

"In *The Jewish Reformation*, Michah Gottlieb skillfully restores the Bible to center stage in the process of German Jewry's emancipation, its endeavor to gain equal rights and acceptance in German society and culture. He significantly highlights the role of Bible translation in the ambitious effort to identify with the surrounding culture and fashion an appropriate version of 'bourgeois' piety while concomitantly maintaining Judaism's foundational distinctiveness."

—DAVID SORKIN, author of *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries*

"Why were German Jews so preoccupied with Bible translation? From 1783 to 1961 there were fifteen Jewish translations of the Pentateuch into German. Among the translators were Moses Mendelssohn, Leopold Zunz, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig. Michah Gottlieb, a leading interpreter of German-Jewish thought, explores this question and gives surprising answers. His important book tells the heroic story of German-Jewish piety, erudition, controversy, and bourgeois integrity."

—WARREN ZEV HARVEY, Professor Emeritus, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

"In *The Jewish Reformation*, Michah Gottlieb has brilliantly employed the biblical translations of Mendelssohn, Zunz, and S.R. Hirsch as gauges to measure the cultural transition of German Judaism and German Jews to the bourgeois world of modern Germany. Gottlieb provides a remarkably detailed and insightful exposition of these works and provides a delightfully rich historical and intellectual contextualization of his subjects. *The Jewish Reformation* constitutes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of modern Judaism!"

—DAVID ELLENSON, Chancellor Emeritus, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University

In the late eighteenth century, German Jews began entering the middle class with remarkable speed. That upward mobility, it has often been said, coincided with Jews' increasing alienation from religion and Jewish nationhood. In fact, Michah Gottlieb argues, this period was one of intense engagement with Jewish texts and traditions. One expression of this was the remarkable turn to Bible translation. In the century and a half beginning with Moses Mendelssohn's pioneering translation and the final one by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, German Jews produced sixteen different translations of at least the Pentateuch.

Exploring Bible translations by Mendelssohn, Leopold Zunz, and Samson Raphael Hirsch, Michah Gottlieb argues that each translator sought a "reformation" of Judaism along bourgeois lines, which involved aligning Judaism with a Protestant concept of religion. Buber and Rosenzweig famously critiqued bourgeois German Judaism as a craven attempt to establish social respectability to facilitate Jews' entry into the middle class through a vapid, domesticated Judaism. But Mendelssohn, Zunz, and Hirsch saw in bourgeois values the best means to serve God and the authentic actualization of Jewish tradition. Through their learned, creative Bible translations, these scholars presented competing visions of middle-class Judaism that affirmed Jewish nationhood while lighting the path to a purposeful, emotionally rich spiritual life grounded in ethical responsibility.

MICHAH GOTTLIEB

is Associate Professor in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. An expert on modern Jewish thought and culture with a focus on ethics and Jewish-Christian relations, he has written or edited several books and articles, including *Faith and Freedom: Moses Mendelssohn's Theological-Political Thought*.