

[<http://jewishencyclopedia.com>]

[germany_jewish-ency[1905].kwd]

GERMANY:

By : Executive Committee of the Editorial Board. M. Brann

ARTICLE HEADINGS:

Under Charlemagne.

Up to the Crusades.

After the Crusades.

Their Legal Status.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

Literature.

Separation from the World.

From Moses Mendelssohn to the Present Time (1750-1900):

Moses Mendelssohn.

Jewish Science.

Reorganization.

Religious Education.

Country of central Europe. The date of the first settlement of Jews in the regions called by the Romans "Germania Superior," "Germania Inferior," and "Germania Magna," and which, on the whole, are included in the present German empire, is not known. The first authentic document relating to a large and well-organized Jewish community in these regions, dates from 321, and refers to Cologne on the Rhine; it indicates that the legal status of the Jews there was the same as elsewhere in the Roman empire. They enjoyed full civic liberty, being restricted only in regard to the dissemination of their faith, the keeping of Christian slaves, and the holding of office under the government. But they were otherwise free to follow any occupation open to their fellow citizens. They were engaged in agriculture, trade, and industry, and only gradually took up money-lending. These conditions at first continued in the subsequently established Germanic kingdoms under the Burgundians and Franks, for ecclesiasticism took root here but slowly, and the Jews lived as peaceably with their new German lords as they had done formerly with the Roman provincials. The Merovingian rulers, also, who succeeded to the Burgundian empire, were devoid of fanaticism, and gave scant support to the efforts of the Church to restrict the civic and social status of the Jews.

Under Charlemagne.

Neither was Charlemagne, who readily made use of the Church for the purpose of infusing coherence into the loosely joined parts of his extensive empire, by any means a blind tool of the canonical law. He made use of the Jews so far as suited his diplomacy, sending, for instance, a Jew as interpreter and guide with his embassy to Harun al-Rashid. Yet even then a gradual change came into the life of the Jews. Unlike the Germans, who were liable to be called to arms at any moment in those troublous times, the Jews were exempt from military service; hence trade and commerce were left almost

entirely in their hands, and they secured the remunerative monopoly of money-lending when the Church forbade Christians to take usury. This decree caused the Jews to be everywhere sought as well as avoided, for their capital was indispensable while their business was viewed as disreputable. This curious combination of circumstances increased their influence. They went about the country freely, settling also in the eastern portions. Aside from Cologne, the earliest communities seem to have been established at Worms and Mayence.

Up to the Crusades

The status of the Jews remained unchanged under Charlemagne's weak successor, Ludwig the Pious. They were unrestricted in their commerce, merely paying into the state treasury a somewhat higher tax than did the Christians. A special officer, the "Judenmeister," was appointed by the government to protect their privileges. The later Carolingians, however, fell more and more in with the demands of the Church. The bishops, who were continually harping at the synods on the anti-Semitic decrees of the canonical law, finally brought it about that the ignorant and superstitious populace was filled with hatred against the unbelievers. This feeling, among both princes and people, was further stimulated by the attacks on the civic equality of the Jews. Beginning with the tenth century, Holy Week became more and more a period of persecution for them. Yet the Saxon emperors did not treat the Jews badly, exacting from them merely the taxes levied upon all other merchants. Although they were as ignorant as their contemporaries as regards secular studies, yet they could read and understand the Hebrew prayers, and the Bible in the original text. Halakic studies began to flourish about 1000. At that time R. Gershom b. Judah was teaching at Metz and Mayence, gathering about him pupils from far and near. He is described as a model of wisdom, humility, and piety, and is praised by all as a "lamp of the Exile" (). He first stimulated the German Jews to study the treasures of their national literature. This continuous study of the Torah and the Talmud produced such a devotion to their faith that the Jews considered life without their religion not worth living; but they did not realize this clearly until the time of the Crusades, when they were often compelled to choose between life and faith.

After the Crusades

The wild excitement to which the Germans had been driven by exhortations to take the cross firstbroke upon the Jews, the nearest representatives of an execrated opposition faith. Entire communities, like those of Treves, Speyer, Worms, Mayence, and Cologne, were slain, except where the slayers were anticipated by the deliberate self-destruction of their intended victims. About 12,000 Jews are said to have perished in the Rhenish cities alone between May and July, 1096 (see Crusades). These outbreaks of popular passion during the Crusades influenced the future status of the Jews. To salve their consciences the Christians brought accusations against the Jews to prove that they had deserved their fate; imputed crimes, like desecration of the host, ritual murder, poisoning of the wells, and treason, brought hundreds to the stake and drove thousands into exile. They were accused of having caused the inroads of the Mongols, although they suffered equally with the Christians from those savage hordes. When the Black Death swept over Europe in 1348-49, the Jews were accused of well-poisoning, and a general slaughter began throughout the Germanic and contiguous provinces (see Black Death).

Their Legal Status

Nevertheless, the legal and civic status of the Jews was undergoing a transformation. They found a certain degree of protection with the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, who claimed the right of possession and protection of all the Jews of the empire in virtue of being the successor of the emperor Titus, who was said to have acquired the Jews as his private property. The German emperors claimed this right of possession more for the sake of taxing the Jews than of protecting them. Ludwig the Bavarian especially exerted his ingenuity in devising new taxes. In 1342 he instituted the "golden sacrificial penny," and decreed that every year all the Jews should pay to the emperor one kreutzer in every gulden of their property in addition to the taxes they were paying to the state and municipal authorities.

The emperors of the house of Luxemburg devised still other means of taxation. They turned their prerogatives in regard to the Jews to further account by selling at a high price to the princes and free towns of the empire the valuable privilege of taxing and mulcting the Jews. On the reorganization of the empire in 1356, Charles IV., by the "Golden Bull," granted this privilege to the seven electors of the empire. From this time onward the Jews of Germany gradually passed in increasing numbers from the authority of the emperor to that of the lesser sovereigns and of the cities. For the sake of sorely needed revenue the Jews were now invited, with the promise of full protection, to return to those districts and cities from which they had shortly before been cruelly expelled; but as soon as they had acquired some property they were again plundered and driven away. These episodes thenceforth constituted the history of the German Jews. Emperor Wenceslaus was most expert in transferring to his own coffers gold from the pockets of rich Jews. He made compacts with many cities, estates, and princes whereby he annulled all outstanding debts to the Jews in return for a certain sum paid to him, adding that any one who should nevertheless help the Jews to collect their debts should be dealt with as a robber and peacebreaker, and be forced to make restitution. This decree, which for years injured the public credit, impoverished thousands of Jewish families during the close of the fourteenth century.

Nor did the fifteenth century bring any amelioration. What happened in the time of the Crusades happened again. The war upon the Hussite heretics became the signal for the slaughter of the unbelievers. The Jews of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia passed through all the terrors of death, forced baptism, or voluntary immolation for the sake of their faith. When the Hussites made peace with the Church the pope sent the Franciscan monk Capistrano to win the renegades back into the fold and inspire them with loathing for heresy and unbelief; forty-one martyrs were burned in Breslau alone, and all Jews were forever banished from Silesia. The Franciscan monk Bernhardinus brought a similar fate upon the communities in southern and western Germany. As a consequence of the fictitious confessions extracted under torture from the Jews of Trent, the populace of many cities, especially of Ratisbon, fell upon the Jews and massacred them.

The end of the fifteenth century, which brought a new epoch for the Christian world, brought no relief to the Jews. They remained the victims of a religious hatred that ascribed to them all possible evils.

When the established Church, threatened in its spiritual power in Germany and elsewhere, prepared for its conflict with the culture of the Renaissance, one of its most convenient points of attack was rabbinic literature. At this time, as once before in France, Jewish converts spread false reports in regard to the Talmud. But an advocate of the book arose in the person of John Reuchlin, the German humanist, who was the first one in Germany to include the Hebrew language among the humanities. His opinion, though bitterly attacked by the Dominicans and their followers, finally prevailed when the humanistic Pope Leo X. permitted the Talmud to be printed in Italy.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

(see image) A Schutzbrief of Theodor of Hesse, 1804. The feeling against the Jews themselves, however, remained the same. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were still subject to the will of the princes and the free cities, both in Catholic and in Protestant countries. The German emperors were not always able to protect them, even when they desired to do so, as did the chivalrous Emperor Maximilian I.; they could not prevent the accusations of ritual murder and of desecration of the host. The unending religious controversies that rent the empire and finally led to the Thirty Years' war further aggravated the position of the Jews, who were made the prey of each party in turn. The emperors even occasionally expelled their "Kammerknechte" from their crown lands, although they still assumed the office of protector. Ferdinand I. expelled the Jews from Lower Austria and Görz, and would have carried out his vow to banish them also from Bohemia had not the noble Mordecai Ema Cohen of Prague induced the pope to absolve the emperor from this vow. Emperor Leopold I. expelled them in 1670 from Vienna and the archduchy of Austria, in spite of their vested rights and the intercession of princes and ecclesiastics; the exiles were received in Brandenburg. The "Great Elector," Frederick William (1620-88), deciding to tolerate all religious beliefs impartially, protected his new subjects against oppression and slander. In spite of the civic and religious restrictions to which they were subjected even here, the Jews of this flourishing community gradually attained to a wider outlook, although their one-sided education, the result of centuries of oppression, still severed them entirely from European culture and kept them in intellectual bondage.

Literature

Fortunately, the Jews had kept their piety, their morality, and their intellectual activity. They were devoted to the study of the Halakah. In the eleventh century R. Gershom's pupils had been the teachers of Rashi, and his excellent commentaries on the Bible and Talmud marked out new paths for learning. The German Jews contributed much to the spread and completion of these commentaries. Beginning with the twelfth century they worked independently, especially in the fields of Haggadah and ethics. R. Simon ha-Darshan's "Yal u . ." (c. 1150), the "Book of the Pious" by R. Judah ha-sid of Ratisbon (c. 1200), the "Salve-Mixer" (Rokea) of R. Eleasar of Worms (c. 1200), the halakic collection "Or Zarua" of R. Isaac of Vienna (c. 1250), the responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg (d. 1293), are enduring monuments of German Jewish industry. Even the horrors of the Black Death could not completely destroy this literary activity. Profound and wide scholarship was less common after the middle of the fourteenth century, which led to the institution of allowing only those scholars to become rabbis who could produce a written authorization to teach ("hattarat hora'ah") issued by a recognized master. To this period of decline belong also a number of large collections of responsa

and of useful commentaries on earlier halakic works. The customs and ordinances relating to the form and order of worship were especially studied in this period, and were definitely fixed for the ritual of the synagogues of western and eastern Germany by Jacob Mölln (Maharil) and Isaac Tyrnau. As it was difficult to produce any new works in the field of the Halakah, and as the dry study of well-worn subjects no longer satisfied, scholars sought relief in the fantastic interpretations and subtle traditions embodied in the Cabala. There arose a new, ascetic view of life, that found literary expression in the "Shene Lu ot ha-Berit " by R. Isaiah Horovitz of Frankfort-on-the Main (d. 1626), and that appealed especially to the pietistic German Jews. The end and aim of existence were now sought in the aspiration of the soul toward its fountainhead, combined with the endeavor to saturate the earthly life with the spirit of God. By a continuous attitude of reverence to God, by lofty thoughts and actions, the Jew was to rise above the ordinary affairs of the day and become a worthy member of the kingdom of God. Every act of his life was to remind him of his religious duties and stimulate him to mystic contemplation.

Separation from the World

The oppressions under which the Jews suffered encouraged this austere view of life. They lived in fear in their Jews' streets, subsisting on what they could earn as pedlers and as dealers in old clothes. Cut off from all participation in public and municipal life, they had to seek in their homes compensation for the things denied them outside. Their family life was pure and intimate, beautified by faith, industry, and temperance. They were loyal to their community. In consequence of their complete segregation from their Christian fellow citizens, the German speech of the ghetto was increasingly interlarded with Hebraisms, and also with Slavonic elements since the seventeenth century, when the atrocities of Chmielnicki and his Tatars drove the Polish Jews back into western Germany. As the common people understood only the books written in this peculiar dialect and printed in Hebrew characters, a voluminous literature of edifying, devotional, and belletristic works sprang up in Judæo-German to satisfy the needs of these readers. Although this output was one-sided, presupposing almost no secular knowledge, its importance in the history of Jewish culture must not be underestimated. The study of Bible, Talmud, and halakic legal works, with their voluminous commentaries, preserved the plasticity of the Jewish mind, until a new Moses came to lead his coreligionists out of intellectual bondage toward modern culture.

From Moses Mendelssohn to the Present Time (1750-1900)

Moses Mendelssohn.

Moses Mendelssohn located with true insight the point of departure for the regeneration of Jewish life. The Middle Ages, which could take from the Jews neither their faith nor their various intellectual gifts, had yet deprived them of the chief means (namely, the vernacular) of comprehending the intellectual labors of others. The chasm that in consequence separated them from their educated fellow citizens was bridged by Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah into German. This book became the manual of the German Jews, teaching them to write and speak the German language, and preparing them for participation in German culture and secular science. Mendelssohn lived to see the first-fruits of his endeavors. In 1778 his friend David Friendänder founded the Jewish free school in Berlin, this being

the first Jewish educational institution in Germany in which the entire instruction, in Scripture as well as in general science, was carried on in German only. Similar schools were founded later in Breslau (1792), Seesen (1801), Frankfort-on-the-Main (1804), Wolfenbüttel (1807). Brody and Tarnopol (1815). In 1783 the periodical "Der Sammler" was issued with the view of providing general information for adults and of enabling them to express themselves in pure, harmonious German.

A youthful enthusiasm for new ideals at that time pervaded the entire civilized world; all religions were recognized as equally entitled to respect, and the champions of political freedom undertook to restore the Jews to their full rights as men and citizens. The humane German emperor Joseph II. was foremost in espousing these new ideals. As early as 1782 he issued the "Patent of Toleration for the Jews of Lower Austria," establishing thereby the civic equality of his Jewish subjects. Prussia conferred citizenship upon the Prussian Jews in 1812, though this by no means included full equality with other citizens. The German federal edicts of 1815 merely held out the prospect of full equality; but it was not realized at that time, and even the promises that had been given were modified. In Austria many laws restricting the trade and traffic of Jewish subjects remained in force down to the middle of the last century, in spite of the patent of toleration. Some of the crown lands, as Styria and Upper Austria, forbade any Jews to settle within their territory; in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia many cities were closed to them. They were, in addition, burdened with heavy taxes and imposts.

In Prussia, also, the government modified materially the promises made in the disastrous year 1813. The promised uniform regulation of Jewish affairs was time and again postponed. In the period between 1815 and 1847 there were no less than twenty-one territorial Jews' laws in the eight provinces of the Prussian state, of which each one had to be observed by a part of the Jews. There was at that time no official authorized to speak in the name of all German Jews. Nevertheless a few courageous men came forward to maintain their cause, foremost among them being Gabriel Riesser, a Jewish lawyer of Hamburg (d. 1863), who demanded full civic equality for his race from the German princes and peoples. He aroused public opinion to such an extent that this equality was granted in Prussia April 6, 1848; in Hanover and Nassau respectively Sept. 5 and Dec. 12 of the same year. In Württemberg equality was conceded Dec. 3, 1861; in Baden Oct. 4, 1862; in Holstein July 14, 1863; in Saxony Dec. 3, 1868. After the establishment of the North-German Confederation by the law of July 3, 1869, all existing restrictions imposed upon the followers of different religions were abolished; this decree was extended to all the provinces of the German empire after the events of 1870.

Jewish Science.

The intellectual development of the Jews kept pace with their civic enfranchisement. Recognizing that pursuit of modern culture would not at once assure them the civic status they desired, their leaders set themselves to reawaken Jewish self-consciousness by applying the methods of modern scholarship to the study of Jewish sources, and to stimulate the rising generation by familiarizing them with the intellectual treasures of their forefathers which had been accumulating for thousands of years; and at the same time they sought to rehabilitate Judaism in the eyes of the world. The leader of this new movement and the founder of modern Jewish science was Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), who united broad general scholarship with a thorough knowledge of the entire Jewish literature, and who,

with his contemporary Solomon Judah Löb Rapoport of Galicia (1790-1867), especially aroused their coreligionists in Germany, Austria, and Italy. The German scholars who cooperated in the work of these two men may be noted here. H. Arnheim wrote a scholarly manual of the Hebrew language; Julius Fürst and David Cassel compiled Hebrew dictionaries; Fürst and Bernhard Bär compiled concordances to the entire Bible; Adolf Heidenheimer and S. Bär edited correct Masoretic texts of the Bible, and S. Frensdorff subjected the history of the Masorah to a thoroughly scientific investigation; the Bible was translated into German under the direction of Zunz and Salomon; Ludwig Philippson, Solomon Hirscheimer, and Julius Fürst wrote complete Biblical commentaries; H. Grätz and S. R. Hirsch dealt with some of the Biblical books; Zacharias Frankel and Abraham Geiger investigated the Aramaic and Greek translations. Nor was the traditional law neglected. Jacob Levy compiled lexicographical works to the Talmud and Midrashim. Michael Sachs and Joseph Perles investigated the foreign elements found in the language of the Talmud. Numerous and, on the whole, excellent editions of the halakic and haggadic midrashim were issued—for instance, Zuckerman's edition of the Tosefta and Theodor's edition of Midrash Rabbah to Genesis. Zacharias Frankel wrote an introduction to the Mishnah and to the Jerusalem Talmud, and David Hoffmann and Israel Lewy investigated the origin and development of the Halakah.

Religio-philosophical literature was also assiduously cultivated, and the original Arabic texts of Jewish religious philosophers were made accessible. H. Landauer issued Saadia's works, and H. Hirschfeld the works of Judah ha-Levi. M. Joel and I. Guttmann investigated the works of the Jewish thinkers and their influence on the general development of philosophy, while S. Hirsch attempted to develop the philosophy of religion along the lines laid down by Hegel, and Solomon Steinheim propounded a new theory of revelation in accordance with the system of the Synagogue.

The extensive field of Jewish history was cultivated still more enthusiastically—by I. M. Jost, David Cassel, L. Landshuth, L. Herzfeld, A. Berliner, and, foremost among them all, H. Grätz. His large work in twelve volumes, covering the 3,000 years of Jewish history down to recent times, is considered the most brilliant product of modern Jewish scholarship. Moritz Steinschneider has written a history of Jewish literature, and has issued catalogues of the most famous collections of Hebrew manuscripts and books, while single epochs of Jewish history and literature have been treated by numerous scholars.

Reorganization

The enfranchisement of the Jews and the reflorescence of Jewish science led to a reorganization of their institutions with a view to transmitting the ancient traditions intact to the new generations. Opinions differed widely as to the best methods of accomplishing this object. While Geiger and Holdheim were ready to meet the modern spirit of liberalism, Samson Raphael Hirsch defended the customs handed down by the fathers. And as neither of these two tendencies was followed by the mass of the faithful, Zacharias Frankel initiated a moderate Reform movement on a historical basis, in agreement with which the larger German communities reorganized their public worship by reducing the medieval payyehanic additions to the prayers, introducing congregational singing and regular sermons, and requiring scientifically trained rabbis.

Religious Education.

It was easier to agree upon the means of training children for the Reformed worship and of awakening the interest of adults in Jewish affairs in general. The religious schools were an outcome of the desire to add religious instruction to the secular education of the Jewish children prescribed by the state. As the Talmudic schools, still existing in Germany in the first third of the nineteenth century, were gradually deserted, rabbinical seminaries were founded, in which Talmudic instruction followed the methods introduced by Zacharias Frankel in the Jewish Theological Seminary opened at Breslau in 1854. Since then special attention has been devoted to religious literature. Text-books on religion and on Biblical and Jewish history, as well as aids to the translation and explanation of the Bible and the prayer-books, were compiled to meet the demands of modern pedagogics. Pulpit oratory began to flourish as never before, foremost among the great German preachers being M. Sachs and M. Joël. Nor was synagogal music neglected, Levandowsky especially contributing to its development.

The public institutions of the Jewish communities serve to supplement the work of teachers and leaders, and to promote Jewish solidarity. This is the primary object of the Jewish press, created by Ludwig Philippson. In 1837 he founded the "Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums," which has been followed by a number of similar periodicals. They have succeeded in preserving a certain unity of religious opinion and conviction among the Jews, with the gratifying result of unity of action for the common good. Societies for the cultivation of Jewish literature were founded, as well as associations of teachers, rabbis, and leaders of congregations.

*See also separate articles on the various kingdoms and cities of Germany.*E. C. M. Br.