

# The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824

*Michael A. Meyer*

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THE  
ORIGINS  
OF THE JEWISH  
MODERN IDENTITY  
JEW AND EUROPEAN CULTURE  
IN GERMANY, 1749-1824

By Michael A. Meyer



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**Michael A. Meyer : The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Grossly Mis-TitledBy David G.Although a great source for

understanding Moses Mendelssohn, his "disciples," the Napoleonic Sanhedrin, German culture and the times, it grossly shortchanges Judaism in general, orthodoxy and Jewish culture. Further, it is grossly mis-titled. While Meyer provides a great service in providing a solid survey of this contributing thread to the modern Jew, if Meyer is to be taken at face value then traditional Judaism in Germany was dead and worse than worthless until Mendelssohn came along. And what about the tremendous impact which Hasidism has had on modern Jewish thinking? Without the latter, we would not have Heschel, Buber, Wiesel and a host of others who comprise the best of 20th century Jewish thinkers. Unless a counterpoise is provided in the classroom for the naive student, I consider this book a serious danger.

Until the 18th century Jews lived in Christian Europe, spiritually and often physically removed from the stream of European culture. During the Enlightenment intellectual Europe accepted a philosophy which, by the universality of its ideals, reached out to embrace the Jew within the greater community of man. The Jew began to feel European, and his traditional identity became a problem for the first time. The response of the Jewish intellectual leadership in Germany to this crisis is the subject of this book. Chief among those men who struggled with the problems of Jewish consciousness were Moses Mendelssohn, David Friedlander, Leopold Zunz, Eduard Gans, and Heinrich Heine. By 1824, liberal Judaism had not yet produced a vision of its future as a separate entity within European society, but it had been exposed to and grappled with all the significant problems that still confront the Jew in the West.

About the Author Michael A. Meyer is professor of Jewish History, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.