

Moritz Stern (1864–1939)

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Moritz Stern, ca. 1932, photo: Mark Allen Goldsmith,

https://www.geni.com/photo/view/6000000011336151255?album_type=photos_of_me&photo_id=6000000013207892252 (Oct. 27th, 2020)

Moritz (Moses) Stern, son to Jacob (ben Meyer) and Rosalie (née Malsch) Stern, was born in Steinbach near Fulda in 1864. At the age of five, the family moved to Berlin, where Stern was educated at the Joachimsthaler and Köllner Secondary School. From 1883 until 1890, Stern studied history at the Humbolt University of Berlin, where he achieved his doctorate in 1889. During his lifetime, Stern was always interested in historic topics, such as Jewish life in Germany and Italy; anti-Judaism in the Middle Ages, modern (Jewish) history, etc. He researched and published vividly, e.g. for the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens.

However, Stern was also trained at the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminar in Berlin, and taught at the religious school of the Adass Israel Community. This Community was a new-orthodox breakaway minority of orthodox congregations, which were established in the 1860s against the rise of liberal Reform Judaism – and of which Stern was a member all his life. In 1891, Stern started serving as rabbi in Kiel, before he became the director of the Jewish Secondary School in Fürth in 1898. In the same year, he married Sara Carlebach (1880-1928), daughter of the famous Salomon Carlebach, Rabbi of Lübeck.

Stern later returned to Berlin and was promoted director of the religious Jewish Boy School in 1900. In 1905, Moritz Stern became a librarian at the Library of the Jewish Community of Berlin. The library had opened in 1902 and, following the model of the American Public Library, addressed both scientific and popular reader interests. It developed into one of the largest and most important

Jewish libraries in Europe, holding about 70.000 books. In 1917 and with the inclusion of the community's art collection, the library became also an important educational institution in Berlin. Stern was promoted chief librarian in 1920 and served in this position until his pension in 1932. He died in 1939 in Berlin, shortly before his planned emigration.

In 1938, the Library of the Jewish Community of Berlin was confiscated by the Nazis. Most of the holdings were found in 1949/50; today they are part of the National Library of Israel as well as of other institutions in Israel and the US.