

TRANSLATED EXCERPTS FROM SPEECHES BY ABRAHAM ADLER
AT THE SECOND AND THIRD RABBINICAL CONFERENCES, FRANKFURT A/M,
1845 AND Breslau, 1846

"It is often asserted that monotheism alone differentiates Judaism from other religions. That mixes up principle with content. Monotheism is indeed the principle, but it is not the main content of Judaism. Other religionists, as well, believe in the unity of God and are nevertheless not Jews. The belief in a future messiah is unique to Judaism, differentiates it from other faiths, more than does monotheism.

This [messianic] faith gives us confidence:

- 1) that good will emerge victorious from its struggle with evil, virtue from the struggle with vice, holiness from the struggle with sin;
- 2) that world history does not move in an eternal circle, but will arrive at a goal, the highest development of humanity;
- 3) that the whole of humanity is not eternally destined to darkness, but will reach reconciliation with God and glorification in Him."

A. Adler votes for the abolition of the קרואים because the female sex is unable to participate. It maintains a religious distinction where we must set forth equal rights. Some want to hold on to the קרואים so that the congregation will take part in the service; but for this very reason they should be abolished. At present the entire congregation does not properly participate in the קריאת התורה, because a good many mistakenly believe that the recitation is principally for those called up. If no one were specially called up to the Torah, the entire congregation would regard the recitation as directed to it and pay closer attention.

[Adler regards] טבילת נידה as emerging entirely from the spirit of the Bible, which through external cleanliness wants to point symbolically to its inner, moral counterpart. . . . He wishes therefore that the conference urgently recommend טבילת נידה as religious practice.

[Adler notes] that the Bible ordains marriage because the two sexually differing individuals only in their coming together create a complete personality -- והיו לבשר אחד... and that it allows the salvation of Israel often to arise from its women.

ABRAHAM ADLER ON KABBALAH

(Roughly translated Excerpts from *Reform des Judenthums* [1846]: 302-304)

[Hegelian philosophy] has sought to put Judaism in its place by putting it into the evanescent category of sublimity [*Erhabenheit*]. However, simply connecting a few [biblical] verses suffices to show that this one-sided character ascribed to Judaism is false and the category of sublimity purely subjective. . . .

[An extraordinary element] in the manner in which Judaism even until now confronts the comprehending spirit is the Jewish Kabbalah. For more than a thousand years it has permeated Judaism as a creative and formative principle. Since then it has been a steadily operating, active workshop within it. . . . Like a fresh breath of spring it wafts across the Jewish fields of ice, loosens frozen masses, pushes up beneficent seeds, transforms the arid steppe into a garden of God in which everyone touched by its breeze feels blissful and knows himself to have been initiated into the deepest secrets of infinity. . . .

Rational metaphysics, which is satisfied with sterile categories, which it cannot even understand itself, seeks to explain the Absolute and takes pride in the non-being that it comes up with. . . . It claims the ability to see the veiled Queen of the Palace, but never to glance into the unveiled shining face.

It is therefore a beautiful sign of the times that men such as Meyer, Tholuck and Molitor are making Jewish Kabbalah the object of thorough study. . . .

The Kabbalah is, like mysticism in general, a mystery even to its bearers, a secret doctrine, so that they themselves don't know how they arrived at it. Therefore they take it as a tradition (קבלה), received either in the course of history or as a revelation. . . .

The Kabbalah has abolished the transcendence of Heaven; it has at all times opened for its initiates the portals and enabled their entry into them--not on the long and arduous road of dialectics, but via the ascent of the fiery chariot of unmediated poetry. Also in the expected Elijah, the herald and predecessor of the Messiah, it had to recognize its own image; for it too is to prepare the world for the Messianic Kingdom before its arrival for the benefit of all on earth (cf. the preface to Hayyim Vital's *Etz Hayyim*). That means to give up its nature as secret doctrine and reveal itself as knowledge [*Wissenschaft*] as such, which embraces all spheres of the spirit within its truth.

WORMSER ZEITUNG

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The Worms Newspaper will henceforth appear under my editorship. Hard-won free speech has now been secured also for Germany and the public can and must demand from editors that they speak their minds freely, both regarding their basic principles and also regarding the spirit in which their papers are being edited. We want to meet that challenge.

The state must not be a prison, into which honest people get thrown so they won't disturb those in power, as was the case in Austria under Metternich's former most worthy regime. Nor should it be a cash cow for the caste of bureaucrats, who loom up between the ruler and the people. . . .

The state is a spiritually free institution for the development of freedom for all that are part of it, and it is worth nothing as long as it still locks the door to its holy realm to anyone.

 All must have the right to speak out on what they feel in their hearts, what they carry in their souls. Unless he has been explicitly designated as such, no one is entitled to present himself as the representative of the people.

Despotism and lack of freedom remain as long as the right to represent the people is tied to property or higher income in the circle of officials. After all, time has clearly shown that the rich (*die Reichen*) do not found commonwealths (*Reiche*), rather that where wealth is to be found in excess and the wealthy cut themselves off from the propertyless by an unbridgeable abyss, they further their own overthrow. . . .

Freedom must be made accessible to all, and for that reason the state may not shrink back fearfully from socialistic issues, since if it does it will run into a different fear that will make it blanch in a quite another way. . . .

But we will not court the masses either in order to gain their favor. Simply numbers won't gain our respect. The German nation has a spiritual achievement in its culture (*Bildung*), in its academic learning (*Wissenschaft*). Insofar as we are able we want to preserve and advance these treasures for the welfare of all and not to give way to frothy fashion. Because we want to serve freedom, we want also to serve spirit, since the former has its protecting genius only in the latter, is only made possible by it. .

Lead articles will summarize, cast their glance upon the whole, encourage progress on the path set upon, or warn against it. We want to widen further the horizon of freedom. For freedom we want to live, for freedom to die!

A. Adler

Translated excerpt from
PROCEEDINGS OF THE RHEINHESSIAN HIGH TREASON TRIAL OF 1850,
First Point of Accusation, pp. 91-92

On February 25, 1849, an open-air mass gathering took place in Horschheim [near Worms], in which various speakers, among them also Abraham Adler of Worms, took part. Various speakers made reference to the circumstances and undertakings of the time and delivered provocative addresses. Yet none of them displayed a criminal character, with the exception of the speech by Adler, in which, according to the testimony of witnesses, Adler, among other things, said the following:

"I am bringing you greetings from Minister Jaup--and it amounts to nothing. I bring you the achievements of the March Revolution--I have them here in my hat."

At this point Adler played with his hat in the manner of a Jewish clown, finally turning it over with the words: "See, these are the March achievements--nothing falls out; there's nothing there."

Afterwards he engaged in similar foolery with his coat pocket, turning it too inside out and showing that nothing fell out. Hereupon he continued:

"You see, it's all nothing. They promised you everything and have kept nothing. Jaup is a sleepy-head; he sits in his *Kabinett* [political cabinet, but the word also means lavatory] in his dressing-gown and has the estates on a string. When he wants them to vote agreement, he jerks on the string and they jump up."

The abuse and the degrading mockery which this speech contains against the grand-ducal minister Jaup are unmistakable. They substantiate the crime of injury to his professional honor, made the more serious by the circumstance that the abuse etc. was hurled in an open-air gathering



The political prisoners in the Mainz Iron Tower 1850. Adler stands middle-left, distinguished by his high balding forehead and the sad expression on his long, narrow face. Taken from Gerold Bönnen, ed., *Geschichte der Stadt Worms*, p. 434.