Humboldt Yale History Network Travel Grant Application

**French Jewish Catechism Textbooks – Bibliographic List**

The use of catechisms for the instruction of Christian religion is not a recent innovation.Such textbooks, which present the credoin the form of questions and answers, were customary in Western Europe already before the advent of print. However, in Jewish education these types of books were only introduced at the beginning of the modern era due tothe process of emancipation and the ideological changes that followed, influencing the renewed definition of Jewish identity in general and religious identity in particular. In France, where equal rights were granted to the Jews in 1791, the first Jewish catechism was published in 1808 in the city of Metz, under the title *Catéchisme du culte hébraïque*.Written by Rabbi L.M. Lambert, the publication constituted a private initiative. In contrast, the books that followed were an initiative of the Consistoire Central, which published over fifty titles and various editions between 1820-1914.

In May 2018 I gave a lecture on this topic at an academic history conference in Paris**,** wherein I attempted to demonstrate the manner in which these books reflect the process of emancipation and how well they illustrate the interaction of a unique religion with universal values on one hand, and pedagogy and rhetoric on the other.[[1]](#footnote-1) This lecture was based on the Jewish catechisms which appear in scholarly literature,[[2]](#footnote-2) as well as the few that can be found at the National Library in Jerusalem. However, a brief visit to the library of the Rabbinic Seminary in Paris revealed additional titles not mentioned in scholarly literature. This library has a wealth of Judaic books – especially works published by the FrenchJewish community. However, the library is not in good condition; it does not have fixed hours, opening only by special request, and most of its books are not catalogued or well-preserved.

This project is a request to fund a research trip to the library of the Rabbinic Seminary in Paris in order to locate all the catechisms housed there and digitize them, with the aim of creating a detailed bibliography which will serve as a foundation for future research of catechisms: pedagogy, values, and ideologies. It is estimated that between thirty to fifty different books may be found there, half of which have not yet been examinedin scholarly literature.

Budget estimate:

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| Flight to Paris for five days (planned time frame: May 2019) | $600 |
| Transportation to/from the airport | $250 |
| Hotel in Paris – five nights ($150 a night) | $750 |
| Meals in Paris - five days ($50 a day) | $250 |
| Research assistant for digitization of fifty books ($10 an hour, fifty hours)  | $500 |
| Total | $2350 |

1. “Textbooks and Jewish Education in Europe (18th-19th Centuries): Knowledge, Pedagogy and Emancipation" (French), Transmission of Knowledge – 143th Congress of the Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques (CTHS), Ecoles des Chartes, Paris, April 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example, in the seventh chapter of the book by Michael Graetz, “The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle”, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)