**Source Exploration: Excerpts from the Pamphlet by Gabriel Riesser proposing the Emancipation of the Jews**

**Full source citation:**

Gabriel Riesser, *Vertheidigung der bürgerlichen Gleichstellung der Juden gegen die Entwürfe des Herrn Dr. H. E .G. Paulus: den gesetzgebenden Versammlungen Deutschlands gewidmet* [*Defense of the Civic Equality of the Jews with Respect to the Proposals of Herr H. E. G. Paulus: Brought to the Attention of the Legislative Assemblies of Germany*]. Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1831, pp. 25, 29-31, 33-4, 42-5, 53-4, 56-7.

* Found on German History in Documents and Images, Translated by Jeremiah Riemer
* ULR for this record: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=341>

**Location of Original Document/where the publication can be found**

Original Document was published in 1831 and published by Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich and resides in the Bavarian State Library. The nearest reproduction of this document to UCSB in microform resides in the University of California, Los Angeles (85 miles away).

* A full online version of the book can be found on the Bavarian State Library digital archives website:
* <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10571144.html>

**Description of the Original Publication**

Within the source Gabriel Reisser, a German Jewish lawyer, advocates the emancipation of the Jewish people. He rejects H.E.G. Paulus’s insistence that the only way for Jews to assimilate and become equal citizenship was to embrace Christianity. By saying so, Paulus turns conversion from a “religious act into a political one”. Furthermore, belief that Christianity presupposes German citizenship runs contrary to the belief that politics and religion should remain separate. Reisser reveals that there is an ulterior economic motive of those trying to exclude Jews from participation in German life. Here he connects Jewish emancipation to German nationalization, arguing that those provincial elites opposing equality on the basis of reduced competition would not be able to do so if there were laws guaranteeing equal citizenship for the whole of Germany. Reisser further argues that Jews would be willing to give up some of their own laws if they were granted civil rights in exchange. Finally he argues Jewish participation in German military conflict was a “baptism of blood” and therefore Jews are worthy of equal citizenship.

The publication is 95 pages long and the parts summarized above are from pages 25, 29-31, 33-4, 42-5, 53-4 and 56-7.

**Information about the author**

Gabriel Riesser was a Jewish-German politician and lawyer who lived from 1806 to 1863 and a leading advocate of Jewish emancipation. He studied law at the universities of Heidelberg and Kiel. He was refused in becoming a lecturer at Heidelberg and in 1830 was denied to practice as a notary because of his religion. He soon published pamphlets addressed to the German people demanding the emancipation of all Jews. He advocated special Jewish organizations to collectively fight for emancipation rights and rejected the notion that Jews had to convert to Christianity to enter into German public life. H.E.G. Paulus, a theologian and professor at Heidelberg, who conversely argued that the Jewish people were a nation and therefore could not be German citizens, heavily contested his ideas. In 1840 Riesser opened a notary’s office in Hamburg. In the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 he was vice-chancellor for two months and also part of the constitutional committee. Within the National Assembly he fought for Jewish emancipation and was part of the delegation that offered the German crown to the King of Prussia, Frederick Wilhelm IV. He became a representative in the Erfurt Parliament in 1850 and in 1860 was appointed to the Hamburg High Court as a judge until his death in 1863.

**Who has published or cited the text**

In Gideon Reuveni’s article “Emancipation through Consumption: Moses Mendelssohn and the Idea of Marketplace Citizenship”, he cites the text to support his claim that Riesser observed that the economic usefulness of Jews predicated their useful citizenship. In effect, “economic and civic freedom are inextricably linked” because Jews, Riesser argued, are not simply useful consumers but also actors and producers.

* Gideon Reuveni. “Emancipation through Consumption: Moses Mendelssohn and the Idea of Marketplace Citizenship”. *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*. 59, 2014. 17.

In David Meola’s thesis dissertation, Riesser’s article is cited to demonstrate “ideological disputes in the greater German public sphere”, that were carried out in smaller formats such as newspapers or pamphlets.

* David Andrew Meola. “Becoming Public : Jews in Baden and Hannover and Their Role in the German Press, 1815-1848.” Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) 2008+. Thesis/Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2012. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0073289. 188.