OLD AND NEW ORDERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN MODERN JEWISH HISTORY

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Considering the many attempts to define what constitutes knowledge, and especially those to distinguish it from belief, one gets the impression that religious knowledge is a contradiction in terms or at least a curiosity. The fact that religion, which necessarily implies religious knowledge, is based on self-evident convictions — on the belief in an entity often described as all knowing — contradicts the rationality usually ascribed to knowledge. From a historical perspective this assumption has to be challenged, however. For not only were conceptions of rationality and religion subject to change and continue to be so, but religious movements time and again claimed to be rational in essence.

Religion describes a specific context of knowledge where what can be considered knowledge, what becomes visible, and what remains hidden is constantly renegotiated. As a subject of historical research, religious knowledge not only facilitates insight into the social and cultural dimensions of religion and religiosity, but also allows for inferences on the interplay between religion and politics, community and society. When considering the European Sattelzeit — roughly speaking the period between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries — one focuses on an epoch in which knowledge, knowledge production, and knowledge transfer as well as religion and religiosity were undergoing a particularly dramatic change.

This article examines religious knowledge from the perspective of Jewish history, which in this instance is understood as a paradigmatic approach to the changes in religion and knowledge that occurred since the middle of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, modern German-Jewish history and the question of the meaning of religious knowledge refer to the debates about the legal and social status of the Jews, about emancipation and civic amelioration, themselves embedded in the broader historical processes of individualization and pluralization, secularization, and the emergence of the modern nation state. On the other hand, the transformation of Jewish culture was the product of internal changes that were inseparable from the

external circumstances of Jewish life yet based on specific preconditions, and thus it necessarily has to be considered as a topic in its own right.4

Taking a history of knowledge approach and using the history of German-speaking Jewry as an example, this article investigates the mutability and adaptability of religion and religious knowledge. What meaning is ascribed to religious knowledge as orientational and instructional knowledge? Knowledge, including Jewish knowledge, is constantly in flux and subject to reinterpretation, innovation, and adaption in accordance with current social, political, and cultural circumstances. The wide-ranging socio-cultural changes occurring during the Sattelzeit created entirely new challenges for German-speaking Jewry, altering the systems of reference for determining Jewish knowledge and Jewish orders of knowledge. Therefore it will be necessary to investigate to what degree concepts of knowledge and knowledge production innate to Judaism were applied. To what extent was Jewish knowledge as religious knowledge based on new patterns of thought and interpretation and on new forms of ordering and structuring knowledge? Particular attention will be paid to religious education, which will be discussed on the basis of Jewish textbooks for religious instruction.

I. Jewish Knowledge within the Boundaries of Torah

The Bible obligates Jews to study the Torah, to practice Talmud Torah,5 which, simply put, means the elevation of knowledge and insight to the precondition of true faith and religiosity.6 Torah is a complex term that stands for the law revealed by God, yet it can also be translated as “teaching.” In a narrow sense, Torah means the five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) as written record of the revelation to Moses, the most important part of Holy Scripture.7 In rabbinical Judaism Torah as divine law is based on the dual revelation of the written Torah (torah she-bikhtav), meaning the Pentateuch, and the oral Torah (torah she be-al peh), the interpretation of the biblical text. Oral teaching in the form of Mishnah (commentary on the written Torah) and Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah) constitutes the Talmud and has been recorded in writing between the second and fifth centuries CE.8 Torah study as the essential religious practice of rabbinical Judaism demands active engagement with the text. The text is continuously updated through interpretation and commentary. As a distinctive system of knowledge9 the continuous engagement with the Torah represents the foundation of Jewish law referred to

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5 Talmud here simply means study.

6 For example: Joshua 1:8: “Let not this book of the Teaching [Torah] cease from your lips, but recite it day and night, so that you may observe faithfully all that is written in it.” All quotations from the Bible are taken from the English-Hebrew edition published by the Jewish Publication Society (1985).

7 And of the Hebrew Bible or Tanak, the acronym for Torah, Nevi’im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).

8 There are two versions of the Talmud, a Babylonian and a Jerusalem (or Palestinian) Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is the authoritative version.

9 Hannah E. Hashkes, Rabbinic Discourse as a System of Knowledge: “The Study of Torah is Equal to them All” (Leiden, 2015), 38.
as Halakhah, a normative order determining Judaism’s religious and social constitution. Halakhah contains the 613 commandments (mitzvot), which include the Ten Commandments, as well as regulations regarding religious customs. The continuous process of interpretation and commentary of the Torah and thus Halakhah enables their specification according to current political and social circumstances. Therefore textual interpretation and reasoning are methods of knowledge production inherent to Judaism.10

Torah study as a focus of (male) religious practice was essentially based on knowledge of the Hebrew language, of Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud as well as religious ritual and practice. At the advanced level this included the knowledge of Aramaic and specific rules of interpretation. While the acquisition of non-Jewish knowledge was quite controversial, it was also of central significance, which becomes evident not only in the rich history of Jewish philosophy, but also in numerous works published on medicine, astronomy, and mathematics.11 Non-Jewish knowledge was invariably subordinated to Torah in the sense of an encompassing and self-evident Jewish knowledge system, however. Attempts to formulate the fundamental principles of Judaism in the form of articles of faith serve to illustrate this point. The first of these attempts occurred in the tenth century among Sephardic Jews. However, systematic formulations of Jewish articles of faith never gained a status comparable to Christian dogma.12 Their specific wording took its lead from formulations of the Islamic creed. Possibly the best known articles of Jewish faith were compiled by Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1138-1204), also called Maimonides or RaMBaM, the most important medieval Jewish thinker. His Thirteen Principles13 include the belief in the one God — absolute, omniscient, and non-corporeal — the belief in the revelation of the written and oral Torah, the belief in divine justice (reward and punishment), and the belief in the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead. These fundamental principles were meant to lead those lacking the opportunity and capability to fulfill the obligation of in-depth Torah study to the right understanding in the sense of an orientational knowledge. While Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles were controversial, they became widely known in Ashkenaz (i.e. the Franco-German lands) in the form of the hymn Yigdal and the prayer Ani Ma’amín. By the late fourteenth century, both of these later poetic compositions were incorporated into the prayer book, the Siddur, thus becoming an integral part of religious practice.14


12 On the medieval debates, see Menachem Kellner, Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel (Oxford, 1986).

13 Described in the introduction to his commentary on the Mishnah (c. 1168), Traktat Sanhedrin, Perek Helek. See A Maimonides Reader, ed. Isadore Twerisky (New York, 1972), 401–423.

Torah study as the ideal of Jewish learning and teaching underwent repeated adaptation and change. In late medieval Ashkenaz the method of *pilpul*, which prioritized legal and conceptual differentiation of halakhic questions based on logic and detailed disputation, grew in significance. This eventually led to the curriculum being narrowed down to the Talmud, and consequently in-depth study of Holy Scripture and the Hebrew language became less important. Since the sixteenth century this development had repeatedly been the subject of criticism. However, wide-ranging changes only occurred in the late eighteenth century, mainly brought about by the *maskilim*.

The dominance of Talmud and *pilpul* originated with a school of medieval Talmudic scholars, the so-called Tosafists, and it was aided by the increasingly precarious socioeconomic and political position of the Ashkenazi communities as well as by a major innovation in cultural history, namely the invention of book printing with moveable type. The Talmud had already begun to gain more attention prior to it, and in the course of the sixteenth century this was further advanced by easier access to and distribution of the relevant texts.

Book printing also caused a change in the materiality and order of Jewish knowledge. The first Talmudic tractates printed in moveable type were based on a new composition of the text, which for the first time included not only the Mishnah and Gemara, but also a selection of medieval rabbinical commentaries. Daniel Bomberg’s print of the complete Babylonian Talmud (1520–1523) continued this innovative composition and included the commentary by Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040–1105) as well as the *Tosafot*. Bomberg created the first standardized edition that would become the model for printing the Talmud still in use today.

The biblical obligation to Torah study included the duty to instruct one’s children, specifically one’s sons. This duty fell to the father, who could either take on the task himself or engage a tutor, a so-called *Melamed*. In medieval Ashkenaz the employment of *Melamdim* was common practice. They instructed children aged five to thirteen, often in their parlor, the *Heder*, which could take on the character of an informal private school when several children were instructed together. Community schools for elementary education often did not


17 Apart from the Talmud, this especially applied to Josef Caro’s (1488–1575) *Schulkhan Arukh*, an influential codex commenting on Halakah.


19 Deuteronomy 11:19: “... and teach them [God’s words] to your children — reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.”
develop in Ashkenaz until the early eighteenth century, when they emerged in the form of charity schools, so-called Talmud-Torah schools. They institutionalized charitable support for the religious instruction of the poor. As formal institutions, they became widespread especially in major central European communities in the following 200 years.

A predominantly male practice, Torah study generally remained prohibited for girls and women well into the modern age. There was instruction for girls, however. Depending on their social status and local customs, they received private instruction, attended a Heder, and began learning in the eighteenth century, Jewish private schools or the first community schools. While they did indeed acquire knowledge about the Torah this way, the religious knowledge of girls and women was mainly restricted to familiarity with religious practice, prayers and rituals, and Halakhic norms relevant to everyday life such as Kashrut (dietary laws) and marital rules.

The invention of book printing not only changed the format of the Talmud and facilitated access to it, but it also lent an entirely new dynamic to knowledge about the Torah and Holy Scripture. Printed Bible editions and Bible adaptions, which had steadily gained significance since the sixteenth century, facilitated access to the Torah and changed practices of Torah study. In Ashkenazi Judaism the first Talmud-Torah societies and schools were founded in the mid-sixteenth century in Sephardic communities in Italy.

20 Ephraim Kanarfogel, Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages (Detroit, 1992).
22 Daughters of important rabbis sometimes acquired in-depth knowledge of the Torah. Fishman, Becoming the People of the Talmud, 104-106. Ilan Fuchs, Jewish Women’s Torah Study: Orthodox Religious Education and Modernity (London/New York, 2014).
24 Including the rabbinic Bible (Mikraot Gedolot), which included further explanations and commentaries by rabbinic authorities.
so-called women’s Bible Ze’enah u-Re’enah, short: Tsene-rene, plays a particularly important role. Presumably written around the turn of the sixteenth century by Yaakov ben Yitzchak Ashkenazi from Janów, Poland (1550–1620), Tsene-rene contains the five Books of Moses in accordance with the weekly Torah portion as well as other books from the Hebrew Bible printed both in the Hebrew original and in Yiddish translation with annotations. Originally not exclusively addressed to women, Tsene-rene was initially widely distributed in central Europe and by the early nineteenth century had begun playing a significant role in the religious practice of Jewish women primarily in eastern Europe.

As shown above, Jewish knowledge had been subject to constant change well before the modern age. Change, and especially the incorporation of non-Jewish influences, was by no means unusual and essentially the result of inward acculturation. According to Ivan G. Marcus, this term best describes a dialectic process in the form of innovation and conservative response by which pre-emancipation Jewry reacted to contemporary challenges. In the end the changes resulting from it never broke with the integrity of Judaism’s social and cultural order as it remained firmly grounded in the Torah.

II. Jewish and Religious Knowledge in the Modern Age

As we have seen, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries central European Jews found themselves confronted with an entirely new dimension of sociocultural transformation. This transformation formed the basis for the idea of the modern nation state and for an ultimately labored process of emancipation, which invalidated previously existing provisions for Jewish autonomy. This, in turn, weakened further traditional power structures within the Jewish community, contributed to a change of elites and subsequently promoted the Jewish Enlightenment movement, the Haskalah, which formulated wide-ranging ideas for reform and sought to realize them in specific projects. The critical discussion of Jewish education and Jewish learning among the proponents of Jewish Enlightenment (Maskilim) led to a reevaluation of what should be considered Jewish knowledge while raising the question what the relationship between this knowledge and non-Jewish knowledge, especially novel scholarly knowledge based on universality and rationality, should be. The change in Jewish knowledge and Jewish orders of knowledge resulting from it will be discussed in the following section.
It was not just the Haskalah which considered education, scholarship, and learning key to a modernization of Judaism, for these issues also dominated debates on the emancipation of the Jews and discussions within the Jewish community about the possibility and limits of modernization. The latter resulted in an intense and controversial debate on religious reforms — changes in religious practice such as sermons in German and new prayer books — and the question of the binding force of Jewish law. In the mid-nineteenth century, these debates eventually led to a differentiation of German-speaking Jewry into three main orientations — Liberal, Conservative, and Neo-Orthodox Judaism. The Wissenschaft des Judentums played an important role in this process and further developed the ideas of the Haskalah at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was to fundamentally alter the principles and content of Jewish modes of study by incorporating the principles of modern philology and critical historical thought. Although this scholarly movement increasingly developed into a highly specialized discipline in the course of the nineteenth century, it remained closely tied to the wide-ranging efforts to create a modern Judaism. This became evident in the growing importance of scholarship-based lines of argument, especially those based on historical knowledge, in debates on the modernization and reform of religious practice. The significance of history as a “pattern of interpretation for the modern age” was thus brought to bear on German-speaking Jewry’s active striving for emancipation.

Most protagonists in the debate on religious reform were affiliated with Wissenschaft des Judentums and relied significantly on historical research and textual criticism to legitimize new interpretations of Judaism and its religious practices. It is important to note that these protagonists often fulfilled several functions at the same time, i.e. they were both scholars and rabbis, pedagogues and intellectuals. The interlacing of the debate on religious reform and that on the development of modern Jewish scholarship created a complex process of negotiating the relationship between scholarship and Judaism, in which the boundaries between a consequent historicizing


33 With regard to the introduction of sermons in German, for example. In 1822 the Prussian government, lobbied by traditionalist circles and out of fear of radical reforms, prohibited sermons in German in synagogues. This prompted Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), founder of Wissenschaft des Judentums, to publish his study Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwiekelt (Berlin, 1832), which showed that sermons in the local language had already been common practice in antiquity.

34 Gotzmann, Eigenheit und Einheit.

35 One example for this are Zacharias Frankel’s (1801-1875) opinions on the defamatory oath More Judaica [Jewish oath], which were based on legal history. They contributed significantly to its repeal in Saxony (1839) and later in Prussia (1861). On Frankel see Andreas Brämer, Rabbiner Zacharias Frankel: Wissenschaft des Judentums und konservative Reform im 19. Jahrhundert (Hildesheim, 2000).
of Judaism and its sources and religious interpretation were drawn in widely differing ways.\textsuperscript{36} Especially the question to what extent the Bible and rabbinical literature could become the subject of historical-critical scholarship remained controversial and eventually resulted in a fragmentation of \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} along the lines of the religious movements emerging at the same time.\textsuperscript{37} This rather theological understanding of \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} began to gain significance in the 1830s and 1840s and was reinforced by rabbinical seminaries, which became the main places of the production of scholarly knowledge on Jewish history, philosophy, and literature.\textsuperscript{38}

Jewish education played a crucial role in the process of emancipation as well as in efforts to define a modern Judaism. The \textit{maskilim} were the first to found reformed schools, so-called \textit{Freischulen} [free schools], and they created new curricula and educational materials for teaching Jewish (religious) knowledge in schools, families, and the community. Subsequent reformers, pedagogues, rabbis, and scholars continued and further developed these ideas. In addition, the efforts to modernize the Jewish education system were shaped both by the gradual adaption and internalization of the emerging modern understanding of \textit{Bildung} and by a governmental emancipation policy that ascribed particular significance to the question of education. It was part of the state’s overall increasing interest in the education and learning of its subjects, which was embedded in broader government reforms carried out in many central European states since the late eighteenth century. In their attempts to create a useful citizen, states expanded their influence on schools and universities. \textit{Usefulness} and \textit{morality} were key terms in the contemporary debate on education as well as in the discussion of the emancipation of the Jews.\textsuperscript{39}

Jewish education underwent some dramatic changes in the course of the nineteenth century. These were the result of new official regulation for Jewish schools and school attendance of Jewish children, Jewish efforts to reform the structure and content of Jewish education, and the growing interest of Jewish parents in the secular education of their children. By the mid-nineteenth century the majority of Jewish children, boys and girls, attended public, mostly non-Jewish schools and received additional religious instruction in the community. Only a few of the reformed schools proved successful in the long term, most of them were converted into interdenominational schools. Only Orthodox Judaism went on to create an independent system of Jewish schools.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} On the public dimension of this process of negotiation, see Kerstin von der Krone, \textit{Wissenschaft in Öffentlichkeit: Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und ihre Zeitschriften} (Berlin, 2012).


\textsuperscript{38} The founder of \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums}, Leopold Zunz, was critical of this theological understanding and preferred (a secular) philology. Meyer, “Two Persistent Tensions.”


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.; Breuer, \textit{Modernity within Tradition}, 91–116.
The development of modern Jewish religious education prompted by this process of transformation raised the question which existing knowledge on Judaism and Jewish religion was to be considered essential and therefore an indispensable part of religious education both in and outside of school. Jewish textbooks for religious instruction attempted to define this essential knowledge and order it systematically. They were not the only media available for religious education — biblical anthologies, school Bibles, and hymnal books were also published. Yet the textbooks and their authors in particular laid claim to providing an authoritative account of the principles and foundations of Judaism. In the course of the nineteenth century, more than 100 textbooks for Jewish religious education were published.41 Many publications dating from the first half of the century employed the question and answer pattern common in catechisms, thus taking their lead from the main teaching method of Christian religious education.42

The demand for a systematically ordered textbook explaining the foundations of Judaism for the purpose of religious education was first voiced as part of the Josephinian reforms of 1781-1782 in the Habsburg Empire. Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725-1805) echoed this demand in his influential treatise on education *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Words of Peace and Truth)43 and essentially demanded two textbooks: a textbook containing the “basic principles of the Jewish religion every Jew had to uphold” and a “textbook on morals” teaching moral virtues.44 It was based on Wessely’s distinction between the *teachings of man* and the *teachings of God*. *Words of Peace and Truth* represents one of the most influential maskilic responses to educational aspects of the emancipation process and essentially anticipates central characteristics shaping the debates on the content and form of Jewish education and learning in the course of the nineteenth century: the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish knowledge as well as between *useful* and *essential* knowledge and the resulting demand for curricula to be adjusted accordingly. This also implied the differentiation of requirements with regard to the knowledge taught as part of these new curricula. Elementary education for boys was no longer supposed to inevitably lead to Talmud study,

41 See Dov Rappel, *Bibliography of Jewish Textbooks (1488-1918)* (Tel Aviv, 1995).


44 Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*, ch. 6.
which ultimately equaled a dismissal of the ideal of life-long Torah study. Meanwhile girls’ education was paid greater attention than previously. The underlying premise, according to which Jewish knowledge had to be subordinated to “human knowledge,” meaning universally valid knowledge, was central to both the emergence of modern Jewish scholarship and the content of a decidedly Jewish education.45

III. New Orders of Jewish Knowledge in Textbooks for Religious Education

By using ten religious education textbooks from the first half of the nineteenth century as examples, I will illustrate in the following section how Jewish knowledge was reconceived and re-categorized as religious knowledge.46 First I will analyze the form in which this knowledge was arranged and supposed to be taught and who these textbooks were intended for. Moreover, I will ask what was considered Jewish knowledge according to these textbooks by focusing on two aspects: the definition of the foundations of Judaism on the one hand and knowledge on how to act towards state and society, ultimately an entirely new social framework, on the other.

My selection features textbooks published in the German-speaking territories of central Europe, including the Habsburg Empire, and it contains books written by Maskilim such as Peter Beer (1758-1838), Jehuda Leib Ben-Zeev (1764-1811), and Herz Homberg (1749-1841) who established the genre. It includes publications by the first generation of Jewish reform pedagogues such as Joseph Johlson (1777-1851) and Eduard Kley (1789-1867) as well as by university trained rabbis like Joseph von Maier (1797-1873) and Salomon Herxheimer (1801-1884). Conservative responses to the demand for a systematic religious education textbook are considered in the form of textbooks by Alexander Behr,47 Naphtali Banet (Benedict, also: Benet, 1789-1857), and Salomon Plessner (1797-1883), all of whom belonged to the traditional circles from which Orthodox Judaism emerged in the 1840s.

The growing influence of the state becomes evident in the textbooks by Beer (1809), Homberg (1812), and Banet (1824), which were published in the Habsburg Empire. In the wake of the Josephinian reforms so-called German Schools for Jewish Subjects were

45 Based on the principle “being human ranks one level higher than being an Israelite,” which was added by David Friedländer in his German translation of Wessely’s treatise to highlight the universal humanistic ideal of the Enlightenment. Worte der Wahrheit und des Friedens an die Gesamte Judische Nation: Vorzüglich an diejenigen, so unter dem Schutze des glorreichen und grossmächtigsten Kaisers Joseph des Zweiten wohnen, trans. David Friedländer (Berlin, 1782), 5.

46 In chronological order: Peter Beer, Dat Israel, Oder, Das Judenthum: das ist: Versuch einer Darstellung aller wesentlichen Glaubens-Sitten- und Ceremonienlehren heutiger Juden: zum Gebrauche bei dem Elementar-religionsunterrichte ihrer Jugend: nebst einem Anhange für Lehrer. Bd.1-2 (Prague, 1809/10); Jehuda Leib Ben Ze’ev, Yesode Ha-Dat. Religionslehrbuch für die jüdische Jugend beyderlei Geschlechts (Berlin, 1811); Herz Homberg, Bne Zan. Ein Religios-Moralisches Lehrbuch für die Jugend Jüdischer Nation (Vienna, 1812); Eduard Kley, Edut Adonai Catechismus der mosaischen Religion (Berlin, 1814); Josef Jolinson, Alume Josef. Unterricht in der mosaischen Religion für die israelitische Jugend beiderlei Geschlechts (Frankfurt a. M., 1814); Naphtali ben Moedecai Banet, Emunath Israel: ein Hülfbuch zum Unterrichte in der mosaischen Religion (Vienna, 1824); Alexander Behr, Lehrbuch der mosaischen Religion (Munich, 1826); Salomon Herxheimer, Yesode ha-Torah Israelitische Glaubens- und Pflichtenlehre für Schule und Haus (Hannoversch Münde, 1831); Joseph von Maier, Lehrbuch der israelitischen Religion, zum Gebrauche der Synagogen und israelitischen Schulen im Königreich Württemberg (Stuttgart, 1837); Salomon Plessner, Dat Mosheh ve-Yehudit oder Jüdisch-Mosaischer Religionsunterricht für die israelitische Jugend. (Berlin, 1838).

47 Behr’s dates are unknown. He was from Hamburg and received his doctorate in philosophy in the 1820s. He later served as a rabbi in Munich.
introduced, following a state-approved German-language curriculum. All three of these books competed with each other for official recognition, although Homberg’s *Bne Zion* (1812) was introduced as mandatory textbook due to his close relationship with government authorities. It also served as basis for a mandatory exam on the principles of the Jewish religion that those willing to marry had to take.

Like Beer, Homberg based his description of the foundations of Judaism on a definition of religion derived from natural law, placing the teaching of moral norms and values at the center of his work. His main source was the Hebrew Bible while the Talmud and Jewish religious law played only a secondary role. Banet’s textbook *Emunath Israel* (1824) published more than a decade later offered an alternative approach to the order of Jewish religious knowledge drawing much more on rabbinical tradition while also integrating universal categories and principles such as religion, dignity, free will, and conscience. Banet claimed that his description of the basic principles of Judaism was more inclusive, and he devoted more space to a detailed discussion of religious law and practice.

The circumstances in the Habsburg Empire served as model for Eduard Kley when, in 1814, he appealed to the Prussian authorities to have...
his catechism *Edut Adonai* introduced as mandatory textbook. The Prussian ministerial bureaucracy had an interest in Jewish education and schooling, which is evident in its numerous official reports on the state of Jewish schools. Yet Prussian emancipation policy pursued a less interventionist approach. Contrary to the Habsburg Empire or Baden, for example, the 1812 Emancipation Edict did not include provisions on education or on the constitution of the Jewish community. Instead paragraph 39 of the edict postponed these matters until decisions on concrete regulations were made.

In 1814 the Prussian authorities did not have an interest in intervening directly in matters of Jewish education, so they referred Kley to the Chief Rabbi of Berlin’s Jewish community, Meyer Simon Weyl (1744-1826), who refused to approve Kley’s book, however.

In Bavaria, the state steered a middle course. Like all teaching materials used in schools, Alexander Behr’s textbook was reviewed and not only received a royal printing privilege, but was also recommended for instruction.

The practice of adopting the format of the catechism for Jewish textbooks, relatively common in the first half of the nineteenth century, became more widespread in the second half of the century.

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52 “The necessary regulations concerning the ecclesiastical condition and the improvement in the education of the Jews shall be considered at a later time. With reference to these matters, men of the Jewish faith who enjoy public confidence because of their knowledge and rectitude shall be consulted for their expert opinion.” *Edikt betr. treffen die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden in dem Preußischen Staate, March 11, 1812.* For a facsimile reprint see: Lohmann et al., eds., *Chevrat Chinuch Nearim, vol. 1, doc. 287, 653-657.*

53 Weyl reinforced his position in an advertisement placed in the *Berlinerische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen of September 3, 1814* (No. 106, p. 7), in which he declared both Kley’s textbook and that written by pedagogue and *maskil* Moses Hirsch Bock inadequate.

54 According to Behr, proof of elementary schooling and religious education was mandatory for obtaining permission to settle, to marry or to move on to an institution of higher education. Behr, *Lehrbuch der mosaischen Religion*, xii. On the Jewish education system in Bavaria, see Claudia Prestel, *Jüdisches Schul- und Erziehungswesen in Bayern 1804-1933. Tradition und Modernisierung im Zeitalter der Emancipation* (Göttingen, 1989).
century, seems to require an explanation, particularly since progressive pedagogues considered the catechetical method inadequate.\textsuperscript{55} Considering that the catechism remained the primary text model for Christian religious textbooks throughout the nineteenth century, however, it seems less surprising that Jewish authors adopted an established format familiar to state authorities. Seven of the textbooks analyzed here follow this structure.\textsuperscript{56} The remaining three textbooks are divided into numbered and sometimes titled paragraphs, following the format of guidelines or manuals. Some of the authors discuss their method and chosen text model in a detailed preface. While Salomon Plessner criticized existing textbooks, including some catechisms, he nevertheless emphasized the merits of catechetical order. He left it up to teachers to decide whether they wanted to take the textual order of his book as basis for their teaching, however.\textsuperscript{57} By contrast Salomon Herxheimer rejected the catechism as methodically inadequate.\textsuperscript{58}

The adoption of Christian models of representing religious knowledge also included the specific structuring of this knowledge such as the frequently made distinction between doctrines of faith and duty (\textit{Glaubens- und Pfllichtenlehre}). Similarly, systematic lists of religious principles comparable to the Christian creed were used. Moreover, the Ten Commandments were given a prominent role, and their detailed description also had a structuring function in some textbooks. This structural proximity to Christian concepts of systematizing and categorizing religious knowledge should not be overrated, however. It was the result of the common heritage and entangled histories of Judaism and Christianity symbolized in the Hebrew Bible, i.e. the Old Testament as the common holy text. Moreover, this proximity primarily was a pragmatic step in the form of adopting a well-proven and accepted text model that was then modified to one’s own needs. The resulting originality and autonomy of Jewish religious textbooks becomes evident in the composition of the text, which made more extensive use of annotations and commentaries. Thus Jewish religious textbooks continued the basic principles of traditional Jewish text culture and introduced the textual interpretation and reasoning so central to traditional Torah study into modern Jewish religious education.

Christian religious textbooks often only contain brief references to the Bible. Homberg’s \textit{Bne Zion} comes closest to following this model. All the other books go further and integrate quotes from the Bible

\textsuperscript{55} Proponents of philanthropism and Enlightenment such as Basedow and Rousseau criticized the catechism as an inadequate and static method. Cf. Hans-Jürgen Fraas, \textit{Katechismustradition: Luthers kleiner Katechismus in Kirche und Schule} (Göttingen, 1971), 141–147.

\textsuperscript{56} In alphabetical order: Banet, Beer, Behr, Ben-Zeev, Johlson, Kley, and Plessner.

\textsuperscript{57} Plessner, \textit{Dat Mosheh ve-Yehudit}, xi and xxxiii. For his criticism, see ii. Plessner also includes an extensive list of published textbooks and handbooks.

\textsuperscript{58} Herxheimer, \textit{Yesode Ha-Torah}, v-vi. Though he ended his thematically structured sections with a set of questions for “repetition, illustration, and further addition to what has been said.”
and, to a lesser extent, references to rabbinical literature into their narrative. They are often supplemented by further explanations and commentaries. The authors thus offered a differentiated approach to the knowledge they provided about Judaism and the Jewish religion. The different layers of text, which often build upon one another, create the possibility to differentiate the content of religious instruction according to the student’s previous knowledge. This also includes didactic advice for instructors, be it teachers or parents.59 Most of these textbooks address a broadly defined audience and in many cases are not just intended for the elementary education of children aged six to thirteen, but also for continuing (self)-study.60

To a limited degree, the formal differentiation of the curriculum continues in the choice of language. All authors except Ben-Zeev write in German and only use Hebrew to complement the text. Ben Zeev’s Yesode ha-Dat was published completely in Hebrew with a German section in Hebrew letters.61 This maskilic format common until the early nineteenth century takes its lead from early modern Jewish prints which usually featured Hebrew text with Yiddish commentary.62 The mostly German textbooks often have a Hebrew main title63 that can be understood as a symbolic reference to tradition. Terms central to Judaism such as Torah, Halakah or God’s name are often printed in Hebrew letters. Extensive passages in Hebrew, mostly quotes from the Bible but also from rabbinical literature, are featured in Johlson and those authors belonging to the traditional spectrum.64 Here Hebrew usually appears alongside the German text, which takes both different levels of previous knowledge among students and varying teaching requirements into consideration.

The use of the German language in these textbooks attests to the general shift towards German as demanded by the state and promoted by the Haskalah and subsequent reform movements, and which was implemented remarkably quickly.65 German not only came to replace Yiddish, which was rejected by the Maskilim as an undesirable, corrupted language and a jargon, but in the course of the nineteenth century it also became the lingua franca of central European Jewry.66 Efforts made by Mendelssohn and his students to redefine Hebrew as the Jewish national language failed. Wide-spread knowledge of the

59 See Beer, Banet, Hersheimer, von Maier, and Plessner, for example.
60 Explicitly stated in Banet, Hersheimer, Maier, and Plessner; addressed to “everyone” or for use “in school and the home” or “in school and the synagogue.”
61 The coeval use of German and Hebrew became the exception. Only the second edition of Banet’s Emunath Israel (1832) can be described as a bilingual work.
62 On the publication practices of the Haskalah, see Shmuel Feiner, Zohar Shavit, Nathalie Naimark-Goldberg, Tal Kogman, eds., The Library of the Haskalah. The Creation of a Modern Republic of Letters in Jewish Society in the German-Speaking Sphere (Tel Aviv, 2014) [Hebrew].
63 With the exception of Behr and Maier, whose textbooks do not have a Hebrew title. Homberg’s Bne Zion does not use Hebrew letters and neither does the first edition of Hersheimer’s Yesode Ha-Torah, except the main title. Later editions include more Hebrew script.
64 Johlson makes extensive use of Hebrew, for example. Banet significantly increased the Hebrew part in the second edition, which made it a bilingual one. Previously, such an edition had only been published by Ben-Zeev.
Hebrew language and alphabet, including knowledge imparted via Yiddish and German in Hebrew letters, declined in the course of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless Hebrew remained an element of religious practice, and it naturally was part of the expert knowledge acquired by Jewish scholars and academics. As the textbooks discussed here and the curricula of Jewish religious schools show, the Hebrew language remained indispensable for the religious instruction of Jewish boys. Ideally, knowledge of Hebrew was supposed to enable them to study the Hebrew Bible or at least to read from the Torah and thus to actively participate in one of the most important acts in the Jewish prayer service.

The question of religious instruction for Jewish boys was contrasted with efforts to improve the education and learning of Jewish girls and women, which had already been attempted by the Maskilim and was demanded by the state as well. This, too, is reflected in the textbooks under consideration. Beer, Ben-Zeev, and Johlson expressly addressed “Israelite youths of both sexes” [die Israelitische Jugend beyderlei Geschlechts] in their title. While all the other volumes are merely addressed to “Israelite youths” or do not explicitly specify their audience, it is safe to assume that they were intended for both boys and girls. Jewish schools — especially reformed schools or the slowly emerging complementary religious schools — were open to boys and girls, and they represent the central context in which the textbooks discussed here were used.

In the preface to his textbook, Salomon Plessner discussed the question of girls’ education in great detail and essentially propagates a gender-specific differentiation of the curriculum. He emphasizes the necessity of religious instruction for Jewish girls and declares the catechism particularly suitable for them. At the same time, Plessner stresses that rabbinical reservations concerning female study of the Torah mainly concerned the “advanced teaching of laws” [höherer Gesetzesunterricht], which had to be distinguished from the necessary knowledge of “doctrines of faith and general duties.” Meanwhile the religious instruction of Jewish boys had to go beyond that and was by no means to be limited to the catechism. Boys required instruction in Hebrew, which would enable them to study the Bible and the Talmud as well as significant Halakhic codices. Plessner’s distinction between required religious knowledge for girls and boys necessitates a reordering of Jewish knowledge, distinguishing between knowledge essential for everyone and knowledge necessary and desirable for

67 Both as the language of sources and, to a limited extent, as language of publication. An adaptation of Wissenschaft des Judentums in Hebrew, the so called Hokhmat Israel, emerged in Galicia and Italy.
68 Plessner, Dat Mosheh ve-Yehudit, xi
69 Ibid., xii.
70 Especially the Shulchan Aruch. Ibid. xiv-xv and xxv.
Jewish men. He essentially attempted to preserve the ideal of lifelong Torah study for the modern age, for which modern Jewish religious education was meant to prepare Jewish boys.

IV. Educating the Modern Jew and the Loyal Citizen

Thus far my main focus has been on the formal structure of the textbooks, meaning how knowledge was supposed to be imparted and who was meant to acquire which kind of knowledge. But how did Jewish religious textbooks present and structure knowledge about Judaism and the Jewish religion? Considering the sheer scope of the individual textbooks (between 100 and 300 pages), the following analysis does not claim to be exhaustive. It rather aims to highlight characteristic elements and peculiarities.

First, it is noteworthy that all authors except Behr briefly introduce religion as a general category. Almost all authors base their argument on natural law while religion is presented as a natural form of sociality and the indispensable foundation of social order. Judaism as a revealed religion is put into relationship to it. The monotheistic idea based in Judaism is considered an essential step in the evolution of humanity. This portrayal corresponds with the contemporary Jewish interpretation of Judaism’s historical role in preserving the monotheistic idea in the sense of the Mission of Israel.71 The integration of universal patterns of thought and interpretation also becomes evident in remarks on the human being, reason, mind and soul, liberty, will, and conscience, which can be found in all textbooks to varying extents. Of far greater importance was the effort to harmonize religion and reason extending to the

concept of a *Vernunftre-ligion*, thus portraying religious actions and religious knowledge as essentially rational.

Taking the Revelation as Judaism’s historical act of founding, the textbooks then describe the foundations of Judaism, although their authors see the relationship between *Torah* and *tradition* quite differently. Naturally all of them treat the Hebrew bible as the authoritative source of Jewish religion. In most cases its structure is described in detail and it represents the most common reference text in the form of citations and quotes. There are differences in the discussion of the traditional understanding of Torah as a unity of the *written* Torah as recorded in the bible and the *oral* Torah mainly preserved in the Talmud. In the textbooks under consideration, all authors except for Homberg, Kley and Maier acknowledge this unity of *Torah* and the binding nature of Jewish law derived from it. Some of these textbooks also attempt a cautious historicizing of the origin of both the bible and the Talmud. As the core of the Revelation, the five Books of Moses are invariably excluded from this while all other books of the Bible and the lore of Mishnah and Talmud are described as steps in the evolution. Nearly all of the textbooks equal oral teaching to the Talmud, which also embodies *tradition* according to Banet, Behr, and Plessner.

Eduard Kley and Joseph Maier distance themselves from rabbinical Judaism by implicitly questioning the binding nature of the Talmud and parts of the Jewish legal tradition. Kley’s text is more guarded and undergoes a development throughout the different editions of his textbook. In the 1814 edition he appears uncertain about the binding character of the oral Torah as part of the revelation when he writes that it “supposedly” was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai. While he does name Mishnah and Gemara as its core, he does not mention the Talmud as overarching name for these two text compilations. In the third, extensively revised and expanded edition of *Edut Adonai* published in 1839, Kley expands on his 1814

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74 According to Kley, the oral tradition was the “interpretation of the written law which supposedly was passed on by Moses through oral tradition.” [Eine Auslegung des schriftlichen Gesetzes welche von Moses durch mündliche Ueberlieferung soll fortgepflanzt worden seyn]. Kley, *Edut Adonai* (Berlin, 1814), 37.
remarks by stating that Mishnah and Gemara contained “much of value for instruction,” but that they could “no longer be considered a revelation of God’s word and part of Holy Scripture.” For Kley, the oral Torah’s equal significance to that of the written Torah belonged to the past. Maier went even further and fundamentally questioned that the latter, in the form of the Talmud, had ever been of equal significance to Holy Scripture. Kley and Maier explained their distanced attitude towards the Talmud and by implication the idea of a second revelation in the form of the oral Torah in different ways. Both shared a basic critical attitude towards rabbinical Judaism, however. By contrast, Herxheimer and Johlson, both of whom also belonged to the reform movement in the broadest sense, adhered to the binding character of oral tradition and the Talmud. Like Plessner, Behr or Banet, moderate reformers such as Herxheimer and Johlson made use of the flexibility of textual interpretation and reasoning in Jewish tradition and searched for patterns of interpretation and modes of thought suitable for meeting the challenges of the modern world.

The systematic presentation of the foundations of Jewish religion that they envisioned required classification and categorization. The distinction between doctrines of faith and duty served as a comprehensive ordering framework that was interpreted in rather different ways. Overall the descriptions of Jewish doctrine dealt with God and his characteristics, with the relationship between God and human being in general, and with the special relationship between God and the people of Israel based on the act of revelation. Doctrines of duty are based on doctrines of faith and separated into duty toward God, toward oneself, and toward others.

Jewish textbooks thus ostensibly reverted to an order of religious knowledge also applied in Christian textbooks. Yet this was by no means simply an adoption of Christian models. The authors could indeed cite Jewish models. The idea of doctrines of duty in particular corresponded with the meaning of the Mitzvot (commandments), which formed the basis for Emunah (faith) and Chovot (duties). In addition to the Hebrew bible, which served as primary reference text for all textbooks, the authors made reference to the Mishnah and the Talmud to varying degrees, but also to works of medieval Jewish scholars, especially Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah, Saadia Gaon’s (882–942) Emunot ve-Deot (933), Bachja Ibn Pakuda’s (first half of the eleventh century) Chovot Ha-Levavot (1040) as well as later systematic accounts of Jewish law such as the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol and the Sefer HaḤinukh (both thirteenth century) or Yosef Caro’s (1488-1575) Shulchan Aruch (1563).

75 Kley, Edut Adonai, 3rd ed. (Leipzig, 1839), 76.

76 BULLETIN OF THE GHI | 59 | FALL 2016
The texts on doctrines of duty were based on abstract and ultimately universal concepts such as love of God, love of self, and the love of others or human kindness, from which specific commandments and behavioral norms were derived. These were justified by Jewish law in varying detail, depending on whether an author considered the entire tradition as binding. To this end, all authors undertake a categorization of Halakah, which usually leads to a distinction between moral law, political laws, and ceremonial law. Maskilim such as Beer and Homberg and reformers like Kley and Maier prioritize moral law as the foundation of moral and virtuous behavior. Ceremonial law describes all the rules on religious practice and rituals whose continuance was questioned as part of the debates on religious reform. Changes mainly manifested themselves with regard to prayer and liturgical order. Jewish textbooks often emphasized the essential importance of religious practice as a vehicle for moral conduct and the internalization of religious knowledge. Authors adhering to the binding force of Jewish law gave particular attention to this aspect of Jewish religiosity. Incidentally, these authors do also acknowledge that not all Jewish laws are applied by the Jewish diaspora. The political laws, legal provisions referring to the ancient Jewish state, were eventually omitted. All authors stress the universal matter of both Judaism and Jewish religious law. In his study on the representation of Halakah in Jewish religious catechisms, Andreas Gotzmann has suggested that all textbooks, including conservative and orthodox ones, ultimately define Judaism as a morally composed religion, thus advancing the dissociation of the unity of religion and law in traditional Judaism.  

The Ten Commandments are discussed in detail in nine of the ten textbooks and in many cases are presented as the universal core of Judaism’s foundations. In contrast to Christianity, the Ten Commandments did not take up a special position in rabbinical Judaism. They were considered part of the commandments (Mitzvot) revealed to Moses in their entirety and were thus seen as binding without any distinction. Except for Alexander Behr, all authors consider the Ten Commandments of particular significance. Beer and Kley derive substantial parts of their depiction directly from their discussion of the Ten Commandments, thus somewhat approximating the method of Christian textbooks. Some of the authors describe the Ten Commandments as the origin of the Mitzvot, claiming that all of the latter could be derived from them. This argument is based on interpretations of the relationship between the Ten Commandments and Judaism’s foundational texts.

76  By Banet, Plessner, and Herxheimer.

77  Gotzmann, “Dissociation of Religion and Law.”


79  This is especially striking in Kley, but it also applies to Beer. For Banet, the Ten Commandments serve as conclusion of his textbook and could thus be understood as a recapitulation.
and the Mitzvot formulated by Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE-50 CE) and later by Saadia Gaon (882-942).

Another element in the systematization of fundamental aspects of the Jewish conception of religion are principles or articles of faith such as the above-mentioned Thirteen Principles by Maimonides. Structurally similar to the Christian creed, these enumerations offered a summary of fundamental aspects of the Jewish religion and were incorporated into Jewish textbooks in varying forms. They were either described as three central Jewish principles of faith: the belief in the one God, in the revelation, and in divine justice,80 based on Joseph Albo (ca. 1380–1444).81 Or the authors refer to the Thirteen Principles82 in the form of the prayer Ani Ma'amín, which go beyond the three principles of Albo and discuss the specific characteristics of God, the expectation of a Messiah, and resurrection. In Behr’s textbook they function as sole introduction. Plessner considers the Thirteen Principles of outstanding importance and criticizes other authors for not mentioning them.83 In the course of the nineteenth century, Orthodox Jewry began to view the Thirteen Principles as an indispensable foundation of the Jewish faith. The commitment to them became a criterion of belonging as well as a means to distinguish themselves from other interpretations of modern Judaism.84 Such a dogmatic narrowing of the meaning of articles of faith does not yet occur in the textbooks under consideration. Instead they reflect the diverse models of systematization of the fundamental principles of Judaism and rather describe principles of faith as orientational knowledge.

Regardless of the differences in the description of the relationship between Torah and tradition, the significance accorded the Ten Commandments in each book, the inclusion of principles of faith, and the binding force of Jewish law, all textbooks were ultimately based on the distinction between doctrines of faith and doctrines of duty. As previously mentioned, the latter not only included the duties towards God and oneself, but also duties towards others in the form of one’s “Nebenmenschen” [fellow human beings]. These duties necessitated a specific instructional knowledge for dealing with family members, one’s community, and the society one lived in, including both Jews and non-Jews. Most of the textbooks also contain sections on duties towards the state. Echoing the idea of the useful citizen, they demand loyalty to the state and patriotism, which should find their expression in abiding by the law, in actions beneficial to the state such as military service, but also in choosing an “honorable” profession.85 The extension

80 Kley and Herxheimer.
81 Formulated in response to Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles in Albo’s Sefer Ha-Ikkarim (completed in 1425).
82 Beer, Behr, and Plessner.
83 Plessner, Dat Mosheh ve-Yehudit, 51.
85 To be found in this or similar phrasing in Beer, Homberg, Herxheimer, and Maier.
of duties towards one’s fellow human beings to society and the state embraces the new political and social reality, which facilitated new forms of social interaction between Jews and non-Jews regardless of continued formal and informal exclusion. Jewish textbooks provided specific instructional knowledge in the form of social norms and moral values grounded in the Jewish religion.

Nearly all explanations of the duties towards one’s fellow human beings are based on a detailed discussion of the biblical commandment to love one’s neighbor, which has always been ascribed a prominent place in both Judaism and Christianity. Loving one’s fellow human beings becomes the universal principle of human kindness, demanding guiding principles for action beneficial to one’s fellow human beings that, in the case of some authors, come close to Kant’s Categorical Imperative. All authors ultimately emphasize the universality of the commandment of neighbor-love, which for Plessner represents the core of Jewish morality. To some extent these Jewish textbooks, and incidentally the interpretation of modern Jewish philosophy, go beyond rabbinical interpretations on the commandment to love one’s neighbor. According to the latter, one’s neighbor by no means meant everyone, but only one’s fellow Jews. Some scholars, Maimonides among them, further narrowed this definition to law-abiding Jews. The Christian definition of charity had not always been universal either, but depended on one’s neighbor’s commitment to the Christian faith. In both Judaism and Christianity, love of one’s fellow human beings derives from love of God. Until the Enlightenment and beyond, it was meant to nurture one’s religion rather than understood as an unconditional obligation that would embrace the universal idea of religious plurality and freedom of thought.

In their remarks on duties towards the state the authors revert to both biblical commandments and rabbinical interpretation. In some textbooks the duty of patriotism is derived from the commandment to honor one’s father and mother, for example. The expanded applicability of this commandment appears in similar form in Luther’s catechism. Reference is made far more often to biblical passages and rabbinical interpretation defining the relationship between the

86 For example, Ben-Zeev, Yesode Ha-Dat, 165. 
87 Plessner, Dat Moshe we-Yehudit, 232. A similar line of argument can be found in Beer und Herxheimer. 
88 Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen can serve as example for this position. See Dana Hollander, »


89 Ernst Simon, “The Neighbor (Re’a) Whom We Shall Love,” in Modern Jewish Ethics, 29–56.


91 In Beer and Homburg the extension of the commandment to honor one’s father and mother to close relatives and authority figures in particular is discussed only briefly. Beer, Dat Israel, 74; Homberg, Bne Zion, 78. Meanwhile Kley discusses the issue in greater detail. Kley, Edut Adomai, 37.

92 In Luther’s Großer Katechismus (1529) it is the fourth commandment from which the respect for secular authorities derives.
Jews and the king. The rabbinical concept *Dina de-Malkhuta Dina* (“the law of the land is the law”) is quoted especially frequently. Historically, rabbinical authorities had cited it in order to justify the duty to pay taxes and fees to a non-Jewish state, although they tied it to a certain degree of justice. In the nineteenth century, the authors of Jewish textbooks not only expanded the meaning of *Dina de-Malkhuta Dina* to the entirety of the state’s laws, it also became one of the main arguments for the compatibility of Jewish religious law with state law in the debates on emancipation and reform.

**V. Conclusion**

In rabbinical tradition there is a metaphor describing the necessity to preserve the integrity of the unity of Torah and Jewish law. According to it, the interpretation of the law erects a fence around the Torah. One faction within eighteenth and nineteenth century central European Jewry, radical proponents of the Haskalah and reformers, sought to tear down this fence. They opposed rabbinical tradition on fundamental questions. Others attempted to preserve the binding character of the Torah by redrawing the borders marked by the fence and making them more open. To this end, they undertook a new evaluation of the fundamental principles of Judaism. They searched for examples in Jewish tradition and incorporated fundamentally new ideas, which offered answers to the challenges of the modern age and were suited to ensure the survival of Judaism. The shifting of borders and the changed circumstances of Jewish life in the modern age created a new Jewish self-conception and ultimately caused a transformation of Jewish knowledge unprecedented in its dimension and dynamics.

This process resulted in equal measure from the adaptation and internalization of novel orders of knowledge and practices of knowledge production, especially in the form of scholarly knowledge. At the same time, a re-evaluation of what was to be considered *Jewish* knowledge took place. In light of the increasingly common self-description as a middle class religion distinct from other definitions of belonging (to a nation, a people, but also a culture), Jewish knowledge was primarily interpreted in religious categories. The textbooks introduced in this article describe this in a focused manner. They represent attempts to systematically order knowledge about Judaism and Jewish religion and to define it authoritatively. Christian text models, religious catechisms, and manuals served as models that

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93 Described as God’s representative on earth, for example in Beer, *Dat Israel*, 196; Plessner, *Dat Mosheh ve-Yehudit*, 273.


95 Hashkes, *Rabbinic Discourse as a System of Knowledge*, 166.
were modified to suit Jewish requirements. This becomes evident in the continued application of traditional practices of knowledge production by commentaries, annotations, and citations of authoritative reference texts, which necessitated the active engagement with the subject matter through interpretation and reasoning. As it has been shown that the incorporation of concepts and practices foreign to Judaism was by no means a specifically modern phenomenon.

Similarities to Christian textbooks can also be found in terms of content, the discussion of the Ten Commandments, the articles of faith, and the justification of social norms of behavior by the commandment of neighbor-love. To see this as a move towards Christianity would be an inappropriate simplification, however. These components point to the shared heritage of Christianity and Judaism in the form of the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, the textbooks discussed here present these aspects in their particular Jewish meaning and thus can be understood as demands for a recognition of Christianity’s Jewish origins. In this sense, Jewish textbooks also represent a response to the supposed immorality of Judaism posited by the opponents of emancipation.  

The different accounts of the foundations of Judaism and, by implication, of the sources of Jewish religious knowledge were quite varied. The textbooks discussed here do not describe majority opinions so much as provide insight into the diverse interpretations of modern Judaism in the first half of the nineteenth century. They stem from a phase in the modern history of German-speaking Jewry when many things were undergoing change. The split into a Liberal, a Conservative, and an Orthodox movement had not yet taken place. Debates about religious reform within the Jewish community became more dynamic, influenced by the ultimately labored process of emancipation. Knowledge about Judaism and the Jewish religion was both subject matter and instrument of this process of self-reflection: whether in the form of novel scholarly knowledge that fundamentally changed the way Jewish tradition and Jewish text culture were studied or in the form of systematically ordered religious knowledge meant to educate future generations to become modern Jews and loyal citizens.

Translated by Insa Kummer

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