

DUBNOW-INSTITUT

# Jahrbuch • Yearbook

**XVII 2018**

A large, elegant, white cursive signature that reads 'Dubnow' is centered on the dark blue background. The signature is fluid and artistic, with long, sweeping strokes.

JAHRBUCH DES DUBNOW-INSTITUTS (JBDI)  
DUBNOW INSTITUTE YEARBOOK (DIYB)

2018



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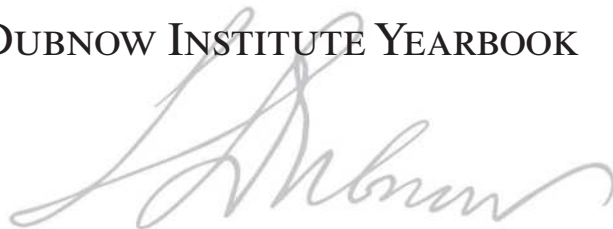
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JAHRBUCH DES DUBNOW-INSTITUTS  
DUBNOW INSTITUTE YEARBOOK



XVII  
2018

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



Diese Maßnahme wird mitfinanziert  
durch Steuermittel auf der Grundlage  
des vom Sächsischen Landtag  
beschlossenen Haushaltes.

### **Redaktionsanschrift:**

Jahrbuch des Dubnow-Instituts / Dubnow Institute Yearbook  
Leibniz-Institut für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur – Simon Dubnow,  
Goldschmidtstraße 28, 04103 Leipzig

E-Mail: [redaktion@dubnow.de](mailto:redaktion@dubnow.de)  
[www.dubnow.de](http://www.dubnow.de)

Gesamtlektorat und -korrektorat: André Zimmermann  
Lektorat englischsprachiger Texte und Übersetzungen: Tim Corbett und Jana Duman

### **Bestellungen und Abonnementanfragen sind zu richten an:**

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht  
Abteilung Vertrieb  
Robert-Bosch-Breite 6  
D-37070 Göttingen

Tel. +49 551 5084-40  
Fax +49 551 5084-454  
E-Mail: [order@v-r.de](mailto:order@v-r.de) / [abo@v-r.de](mailto:abo@v-r.de)  
[www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com](http://www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com)

Mit 12 Abbildungen

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der  
Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind  
im Internet über <https://dnb.de> abrufbar.

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Satz und Layout: Reemers Publishing Services, Krefeld

**Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | [www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com](http://www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com)**

ISSN 2197-3458  
ISBN 978-3-647-37080-4

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Netta Cohen

## Memories of a Zoologist: Reflections on the Role of the Archive in the Production of Knowledge and Memory

Heinrich Mendelssohn was born in Berlin in 1910 to an assimilated bourgeois German-Jewish family that was related to the famous Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and the composer Felix Mendelssohn. Already during his early childhood, Mendelssohn demonstrated great interest in nature and displayed a special passion for the study of animals. At the age of twelve, he joined the Zionist youth movement *Blau-Weiß*, which drew upon youth hiking organizations such as the *German Wandervögel*, and promoted outdoor recreation influenced by romantic and national ideals. In 1928, he began to study zoology and medicine at the *Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität* in Berlin. However, soon after the Nazi rise to power in Germany in 1933, he decided to immigrate to Palestine and completed his studies at the newly founded *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*. He joined the *Tel Aviv Biological-Pedagogical Institute* in 1935, and, in 1947, he became its official manager. In 1956, the *Biological-Pedagogical Institute* transformed into the *Nature Sciences Faculty* of the emerging *Tel Aviv University*, a formal process which made Mendelssohn the first Chairman of the Department of Zoology. Five years later, he was nominated Dean of the *Nature Sciences Faculty*, and, in 1966, he was appointed Vice President of the *Tel Aviv University*.

Besides devoting his life to research and academia, Mendelssohn was also engaged in numerous environmental campaigns, and he is often considered to be the first to raise awareness of environmental issues in the Israeli public sphere. During the 1950s, Mendelssohn helped establish the nation's first nongovernmental organization, the *Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI)*, and served as its first chairman. In 1963, he was involved in the foundation of the *Israel Nature Authority (INA)*, a governmental agency that established and managed nature reserves in Israel. In addition, he assisted in formulating the first Israeli laws for nature protection and animal rights. During his lifetime, he received numerous prizes and honors, including the

Weizmann Prize, the Israel Prize, and the German Federal Cross of Merit (*Bundesverdienstkreuz*). He died in 2002 at the age of 92.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from delineating the zoologist's life trajectory, the papers of Heinrich Mendelssohn can serve as a gateway to broader historical and political developments of his time, including, for example, the rise of National Socialism to power in Germany and the displacement of German Jews starting from the 1930s, or the emergence of Jewish national ideology in Europe and the ensuing violent confrontations between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. However, as it will be demonstrated on the following pages, Mendelssohn's professional records can also provide information on contemporary zoological and ethological research methodologies and practices, and these could potentially contribute to a better understanding of processes of knowledge production in natural sciences as well as help reveal the social and cultural contexts in which this kind of knowledge was embedded.

Much of archival theory in the last decades has been devoted to discussions on the inherent political aspect of the archive as a powerful institution in the production of memory, identity, and knowledge. In 1995, French philosopher Jacques Derrida published a seminal essay titled *Mal d'archive* (Archive Fever).<sup>2</sup> Derrida defined the archive as a site of violence and emphasized the power of the archive and the archivist in determining past, present and future realities.<sup>3</sup> Derrida's essay contributed to the emergence of a prolific discourse on the political role of the archive and bolstered a large literature that presented the archivist as an active agent in the making of national identity and consciousness in the modern

- 1 Archives for the History of Tel Aviv University (henceforth AHTAU), Heinrich Mendelssohn Collection (henceforth HMC), Finding Aid. The Papers of Heinrich Mendelssohn 1910–2002, 4–6.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, transl. by Eric Prenowitz, in: *Diacritics* 25 (1995), no. 2, 9–63.
- 3 However, as historian Carolyn Steedman argues, the work of Derrida in *Archive Fever* has much less to do with the archive itself and its political implications than with psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and Freud. Richard J. Matthews also claims that postmodern archival theory understands deconstruction wrong by misreading Derrida's work. According to Matthews, it cannot be about power and injustice since Derrida's approach is inherently inconclusive as deconstruction in general provides no specific guidelines and certainly is incapable of generating a definite ethical or political stance. See Carolyn Steedman, *Something She Called a Fever*. Michelet, Derrida, and Dust, in: *The American Historical Review* 106 (2001), no. 4, 1159–1180, here 1159 f.; Richard J. Matthews, *Is the Archivist a "Radical Atheist" Now? Deconstruction, Its New Wave, and Archival Activism*, in: *Archival Science* 16 (2016), no. 3, 213–260, here 213.

state.<sup>4</sup> Derrida's essay and the scholarly work of many of his commentators serve this article as a theoretical backdrop for examining the political aspects of Heinrich Mendelssohn's archival collection.

Yet, unlike general statements on non-specific archives, the careful examination of this specific collection and the active participation of the author in its inception will also enable questioning some of the ideas and conventions that have been rooted in recent archival theory. One of the main arguments of this article is that the production of knowledge and the manufacturing of memory in the archive cannot be subjected to only one authoritative power, namely to the archivist alone. Instead, it is a result of a complex power relation between three main agents: the creator of the archival records, the archivist, and the scholar. This decentralized approach to power relations in the archive illuminates how different agents often compete and, at times, complement each other in the immediate interpretation of archival records and their broader historical implications while unfolding constant processes of construction, reconstruction, and deconstruction of the content and form of the archive.

The first section of this article analyzes the role of the creator of the records in the process of knowledge production at the archive – in this case Heinrich Mendelssohn himself – and focuses on his conscious and unconscious attempts to construct a coherent and meaningful story of his life while concurrently loading his personal documents with the most immediate and obvious political connotation. While utilizing Derrida's notion of the archival "death wish," this article also argues that the archive is in fact already shaped during the lifetime of its creator as he begins to be aware of his temporality and aspires to leave his mark on both the present and the future.

The second section of this article focuses on the role of archivists and their part in the production of knowledge at the archive. While accepting the axiom of archivists' powerful position, this article aims to problematize the exclusiveness often attributed to their authoritative role in archival theory. This approach is largely based on the practical limitations that dictate the daily work of archivists, and which are often much more significant than any hidden political motive. In addition, since archivists are responsible for the physical preservation of archival records, and because of their position

4 In 1998 and 1999, the Journal *History of the Human Sciences* published two special issues devoted to archival theory which consisted of many important interpretations of Derrida's essay. Other noteworthy articles and books published as a response to *Archive Fever* include, among others: Marlene Manoff, *Theories of the Archive* from across the Disciplines, in: *Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2004), no. 1, 9–25; Jonathan Boulter, *Melancholy and the Archive. Trauma, History, and Memory in the Contemporary Novel*, London 2011; Steedman, *Something She Called a Fever*; Matthews, *Is the Archivist a "Radical Atheist" Now?*.

as mediators between two other powerful agents of knowledge production at the archive, their capability to influence the political content of the archive is usually limited.

The third section in this article discusses the role of scholars as agents of knowledge production at the archive. It claims that scholars enjoy the greatest independence and freedom in comparison to the other agents as the narrative they produce is not restricted to one kind of source or one archival institute. Scholars are encouraged to utilize a larger variety of literary sources, yet they are also expected to approach their sources carefully and critically, a practice which enhances their latitude and opens them to a broader discussion on the records.

Because of the freedom they enjoy in the archive, different scholars can also produce different kinds of knowledge. To demonstrate the utilization of the same archival records for the construction of distinct narratives, this section also presents two historical accounts of Heinrich Mendelssohn's archival collection. The first account summarizes the work of historian Ray Schrire<sup>5</sup> in his article *Ökologische Kommunikation*.<sup>6</sup> The second account is suggested by the author of this article and focuses on the intersection between Jewish national ideology and nature education in Palestine (later the State of Israel) as it is reflected in Mendelssohn's work.

When discussing the politics of the archive, archival theory usually refers to the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge. Yet, the content of archives and the knowledge produced in them are often also intertwined with "real" political notions and events. Emphasizing these ideas in an archival collection of a zoologist is perhaps not the most obvious choice, and yet political aspects are not absent from the archive nor are they difficult to find in it. Thus, besides deliberating power/knowledge processes in Mendelssohn's archival collection, this article also aims to present its concrete political content. Since different political dimensions – "within" the records and "outside" of them – are often interlaced in the archive, they will serve this article alternately as a common thread.<sup>7</sup>

5 Ray Schrire was one of the three archivist-scholars who participated in the archival processing of Heinrich Mendelssohn's private estate at the Archives for the History of Tel Aviv University.

6 Ray Schrire, *Ökologische Kommunikation*. Heinrich Mendelssohns Nachlass, in: *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 11 (2017), no. 1, 95–106.

7 It is also being recognized that by discussing knowledge production at the archive, this article is subjected to the inevitable tautological paradox that often occurs in accounts of history and sociology of science, as it produces meta-knowledge on similar processes of knowledge production.

## The Creator

Heinrich Mendelssohn's papers were transferred from his office and his home to the Archives for the History of Tel Aviv University in 2002. The collection mainly reflects Mendelssohn's academic work and consists of professional letter exchanges, scientific notes and observations, articles and publications, as well as images and audio-visual material of the various species he studied. Although most of this archival material could be described as scientific and academic, the aim of this section is to reveal the overt and covert political connotations within processes of knowledge production at the archive by focusing on the formation and gathering of material by the creator himself.

As we shall see on the following pages, Mendelssohn's environmental ideas were often realized within the political sphere. However, his documents also express non-environmental political views. This is perhaps best demonstrated in his interviews with various newspapers throughout the years, in which he often voiced his political opinions. For example, in an interview for *Haaretz* from 7 January 2000, he revealed his abiding animosity towards his sister, which formed after he realized that she was not only disinterested in nature but also an anti-Zionist. In the same interview, he disclosed his support of the Israeli Labour Party while concurrently expressing his detestation of Israel's Arab and Jewish Oriental population.<sup>8</sup>

Mendelssohn's records also document his good rapport with prominent public and political figures, such as Yigal Alon (1918–1980), Reuma Weizman (b. 1925), Haim Levanon (1899–1986), and Shimon Peres (1923–2016).<sup>9</sup> Yet, most significant of all was his friendship with the latter, who changed his name from Perski to Peres after meeting Mendelssohn in the Um-Rashrash expedition to the Negev during the 1940s (fig. 1). The expedition members recounted that during the journey they had observed a *Gypaetus barbatus* (bearded vulture), whose name in Hebrew is Peres. Fascinated by its majestic impression and following Mendelssohn's scientific explanation about the species, Perski decided to adopt the bird's name.<sup>10</sup> This event was not only the beginning of a long-term relationship between the politician and the zoologist but, on a more symbolic note, it was also understood as the metamorphosis of a diasporic Jew into a native Sabra by virtue of his "renewed" personal connection to nature and landscape in his chosen homeland.

8 Dalia Karpel, Death to Cats, in: *Haaretz*, 7 January 2000, 42.

9 AHTAU, HMC, 902.0127/01.

10 AHTAU, HMC, 902.0163/02.



Fig. 1: Shimon Peres, Heinrich Mendelssohn, and Azaria Alon (left to right). The picture has been taken at 17 March 1987 by the Zoom 77 company from Jerusalem. Source: The Archives for the History of Tel Aviv University.

Mendelssohn's environmental activism also manifested itself in political environmental activity. His efforts in promoting legislation for the protection of nature in the Israeli parliament were often successful, including a campaign that led to the passing of the Wildlife Animals Protection Law in 1955.<sup>11</sup> This law was meant to replace the old Mandate Law from 1924, which Mendelssohn considered to be an inefficient instrument for saving endangered species. The new law took a novel approach that has since been adopted in other countries around the world. Rather than making lists of animals that are off-limits to hunters, the law banned hunting in general but allowed for licenses to permit the hunting of certain species which could sustain losses. Another important law that Mendelssohn helped formulate was the National Parks and Nature Reserves Act of 1963, which established the legal status of INA and the Israel Park Authority (IPA).<sup>12</sup>

Yet Mendelssohn's powerful position as a producer of knowledge at the archival collection also contains a deeply formalistic aspect. Long before

11 AHTAU, HMC, 902.173/016.

12 AHTAU, HMC, 902.173/016.

postcards, notes, letters, journals, and books became hallowed archival relics shielded in acid-free, lignin-free, pH-neutral boxes, folders, and tissues for future generations, they served as common and even trivial objects of daily life. They were used, reused, impaired, forgotten, and thrown away. Individuals usually discard records and objects much more frequently than they preserve them. Besides in the case of special documents and artifacts that have specific importance or personal value, consciousness for preservation usually only appears simultaneously with the realization of one's temporality and mortality.

Derrida described this principle as the archival "death wish." With this concept, he followed Freud's understanding of loss as an event that defines the subject. In his essay *Mourning and Melancholy*, Freud suggested that only through the experience of radical departure from a previous condition of narcissistic self-sufficiency the subject becomes aware of his or her finitude.<sup>13</sup> Or, as Carolyn Steedman puts it, the "fever" of the archive is a feverish desire, a sickness unto death. This fever is not so much to enter the archive but to hold and have it – "to find, or locate, or to possess that moment, as a way of possessing the beginning of things."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the notion of "death wish" can help explain why records of Mendelssohn's early life in Germany are scarce and do not include almost any literary sources, whereas his later life and work, especially from the 1960s onward, is documented feverishly.

On the other hand, James Jordan, Lisa Leff, and Joachim Schlör suggest that persecution and migration ought to be considered as key elements for understanding the constitution of Jewish memory, history and even historiography. They ask "When people migrate, what happens to their documents?" and argue that studying archives through the prism of migration, compels researchers to accept incomplete historical narratives and complex non-linear memories.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, while migration might be an important framework for explaining and examining Mendelssohn's limited records from his early life in Germany, it cannot be utilized to discuss Mendelssohn's scarce records from the Mandate period and the first decade of the State of Israel.

One of the most important episodes which were left out of the archive was the campaign for the preservation of the Hula Valley (1950–1954), which was also Israel's first environmental campaign. The Hula is one of the many valleys that compose the Great Rift Valley. It is located in Northern Israel and

13 See Sigmund Freud et al., *Mourning and Melancholia*, in: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, transl. from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, vol. 14: 1914–1916, London 1999, 243–258.

14 Steedman, *Something She Called a Fever*, 1160.

15 James Jordan/Lisa Moses Leff/Joachim Schlör, *Jewish Migration and the Archive*. Introduction, in: *Jewish Culture and History* 15 (May 2014), no. 1–2, 2 and 5.



covers an area of approximately 177 km<sup>2</sup>. Until the 1950s, this area included 31 km<sup>2</sup> of wetland and 14 km<sup>2</sup> of a sweet water lake. In view of the land's hot and dry climate and the scarcity of sweet water reservoirs, starting from the 1930s the Hula gained the attention of various natural scientists. Botanists considered it a rare habitat for plants, and zoologists had vast interest in exploring the fauna of one of Israel's only wetlands. In 1940, Mendelssohn and zoologist Heinz Steinitz (1909–1971) discovered the *Latonia nigriventer* and published a scientific article on this endemic frog. Amotz Zahavi (1928–2017), Mendelssohn's student who would later become one of the main forces behind the SPNI, dedicated his master's thesis to a thorough survey of the birds of the Hula wetland. Zahavi's research was published in *Saliit*, an ornithological journal edited by Mendelssohn and produced in collaboration with the Zoological Society of Israel.<sup>16</sup>

However, in the eyes of state institutions, the Hula was mainly a habitat for mosquitos and thus understood as a disseminator of malaria. According to the legal owner of the land, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the swamp was to be drained and the land used for agriculture. The Hula Development Company Inc., which was founded for this specific project, stated in its business registration ordinance that its aim was “to establish, implement, equip, train, improve, manage and supervise this agricultural and industrial enterprise.”<sup>17</sup> From a Zionist perspective, the drainage of the Hula was considered one of the state's most important ventures of the time, a battle against the hostile nature and an example for the Zionist ideal of “prevailing over the wilderness” (*kibush ha-shmama*).<sup>18</sup>

The clash between these two worldviews was inevitable. In response to the state's aspiration to develop the Hula, two scholarly societies – the Zoological society and the Botanical Society – decided to unite, and created the first official environmental organization in Israel, the Joint Committee for the Protection of Nature, which would, in 1953, become the SPNI. Hoping to protect at least part of the Hula, members of the Committee published leaflets and arranged meetings with policy makers. Eventually, the first nature reserve in Israel was founded, stretching 4 km<sup>2</sup> out of the 33 km<sup>2</sup> that the Committee wished to protect. Indeed, efforts to prevent development schemes at the Hula were partial, nevertheless, they assisted in creating a

16 See Heinrich Mendelssohn/Heinz Steinitz, A New Frog from Palestine, in: *Copeia* 1943 (1943), no. 4, 231–233; Amotz Zahavi, Observations of Birds in the Hula (1951–1953), in: *Saliit* 1 (December 1954), no. 1.

17 Central Zionist Archives (henceforth CZA), KKL5/23123.

18 See Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation. Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920–1947*, Chicago, Ill./Bristol 2007.

community of dedicated nature lovers that would become the core of Israel's environmental movement in the next decades.

The Hula campaign was also a milestone in Mendelssohn's personal biography. In a lecture he held in the National Academy of Sciences in Jerusalem in 1970, he portrayed himself as one of the leading members of the Committee and the one put in charge of negotiations with the JNF.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, this episode is almost entirely absent from the archival collection, presumably a result of young Mendelssohn's lack of awareness as to his temporality and mortality.

On the other hand, records from Mendelssohn's last decade (1990s–2000s) are abundant and often much less significant. During these years Mendelssohn preserved and stored printed emails together with other random paperwork and post. This archival material includes bills, women's magazines ("they contain simple things that do not bother my mind"),<sup>20</sup> shopping lists and advertisements for plumbing services in his neighborhood in the town of Ramat Gan. By gathering and collating his own documents, Mendelssohn becomes the first agent in the process of knowledge production at the archive. This commencing and commending power, whether conscious or unconscious, determines the basic structure of the archival collection and fills it with its primary content.

## The Archivist

The second agent in the production of knowledge at the archive is the archivist. Derrida emphasized his power in constituting the interplay between records that are made public and those that remain private, records that are made transparent and those that remain secret or forgotten.<sup>21</sup> According to him, the archivist's "archontic power" is manifested in the practices of unification, identification, classification, and consignment (in the meaning of gathering of signs) of archival records.<sup>22</sup>

Sociologist Richard Harvey Brown and librarian Beth Davis-Brown utilize Derrida's terminology to provoke the archival convention as they raise questions on daily practices carried out by archivists:

19 Records concerning this episode in the archival collection are usually from later years. See, for example: AHTAU, HMC, 10.08.1970. 902.0145/02, Mendelssohn's lecture paper on the history of nature protection in Israel.

20 Karpel, *Death to Cats*, 44.

21 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 12.

22 See *ibid.*, 10.

“Which materials are preserved in the archive and which are excluded? As the documents and artefacts selected for the archive are ordered and classified, how do the schemas and structures applied include, exclude, foreground or marginalize those materials? [And] to what extent do the logical hierarchies for classification and arrangement reflect social or political hierarchies?”<sup>23</sup>

These kinds of questions and the decisions that follow them differ from one archive to the other. As personal estates are often deposited at archival institutions by individuals or families, their re-organization by archivists tends to be more flexible and is sometimes even adjusted to the personal requests of the creator himself.<sup>24</sup> For Mendelssohn’s collection, the archivists were not given direct instruction by the creator or his family, however, they decided to preserve the original order of Mendelssohn’s files whenever possible.

This decision cohered with the fact that Mendelssohn himself frequently organized his documents and files according to nearly archival categories. For example, he arranged his letters in distinct files according to geographical, institutional and chronological order, and collated his observation records, notes, articles, and photographs in organized files according to the type of species they described. The archivists’ decision to preserve Mendelssohn’s sometimes meticulous organization also stemmed from their intention to make his research epistemology and methodology accessible as well as to reflect his vast research interests and encyclopedic knowledge of zoological species.

Yet the intervention of archivists in the arrangement of records can contain more than one meaning and can also be a result of an institutional decision. Three institutions were involved in the establishment of Mendelssohn’s collection: the German Literature Archive Marbach, the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv University. These institutions were essentially interested in the cultural aspects of the archival estate and especially in its German-Jewish connotation. This special emphasis did not change the general character of the archive and its records, yet it did highlight fundamental aspects in Mendelssohn’s life which were in fact less prevalent in the archive. As mentioned earlier, scarcity of records on certain life events (especially from an early age) and a lack of introspective personal writing do not necessarily imply the absence or unimportance of these moments.

23 Richard Harvey Brown/Beth Brown-Davis, *The Making of Memory. The Politics of Archives, Libraries, and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness*, in: *History of the Human Sciences* 11 (1998), no. 4, 17–32, here 17.

24 See Catherine Hobbs, s. v. “Personal Records,” in: Luciana Duranti/Patricia C. Franks, *Encyclopedia of Archival Science*, London 2015, 266–270.

Besides a few records from Mendelssohn's early life which indicate his German-Jewish cultural background, the archival collection also contains some documents that illustrate Mendelssohn's own definition of his cultural identity as an adult. These include an article he wrote for the *Medizinhistorisches Journal* (Journal for the History of Medicine) titled *My Experiences at the Berlin University between the Years 1928 and 1933*,<sup>25</sup> as well as an interview with historians on his experience as a Jewish child and youngster in the Weimar Republic.<sup>26</sup> In an interview with *Haaretz*, Mendelssohn described himself as a proud Yekke. Yet, not less important were his profuse professional contacts with colleagues in West and East Germany starting from the 1960s, and his decision to continue using German in his notes and observation cards long after he left Germany. In other words, although various types of records can reflect Mendelssohn's cultural identity, it would be impossible to organize them into a distinct archival category. Thus, as in many other cases, it is the responsibility of the archivist to bring to attention to what could have easily been marginalized at the archive.

However, the institutions that guided and supported the archival processing in Mendelssohn's collection also aimed at enhancing German-Jewish memory in a broader Israeli context, as the purpose of the project was described as contributing to the preservation of a "threatened" cultural heritage. To understand the fear of a lost collective heritage in social and cultural terms (perhaps indeed another form of "death wish"), it might be useful to mention the seminal theoretical work on memory and commemoration by historian Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Sites of Memory).

In this compendium, Nora makes an important distinction between what he terms as primitive civilizations who perceive their past through memory and modern civilizations who perceive their past through history. According to Nora, so-called primitive civilizations have a notion of a living past which is unconscious and in constant evolution. It is spontaneous, open to dialectic remembering and forgetting, and, at the same time, it is also commanding, powerful and brimming with heroes and myths. Nora gives the example of the Jewish diaspora as a people of memory: "[B]ound in daily devotion to the rituals of tradition [...] [they] found little use of historians until [their] forced exposure to the modern world."<sup>27</sup>

25 Heinrich Mendelssohn, *Meine Erfahrungen an der Berliner Universität in den Jahren 1928 bis 1933*, in: *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 29 (1994), no. 2, 183–188.

26 Anne Betten/Miryam Du-Nour, *Wir sind die Letzten. Fragt uns aus. Gespräche mit den Emigranten der dreißiger Jahre in Israel*, Gerlingen 1995, 41 f.

27 Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire*, in: *Representations* 26 (1989), Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory, 7–24, here 8.

On the contrary, according to Nora, modern civilizations suffer from forgetfulness and are remote from their own past. This remoteness, Nora argues, is also why they produce organized, disciplined, secular and intellectual accounts of their past, which are in fact reconstructions and representations, always problematic, critical, and incomplete. Nora summarizes modern civilization's notion of the past as he concludes, "[W]e speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left."<sup>28</sup> To him, the establishment of modern archives (as well as museums, monuments and other repositories of relics from the past) evince the lack of spontaneous memory which marks the rituals of a society without rituals. Thus, whereas Derrida stresses the creator's "death wish," Nora highlights the gradual death of people and their cultural heritage.

Other important elements in the production of knowledge at the archive are the disciplinary orientation, personal interests, and general knowledge of the archivists themselves and hence what they might view as important or unimportant in a specific historical, cultural, and political context. In addition, the role of archivists in providing a myriad of documents with physical structure is indeed a function that enables them to reveal – as well as to conceal – historical moments that might contain specific political meanings. Mendelssohn's collection includes, for example, several records which could have been left aside and forgotten unless the archivists had identified the broader historical and political context in which they were embedded.

One such record is a letter sent to Mendelssohn by an official in the INA on 14 June 1967 requesting a systematic survey of the fauna and flora in the newly occupied territories. The Six-Day War began on 5 June 1967 and changed the geopolitical power relations of the Middle East overnight. In less than one week, Israel had seized the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. Beyond changing the political landscape in the region, the war had immense economic, political, geopolitical, social, and cultural implications for both its Jewish and Arab populations. Among other things, it boosted the ties between some civil organizations and the military administration in the occupied territories – a process which was usually in the interest of both parties.

Since its establishment in 1963, the INA continuously aspired to increase the size and amount of its reserves. Thus, when Moshe Dayan (1915–1981), the Minister of Defense, himself contacted the INA to conduct a survey in the occupied territories only a few days after the end of the war, it was clear that this organization was facing a new era of novel possibilities.

28 Ibid., 7.

“The Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan, has turned to the INA in request to look after nature protected values in the Golan Heights and the Hermon slopes. For this purpose, we need to conduct a basic survey encompassing all the available information regarding natural phenomena in the area. We would appreciate it if you could conduct a fauna survey with the assistance of your employees as soon as possible.”<sup>29</sup>

Dayan’s urgency was not a result of his devoted commitment to nature values. He was known among environmentalists as a person who had neither understanding nor interest in nature values since the days he had served as Minister of Agriculture. The act of announcing an area as a nature reserve in the occupied territories merely served as a political and territorial means. The National Parks and Nature Reserves Act of 1963, mentioned earlier, clearly stated that once a land had been announced as a national park or a nature reserve, the announcement was to supersede any prior use. The act also affirmed that once such a plan was approved, no other form of planning or construction was to be allowed for the same territory unless it was given special permission by the authority itself. And finally, the authority was to be given the right to use any legal mean to evacuate intruders from such land.<sup>30</sup>

Following the 1967 War, nature reserves and national parks became means in the hands of the Israeli government and the military rule to control the territories. At the same time, this development presented a meteoric achievement for the INA. Indeed, on 10 July 1968, the organization published its first newsletter which stated: “Due to our precedence in the region [Golan Heights], we have greater power than anywhere else in the country to influence the planning of this area while considering its natural values and establishing our adequate status in it.”<sup>31</sup>

In terms of its scope at the archive, this episode seems almost insignificant. It consists of a few letters and a survey of the Golan Heights’ fauna conducted by Mendelssohn himself. Yet due to its historical and political implications, the archivists of Mendelssohn’s collection decided to call for its attention in the archive’s finding aid. Since finding aids are used by researchers to determine whether information within a collection is relevant to their research or not, the decision of archivists to highlight a certain episode has great potential to influence the ways in which knowledge is produced at the archive.<sup>32</sup>

However, it should be stressed that such decisions are not only inevitable but that their gravity often actually makes archivists much more conscious

29 AHTAU, HMC, 902.0171/07.

30 See AHTAU, HMC, 902.0173/016.

31 AHTAU, HMC, 902.0171/07.

32 AHTAU, HMC, Finding Aid, 7.

and cautious towards their work in comparison to the other agents at the archive. This is not the only weakness of archivists and archives. According to Derrida, archives remember only what is documented. This usually means the written and photographed record as anything else – spoken words, sounds, and silences – is annihilated. On the one hand, this annihilation can serve as the epitome of the archives' violence. Yet, on the other hand, it also demonstrates its fragility, its internal contradictions, and its inability to capture and classify the chaotic human existence into neatly organized categories. Derrida thus asserted that the structure of the archive itself determines what can be archived. He pointed out, for example, that most of Freud's heritage lies in letters to his colleagues and friends. Had he owned a telephone, a fax machine or an email, the knowledge we would have had today about Freud's professional work and personal life would have probably been very different.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, tempting as it is to theorize practices of archivists, most of their resolutions – political as they may be – depend on technical considerations such as budget, size of physical storage, and staff resources. Mendelssohn's estate, for example, consisted of many copies of his published articles. During the archival processing, the archivists had to decide what to do with this abundance of printed material. Some article copies contained notes and marks by the author himself, yet other copies were not unique in any way. Preserving all the copies of Mendelssohn's articles might have reflected Mendelssohn's methodology but it would also have taken up precious space in the archive. In this case, the archivists had to dispose of some of the material. Another relevant example from this collection would be the abundance of 8mm films on various animal species preserved by Mendelssohn in his office. The archivists decided to keep the films due to their potential historical and zoological value even though the Archives for the History of Tel Aviv University do not possess equipment for the preservation of this type of archival material, nor do they own a projector.<sup>34</sup>

Hence, although maintaining considerable authority in the archive, the simultaneous attention and awareness expected from archivists in relation to the archive's scope and content put them in a vulnerable position. While the creator of the archival records and the scholar are almost entirely free to utilize records according to their own view, the archivist is bound to respect the legacy of the creator while simultaneously enabling accessibility and comprehensibility for the scholar. Rather than being "violent" authorities, they are expected to mediate between different agents who pull knowledge in different directions at the archive.

33 See Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 17.

34 AHTAU, HMC, 902.0201/01–902.0213/02.



In some ways, it can even be said that archivists often leave more open ends, gaps, disorder, idiosyncrasies, and question marks than any other agent of knowledge production at the archive. As Nora points out, in contemporary historiography, it has become difficult to assess what type of information should be remembered, kept, and preserved because of the unpredictable or arbitrary nature of the definition of historical value and its potential meanings in the future.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the abundance of the archive is not only limited to textual material. Indeed, already in 1930, Paul Otlet (1868–1944), the founder of the documentation movement, redefined the term “document” and included in it a wide range of objects and artifacts that, according to him, conveyed information.<sup>36</sup> The growth of academic study of popular culture has also led scholars to research posters, advertisements, and objects. In Mendelssohn’s archive, it was often hard to decide whether an advertisement for a local plumber or a videotape of a movie he recorded on television should be preserved or not.

## The Scholar

The third agent in the chain of knowledge production at the archive is the scholar. According to political scientist Thomas Osborne, to historians the archive is what the laboratory is to the scientist in Bruno Latour’s work: a center of calculation – or, better said, a center for interpretation.<sup>37</sup> Yet, unlike scientists in the lab and certainly unlike creators of archival records and archivists, who are bound to one specific site of knowledge production, scholars are allowed and are even expected and encouraged to utilize more than one archive in their pursuit of knowledge production. For scholars, one archive alone provides partial, incomplete, and fragmented information and can thus only serve as a single component in the construction of a broader, richer, and more comprehensive narrative. Yet, at the same time, the abundance of records in one single archive is infinitely more than what scholars necessitate for their investigation. The reason for this ambiguous relation between scholars and archives is also related to the essence of scholars’ professional practice, which requires gathering, organizing, and making sense of diffused data while, at the same time, calling for critical analysis of the very same data.

35 See Nora, *Between Memory and History*, 16 f.

36 See Manoff, *Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines*, 10.

37 See Thomas Osborne, *The Ordinarity of the Archive*, in: *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 12 (1999), no. 2, 51–64, here 52.



In many ways, it is the scholar and not the archivist who aims to make sense of historical data at the archive, who fears the silence of myriad equivocal records, who is urged to explain, organize, connect, and chronologize while simultaneously violating the peacefulness of a “chaotic human existence” which is reflected at the archive. It is the scholar who transforms the nearly “flat” information of the archive into a hierarchical one as he or she is not only the last and final agent in the chain of knowledge production but also the one who is encouraged to communicate this knowledge to a larger audience, and hence has greater influence on determining its predominant interpretation.

Yet, since there is never only one scholar interpreting a historical period or event, since the interpretation of two or more scholars is never similar, and since each scholar utilizes slightly different literature, different archives, and different archival sources, the knowledge they produce remains relatively heterogeneous, flexible, and open to debate. Moreover, according to historian Carolyn Steedman, even passing the threshold of the archive is in itself an event that is experienced differently by each and every scholar:

“As might be expected of an experience that is an important professional rite of passage, no one historian’s archive is ever like another’s; each account of his or her experience within them will always produce counterexamples, of different kinds of discomfort.”<sup>38</sup>

For Steedman, the relation between scholars and archives should not only be understood in conceptual terms but also physical ones. In her article, she sarcastically describes the fever of the archive not as a metaphor but as a real experience. To her, archival fever is the endless dust, the sleepless nights and unrest in quest of original sources, the myriad data and the time spent on often useless information, the expenses on hotels and restaurant meals that must be sacrificed for the time spent in the archive, and the fear of not having enough time to find sufficient or relevant material (“Archive Fever, indeed? *I* can tell you *all about* archive fever.”<sup>39</sup>)

To demonstrate the ideas mentioned above, this section suggests two scholarly accounts based on Mendelssohn’s archival collection. While both accounts draw on the same collection, each of them focuses on different aspects and relies on a distinct body of secondary literature to support its arguments. The first account is a synopsis of Ray Schrire’s article *Ökologische Kommunikation*. Schrire opens his article by stating that the link between natural sciences and environmental activism, as it is manifested in Mendelssohn’s work, is not an obvious one. Hence, unlike the emergence of Western environmental movements in the late nineteenth century, which were

38 Steedman, *Something She Called a Fever*, 1163.

39 *Ibid.*, 1164 (emphases in the original).

generally alien to natural sciences (at least until the second environmental wave in the 1960s and the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*<sup>40</sup>), the Israeli environmental movement was intertwined with scientific agendas from its inception, and this tendency was largely a result of Mendelssohn's own scientific practice. Schrire bases this argument on a careful analysis of Mendelssohn's field observation cards, file organization, and everyday research practices which, according to him, reflect both Mendelssohn's unique methodology as well as his environmental activism.<sup>41</sup>

Within this context, Schrire highlights two main disciplinary approaches which guided Mendelssohn in his work: ecology and ethology. Their importance is in the concrete link they create between species and their immediate environment. In other words, unlike notions of evolution which stress the dimension of time in the process of species' development, ecology and ethology highlight the dimension of space (the requirement of specific physical conditions in a certain habitat) for development. In addition, Schrire argues that the organization of Mendelssohn's files reflected the principle of diversity and variety in his work, according to which the more species exist in an ecosystem, the better chances it has to flourish. To conclude, according to Schrire, only by including Mendelssohn's scientific methodology and research practices can his motivation for environmental activism be understood.<sup>42</sup>

The second scholarly account of Mendelssohn's archival records displays the author's interpretation of Mendelssohn's role in advocating national ideology through nature education and environmental sentiments. As historians of nationalism have demonstrated, territories, landscapes, and natural environments were essential components in the construction of modern national identities. They provided nations not only with boundaries, but were also perceived as their habitats, and served as a backdrop for their real and imaginary historical roots.<sup>43</sup> One example for such a relation can be found in the case study of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany. According to historian Thomas Lekan, the environmental movement in Germany "participated actively in the cultural construction of nationhood by envisioning natural landmarks as touchstones of emotional identification, symbols of

40 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, London 1999 (reprint with a new afterword; first edition 1962).

41 See Schrire, *Ökologische Kommunikation*, 97 f.

42 See *ibid.*, 100–103.

43 To mention only the most renowned historians of nationalism who view nature and landscapes as an integral part of nation-building: Benedict R. O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983; Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism. Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge 2010.

national longevity, and signs of a new form of environmental stewardship.”<sup>44</sup> The utilization of nature for national causes in Germany is also interesting since it serves as the scenery for Mendelssohn’s early ideological development. As mentioned earlier, during his childhood and youth Mendelssohn was a member of the Zionist Blau-Weiß youth movement which drew upon German youth hiking organizations and emphasized the love of nature and the nation.

Zionist ideology in general was influenced by European romantic nationalism while also reflecting a long Jewish tradition of longing to “return” to the Land of Israel. However, the arrival of Jewish settlers in Palestine (later the State of Israel) often stimulated feelings of alienation and estrangement towards the country. The way to surmount these feelings required pursuing knowledge and becoming familiar with local nature and landscape. The ideological link between nation and nature was by no means vague or abstract. Already starting in the late 1920s, Jewish schools in Palestine began to teach *Yediaat ha-aretz*, a school subject which literally meant “knowing the land.” The purpose of this class was to acquaint children and adolescents with the geography, geology, topology, climate, fauna, and flora of their new homeland.<sup>45</sup>

After arriving in Palestine in 1933, Mendelssohn traveled through the country with the intention of familiarizing himself with it. At the same time, he wrote his doctoral dissertation at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the bird population in Palestine and went on to pursue an academic career, in which he continued to focus primarily on local and endemic wildlife. While he often insisted on scientific rigor, he did not restrict himself to academic teaching alone. Mendelssohn was an active agent in the utilization of natural sciences for national-educational purposes. For example, in 1935, he joined the Biological-Pedagogical Institute, an organization that had been founded twelve years earlier by Jehosha Margolin (1877–1947), an influential teacher and a natural scientist. The Institute’s official ideology was to educate and inspire Jewish children to a love for the nation and its nature. Margolin wrote “We, a people that was detached from soil and nature for 2000 years, [...] need to search and find the way to the natural environment that surrounds us, to learn it and be well familiar with it.”<sup>46</sup>

44 Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature. Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885–1945*, Cambridge, Mass./London 2004, 4 f.

45 See Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness. Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948*, foreword by Oren Yiftachel, transl. from the Heb. by Dimi Reider, Bloomington, Ind., 2015, 50.

46 Jehosha Margolin, cit. in Oz Almog, Ha-Tzabar. Dyukan [The Sabra. A Profile], Tel Aviv 1997, 260.

Indeed, Mendelssohn eventually transformed the Biological-Pedagogical Institute into the Faculty of Nature Sciences at Tel Aviv University, yet he continued to admire Margolin's pedagogical approach for many years to come. In 1974, Mendelssohn stated that Margolin's approach to teaching and his emphasis on field observations and excursions was one of the reasons that had led him to join the Biological-Pedagogical Institute instead of taking a highly respected teaching position at the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa.<sup>47</sup>

Mendelssohn's contribution to Jewish nation-building through nature education is evident in more than one aspect of the archival collection. Another common way to emphasize the intimate relation between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel was by alluding to the Tanakh. This tendency becomes especially obvious when considering the history of zoos and zoological research among Jews in Mandate Palestine. As historian Eliya Etkin demonstrates, the first modern zoo to open in Palestine was established in Tel Aviv in 1938 with the intention to reintroduce biblical animals to the country. In 1940, another zoo opened in Jerusalem, this time under the official title of a Biblical Zoo, which was meant to encourage national education, scientific research, and recreation.<sup>48</sup> The scientific challenge of proving the biological link between existing species (defined by binomial Latin names) and their scriptural references in biblical Hebrew occupied renowned zoologists such as Shimon Fritz Bodenheimer (1897–1959), who in 1949 published a book titled *Fauna in the Bible Lands*.<sup>49</sup> It is worth mentioning that Bodenheimer was Mendelssohn's admired teacher and supervisor at the Hebrew University. Moreover, during the 1960s, Mendelssohn himself was involved in the establishment of a nature reserve in the Arabah which aimed to recreate biblical wildlife. In fact, he was the one who composed the list of biblical animals which were to be "reintroduced" to the reserve.<sup>50</sup>

The relation between local nature and the scriptures clearly had a strong political dimension. Not only did it reflect the settlers' aspiration to construct a national identity, but it also served to emphasize the "civilizing mission" of Jews in a "backward" environment whose moral obligation was to transform the land back to its "original" fruitfulness. This tendency is also prevalent in Mendelssohn's approach towards Arabic culture and its so-called role in deteriorating nature. In a letter he sent to a hunting inspector at the INA in 1960, Mendelssohn expressed this view lucidly:

47 See AHTAU, HMC, 902.0181/03.

48 See Elia Etkin, The Ingathering of (Non-Human) Exiles. The Creation of the Tel Aviv Zoological Garden Animal Collection, 1938–1948, in: *Journal of Israeli History* 35 (2016), no. 1, 57–74, here 58.

49 Shimon Fritz Bodenheimer, *Fauna in the Bible Lands*, Jerusalem 1949.

50 See AHTAU, HMC, 902.0173/011.

“The civilized countries of Europe and North America are known for a meticulous protection of their wildlife. [...] Nature’s worst condition is probably in Muslim countries. [...] with modern ammunition they [Middle Easterners and North Africans] have destructed in rapid pace all wildlife animals. Since the Second World War almost all gazelle and Oryx have been exterminated [...]”<sup>51</sup>

As Noga Kadman points out, even though the usual enemies of biodiversity, in Israel as elsewhere, were industrialization, technological development, and “progress” in general, the common notion in Israel was also that Palestinian Arabs had neglected the land in the years prior to the “return” of the Jewish people, while the State of Israel alone possessed the scientific means and the environmental awareness to fix this damage.<sup>52</sup> Also, according to geographer Naama Meishar, the basis for environmental protection in Israel was and remains ethnocentric, and Israeli Jews are not only aiming to gain control over land through nature protection strategies, but also by trying to establish their positive local identity through a negative local Palestinian identity – all while destroying Palestinian links to the environment and giving priority to the Jewish national landscape, environmental development, and visitor convenience.<sup>53</sup>

The interpretation of some of Mendelssohn’s records in the context of national ideology is not meant to undermine the importance of his general scientific enterprise nor is it supposed to devalue his environmental activity. Above all, its purpose is to assert that Mendelssohn’s scientific approach ought to be also understood and considered in the political context of its era. In addition, both scholarly narratives presented above rely on records from the same archival collection. While these parallel accounts are by no means contradictory, each of them illuminates distinct aspects in Heinrich Mendelssohn’s life and work, and utilizes them to portray larger historical, cultural, political, and scientific developments. The ability to read (and write) more than one narrative into the archival collection reflects both the openness, fluidity, and flexibility of the archive itself, as well as the scholarly desire to provide it with new perspectives on current debates.

51 Uri Tzon, *Halom she-hitgashem. Olam ha-hai shel erez ha-tanakh*, “hai-bar”. *Mehkar ve-tazpiyot. Odot shikum edrey hayot ha-bar ha-tanakhivot ba-shmorot “hai-bar” be-Yisra’el* [A Dream that Came True. The Living World of the Bible Land, “Chai Bar.” Research and Observations. On the Preservation of Biblical Wildlife in the Chai Bar-Reserve in Israel], Tel Aviv 1990, 175.

52 Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness*, 46.

53 See *ibid.*

## Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, most contemporary archival theory is focused on the unparalleled powerful position of the archivist in the production of knowledge and memory at the archive. While this article recognized the power of archivists in determining some of the knowledge produced at the archive, it also aimed to present a more complex power relation between various authoritative and influential agents at the archive who often compete and, at times, complement distinct views and narratives on the same material data.

The first component in the chain of knowledge production is the owner and producer of the archival records who charges the documents with their most immediate and obvious meanings. According to this idea, the archive is, in fact, already being formed during the lifetime of the creator when he or she begins to be aware of his or her own temporality while wishing to leave his mark on both the present and the future.

The second component in the chain of knowledge production in the archive is the archivist. Yet, as demonstrated above, even this so-called simple category consists of more than one archivist-agent, as it usually refers both to the institutions that initiate, fund, and support the archive, as well as to the individuals who physically arrange and preserve the records. These different archivist-agents, too, are guided by various material and ideological motivations. This article has also argued that of all three agents, archivists are situated in the most vulnerable position. While both the creator of the archival records and the scholar can utilize archival records according to their own views, the archivist is bound to respect the legacy of the creator while simultaneously aiming to enable accessibility and comprehensibility of the records for the scholar. Thus, while producing knowledge at the archive, archivists often also serve as mediators between other agents of knowledge production in the archive.

The third agent at the archive that was discussed in this article is the scholar who, in comparison to the other agents, enjoys the greatest extent of independence and freedom in relation to the archival records. This alleged freedom is embedded in the scholar's professional practice which requires gathering, organizing, and making sense of diffused data, yet at the same time calls for critical analysis of the very same data.

The creator of the archive, the archivist, and the scholar thus maintain a dialectic relation in the process of knowledge production at the archive. All three are bound to each other while each of them has a different immediate relation to the archival records and a different approach to their interpretation. As a result, they also generate different perspectives and meanings in their interaction with the archival records.

While discussing various strategies of knowledge production at the archive, this article has also aimed to display central episodes in the biography of Heinrich Mendelssohn and the different ways in which they can be rendered from the agents' distinct standpoints. These episodes mostly focused on political aspects of Mendelssohn's life and work while thus demonstrating the political potential embedded in sites of knowledge production.