

German Refugee Rabbis and German–Jewish Cultural Heritage:

Towards a Global Comparative Perspective

The workshop seeks to bring together work in progress on German refugee rabbis in different regions and seeks a comparative perspective on how these refugees dealt with their traditions, their knowledge and the experience during and after the Nazi era.

We would like the workshop participants to consider a perspective of the Critical Heritage Studies and reach across disciplinary backgrounds, thematic or regional focus pursuing questions such as: How was the refugee rabbis' (communal rabbis, students, ordained scholars and the second generation, those born in Germany and educated after emigration) expulsion and the destruction of their cultural centers part of a cultural transfer/knowledge transfer? How did they and others perceive their forced presence and scholarship? Were there discussions on the construction of cultural heritage, the re-construction of their networks and hubs (seminaries, colleges, universities), and audiences, what purposes did they serve? How have their activities after the Holocaust resonated in society, and why was their knowledge sometimes lost to future generations? Where and why did it survive? We would also like you to address how the cultural transfers materialized (in religion, society and politics and memory) and were related to local and global contexts, to nationhood, diaspora and existing Jewries in their respective countries of refuge. We would like to learn about the agency these refugees (re-)gained or lost in and after their forced flight. Finally, we are very interested in exploring the rabbis' memory, the memory of their tradition, possible returns to Germany and also methodological questions on how to explore and evaluate these topics in such a large group.

Date: May 20-22, 2024

Conference Venue: Jüdisches Museum Franken, Fürth

Organizer: Prof. Dr. Cornelia Wilhelm, Abteilung Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur, LMU München

Sponsors (and co-organizers): Abteilung für Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur der LMU München, Jüdisches Museum Franken in Fürth, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, München, DFG, Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo-Baeck-Instituts in Deutschland, Bayerischen Amerika-Akademie and Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst.

May 20:

7 pm, Jüdisches Museum Franken (JMF), Evening Lecture:

- „To spread the heritage we have assumed.“ Central European Rabbis and Chazzanim in Exile in Latin America Liliana R. Feierstein (Humboldt University, Berlin)

May 21:

9am - 12:30 pm, JMF, Morning Session: The Uses of the Past: Agency and the Political Arena

Chair: Michael Brenner (LMU München)

- “Renewal, Revival and Return: Unexpected Agency for German Refugee Rabbis in the US”
Cornelia Wilhelm (LMU München)
- “Justice Thou Shalt Pursue: From Nazi Germany to Rabbinic Leader and Freedom Rider in the United States Civil Rights Movement in 1961” Joshua Plaut (Rabbi, Metropolitan Synagogue NYC and managing director AFRC)

- „It is the great desire of our life that what German Jews have created intellectually and expressed spiritually may live on in other countries and in Israel’ Rabbi Dr. Henrique Lemle and his commitment to Liberal Judaism” (Marlen Eckl, independent historian)
- “The Breuer Congregation in Washington Heights: Negotiating a Neo-Orthodox Jewish Legacy” Raphael Thurm (Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv)

2 pm, JMF, Afternoon Program ***only for the invited active conference participants:***

Jewish Cultural Heritage in local Jewish Communities: Guided Tour “Jewish Museum Franken and Walk through Jewish Fürth”, sponsored by the International Office, LMU München,

sponsored with funds of the Bavarian Department of Science and the Arts (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst).

May 22:

9 am - 12:30 pm, JMF, Morning Session: A Future for the Past: Community and Heritage

Chair: Cornelia Wilhelm (LMU München)

- „Our generation passes on and the following does not know much anymore about Jewish life in Germany“ Astrid Zajdband (Embry Riddle University, Daytona FL)
- “Postwar Jewish Ultra-Orthodox Attempts to Delegitimize German Jewish Orthodox Legacy and Heritage” Kimmy Caplan (Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv)
- „German-speaking Rabbis in Jerusalem after 1933“ Christian Kraft, Tübingen (PhD LMU)
- “Austrian Rabbis in search for communities in Israel” Dieter J. Hecht (Institute for Cultural Studies and Theater History at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna)

2 pm- 5 pm, JMF, Afternoon Session: The Re-construction and Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Chair: Gerhard Schön (LMU München)

- “From historical sources to research data. How to create new knowledge with known facts. A workshop report of the project “Trials and Transmissions: Mapping the Legacy of the German Refugee Rabbinate” and its database MIRA” Tabea Henn (ITG, LMU München)
- “Digital Records of German Refugee Rabbis in the Global Collections of the JDC Archives” Jeffrey Edelstein, JDC-Archives New York)
- “Preservation and Documentation of The Lost Spiritual Heritage of German Rabbis: The Challenges of Preserving and Documenting lost Cultural Heritage” Isaac Hershkovitz (Bar Ilan University)

End of Workshop at 5 pm

The workshop is organized by Prof. Dr. Cornelia Wilhelm as part of her ongoing research project “Trials and Transmissions: Mapping the Legacy of the German Refugee Rabbinate” in the DFG funded priority program „Jewish Cultural Heritage “, for more information see:

[https://www.jgk.geschichte.uni-](https://www.jgk.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/jgk_neuzeit/personen/professoren/wilhelm_cornelia/current_research/index.html)

[muenchen.de/jgk_neuzeit/personen/professoren/wilhelm_cornelia/current_research/index.html](https://www.jgk.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/jgk_neuzeit/personen/professoren/wilhelm_cornelia/current_research/index.html)