



Jeffrey Haus. *Challenges of Equality: Judaism, State, and Education in Nineteenth-Century France.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009. ix + 230 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8143-3380-8.



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French Jews, Finances, and the Politics of Jewish Education

In *Challenges of Equality*, Jeffrey Haus examines the financial relationship between Jewish leaders and the French state and the practical impact of specific church-state policies on Jewish educational institutions. He explores how Jewish leaders navigated the clerical and anticlerical vicissitudes of the various nineteenth-century regimes and shows how their consistent dedication to Jewish schooling belies the notion that they pushed French Jews to shed all vestiges of Jewish particularism.

In the introduction, Haus explains how the different circumstances between German and French Jews led them to adopt different approaches toward integration. The granting of citizenship to French Jews *prior* to their attempts to modernize Judaism as well as the French government's official recognition of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism, emboldened French Jews to carve out a separate educational sphere. As their leaders argued, as long as Jews proved their utility and commitment to the French state, their right to equality justified the preservation of their religious and cultural differences. In turn, the extent to which any particular regime

supported specific forms of Jewish educational institutions served as a barometer for its attitude toward both the role of French Jews in civil society and the existing relationship between religion and state.

In part 1, "Jewish Primary Education and the State, 1808-1870," Haus traces the development of consistorial primary schools from the establishment of the consistorial system in 1808 until the rise of the Third Republic in 1870. Jewish leaders urged local authorities to support the establishment of modern Jewish primary schools. They did not see any contradiction between their call for separate Jewish schools and their loyalty to the state because, as they argued, such schools would transform Jews into productive and patriotic French citizens. Nonetheless, such arguments entailed risk because by justifying separate Jewish schooling on utilitarian grounds, Jewish leaders implied that French Jews had not yet integrated. In particular, Haus examines the effect of the 1850 Falloux Law. Named for Louis Napoleon's ultramontane Catholic minister of education who had proposed it, the Falloux Law required compulsory Catholic education in

public schools. Although the Falloux Law strengthened the case for separate Jewish schools, government support for Jewish schools actually declined during this era of Catholic resurgence. In response, Jewish leaders turned their attention to providing classes in Judaism for Jews in public schools during the hours designated for religious instruction.

In the second part, "Rabbinical Education and the State, 1808-1906," Haus examines the development of the Rabbinical School, its curriculum, and its finances. Founded in Metz in 1829, it relocated to Paris in 1859 for both practical and ideological reasons. Rather than renovating its deteriorating building, Jewish leaders chose to transfer the school to Paris where the students would have more access to the rich scientific, literary resources of the capital and the financial resources of its Jews. As with primary schools, Jewish leaders justified their quest for government assistance for the seminary on integrationist grounds. And as with primary schools, government aid came with government curricular demands. Every regime expected rabbinical students to study secular subjects and to engage in classical studies, especially Latin and Greek.

In the final part, "Toward Separation, 1875-1906," Haus discusses the effect of republican anticlerical policies on Jewish educational institutions during the Third Republic. After they assumed power, the republicans promoted an anticlerical agenda that included the suppression of unauthorized religious orders, secularization of schools, secularization of cemeteries, and the introduction of civil divorce. Although the Catholic Church was the real target of their anticlerical legislation, Jews felt the impact as well. Focusing on education, Haus examines the Ferry Laws passed in 1881-82. Named for the positivist liberal republican minister of education Jules Ferry, the Ferry Laws abolished confessional religious instruction in state schools; made primary education compulsory; and, in an effort to compete with parochial schools, eliminated tuition for public elementary schools. The consistories responded by organizing special supple-

mentary classes during nonschool hours. In the most original and legalistic section of his work, Haus examines the decisions of the republican-dominated Conseil d'Etat, the supreme administrative court, that restricted the right of the Catholic parish law councils, Protestant consistories, and Jewish consistories to receive legacies for the founding and administration of schools. In brief, the court ruled that these institutions were established to supervise religious worship and not to create or maintain educational and charitable establishments. In response to financial anticlericalism, as Haus points out, Jewish leaders abandoned their equality argument, and, unsuccessfully, sought to distinguish the precarious financial position of the Jewish minority from the other religions. In the end, the expansion of supplementary religious instruction and rise of independent Jewish organizations helped French Jewry to cope with the separation of church and state in 1905.

Haus's work is based on extensive archival research. He combed the vast archival deposits on French Jewish history in the United States and France, including the rarely examined Archives du Conseil d'Etat. Readers of this specialized work will likely have a solid background in both modern French Jewish and modern French history, and they may want to examine some of Haus's primary sources. Unfortunately, they will be disappointed by the careless copyediting of the endnotes and the bibliography. At the very outset, the numbers of what are arguably the two most relevant archival series, F¹⁷ *Instruction Publique* and F¹⁹ *Cultes* of the National Archives of France, are reversed. Furthermore, the notes to the introduction and first two chapters omit the series numbers altogether. Nonetheless, these minor bibliographical errors do not detract from the strength of the book and Haus's exhaustive research. *Challenges of Equality* is a solid history of the financial relationship between the French state and the Jews of nineteenth-century France and reveals the dexterity of communal leaders in reformulating their positions in response to the challenges posed by emancipation and the church-state issue.

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