

What might be the reasons that induced the governments of almost all European states unanimously to deal so harshly with the Jewish nation? What has induced them (even the wisest) to make this one exception from the laws of an otherwise enlightened policy according to which all citizens should be incited by uniform justice, support of trade and the greatest possible freedom of action so as to contribute to the general welfare? Should a number of industrious and law-abiding citizens be less useful to the state because they stem from Asia and differ from others by beard, circumcision, and a special way—transmitted to them from their ancient forefathers—of worshipping the Supreme Being? This latter would certainly disqualify them from full rights of citizenship, and justify all restriction measures, if it contained principles which would keep the Jews from fulfilling their duties to the state, and from keeping faith in their actions within the community and with single members of the community; and if hatred against those who do not belong to their faith would make them feel an obligation to deal crookedly with others and to disregard their rights.

It would have to be clearly proved that the religion of the Jews contains such antisocial principles, that their divine laws are contrary to the laws of justice and charity, if one were to justify before the eyes of reason that the rights of citizenship should be withheld entirely only from the Jew, and that he should be permitted only partially to enjoy the rights of man. According to what has become known about the Jewish religion so far, it does not contain such harmful principles.

JOHANN DAVID MICHAELIS<sup>1</sup>

## 10. Arguments Against Dohm

1783

Herr Dohm admits candidly that the Jewish brain is more harmful and more corrupted than that of other Europeans, an admission which several defenders of the Jews were hitherto unwilling to make. He seeks the reason for this, however, in the condition in which the Jew lives, reviled, oppressed, and forced to support himself almost exclusively from trade. Herr Dohm has probably no idea to what extent I agree with him in this matter; I wrote exactly the same thing thirty years ago in a piece in the *Goettingische gelehrte Anzeigen*. I would like to express my opinion as it was then and as it still is today. Mine goes one step further, however, than does that of Herr Dohm in that it takes account of the deceitfulness of the Jews.

We can see, principally from reports of investigations of thieves, that the Jews are more harmful than at least we Germans are. Almost half of those belonging to gangs of thieves, at least those of whose existence is known to us, are Jews, while the Jews are scarcely 1/25th of the total population of Germany. If this 1/25th part supplies the same number of riff-raff as the whole German people, or even more, then one must conclude that at least in respect to thievery, which I consider to be the lowest of vices, the Jews are twenty-five times as harmful or more than the other inhabitants of Germany.

THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

5. The Emancipation of the Jews of France (September 28, 1791)<sup>1</sup>

The National Assembly, considering that the conditions requisite to be a French citizen, and to become an active citizen, are fixed by the constitution, and that every man who, being duly qualified, takes the civic oath, and engages to fulfil all the duties prescribed by the constitution, has a right to all the advantages it insures;

Annuls all adjournments, restrictions, and exceptions, contained in the preceding decrees, affecting individuals of the Jewish persuasion, who shall take the civic oath, which shall be considered as a renunciation of all privileges in their favor.<sup>2</sup>

... A powerful, hostilely disposed nation is infiltrating almost every country in Europe. This nation is in a state of perpetual war with all these countries, severely afflicting their citizenry. I am referring to the Jewish Nation [*das Judentum*]. I believe, and hope to demonstrate subsequently, that the Jewish Nation is so dreadful not because it is isolated and closely-knit, but rather because it is founded on the hatred of mankind. It is a people whose most humble member elevates his ancestors higher than we exalt our entire history. Jewry sees as its ancestor a patriarch older than itself—a legend we ourselves have incorporated into our creed. It perceives all peoples as the descendants of those it drove out of its fervently loved fatherland. It condemned itself and is condemned to petty trade, which debilitates the body and deadens any tendency for noble feelings. The Jewish nation excluded itself from our meals, from our festive toasts, and from sweet, heart-to-heart exchanges of happiness with us by the most binding element of mankind—religion. It separates itself from all others in its duties and rights, from here until

eternity. One would expect something different from such a people than what we see, namely, that in a state where the absolute monarch may not take away my ancestral dwelling and where I retain my rights before the all-powerful minister, the first Jew whom it so pleases pillages that which is mine and goes unpunished. You see all this; it cannot be denied. Yet, you speak sugar-sweet words about toleration and human rights and civic rights, by which you infringe upon our basic human rights. Your loving toleration of those who do not believe in Jesus Christ [expressed] by all the titles, honors and high positions you grant [the Jews], brings no satisfaction, for you are openly denouncing those who believe in Christ just as you do, depriving them of their civic honor and their honestly earned bread. Does this not recall to you the notion of a state within a state? Does the obvious idea not occur to you, that the Jews alone are citizens of a state which is more secure and powerful than any of yours? If you also give them civic rights in your states, will not your other citizens be completely trod under foot?\*

## THEODOR FRITSCH

19. The Racists' Decalogue<sup>1</sup>

1888

1. Be proud of being a German and strive earnestly and steadily to practice the inherited virtues of our people, courage, faithfulness and veracity, and to inspire and develop these in thy children.

2. Thou shalt know that thou, together with all thy fellow Germans, regardless of faith or creed, hast a common implacable foe. His name is Jew.

3. Thou shalt keep thy blood pure. Consider it a crime to soil the noble Aryan breed of thy people by mingling it with the Jewish breed. For thou must know that Jewish blood is everlasting, putting the Jewish stamp on body and soul unto the farthest generations.

4. Thou shalt be helpful to thy fellow German and further him in all matters not counter to the German conscience, the more so if he be pressed by the Jew. Thou shalt at once take into court any offense or crime committed by the Jew in deed, word or letter, that comes to thy knowledge, lest the Jew abuse the laws of our country with impunity.

5. Thou shalt have no social intercourse with the Jew. Avoid all contact and community with the Jew and keep him away from thyself and thy family, especially thy daughters, lest they suffer injury of body and soul.

6. Thou shalt have no business relations with the Jews. Never choose a Jew as a business partner, nor borrow nor buy from him, and keep your wife, too, from doing so. Thou shalt sell nothing to him, nor use him as an agent in thy transactions, that thou mayest remain free and not become slave unto the Jew nor help to increase his money, which is the power by which he enslaves our people.

7. Thou shalt drive the Jew from thy own breast and take no example from Jewish tricks and Jewish wiles, for thou shalt never match the Jew in trickery but forfeit thy honor and earn the contempt of thy fellow Germans and the punishment of the courts.

8. Thou shalt not entrust thy rights to a Jewish lawyer, nor thy body to a Jewish physician, nor thy children to a Jewish teacher lest thy honor, body and soul suffer harm.

9. Thou shalt not lend ear nor give credence to the Jew. Keep away all Jewish writings from thy German home and hearth lest their lingering poison may unnerve and corrupt thyself and thy family.

10. Thou shalt use no violence against the Jews because it is unworthy of thee and against the law. But if a Jew attack thee, ward off his Semitic insolence with German wrath.

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## ABRAHAM MENDELSSOHN

### 5. Why I Have Raised You as a Christian: A Letter to His Daughter<sup>1</sup>

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My dear Daughter,

You have taken an important step, and in sending you my best wishes for the day and for your future happiness, I have it at heart to speak seriously to you on subjects hitherto not touched upon.

Does God exist? What is God? Is He a part of ourselves, and does He continue to live after the other part has ceased to be? And where? And how? All this I do not know, and therefore I have never taught you anything about it. But I know that there exists in me and in you and in all human beings an everlasting inclination towards all that is good, true, and right, and a conscience which warns and guides us when we go astray. I know it, I believe it, I live in this faith, and this is my religion. This I could not teach you, and nobody can learn it; but everybody has it who does not intentionally and knowingly cast it away. The example of your mother, the best and noblest of mothers, whose whole life is devotion, love and charity, is like a bond to me that you will not cast it away. You have grown up under her guidance, ever intuitively receiving and adopting what alone gives real worth to mankind. Your mother

has been, and is, and I trust will long remain to you, to your sister and brothers, and to all of us, a providential leading star on our path of life. When you look at her and turn over in your thoughts all the immeasurable good she has lavished upon you by her constant self-sacrificing devotion as long as you live, and when that reflection makes your heart and eyes overflow with gratitude, love, and veneration, then you feel God and are godly.

This is all I can tell you about religion, all I know about it; but this will remain true, as long as one man will exist in the creation, as it has been true since the first man was created.

The outward form of religion your teacher has given you is historical, and changeable like all human ordinances. Some thousands of years ago the Jewish form was the reigning one, then the heathen form, and now it is the Christian. We, your mother and I, were born and brought up by our parents as Jews, and without being obliged to change the form of our religion have been able to follow the divine instinct in us and in our conscience. We have educated you and your brothers and sister in the Christian faith, because it is the creed of most civilized people, and contains

nothing that can lead you away from what is good, and much that guides you to love, obedience, tolerance, and resignation, even if it offered nothing but the example of its Founder, understood by so few, and followed by still fewer.

By pronouncing your confession of faith you have fulfilled the claims of *society* on you, and obtained the *name* of a Christian. Now *be* what your duty as a human being demands of you, *true, faithful, good, obedient and devoted* till death to your mother, and I may also say to your father, unremittingly attentive to the voice of your conscience, which may be suppressed but never silenced, and you will gain the highest happiness that is to be found on earth, harmony and contentedness with yourself.

I embrace you with fatherly tenderness, and hope always to find in you a daughter worthy of your, of our, mother. Farewell, and remember my words.

#### NOTE

1. Abraham Mendelssohn (1776-1835), son of Moses Mendelssohn. A deist and a rationalist by conviction, Abraham brought up his children—Fanny and Felix—as Protestants in order to improve their social opportunities. In 1822 he and his wife also embraced Christianity “because it is the religious form acceptable to the majority of civilized human beings.” He wrote this letter to his daughter Fanny (1805-1847) upon her confirmation into the Lutheran church.

Source: Abraham Mendelssohn to Fanny Mendelssohn, c. July 1820, in S. Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847): From Letters and Journals*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. C. Klingemann (New York, 1882), vol. 1, pp. 79-80.

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## HEINRICH HEINE<sup>1</sup>

### 6. A Ticket of Admission to European Culture

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From the nature of my thinking you can deduce that baptism is a matter of indifference to me, that I do not regard it as important even symbolically, and that in the circumstances in which it will be carried out in my case it will have little significance for others likewise. For me perhaps its significance will be that I can better devote myself to championing the rights of my unfortunate brethren. And yet I hold it beneath my dignity and a stain on my honor to undergo conversion in order to obtain a position in Prussia. Dear old Prussia! I really do not know what course to take in this bad situation. I'll turn Catholic yet for spite, and hang

myself. . . . We are living in sad times. Scoundrels become our “best,” and the best must turn scoundrel. I understand well the words of the psalmist: “Lord, give us our daily bread, that we blaspheme not Thy name. . . .”

The baptismal certificate is the ticket of admission to European culture. . . .

My becoming a Christian is the fault of those Saxons who suddenly changed saddles at Leipzig,<sup>2</sup> or of Napoleon, who really did not have to go to Russia, or of his teacher of geography at Brienne, who did not tell him that Moscow winters are very cold.

Source: Hugo Bieber, *Heinrich Heine: A Biographical Anthology*, trans. M. Hadas (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), pp. 157, 196. Reprinted by permission of the Jewish Publication Society of America.

23. To America or to the Land of Israel<sup>1</sup>

... It is clear that if there were no other proposal for saving tens of thousands of our people could be reborn and fulfill their destiny, then it would be easier to reconcile ourselves to a thousand sacrifices and to the European spiritual abominations in order to live in tranquility without fear of the wrath of tyrants who threaten to disperse and destroy us, without fear that at any moment our lives and property may be pillaged and plundered. But before us lies the prospect of deliverance from evil and national rebirth in the land of America. The intelligent man will, therefore, choose this path, arguing that... although the ancient memories of our souls are not bound up with the American soil, it is nonetheless a suitable land in which to raise up the remnants of Israel, for it is a country settled by enlightened peoples of culture and civilized behavior. Further, there the Jews, unconstrained by the commandments enjoined upon them concerning their own soil, would be able to lead a good life. And America has a further advantage in connection with the rebirth of our nation and that is: In the Holy Land our dream would be far from realized; there we would be slaves to the Sultan and the Pashas; there, as here, we would bear a heavy burden in the midst of a wild desert people, sustaining ourselves with the distant hope that if our numbers increase sufficiently we might perhaps, after many years, become another small principality that will, finally, in some ultimate utopia, ... achieve its destiny. But in America our dream

brothers from their hard and bitter sufferings, if there were no other way in which our is closer to fulfillment, for the constitution of that country provides that when the number of colonists reaches sixty thousand they have the right to establish a separate state with a governor, ministers, and a constitution, and to determine their own laws, and our hope of attaining our independence and leading our lives in accordance with our beliefs and inclinations would not be long deferred.

Kindly note, my friend, that I speak not only of the advantages in regard to spiritual rebirth; I have not mentioned the material advantages of America, as they are obvious and require no proof. ... Our brethren beg for relief from oppression. ... They must find a safe haven. Our rich and generous must... rescue the lost flock of Israel from the dwellings of lions. ... Let [the rich] find any place which suits them if only they save our wretched brethren.

The eloquence of the Bible, the piteous spectacle of the bereaved daughter of Zion, the emotion aroused by our ancient memories, all these speak for the Land of Israel. The good life recommends America. You know, my friend, that many will yearn for the Holy Land, and I know that even more will stream to America. Let there be no quarrel! Let the writers sharpen their pens, but in the meantime the generous must rise up to rescue their oppressed and persecuted brethren in any way they may choose.

NOTE

1. Judah Leib Levin (acronym, *Yehalel*, 1844-1925). Hebrew poet and socialist, he assisted Aaron S. Liebermann in the publication of *Ha-Emet*. His poems were the first to introduce socialist themes into Hebrew literature. After the pogroms of 1881 he despaired of a solution to the Jewish problem in Russia and advocated emigration to the United States. He presented his position in a letter to David Gordon (1831-1886), editor of the Hebrew weekly *Ha-Maggid* (which was at the time published in Lyck, East Prussia). Excerpts of the letter are presented here. Soon after writing this letter Levin joined the Hovevei Zion in his native Kiev

and became a fervent supporter of emigration to Palestine.