



# Emancipation: How Liberating Europe's Jews from the Ghetto Led to Revolution and Renaissance

*Michael Goldfarb*

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## **Emancipation: How Liberating Europe's Jews from the Ghetto Led to Revolution and Renaissance**

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For almost 500 years the Jews of Europe were kept apart, confined to ghettos or tiny villages in the countryside. Then, in one extraordinary moment in the French Revolution, the Jews of France were emancipated. Soon the ghetto gates were opened all over Europe. The era of Emancipation had begun. What happened next would change the course of history.

*Emancipation* tells the story of how this isolated minority emerged from the ghetto and against terrible odds very quickly established themselves as shapers of history, as writers, revolutionaries, social thinkers, and artists. Their struggle to create a place for themselves in Western European life led to revolutions and nothing less than a second renaissance in Western culture.

The book spans the era from the French Revolution to the beginning of the twentieth century. The story is told through the lives of the people who lived through this momentous change. Some are well-known: Marx, Freud, Mahler, Proust, and Einstein; many more have been forgotten. Michael Goldfarb brings them all to life.

This is an epic story, and Goldfarb tells it with the skill and eye for detail of a novelist. He brings the empathy and understanding that has marked his two decades as a reporter in public radio to making the characters come alive. It is a tale full of hope, struggle, triumph, and, waiting at the end, a great tragedy.

This is a book that will have meaning for anyone interested in the struggle of immigrants and minorities to succeed. We live in a world where vast numbers are on the move, where religions and races are grinding against each other in new combinations; *Emancipation* is a book of history for our time.

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