

# Levi Bamberger, the Jewish elementary school teacher of Karl Weierstrass in Gütersloh 1826 – 1828

Curriculum vitae and highlights of his work as an outstanding educator of the Jewish Enlightenment in its early days in Westphalia

Peter Weierstrass, Karl Weierstrass' younger brother by 5 years, praised a Jewish teacher in Gütersloh to whom Karl was grateful throughout his life for very good elementary instruction in all basic subjects, especially Latin and Arithmetic.

The name is not mentioned in the sources - the author only knows of conversation notes between Hermann Amandus Schwarz and Peter Weierstrass when the former was collecting material for a Weierstrass biography - . We have known since 2014/2015 that this excellent teacher must have been Levi Bamberger. Karl benefited greatly from this in the school year 1828/1829 that followed Gütersloh at the "Gymnasium" (= Grammar School) Paulinum in Münster and at the "Gymnasium" Theodorianum in Paderborn from 1829 to 1834 as an outstanding student, skipping the "Tertia" (= 3rd grade before graduation) and getting the Predicate "primus omnium" in his "Abitur" (= graduation). Levi Bamberger (1769 – 1851, as rabbi in Gütersloh 1799 - 1851) attracted attention locally as a good teacher at his small Jewish elementary school and also through particularly good private lessons necessary to earn his living. A growing number of Christian children came to him and he was allowed to open his Jewish School in coeducation for them because the state schools did not have a good reputation in those years and were still waiting for the overdue reform. Many educationally conscious families e.g. those of higher Prussian officials, like the ambitious father Wilhelm Weierstrass, sent their children to the teacher Bamberger. He was permeated by a deep conviction of Jewish tradition and religion as well as by an enthusiasm for what was the modern, mathematical, natural-scientific thinking of the Enlightenment in the spirit of the Humboldt brothers in Berlin. That led to conflicts with the orthodox part of the Jewish community. In this way, Bamberger a decade before the better known Alexander Haindorf in Münster provides a very early example of an influence of the whole educational reform at the beginning of the 19th century, when especially the school-subject „Mathematik“ (mathematics) came into being, besides the traditional and also important „Rechnen“ and „Kopfrechnen“ (written and mental arithmetics) even in the Prussian provinces far removed from urban centers – with implications for mathematics as a university discipline.

His curriculum vitae should be outlined in the article as far as it is known. From a selection of the few sources in the Prussian provincial government and the press, a few highlights will be thrown on his lessons and on individual events in his life. Examples: - His underlying lesson plan (unsystematically compiled for methodology and material distribution) handwritten by the apparently friendly Minden private teacher Fontarius Schönlanke and attached to Bamberger's personal file. - Appraisals as a teacher from the Prussian government and school board. - Application for a position as a rabbi in Bielefeld. - His 70th birthday. - The invitation of the 80-year-old, who was suffering from illness, to an important conference in Münster Castle on the question of the future of Jewish schools in the province of Westphalia. - His reliable long-term participation in the association for the promotion of crafts among the Jews. - Etc.