted.

With these reforms, qualified Jewish students, many of whom had attended the Mendelssohn-Friedländer elementary schools, now attended university and received Classical training. This route produced some of the leading intellectuals of the day.

Within a few short decades, this educational process produced sixty learned rabbis, including Zunz, Geiger, Philippon, and Mannheimer, who had the distinction of having earned doctorate degrees from university study. Steeped in Mendelssohn, Plato, and the great thinkers of the early German Classical period, these leading rabbis reinvigorated Judaism, and played a historical role in modernizing and educating the Jewish population.

They further made the unprecedented shift away from the religious and philosophical “Zionism” of the period, which demanded that Jews remain an isolated community—a nation in exile—rather than citizens of a nation, responsible for the present and future well-being of the entire citizenry. Their stories are exemplary of the impact of Moses Mendelssohn’s ideas on the development of both the Jews and the German nation.

Rabbi Leopold Zunz

Rabbi Leopold Zunz (b. 1794) attended the Samson Free School in Wolfenbüttel. An early Jewish educational institution, it was modelled on the Berlin Free School curriculum by Meyer Ehrenberg, who had been placed in the school by Rabbi Israel Jacobson, Friedländer’s associate.

Zunz became the first Jewish student admitted to the advanced department of Wolfenbüttel High School, which he graduated in 1811. He remained in Wolfenbüttel for a number of years, studying privately and teaching at the Samson Free School. He was significantly influenced by the writings of Lessing, who was the librarian

of the Ducal Library of Wolfenbüttel, which held the papers of Leibniz.

In 1815, Zunz entered the University of Berlin, which had been established by Wilhelm von Humboldt, where he was to receive an education steeped in Plato and Classical Greek studies. In his first year, Zunz studied logic, ancient history, Plato’s *Republic*, and conic sections. According to an autobiographical sketch of Zunz, his mentor was the renowned Homeric scholar and philologist, Friedrich August Wolf, who had played a crucial role in creating the famous Humboldt education reforms.³

With this exceptional education, Zunz based his life’s work on the love of Plato, Lessing, and the influence of Mendelssohn. His friends ranged from the elderly David Friedländer, to his contemporary, the poet Heinrich Heine.

In 1819, Zunz received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Halle. In the same year, he also co-founded the Society for Jewish Culture and History (*Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*), of which Friedländer and Heine were also members. The organization was the first of its kind, and its founding documents set forth the principles that would be central to the reform of Judaism: “The Jews must once again show their mettle as doughty fellow-workers in the common task of mankind. They must raise themselves and their principle to the level of a science . . . and if one day a bond is to join the whole of humanity, then it is the bond of science, the bond of pure reason.”

The society, with membership in Hamburg and Berlin, was composed largely of leading students like Zunz. It sponsored a small school, at which Heine taught history. It was most likely with this circle of students in mind, as representative of the initial accomplishments the Reform Movement had made in secular education, that David Friedländer re-published Mendelssohn’s *Phaedon* in 1823, with the hope that it would become a guide to all Jewish youth.

In 1821, the Society proposed that a Jewish colony, modelled on their Classical reforms, be established in the America, and Heine proposed that it be named Ganstown, after fellow member Eduard Gans. The project did not reach fruition, and the society was short lived, but Zunz and Heine remained lifelong friends.

Zunz became the rabbi of the new Berlin synagogue in 1821, where he remained for a year. His sermons reflected his Classical training, and Mendelssohn’s application of Plato and Leibniz’s ideas to Judaism. Zunz exhorted his congregation: “That, my friends, is the power of reason! By it we are men, by it we experience all that is glorious and divine in this life and surmise the bliss of the future;

reason it is which rules the peoples and the world, which lends us dignity, esteem and strength.” And: “[F]rom the totality of the nation . . . down to the communities, families, and individuals, there is only one, and always the same thing, which is worthy and lends dignity: it is the heavenly triad of religion, virtue, and science.”

Zunz left the Berlin synagogue after a year, frustrated at the slow acceptance of reforms by the leading members of the congregation. He became an editor of *Haude und Spenserche Zeitung* (1824-1831), a Berlin daily newspaper. In 1831, he collaborated with Rabbi Abraham Geiger to found the *Scientific Journal of Jewish Theology* (*Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie*), which initiated a lifelong friendship between the two.

Zunz became the most prominent Jewish historian of the period, devoting himself to the research of Jewish literature, as well as Jewish contributions to the natural sciences and the development of technology, on which he wrote extensively. His approach to history was defined in *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, written in 1845, which was modelled on a work of the same title by Lessing, in which Lessing described the treasures of the Ducal Library of Wolfenbüttel, which housed the Leibniz archives. Zunz' *Encyclopedia of Jewish Science* was conceived as a parallel to the *Encyclopedia of Classical Sciences* taught by his professor August Boeckh, with whom he studied Plato's *Republic* at the University of Berlin. In Zunz' view, Classical education, with its rigorous training in philological interpretation and scientific method, was a prerequisite for anyone who wished to make a substantial contribution to a science dealing with anything Jewish.

In the early 1840's, Zunz wrote several memoranda on Jewish emancipation and the role of the rabbinate, and, in 1845, he was chosen to head a delegation to the Berlin Ministries of Religion and Interior, to discuss these and other matters with the government. The next years of his life were devoted to the changing political landscape, something truly extraordinary for a rabbi. He had great hopes for the 1848 Revolution, wishing it would transform Germany into a republican nation. From 1848 to 1859, he participated in political propagandistic activities, delivering lectures to secular citizen's organizations. He was appointed to the elector's council in Berlin, which prepared the Prussian and German national assemblies. His political lectures and outlook were explicitly based on the *Republic* of Plato.

Rabbi Zunz loved Classical music, and he and his wife regularly attended *musikabends* where the works of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn were performed. His outlook may be encapsulated in a phrase from one of his lectures, in which he said that his hope for mankind lay in the vision that all men would reach the same level of

civilization together, and that it were best “if all of them would be Socrateses and Lessings.”

Rabbi Abraham Geiger

Rabbi Abraham Geiger was born in 1810, in Frankfurt. Like Zunz, he thrived on German Classical culture, and was noted for his public statements on the subject, which placed him at odds with the orthodox rabbinate. He noted that he was personally indebted to Moses Mendelssohn, for it was through Mendelssohn that Jews were able to embrace German Classical culture.

Although he received an education from his rabbinic family rather than a free school, as a young boy he delighted in the works of Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller.

He entered the University of Heidelberg in 1829, and later went on to study at the University of Bonn, where, in addition to Oriental languages under B.F. Freytag, he studied Greek, philosophy, classical philology, astronomy, and zoology.

In 1828, Geiger happened upon a copy of the journal published by the Society for Jewish Culture and History (the *Verein*), of which Zunz had been editor (he later reminisced, in a letter to Zunz on his seventieth birthday, that its scholarly approach to reforming Judaism had changed his life forever). In April 1831, while still a student, he contacted Zunz, and asked him to head a new scholarly journal which would lay the groundwork for further reform, noting that it was Zunz who knew how to revitalize Judaism. This was to become the *Scientific Journal for Jewish Theology*.

In 1831, Geiger won an essay contest sponsored by Freytag, and, in 1833, the philosophy department of the University of Marburg unanimously granted him a doctorate diploma for that work. He was also given a rabbinical diploma from Rabbi Gosen of Marburg.

Rabbi Geiger was one of the most energetic leaders of the reform. In 1832, the 22-year-old Geiger became rabbi of Wiesbaden, where he immediately began to introduce changes in the synagogue prayer service. He preached in German rather than Hebrew, and he introduced choral singing to enhance the beauty and dignity of the prayer service. He also founded a choral society.

His love of Classical music led him to collaborate with Felix Mendelssohn, who sought Geiger's guidance in creating the libretto for his oratorio *Elijah*. Geiger's final years, serving as the erudite rabbi of the new Berlin synagogue, allowed him to pursue and enjoy these endeavors further, as he served with choirmaster and composer Louis Lewandowski.

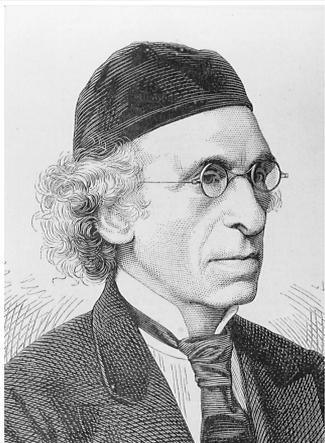
In 1835, in collaboration with Zunz, he founded the *Scientific Journal for Jewish Theology* in which he sought



Leopold Zunz



Abraham Geiger



Ludwig Philippson



Izaak Noah Mannheimer

to combine historical research with practical recommendations for a reformation of the Jewish religious faith. The journal published the works of the leading Jewish minds of the day, and served as the rallying point to expand the reform.

In one of the earliest issues, Geiger published an essay by Rabbi Elias Grunbaum, whose ideas were congruent with Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*. Grunbaum argued that it was Judaism which laid the foundations of the principle of love as the ethical precept that should govern social life in practice. In its essence, Judaism is a religion of universal morality. The Talmudic precept to "love one's neighbor" applies not only to the Jews among themselves, but is a commandment that applies to all men, regardless of religious affiliation, nationality, or class. Most emphatically, he argued that justice was not restricted to people of a specific religion or nation, but was universal in character, as it was a corollary of man's rational nature. As a historical religion, Judaism is a guide to a social life based upon love and justice in particular, and on morality leading to human progress in general.

The effect of the journal allowed Geiger to convene a conference of reform rabbis, the first of its kind, in 1837 in Wiesbaden. Fourteen colleagues attended. Over the ensuing decade, Geiger was to preside over, or be a leading participant in, three other synods. These were broadly attended, although they never established an official organization to unify Reform Judaism, as Geiger had hoped.

In 1840, after almost two years of bitter political battles, Geiger became the assistant rabbi of the Jewish community of Breslau. His installation marked a watershed for the Reform Movement, because it signified a semi-official endorsement by the Prussian state.

Geiger, then the leading spokesman for the Reform Movement, was opposed by Breslau's senior orthodox rabbi, Solomon Titkin, with whom he was to serve. Titkin did everything in his power to stop Geiger, including instigating a formal investigation of Geiger as a threat to the state.

Not only did the Prussian government exonerate Geiger of all charges, but he was granted citizenship, without which he could not have taken up his post. According to the historian Max Wiener, it was Geiger's friend, Alexander von Humboldt, who helped orchestrate this outcome from behind the scenes!

Geiger worked tirelessly for reform. Over the ensuing years he worked on a new prayer book, which was completed in 1854. The core of the text, which retained prayers in Hebrew, was the philosophical doctrine that the Jews were a people united solely by a common historic religious faith, renouncing once and for all whatever

political or nationalistic aspirations Judaism might have had in the past. This new prayer book was widely adopted by the liberal Reform congregations, and it was by means of its use that a large section of Germany's Jewish population made the transition to considering themselves Jewish Germans, rather than Jews living temporarily on German soil, while they awaited a return to Zion. Geiger's prayer book became the model for the one adopted later by the Conservative movement of Judaism in the United States.

Rabbi Geiger was the epitome of this outlook. In 1857, at the testimonial banquet celebrating his twenty-five years as a rabbi, he proposed a toast to his "German Fatherland." The following year, he presented copies of all his major literary works to the University of Jena, which was celebrating its tercentenary, complimenting the university in an accompanying note, for its contributions to the liberal German spirit. Late in life, at the end of the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, he would write to his close friend Joseph Dernburger: "Over and above everything else, I am a human being; it is only second to that, or in constant relation to it, that I am a German, and then a Jew."

Over the span of years he served as a rabbi, Geiger included contemporary history and historical themes as the intellectual content of his sermons and lectures, often incorporating works by David Friedländer, Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, among others.

Many of Geiger's works were translated into English, and he had a profound effect on the leadership of the Jewish community in the United States. He influenced and collaborated with the German rabbi David Einhorn, who became the leading American Jewish opponent of slavery and supporter of the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, in opposition to the faction of apologists for slavery and the Confederacy led by Cincinnati's Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise [SEE Box, page 62].

Einhorn was one of the sixty German rabbis to receive a doctorate degree, his in philosophy, studying at the Universities of Erlangen, Würzburg, and Munich. He was a close associate of Geiger's, attending the synods Geiger led, and coming to his defense when Geiger was under attack by Rabbi Titkin. At Geiger's suggestion, Rabbi Einhorn emigrated to America in 1855.

Over a decade later, Geiger sent another rabbi to the United States, the young Kaufman Kohler. Like Einhorn, Kohler also held a doctorate in philosophy, having studied in Erlangen and Berlin. His thesis was considered so radical, that he could not secure a rabbinic appointment in Germany, so he continued his studies in Leipzig and also studied with Geiger.

In 1869, at Geiger's recommendation, Kohler was asked to become the rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Detroit, Michigan. Within a year, he married Einhorn's daughter, and became the protégé of his father-in-law.

After bitter political and religious battles with Isaac Wise and his section of the Reform Movement, Rabbi Kohler ultimately succeeded in becoming the dominant force and spokesman of the Reform. At Wise's death, Kohler became the president of Hebrew Union College, the major U.S. institution which educated Reform rabbis. A leading anti-Zionist, Kohler immediately moved to improve the curriculum and bring in new faculty, strengthening the Reform Movement's commitment to the ideals of Mendelssohn and the leading Classical thinkers of the period of German reform.⁴

Rabbi Ludwig Philippson

Rabbi Ludwig Philippson was born in 1811. He was educated at the Dessau Jewish school modelled on the Berlin Free School, where his father taught the works of Moses Mendelssohn and German literature. In 1833, Philippson took his doctorate at the University of Berlin.

He was ordained a rabbi in Magdeburg, and attended the rabbinical synods that Rabbi Geiger called in Brunswick, Frankfurt, and Breslau. As a rabbi, he too preached in German, and introduced the organ in his synagogue.

Most significantly, in 1837, Rabbi Philippson founded the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, a weekly Jewish newspaper that was the most widely read and influential newspaper among German-speaking Jews. He was the editor until his death in 1889.

For more than half a century, the newspaper championed the reform cause of Judaism and published articles by its leading proponents. In civic matters, Rabbi Philippson was an outspoken promoter of the United States of America, and he detailed the necessity for the creation of constitutional states in Europe, which he argued was inherent in Mosaic law.

Philippson often wrote about and championed republican ideals. His newspaper covered the leading political battles of the day, and in the period leading to the American Civil War, Rabbi Philippson argued passionately against slavery and the destruction of the American Union. In the tradition of Moses Mendelssohn, he applied the Mosaic code to define the requirements of a modern republican state, and wrote articles which would educate and organize his Jewish readers to that outlook, thereby providing them with knowledge necessary to become responsible citizens. Philippson was particularly influenced by the writings of the great German and American

economist Friedrich List, who promoted the American System of industrial development in Germany.

Philippson lectured and used his newspaper to take an active part in the events of 1847-1848. His lectures and articles were published in 1848 as a collected work, and it soon appeared in both English and French.

Philippson argued that Mosaic law did not recognize aristocracy or noble status, or a privileged social class based on birth or property. To explain this he quoted and developed the idea from Numbers 15:16, which states: "One Law and one Statute shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourns with you."

He argued that Moses constructed a political society with equal rights for all persons as defined in Exodus 18:21, and that the covenant that Jews made with God was to be applied not only to the Jews themselves, but to

their activity with others. To explain this, he quoted and developed the idea contained in Deuteronomy 29:10: "You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God: your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, even the stranger within your camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water."

Rabbi Philippson taught that Jews were responsible to participate in all the industrial and intellectual endeavors of mankind, including science and the arts, and that only this activity would provide true emancipation, not merely a change in civil status.

Philippson was clear that the distribution of wealth and the question of property had to be reorganized, and argued that its unequal distribution was one of the most destructive elements in the history of nations and states.

Rabbi David Einhorn: A Leader in the Fight Against Slavery

Rabbi David Einhorn, a protégé of Rabbi Abraham Geiger, served in several German communities before emigrating to the United States in 1855 to take up the pulpit of Congregation Har Sinai of Baltimore, Maryland. He immediately became the most outspoken opponent of slavery in the American rabbinical community. Not only did he preach against slavery from the pulpit, but he also edited and published a German-language newspaper, to organize the anti-slavery cause among American Jews. Einhorn was a fiery polemicist, who wrote:

Scorning the entire civilized world, the rebellious South wants to overturn the principle of the innate equality of all beings created in the image of God, in favor of the opposing principle of innate servitude, and to set slavery and the law of might recognized as a force in the formation of states, as the basis of civilization. It wishes to tear down the glorious Stars and Stripes to pieces. . . . If this diabolical undertaking were to succeed, who would have more to fear than Israel, the very ancient slave of slaves?



Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, MA and NY, NY

Most of the leading American rabbis, like Isaac Meyer Wise, who was a Copperhead, a member of the Confederate Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, and an opponent of Lincoln's presidential bid, were either apologists for slavery, or thought it was not an issue of fair comment for a rabbi! There was also Rabbi Morris Raphall of New York, who wrote a tract proving that slavery was sanctioned by the Bible.

In 1861, a confederate lynch mob targeted Einhorn, burned down his printing press, and forced him to flee for his life to Philadelphia.

Samuel Isaacs, the editor of the Jewish Messenger of New York, castigated him: "It seems he has been mistaking his vocation, and making the pulpit the vehicle for political invective. . . . We commend his fate to others, who feel inclined to take similar course. A minister has enough to do, if he devotes himself to the welfare of his flock. . . . Let Dr. E's fate be a warning."

Einhorn was supported by Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal of Chicago, who had studied in Kaiserlautern and whom Einhorn had ordained as a rabbi when he emigrated to the United States. Felsenthal wrote:

How can it be . . . that [Jews] who for thousands of years were persecuted and enslaved . . . should be defenders of the most ignominious institution of slavery and enemies of freedom? People whose brothers and relatives in many German or non-German states of the Old World even today have to agitate and petition for their own emancipation expose themselves here as fanatical apologists of Negro slavery!

During the 1848 Revolution, he warned in his newspaper that the new Socialist and Communist movements were extremist, and that they would lead to the destruction of the “sanctity” of personal freedom and private property. He warned his readership of the potential tyranny inherent in their reforms.

He wrote that only development in the realm of education, technology, and economics, if accompanied by moral consciousness on the one hand, and restraining action by a constitutional State on the other, could lead to just solutions to urgent social problems, such as: safeguarding the civil and spiritual freedom of man; greater equality in wage opportunities and social conditions; the improvement of labor relations, especially between employers and workers; assuring property rights, while taking care that those rights do not lead to extreme social polarity between rich and poor.

He argued for the use of debt cancellation for the poor, and the restriction of usury, as these were detailed in Jewish agrarian policy and Sabbatical and Jubilee regulations.

As Mendelssohn had argued in *Jerusalem*, he too noted that it is the obligation of the well-to-do to share their surplus wealth with the poor, and from this it followed that charity was not to be viewed as an act of mercy or pity, but as a responsibility.

Rabbi Philippon was an enthusiastic supporter of Rabbi David Einhorn, and of the leading role that he took in the fight against slavery in America. To Philippon, condemnation of slavery was a matter of principle, especially for Jews, who were still fighting for their own emancipation.

In 1861, he wrote in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*: “Should the secession be accomplished and the Declaration of Independence thrown overboard, then before long—everything moves quickly in America—the black deed of the Crucifixion will no less be held against the Jews, than their black color against the Negroes. And still there are recently immigrated Jews who are deluded to enthuse over secession and the institution of slavery!”

Philippon played an influential role in the United States. Over the years, he had numerous American correspondents, and numbers of Jewish immigrant organizations and individuals in the U.S. maintained subscriptions to his newspaper, and were members of his literary society. On numerous occasions, he became publicly embroiled with slavery apologist Rabbi Isaac Wise, who was the ostensible spokesman for the American Reform Movement. The two were often at each other’s throats. Philippon was uncompromising in his moral principles, which he derived from Mosaic law and Classical philosophy; Wise, on the other hand, tended to wear the trappings of the German Reform Movement and German

Classical culture, but shed its philosophical and moral content.

Over the decades that he published his newspaper, Philippon maintained his post as the rabbi of Magdeburg. He was forced to curtail his rabbinic activities in 1862, because he had grown almost blind, but continued to direct the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* until his death in 1889. The newspaper continued publishing, and in 1904, Ludwig Geiger, Rabbi Abraham Geiger’s son, who was an expert on Goethe and the history of the Italian Renaissance, took over as editor.

Rabbi Izaak Noah Mannheimer

Rabbi Izaak Noah Mannheimer was born in 1793 in Copenhagen. As a protégé of some of Moses Mendelssohn’s closest collaborators, he was chosen to be the rabbi for the new Reform synagogue in Vienna, where he presided for the rest of his life. It was Mannheimer who recruited Salomon Sulzer as its magnificent cantor.

Rabbi Mannheimer’s moral commitment extended beyond the walls of the synagogue, to encompass the entire community. He played a major role in the 1848 Revolution, and his imposing stature among both Christian and Jew alike was the basis for his election to the ensuing Constitutional Convention, where he was elected vice-president.

The nascent reform movement of Copenhagen had been led by Moses Mendelssohn’s brother-in-law, Moses Furst. Through Furst, leading Copenhagen Jewish intellectuals became subscribers to Friedländer’s *Ha-Me’assef*. In 1805, two of those intellectuals, Gottlieb Euchel, whose relative was a tutor in the home of David Friedländer, and Mendel Levin Nathanson, established a school modelled on the Berlin Free School. It was there that the young Mannheimer received his early education.

Mannheimer then studied at the University of Copenhagen, taking courses in philosophy, philology, Oriental languages, and theology. He matriculated in 1814, the same year that the Jews of Denmark received their legal emancipation.

When Nathanson became a member of the board of directors of the Copenhagen synagogue in 1816, he secured a teaching position for Mannheimer. Nathanson’s real purpose was to have Mannheimer reform the synagogue service. So, every Wednesday, Mannheimer held religious services for adherents of Reform Judaism, where he eliminated Hebrew prayers, preached in Danish, and used the organ and Classical music of Christian composers. When the orthodox members of the synagogue lodged a protest, he was forced to terminate his rabbinical activity.

In 1821, he traveled to Berlin, to preach as a guest of Rabbi Zunz. He was immediately taken in by David Friedländer, who made a lasting impression upon him. He befriended Zunz, with whom he had a lifelong correspondence, and also established friendships with other members of the Society for Jewish History and Culture, including Moses Moser, the close friend of Heine, Eduard Gans, and Isaac Marcus Jost.

Rabbi Mannheimer then traveled to Vienna, where on three separate occasions he preached before the Reform congregation, which was looking to employ their first permanent rabbi. He was ultimately chosen from among numbers of candidates.

Although the historical details are sparse, it would be surprising if Friedländer and his sisters-in-laws' families, the Arnstein and Eskeles families, did not play an important role in securing the position for Rabbi Mannheimer. Both families were members and financial supporters of the new Vienna reform synagogue. Fanny Itzig, her husband Nathan Arnstein, and Cecilia Itzig Eskeles, were all devoted to the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn, so it would be lawful for them to chose Mannheimer, who no doubt came highly recommended by Friedländer.

One of the first tasks undertaken by Rabbi Mannheimer, was to approach Beethoven to write a dedication cantata for the opening service of the newly built Vienna Reform synagogue. Since the Arnstein and Eskeles families were friends of Beethoven, and the Arnstein and Eskeles investment firm was used by him on numerous occasions, it is more than likely that it was they who provided the young rabbi with an entrée to the great composer.

Rabbi Mannheimer and his newly recruited cantor, Salomon Sulzer, soon embarked upon creating a prayer service that would uplift and sanctify their congregants' relationship to God and their fellow men. Both adopted clerical robes and hats. While Mannheimer began to rewrite and reorganize the liturgy, Sulzer began to set the Hebrew prayers to Classical music composition. Rabbi Mannheimer used the works of the great Classical German poets, Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing, in his sermons, which he, too, preached in German. The prayer service of Mannheimer and the music of Sulzer became known as the distinct "Mannheimer Rite," and it was widely used throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In theological terms, it was similar to what became known as liberal Reform Judaism in Europe, and Conservative Judaism in the United States.

Rabbi Mannheimer maintained a broad-ranging, life-long correspondence with his friend Leopold Zunz. He was visited in Vienna by Abraham Geiger, who began

publishing Mannheimer's sermons in his journal.

But unlike these associates, Mannheimer scarcely spent his time in literary pursuits and historical research, devoting himself instead to a relentless fight for Jewish civil emancipation and the betterment of of his nation and all mankind.

Mannheimer was always outspoken. He personally attacked Prince Metternich, the Chancellor of Austria, as a hypocrite, and charged that although Metternich spoke out against the violation of Jewish rights in other parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire, he made no effort to "stop the abuse in his own household." Metternich was forced to publicly respond to Mannheimer, stating that such abuses were found in every household, large or small. To show what kind of Jew he liked, Metternich had Solomon Rothschild, the advisor and financier of the Hapsburgs, as well as his own personal financier, appointed an honorary citizen of Vienna, the first Jew ever given those rights. (Since Jews were prohibited from becoming citizens, the category of "honorary citizen" or "privileged Jew" was established for Jewish exceptions.)

At the beginning of the 1848 Revolution, Cantor Sulzer addressed a demonstration in front of the Imperial Palace demanding general representation in the government, the abolition of censorship and police rule, and Metternich's resignation. Later, in March, when Metternich fled to England, he carried a personal letter of credit issued by Solomon Rothschild, to pay his expenses in exile.

When during the bloody events of October Rothschild himself was forced to flee Vienna, Rabbi Einhorn wrote of him: "The rich Jewish merchant, like his Christian counterpart, as a rule holds conservative views. For no sooner does he set out to express his jubilation over a victory of freedom, than news from the stock exchange reminds him of the substantial financial loss he has suffered as a result. And so, instead of intoning psalms at the synagogue to give thanks for the victory, he will sing dirges at the stock exchange to lament the slump in state bonds."⁵

Rabbi Mannheimer was elected from the city of Brody to the Constitutional Reichstag that replaced Metternich and Rothschild. Composed of four hundred persons from throughout the Austro-Hungarian empire, it first met in July 1848, and elected Rabbi Mannheimer the second vice-president.

Mannheimer was an outspoken advocate of the rights of the peasantry, a leading spokesman against the death penalty, and, although he had hoped his Christian colleagues would lead the fight in the vote on emancipation of the Jews, he took the floor during the debate to abolish special taxes levied solely on Jews. His actions in the Constitutional Reichstag echoed the sentiments he voiced in

his first sermon in March, after the outbreak of the Revolution, where he cautioned his congregants, “*first comes the man, the citizen, and only then the Jew . . .*”

Postscript

Let us turn our attention, briefly, to the plight of Mendelssohn’s co-religionists today.

In her accompanying article on the world-historical individual, Helga Zepp LaRouche argues that

Jewish history didn’t start with the Holocaust. It is not limited to the twelve years from 1933 to 1945. One of the highest points of this history of the Jews, was when they participated in and helped to create the most recent period when mankind experienced a Classical culture, a culture which had a proud, marvelous image of man, capable of limitless perfectibility, that is, the German Classical period and its aftermath.

By eliminating the thousands of years of real Jewish history, and especially by denying the integral part Jews played in the German Classical period, by reducing the memories to the twelve years of the Nazi period, a terrible robbery is committed, not only against the Jews, but against everybody.

Moses Mendelssohn is a very good example of a world-historical individual. By breaking out of the containment of the Jewish ghetto, taking the best of humanist culture from Plato to Leibniz to Bach to everybody else, he is a model of what every oppressed minority can do today.

The tradition of Mendelssohn and the great Classical renaissance of Nineteenth-century Germany it inspired, shaped forever the outlook of modern Jewry. This is the tradition that came close to extermination in the Holocaust. For the world Jewish community—both of the Diaspora and of Israel—to regain its sense of purpose in the mission of Moses today, at this time of world crisis—and crisis in the long saga of Jewish historical development—it will have to rely on the ideas of Mendelssohn, and the ecumenical outlook he shared with the other geniuses of the German Classical tradition: Lessing, Schiller, and Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt.

There is no other direction in which to move, except to enter into dialogue with the gentle Berlin Socrates.

Let Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem* serve as a guide for the development of all nations; let it serve, moreover, as the bedrock upon which a lasting Middle East peace may be built. Let the magnificent contributions to Classical culture of the Jews of Germany serve as an inspiration to people everywhere. This would be an appropriate memorial to the innocent millions who perished in the Holocaust.

NOTES

1. For purposes of this discussion, I am not distinguishing between those branches of the extended Mendelssohn-Itzig family which, for religious or political reasons, converted to Christianity—such as, for example, Abraham Mendelssohn, the father of the composer Felix—and those who, like Abraham’s brother Joseph, or Sarah Itzig Levy, maintained the family’s original faith and religious practice. The question of religious conversion in Nineteenth-century Germany, itself a feature of the complex relationship between the Jews and the larger Christian community, is best approached by reference to the difficult life history of the great poet Heinrich Heine.
2. See David Shavin, “Mozart and the American Revolutionary Upsurge,” especially the section “Lessing, Mendelssohn, and the Moral Purpose of Drama,” *Fidelio*, Winter 1992 (Vol. I, No. 4); see also “Philosophical Vignettes from the Political Life of Moses Mendelssohn,” page 29, this issue.
3. Wolf attended the University of Göttingen from 1777 to 1779. His studies were shaped, in part, through a correspondence on Greek history with the great Platonist of the period, Moses Mendelssohn! He became a close friend of Wilhelm von Humboldt, introducing Humboldt to a rigorous study of the classical Greeks. Later, personally convinced Humboldt to accept the post of Prussian Minister of Education, and he chaired the committee that worked with Humboldt to draft the education reforms.
4. Readers can get a sense of Dr. Kaufman Kohler’s influence on the American Jewish community, from the Table of Contents of a 1931 posthumous selection of his essays and addresses. Written between 1868 and 1925, the works include: “Hellenism and Judaism,” “The Bible and Capital Punishment,” “The Essenes and the Apocalyptic Literature,” “Backward or Forward: Form or Spirit; Piety or Living Religion; Palestinian or American Judaism,” “Human Brotherhood,” “The Synagogue and the Church in Their Mutual Relations,” “Philo,” “Moses Mendelssohn,” “Jewish Superstition.”
5. One wonders whether the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith would consider these remarks to be anti-Semitic. Remember, the B’nai B’rith was the creation of the pro-Confederate Jews led by Rabbi Isaac Wise, Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, and their ilk!

RECOMMENDED READING

- Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn, A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973).
- Max Grunwald, *Vienna* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1936).
- Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983).
- Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972).
- Revolution and Evolution in 1848 German-Jewish History*, ed. by Werner E. Moss (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981).
- Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1976).
- Eric Werner, *Mendelssohn, A New Image of the Composer and His Age* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1963).