HANDOUT 3.3.4 JUDAISM IN GERMANY

Religion	of Nation %
Christianity: Evangelical Protestants	29.30 %
Christianity: Roman Catholics	29.20 %
Islam	4.88 %
Judaism	0.24 %
Other Religions (Christianity)	5.75 %
No Religion	31.00 %

Source: (2011). Religionen & Weltanschauungs-gemeinschaften in Deutschland: Mitgliederzahlen. REMID. Retrieved September 31, 2012, from http://www. remid.de/remid_info_zahlen.htm

➤ Judaism in Germany

Today, Germany is home to the third-largest Jewish community in Europe, numbering about 110,000 overall. Before the Nazis came to power in 1933, Germany's Jewish congregations had around 560,000 members. After the Shoah, in 1950 only about 15,000 Jews were left in Germany. Until about 1985, Jewish congregations were threatening to disappear as their aging members died.

From 1991 to 2009, about 212,000 Jewish emigrants and their families from the countries of the former Soviet Union moved to Germany. Many of them were received by Jewish congregations here.

➤ The Central Council of Jews in Germany

Founded in Frankfurt (Main) in 1950, the Central Council of Jews in Germany is the most important representative of the Jewish community in Germany. The Central Council sees itself as representing the political interests of all Jews in Germany and is open to all religious currents within Judaism. It is a corporation under public law which exclusively and directly pursues charitable aims. The Central Council currently has 108 member congregations with about 105,000 individual members. Berlin's Jewish community is the largest in Germany, with about 11,000 members.

➤ Tasks of the Central Council

In addition to representing Jewish interests to the Federal Government, one of the Central Council's main tasks today is helping Jewish immigrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union become integrated in the Jewish congregations. To do so, the Central Council focuses on educational and training seminars, language courses, civic education seminars, religious instruction and other integration measures.

The Central Council also plays an active part in the political and social life of the Federal Republic of Germany. One priority is promoting mutual understanding and respect between Jews and non-Jews.

➤ Progressive Judaism in Germany

Apart from the Central Council, other congregations with a liberal-progressive orientation began forming in the mid-1990s and are now organized in the Union for Progressive Judaism in Germany, a registered society which currently has about 20 member congregations with roughly 4,800 individual members. The union's regional associations in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony have been members of the Central Council of Jews in Germany since 2005.

➤ The Federal Government and the Jewish community in Germany

The Federal Government feels a special responsibility for the Jewish community and opposes all attempts to forget or deny the Nazi genocide of the Jews. The Federal Government takes action against anti-semitic tendencies and works to assist those who have taken on the task of eradicating the roots of anti-semitism and racism.

This is why the Federal Government supports organizations which advocate understanding and cooperation between Christians and Jews, in particular the German Coordinating Council of Associations for Christian–Jewish Cooperation and the International Council of Christians and Jews.

On 27 January 2003, the national Holocaust Memorial Day, the Federal Government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany signed a national agreement, placing their partnership on a long-term legal footing.

Under the agreement, the Federal Government pledged annual funding for the Central Council to carry out its interregional tasks of preserving German-Jewish cultural heritage and building up the Jewish community, as well as its integration policy and social tasks. Because the Central Council declared in the agreement that it is open to all currents within Judaism, it is expected to use the government support for the benefit of the entire Jewish community. Funding since 2008 has amounted to €5 million.

The following interregional Jewish institutions also receive federal funding:

- the College of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, which was founded in 1979 to renew the research and study of Jewish culture, history and religion in Germany;
- the Central Archives for Research on the History of the Jews in Germany, located in Heidelberg;
- the Abraham Geiger College at the University of Potsdam and its Jewish Institute of Cantorial Arts. The Abraham Geiger College was founded in 1999 as the first rabbinical seminar in Germany since the Shoah. The Leo Baeck Institut, founded in 1955 with centres in Jerusalem, London and New York and a branch of its archive at the Jewish Museum Berlin, is dedicated to researching the history and culture of German Jewry.

Federal funding for maintaining abandoned Jewish cemeteries in Germany: According to a 1957 agreement between the *Länder* and the Jewish community, federal funding pays half the expenses for the preservation and upkeep of abandoned cemeteries of the former Jewish congregations in Germany.

➤ Source:

"Jews Around the Globe: Jews in Germany Today". *My Jewish Learning*, 2018, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jews-in-germany-today/. Accessed 20 March 2019.