



Introduction

Moritz Oppenheim was born in the Jewish ghetto of Hanau in 1800; he died in Frankfurt, Germany in 1882. Oppenheim was known as the “first Jewish painter.” His works overturned stereotypical concepts about the Jewish religion and people. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he remained a devout Jew instead of converting to Christianity. Oppenheim felt it was his duty to show both Jews and non-Jews the beauty of Judaism. Doing so challenged the conventional antisemitic views regarding Jewish art and culture in this era. **These featured works by Oppenheim portray Jewish identity as deeply rooted in religion and family by using the symbol of family as a bridge between Jewish religious, private life and Jewish-German civic, public life.**

1. Family, a universal theme, promotes a common ground between Jews and Germans.



“Window Scene of the Entry of the Imperial Administrator Archduke Johann in Frankfurt am Main, 1848” Moritz Oppenheim 1852

- ❖ Family is centrally located
- ❖ Wholesome and moral mother
- ❖ Happy, healthy children
- ❖ Two German republican revolutionary flags as a symbol of the the civic German identity that unites the two groups

2. The union of two people into one family brings together both elements of Jewish religion and German practices.



“The Wedding” Moritz Oppenheim 1866

- ❖ Family is centrally located
- ❖ Jewish aspects: shawl, rabbi, Star of David, synagogue
- ❖ German aspect: “out in the open” ceremony
- ❖ The ghetto is depicted as clean, lively, and desirable
- ❖ Pride in Jewish identity

Sources

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3. The home and family provide a foundation for creating a strong and moral Jew who can balance the duties of faith and Fatherland.



“The End of the Sabbath” Moritz Oppenheim 1866

- ❖ Old man: Judaism’s past, troubles
- ❖ Parents: Judaism now, raise and educate the children
- ❖ Children: Judaism’s future, innocence, pure morality
- ❖ Flame parallels the family

Conclusion

Oppenheim’s paintings argue that:

- ❖ Jews who are proud of Judaism and have strong familial ties to it will counteract the prejudice and discrimination of antisemitism
- ❖ With the beauty of Judaism focused on in a more positive light, non-Jews would better appreciate Judaism and seek to understand it better; this will help to counteract antisemitism.
- ❖ The family not only serves as a connecting factor between Jewish religious private life and Jewish-German civic public life, but also as a connector between Jews and non-Jewish Germans.
- ❖ With non-Jews being more aware of the values and customs of Judaism, they would be able to better respect their Jewish counterparts, instead of discriminating against them.