Edict of Toleration (2 January 1782): Emperor Joseph II

We, Joseph II by the Grace of God, elected Holy Roman Emperor, at all times the Enlarger of the Empire, King of Germany, Hungary and Bohemia, etc., Archduke in Austria, Duke of Burgundy and Lorraine, send our Grace to all and graciously make known the following:

From the ascension to Our reign We have directed Our most preeminent attention to the end that all Our subjects without distinction of nationality and religion, once they have been admitted and tolerated in Our States, shall participate in common in public welfare, the increase of which is Our care, shall enjoy legal freedom and not find any obstacles in any honest ways of gaining their livelihood and increasing general industriousness.

Since, however, the laws and the so-called Jewish Regulations pertaining to the Jewish nation prevailing in Our hereditary countries in general and particularly in Vienna and Lower Austria are not always compatible with these Our most gracious intentions, We hereby will amend them by the virtue of this present edict in so far as the difference in times and conditions necessitates.

The favors granted to the Jewish nation by this present amendment, whereby the latest Jewish Regulation of May 5, 174, is fully repealed consist of the following:

As it is our goal to make the Jewish nation useful and serviceable to the State, mainly through better education and enlightenment of its youth as well as by directing them to the sciences, the arts and the crafts….

SOURCE: adapted from Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ***The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 36-37.