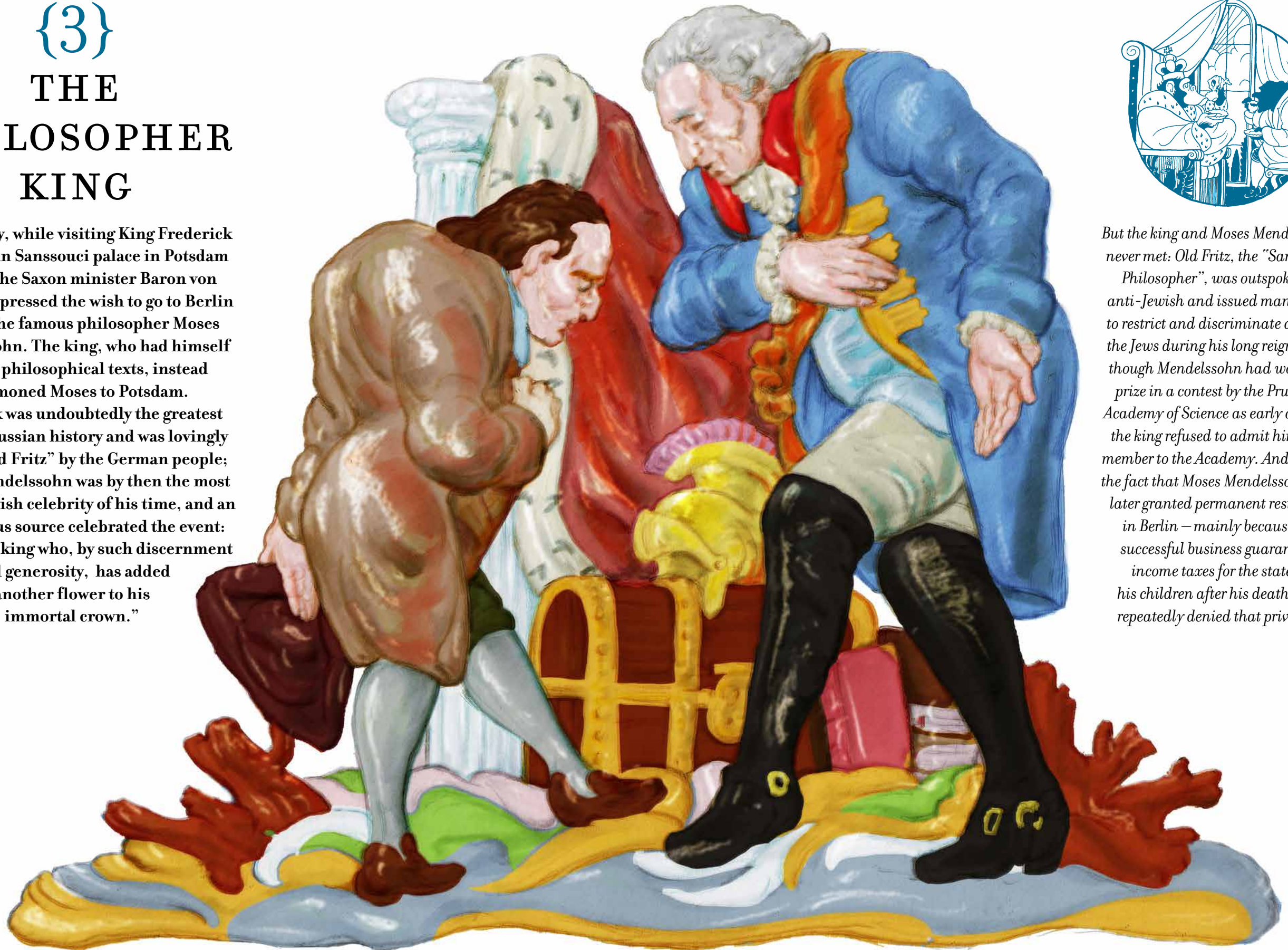


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THE PHILOSOPHER KING

Supposedly, while visiting King Frederick the Great in Sanssouci palace in Potsdam in 1771, the Saxon minister Baron von Fritsche expressed the wish to go to Berlin to meet the famous philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. The king, who had himself written philosophical texts, instead summoned Moses to Potsdam.

Frederick was undoubtedly the greatest hero of Prussian history and was lovingly called "Old Fritz" by the German people; Moses Mendelssohn was by then the most famous Jewish celebrity of his time, and an anonymous source celebrated the event: "Glory to a king who, by such discernment and generosity, has added another flower to his immortal crown."



But the king and Moses Mendelssohn never met: Old Fritz, the "Sanssouci Philosopher", was outspokenly anti-Jewish and issued many laws to restrict and discriminate against the Jews during his long reign. Even though Mendelssohn had won first prize in a contest by the Prussian Academy of Science as early as 1763, the king refused to admit him as a member to the Academy. And despite the fact that Moses Mendelssohn was later granted permanent residency in Berlin – mainly because his successful business guaranteed income taxes for the state – his children after his death were repeatedly denied that privilege.

