Mayer von Kallir

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Date of birth: 1789 | **Date of death:** 1874
Occupation or position: Banker

Community: Brody

Mayer von Kallir was a famous banker and patron of the arts. He was born in 1789 to a family of immigrants from Bohemia. His father, Alehander Kallir, maintained progressive views and, besides studying Talmud and religion, encouraged his son to study secular sciences. At the age of twenty Mayer Kallir married Gitel Mortkowitsch, a Jew of Russian origin. The young couple received help from Kallir's uncle, Judl Nathansom. Thanks to this monetary assistance, Kallir was able to found a Jewish Hospital in Brody, a model medical establishment for the time, which was also open to Christians. Kallir was convinced of the need for the emancipation of the Jewish population, particularly the expansion of the range of professional activities. He donated 15,000 florins to set up a scholarship for poor Jewish children to study different professions.

For many years Kallir was a Realschul (secondary school) inspector and the chief founder of the Jewish-German high school, as well as a school for girls. In 1848, Kallir was selected to be Brody's representative at the Galician Sejm. There he immediately joined the Liberal Club, a liberal centrist party whose views were focused on Vienna. Up until the end of his political activities in the Galician Sejm, in 1870, Kallir never learned Polish, a fact which, during this period of the Polonization of Galicia, caused constant and heavy criticism in the political arena. Beginning in 1851 and for the next 20 years, Kallir headed Brody's Chamber of Commerce.

For his golden wedding anniversary Kallir received the Knight's Cross and a noble title from the emperor Franz Josef. Mayer's only son, Nathan von Kallir, was a successful banker who continued his father's work, and was just as active in charity work.

Mayer von Kallir died in 1874 in Brody, where he was buried. One of the streets in Brody was named in his honor.

Information taken from:

- Nekrolog von Mayer Kallir geschrieben Leo Herzberg-Fränkel/ Der Israelit §12 1875
- Saul Raphael Landau, Der Polenklub und seine Hausjuden, Wien, 1907.

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