

# Mickiewicz and the Jewish World.

## A Study with Appendices

### Summary

The study focuses on Mickiewicz and his relationship with broadly defined Judaism. In his youth, Mickiewicz dissociated himself from the Jewish world, but in exile he studied Jewish mysticism, which is reflected in the Judaic roots of *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), Part III. Reading *The Great Improvisation* in view of bargaining with God, characteristic for Judaism, reveals completely new meanings of this monologue. The mystic also permeated the scene of Father Peter's Vision, which is the centre of the messianic message of the drama. The interpretation of *Pan Tadeusz* (*Sir Thaddeus*) was focused on the historical probability of Jankiel's appearance in the realities of Soplicowo of 1811–1812. A significant finding is also a new interpretation of the Lausanne lyric *Polaby się tzy...* [I Shed My Tears]. The poem traditionally interpreted as the expression of a pitiful existential reckoning in the light of Jewish mysticism turns out to be an opening, an invitation to enter a new spiritual world offering unprecedented possibilities for man.

The Judaism-related topics also organized, to a large extent, Mickiewicz's lectures as a professor at the Collège de France, as well as his activities in the Circle of God's Cause founded by Andrzej Towiański. The belief in reincarnation, characteristic for the views of Master Andrzej and his followers, had its origin in the kabbalistic concept of *gilgul*. Mickiewicz also drew the idea of *tikkun* from Jewish mysticism, according to which man can influence God's behaviour. For the poet, as a man of action, this idea turned out to be particularly important, since it opened the infinite prospects of creating a course of historical events by an outstanding individual or a small group of people. From the perspective of *tikkun*, Mickiewicz's last earthly undertaking – the organization of the so-called Jewish legion as an independent military formation in the Crimean War – becomes understandable. In his work, the concept of action drawn from Jewish mysticism met with political longing for freedom – both of Poland and the nation of Israel.

The study on Mickiewicz is accompanied by eleven appendices. They are not textbook, but constitute stand-alone papers in terms of their content

and are profiled so as to maximally expand the contextualization scope of the study. The analytical material of the appendices comes from little known or unknown Polish and foreign archives. Six of them concern history and culture, the other five discuss the presence of the Jewish world in the works of the most important writers of Polish Romanticism.

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