



Jewish Women in Enlightenment Berlin

Natalie Naimark-Goldberg

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Now available in paperback! The encounter of Jews with the Enlightenment has so far been considered almost entirely from a masculine perspective. In shifting the focus to a group of educated Jewish women in Berlin, this engaging study makes an important contribution to German Jewish history as well as to gender studies. Natalie Naimark-Goldberg's study of these women's letters, literary activities, and social life reveals them as cultivated members of the European public. Their correspondence allowed them not only to demonstrate their intellectual talents but also to widen their horizons and acquire knowledge—a key concern of women seeking empowerment. Her descriptions of their involvement in the public sphere, a key feature of Enlightenment culture, offer important new insights: social gatherings in their homes served the purpose of intellectual advancement, while the newly fashionable spas gave them the opportunity to expand their contacts with men as well as with other women, and with non-Jews as well as Jews, right across Europe. As avid readers and critical writers, these women reflected the secular world-view that was then beginning to spread among Jews. Imbued with enlightened ideas and values and a new feminine awareness, they began to seek independence and freedom, to the extent of challenging the institution of marriage and traditional family frameworks. A final chapter discusses the relationship of the women to Judaism and to religion in general, including their attitude to conversion to Christianity—the route that so many ultimately took.***'A major contribution to German Jewish history and to gender studies . . . It becomes clear that . . . Jewish women participated in the European Enlightenment as well, although usually in a different and unique way . . . [Naimark-Goldberg] enhances our view of the history of German Jewry and Jewish women, the processes of modernization and secularization, and the cultural history of the Jews at the onset of modern times.' Shmuel Feiner, Bar-Ilan University***'This book is of great interest and significance. Dr Naimark-Goldberg's approach is part of a newer historiographical tradition in the study of women and culture. Her book takes a new angle of research and makes a significant contribution to understanding Jewish women's history and Jewish culture as a whole.' Shulamit S. Magnus, Oberlin College [Subject: Jewish Studies, Gender Studies, History, German History]

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