Adolf Jellinek (1821–1893), the Czech-born, German-educated, liberal chief rabbi of Vienna, was the most famous Jewish preacher in Central Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. As an innovative rhetorician, Jellinek helped mold and define the modern synagogue sermon into an instrument for expressing Jewish religious and ethical values for a new era. As a historian, he made groundbreaking contributions to the study of the Zohar and medieval Jewish mysticism. Jellinek was emblematic of rabbi-as-scholar-preacher during the earliest, formative years of communal synagogues as urban religious space. In a world that was rapidly losing the felt and remembered past of premodern Jewish society, the rabbi, with Jellinek as prime exemplar, took hold of the Sabbath sermon as an instrument to define and mold Judaism and Jewish values for a new world.

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