



## **New European Center for Jewish Learning at the University of Potsdam**

### **Opening on August 18, 2021 - in the Presence of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier**

The European Center for Jewish Learning will be opened at the University of Potsdam on August 18, 2021, in the presence of the German President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the Minister President of the State of Brandenburg Dietmar Woidke.

H. E. Jeremy Issacharoff, Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Federal Republic of Germany, has confirmed his attendance, as have Dr. Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and Sonja Guentner, President of the European Union of Progressive Jews (London).

Under the roof of the European Center of Jewish Learning three institutions will receive their new joint home on the Potsdam campus „Neues Palais“: the School of Jewish Theology of the University of Potsdam and the two rabbinical seminaries – the progressive Abraham Geiger College and the conservative Zacharias Frankel College.

After the conversion of the former Orangery and the historic Royal Gardener’s Building, a modern teaching and study building with a synagogue has been created opposite the New Palace in Sanssouci Park. As part of the festivities, the Torah scrolls will be brought into the university synagogue – it is the first Jewish sanctuary in Potsdam after the Second World War.

Media representatives are cordially invited to the opening, one of the highlights of the anniversary year "1,700 Years of Jewish Life in Germany."

When the School of Jewish Theology was founded at the University of Potsdam in 2013, finally Jewish theology obtained equal status with Christian and Islamic theologies. The joint university campus marks this impressively. All interested can become students regardless of their religious affiliation. Currently, about 80 students are enrolled, 31 of whom are pursuing rabbinical or cantorial studies.

The architectural ensemble was built in 1769 according to plans by Carl von Gontard. It housed the palace administrator and court gardener and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin" managed by the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg.

It has been extensively renovated and redesigned by the Berlin office of Rüttnick Architects. The Rabbinical seminaries will be based in the Royal Gardener's house. The School of Jewish Theology moves into the Orangery. Both buildings are connected by the synagogue.

The glass façade of the Orangery which makes the original shape of the building visible again can be opened extensively in the warmer seasons. It also provides the surface for the artwork "This Is Not a Thornbush" by Eva Leitolf, award winner of the "Kunst am Bau" competition. The motif, a thornbush, refers to the Bible narrative and dissolves into its individual parts - monochrome squares - when enlarged. The image thus generated was applied to the individual glass panes. The burning bush remains as an idea but is not recognizable as such in the image - symbolizing the contact of the sacred with the profane at the university campus.

On behalf of the state of Brandenburg, the Brandenburg State Office for Real Estate and Construction (BLB) managed the renovation and expansion of the former royal court gardener's house, the adjacent stables and the orangery at a cost of around 13.5 million euros.

***Time: August 18, 2021, 2 p.m.***

***Location: University of Potsdam, Campus Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam, An der Kolonnade.***

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***Participation only with prior registration.***