

Session # 17 in our Series Jews in Science

The Jewish Enlightenment

We are proud to present a PhD Candidate/Research Fellow from the Universities of Potsdam, (near Berlin) Germany and Paris-Sorbonne, France, *Christina Feist*.

On **July 17**, at a special time, **1 PM** (St. Louis time), a 'long-distance' presentation will focus on the origin of the Judaism we live and experience today. Christina will join us from Paris via Zoom!



(photo credit: Ron Hartman)

The origin of the different denominations in Judaism we know today, lies within **The Jewish Enlightenment** prior to which orthodoxy was the only known "brand" of Jewish life. Christina's doctoral research focuses on *Lazarus Bendavid*, one of the intellectuals of the Jewish Enlightenment movement, and the impact of his works.

Lazarus Bendavid (1762 – 1832), born and raised in Berlin, was an intellectual of the Jewish Enlightenment's second generation. He spent half of his life focusing on studying and teaching Kantian philosophy, rendering it accessible to a broader public and taking him all the way to Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg monarchy. After seven years in Vienna and being prohibited from staying any longer, Bendavid returned to Berlin where he became dean of the first

Jewish establishment for higher education (Jüdische Freischule) – a job he wasn't paid for but merely did out of ideological conviction.



Around this time Bendavid reconnected with his Judaism, focusing his writings on his vision for religious reform – namely a renewed

connection to the 10 commandments, he deemed the "real faith", as well as individual autonomy in religious practice, thus leading him to question the validity of Halakha. This re-examination of Jewish life and religious practice not only offers a glimpse into German Jewish life of 18th century Prussia but above all initiated a scientific approach to Judaism, which ultimately led to today's Jewish studies (Wissenschaft des Judentums).

In her presentation, Christina will first give a general introduction to the Jewish Enlightenment movement as well as its key players, followed by a more detailed account of Lazarus Bendavid's life and works to show how the Jewish Enlightenment *still impacts our Jewish life today*.

Do not miss this unique opportunity to learn firsthand from a world class scientist – live from Paris, France!

As usual register on the Kol Rinah Website!

