



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

Welcome Address

by the State Secretary

at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research,

Cornelia Quennet-Thielen

at the opening of the exhibition

Jewish Mathematics in German Speaking Academic Culture

in Tel Aviv on 14 November 2011

Check against delivery.

Mr Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Regional Development and the Development of the Negev and the Galilee, Silvan Shalom

Minister a.D. Klaus Kinkel

Ambassador Primor

Director Armoni

Professor Epple

Esteemed Scientists

Friends of the Museum,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I THE EXHIBITION AT THE NAHUM GOLDMANN DIASPORA MUSEUM

There could be no better place for this exhibition than Beit Hatefutsot,¹ the Nahum Goldmann Diaspora Museum. It is located in the middle of the campus of one of Israel's centres of science, research and teaching: the University of Tel Aviv.

Its mission is to document the history of the Jewish Diaspora around the world. And we are acknowledging part of this history today by remembering outstanding personalities who have three things in common: their Jewish background, their life in Germany until living in Germany was made impossible for them, and their extraordinary mathematical talents.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the help of many supporters. It reflects the excellent relations between Germany and Israel and the strong ties between our scientific communities. That is, it reflects the strong interest we have in each other and our great willingness to address German-Jewish history together.

I would like to thank Mr Armoni for agreeing to host an exhibition whose contents he could not influence, and I am delighted that this exhibition is attracting so much interest.

My thanks also go to Professor Epple of the University of Frankfurt who developed the concept for this exhibition together with his team and to his cooperation partners Professor Gross and Mr Backhaus from the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt.

In expressing this appreciation and pleasure, I am speaking not only on behalf of Professor Annette Schavan, the Federal Minister of Education and Research, but also on behalf of the other supporters of this project: The Federal Foreign Office, the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the German Telekom Foundation. I would like to thank you, Mr. Kinkel, the head of the Foundation and our former Foreign Minister, for your unwavering commitment to this exhibition.

II THE CONTRIBUTION OF JEWISH MATHEMATICIANS IN GERMANY

Until 1933, Germany was one of the world leaders in the field of mathematics, along with France and the ascending USA. In the 19th century, three world-class centres of mathematics had emerged in the German states: Berlin, Königsberg and Göttingen. At first, Berlin was dominant; in the early 20th century, Göttingen became the German centre of mathematics.

This rise would have been unthinkable without Jewish mathematicians and mathematicians of

¹ hebr.: "Diaspora-Haus"

Jewish origin². They helped to shape mathematics in Germany and across the world. A few examples include Carl Gustav Jacobi in Königsberg, Leopold Kronecker in Berlin, and Hermann Minkowski, Edmund Landau, Richard Courant and Emmy Noether in Göttingen.

They worked together with other world-class mathematicians, including Carl Friedrich Gauss and Bernhard Riemann, Felix Klein and David Hilbert in Göttingen, Ernst Eduard Kummer and Karl Friedrich Weierstrass in Berlin.

The present exhibition documents this cooperation and social integration very impressively. In 1933, Jewish mathematicians held one third of all professorships in the field of mathematics in Germany.

That same year, it was made impossible for them to work; many of them were expelled, dispossessed, and murdered. Jewish life was systematically destroyed. We are left shaken whenever we think of the break with civilization that was the Shoah. I bow my head in shame and humility before the victims and before those who risked their lives to help them.

It is an enduring responsibility for us and our children to remember. This exhibition is a concrete and valuable contribution.

At the same time, it is our responsibility as well as a matter of concern to support the re-emergence of close scientific ties and to promote personal encounters. All sciences need international exchange and cooperation. The bilateral conference "Trends and Perspectives in Mathematics" is taking place today and tomorrow in connection with the exhibition. I am delighted that the history of mathematics is being linked with current research in this way – a history of close cooperation in the past which is related to the practice of German-Israeli cooperation in the present. That is exactly in the spirit of the exhibition, which points beyond the past in its very title – "transcending tradition".

However, this exhibition is not the only way in which Germany is paying tribute to the golden age of German-Jewish mathematics research. The German Research Association's Emmy Noether junior research groups for all disciplines are an outstanding example. They are named in honour of an extraordinary woman. Even though women were not allowed to obtain postdoctoral qualifications in the Wilhelminian Empire, Emmy Noether remained true to mathematics and went on to become an influential researcher and academic teacher. Then, in 1933, a teaching ban was imposed on her. Nevertheless, despite having been discriminated against - first as a woman, then as a Jew, she followed her vocation in an admirable way. May she set an example for people in Germany and Israel alike!

III THE EXHIBITION IN ISRAEL AND GERMAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS

The German version of this exhibition has been very successful in the mathematical world since the Year of Mathematics in 2008. Wherever it was shown, it brought together Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, scientists and non-scientists. It was only logical for the exhibition to also travel abroad, and Israel was the country that first came to mind.

- Israel, where those who once suffered persecution built up a new life as well as a country
- Israel, a country with a world-class science and research environment;
- Israel, a country with which Germany now enjoys close and productive relations on a day-to-day basis.

This is true of industry, politics, culture and especially science. Their foundations were laid by scientists. More than fifty years ago, science led the way, and politics followed.

² Einige waren – zumal in der Zeit vor dem Kaiserreich – getauft.

In 1959, when the first researchers of the Max Planck Society set off for Israel to cooperate with the Weizmann Institute, many Israelis still frowned upon everything German. The contacts between scientists gradually developed into a diplomacy of trust.

This was six years before the beginning of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1965. In 1973, my Ministry and the Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology started working together closely. This cooperation as well as the cooperation established in 2000 with the Israeli Ministry of Industry and Trade have made an essential contribution to today's intense relations between Israel and Germany. A strong network of scientists has emerged from this cooperation.

The launch of the Minerva fellowship programme in 1961 was another milestone. Since then, young scientists from both countries have been encouraged to conduct research in the partner country. Minerva Centres at Israeli universities and the Weizmann Institute have existed since 1975. Meanwhile there are more than 30 of them. During her last visit to Israel in June 2011, Federal Minister Professor Schavan opened another one here at the University of Tel Aviv that focuses on the end of life.

The establishment of the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF) in 1986 and the German-Israeli Project Cooperation in 1996 gave our relations new momentum.

The latest initiative of my Ministry is the Martin Buber Society of Fellows. It promotes dialogue between outstanding young researchers in the humanities and social sciences in Israel and Germany.

Many of these programmes focus on young researchers. Apart from promoting scientific excellence, this also aims at making the next generation aware of our precious relations.

In June, a German-Israeli Forum for Research Cooperation was held for the first time. Both Ministers were present as well as representatives of important research organisations.

Taken together, this makes German-Israeli research and research policy cooperation one of our closest bilateral research partnerships.

I would like to end my speech by quoting Leopold Kronecker, one of the mathematicians presented in the exhibition who is well known for his remark: *"God created the integers, all else is the work of man."*

The ties that have developed between Israel and Germany are certainly the work of man. And it is in all our interest to fill them with life again and again. The exhibition that we are opening today is a fine contribution to this.

Thank you.