

Jewish Worms



Rashi House and Judengasse

Fritz Reuter

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Impressum

Extended separate print of “Das Jüdische Museum Raschi-Haus in Worms” in
Der Wormsgau. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Stadt Worms und des Altertumsvereins Worms e.V., vol. 15, 1987/91

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Design: Klaus Krier, Worms

Printing: Heinrich Fischer, Rheinische Druckerei GmbH, Worms

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The publication was supported by a grant from the Altertumsverein Worms e.V.

I. The Worms Jewish Museum before 1938

As early as 1879/81, when the *Altertumsverein* (Historical Society) and the Municipal Museum were established in Worms attention was called to the existence of Judaica worth to be exhibited in the museum. The Jewish citizens would certainly be happy to make them available to the public¹. This idea was not taken up intensely. The Jewish citizens, however, participated in the newborn interest in municipal history. Thus, after some attempts, a Jewish museum was eventually established in 1912. The collection, including the two world-famous volumes of the "Worms Machzor" of 1272, was exhibited on the second floor of the vestibule of the women's synagogue. When the collection grew also the Rashi Yeshiva was temporarily used as exhibition room. Isidor Kiefer who served as the museum's director since 1924 prepared a catalogue with photographs and descriptions of almost all the objects. Today, the catalogue is in the possession of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. The Worms Rashi House holds a photocopy². Kiefer's catalogue testifies to the variety of this precious collection. Tragically, it is also the sole testimony to most of the pieces. On November 10, 1938, the synagogue was barbariously set on fire and burned down together with the Jewish Museum of Worms. Thus, a new start was necessary for Worms.

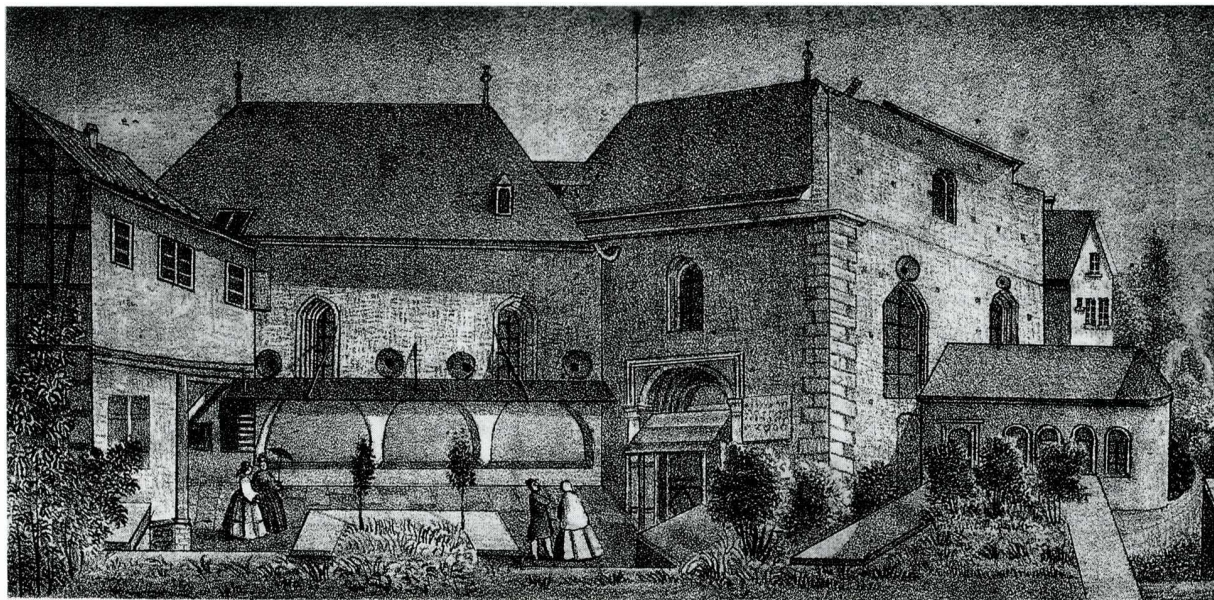
II. From Dance and Wedding Hall to Jewish Home for the Aged

The former Jewish quarter of Worms is situated on both sides of the boundary between the late-Roman city and the adjacent Roman grave fields to the north³. When the reconstruction of the Rashi House was being prepared, the Museum of the City of Worms was able to expose remains of Roman foundation walls

dating back to the 4th century C.E. in the western part of the cellar⁴. We cannot establish to what extent the *Friesenviertel* (quarter of Frisian merchants known from 9th-century documents)⁵ overlaps with the settlement of the Jews (since the late 10th century). In 1080, however, the *Porta Judeorum* is called the former *Friesenspitze*, a name that replaces the older "*Frisona-Spira*" (mentioned in the Worms town-wall regulations [*Mauerbauordnung*] of 900), meaning a fortified structure and probably also gate to the harbor⁶. The first synagogue (dated by inscription as of 1034) was situated in the immediate proximity of today's Rashi House. Excavations under the western third of the Rashi House around 1980 established a Romanesque predecessor of unknown date. Unfortunately, the pillars and likely vaults were already lost.

Excavations under the eastern part of the building could not take place. This part consists of two still extant barrel-vaulted cellar rooms designed in parallel in east-west direction. According to the technique and the shape of the walls they date back to the period of reconstruction after the Black Death pogrom on March 1, 1349 (Adar 10, 5109, according to the Jewish Era)⁷.

The earliest function of the building has not been definitely established. On the assumption that the small-stoned brickwork under the western third of the building dates back to the 11th century, it has been suggested that it actually housed the Talmud academy where Rashi studied with his teachers, Jacob ben Yakar and Isaac ben Eleasar ha-Levi⁸. Yuspa Shammes, the Worms synagogue beadle and Jewish chronicler, apparently introduced the designation "*Bet ha-Midrash Rashi's*" (academy where Rashi studied) in the late 17th century⁹. However, the building was already being confused with the so-called "Rashi-Chapel", a chapel-like annex to the synagogue's west wall donated by David Oppenheim in 1624¹⁰. It served as a Talmud academy whereas documents of the 15th and 16th centuries refer to today's "Rashi House" as "dance hall"¹¹.



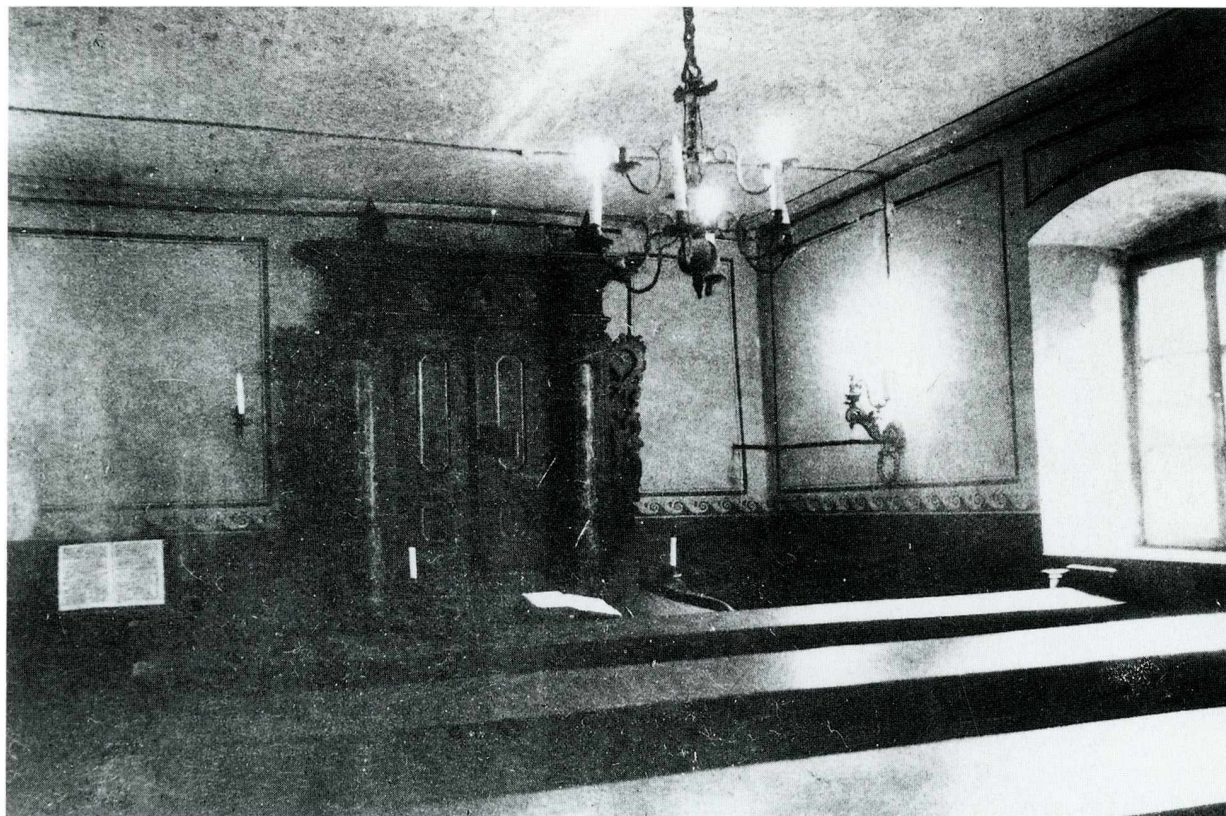
הצר בית הכנסת עם כותלי בית המדרש של רש"י

Synagogue courtyard, store-room for flour, Women's Synagogue, Men's Synagogue, Rashi Chapel, in the background: Dance Hall (today Rashi House)

The Rashi House comprises a space of 10 x 20 meters corresponding to the medieval foundations. Originally there seem to have been only two floors with a steep roof on top. The building was used by the Jewish community as a dance and wedding hall and therefore belonged to the "public" buildings of the Jewish quarter. As such it is referred to in the *Judenordnungen* (regulations concerning the Jews)¹². The cellars were probably used as wine-cellars¹³.

Nothing is known about the fate of the dance hall when troops of King Louis XIV of France set the city on fire in 1689. Like all of Judengasse it was probably burnt down¹⁴. A visitation report, executed by order of the city magistrate in 1760 and covering all the houses in *Judengasse*, described the reconstructed dance hall:

a three-storied building with a roof less steep than before, called *Zur Klaus* (roughly "secluded place") oder *Tantz Haus* ("dance hall")¹⁵. The report contains detailed information on the inhabitants and the function of each room. One of the tenants was a rabbi who "lectured", i.e. gave private Talmud lessons, then a common practice. At least since the 18th century a private *Klaus* synagogue¹⁶ functioned in the south-east corner room whose interior is shown on a late 19th-century photograph. The *Klaus* was still mentioned in early 20th-century community calendars. After the abolition of the ghetto in 1801¹⁷ the dance hall was transformed into a Jewish home for the aged. Along with the synagogue, the community hall at Synagogue Square 2 (House "to the Sun") and the Levy



Aron ha-Kodesh of the Klaus Synagogue in the Dance Hall

Synagogue of 1875 in *Judengasse 29*, it formed the administrative and ritual center of the Worms Israelite *Kultusgemeinde* (religious community)¹⁸. Thus it remained until the morning of November 10, 1938 (*"Kristallnacht"*) when the Nazis set the Old Synagogue¹⁹ on fire and devastated the community hall and the Levy Synagogue.

There were no abuses of the home for the aged and its inhabitants during the November pogrom in 1938²⁰. In the following years up until 1942, however, the building was designated a *"Judenhaus"* for Jews who

had been driven out of their homes in the city and therefore was a step on their way to the extermination camps²¹. After that, no Jew was left in Worms.

The former home for the aged became a domicile for the socially indigent, a condition that continued after the end of the war in 1945. The dilapidated building was more and more neglected until the *Baudezernent* (deputy mayor in charge of the municipal building department)²² ordered the "disgrace's" demolition in 1971. Only the basement and a few remains of the walls were left, rather accidentally.



The Jewish Museum on the second floor of the vestibule of the Women's Synagogue, around 1924



Ruins of the Synagogue; in the background the former Jewish Home for the Aged (today Rashi House), 1945

III. Reconstruction and Conception of the Museum

In 1961, the Old Synagogue was rededicated²³. The former dance hall was to become a center of learning and dialogue according to the idea of the international association "*Verein Raschi-Lehrhaus Worms e.V.*"²⁴ (founded in Mainz in 1968). After the rather unexpected demolition, the *Verein*, the New York-based "Rashi Association"²⁵ and additional parties²⁶ insisted upon a speedy reconstruction.

Due to the results of an analysis of cultural and organizational needs, the building-to-be was eventually given a different purpose. According to my proposal – presented in a meeting of the city administration and the *Raschi-Lehrhaus-Verein* in 1977 – an exhibition on Jewish Worms was to be set up in the surviving late-medieval cellars and on the ground floor. The upper floors were to accommodate the city archives providing rooms for the administration, the archival repository, and reading rooms²⁷. Accordingly, the functions of



Rashi House; on the left Synagogue and "Rashi Chapel", 1991



Foundation-Stone Plaque in the Rashi House, 1980

chief city archivist, director and curator of the Judaica Museum and administrator of the synagogue were combined²⁸. This situation demands that every future city archivist will be steeped intensely in the Jewish history of Worms and the Upper Rhine Valley and have some basic knowledge in the field of Judaica.

The collection of the "Jewish Museum Rashi House" has been put up only in recent years. Prior to the opening in November 1982 there was no complete collec-

tion of Judaica whatsoever. A few solitary objects (Seder plate, spice towers, Shabbat lamps), most of them badly in need of restoration, could be found in the city museum. Some *Beschneidungswimpel* (torah binders made from swaddling clothes) from the former synagogue collection, documents on parchment and paper as well as pictures were in the possession of the city archives. Writings on Jewish Worms had been collected by the city library, even though unsystemati-

cally. Three boxes with important pamphlet material were eventually given to the city archives.

Adhering to the principle to collect mainly objects relating to Worms we have been guided by the following considerations:

The objects

- originated in Worms (e.g. the oil painting by Hertha Mansbacher, a Jewish teacher who was murdered in a death camp²⁹);
- were made in Worms (e.g. 17th-century Kiddush cup with Worms maker's mark);
- were given the Rashi House by former Jewish citizens of Worms (e.g. Elijah's cup);
- are connected with Worms by historical-personal relations (e.g. facsimile of the so-called London Haggadah with a commentary by Eleazar ben Yehuda of Worms).

In addition, of course, objects are being purchased for the purpose of illustration and comparison. From the beginning we intended to create a sociohistorically oriented exhibition, not simply a collection of esthetically beautiful objects. Jewish Worms is to serve as an example of Jewish life in the upper Rhine valley.

At present, the substantial holdings of the Rashi House – with the exception of those few objects which have been in the city's possession for some time – comprise a variety of objects, some of which were once used in Worms, many donated by former Worms Jews, and others purchased. The collection that has been assembled since the museum's opening in 1982 will be expanded within the limits of the city's meager financial framework as well as by means of very welcome donations and the support of the Worms *Allertumsverein*.

IV. Rashi House: Jewish Museum and City Archives

The reconstruction – inaugurated in 1977, actually begun in 1979/80 – intended to strengthen the link of the *Judengasse* neighborhood – including the 1961 rededicated synagogue – with today's commercial center by public service facilities. The city planners had accentuated this concept already by setting up the municipal educational counselling office (and rooms for the adult education center) at Synagogue Square in the House "to the Sun".

The new building³⁰ – designed by the architect Rainer Kleebank (Darmstadt/Worms)³¹ – was constructed on top of the old foundations. The historical cellars and the remaining walls have been integrated and the medieval layers of masonry exposed. You can distinguish layers of rubble masonry and brickwork of different centuries. Neat squared-stone masonry has been preserved only in the cellar. The newly constructed parts are set off by light plastering. The original proportions have been preserved. The roof was given a steeper angle, in accordance with the other medieval houses in *Judengasse*³². The foundation-stone ceremony took place on December 18, 1980, the inauguration on December 29, 1982. According to the tradition, the building was named Rashi House in honor of the great Talmud commentator Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040–1105)³³ who studied at the Worms *Yeshiva* around 1060. The interior was designed in accordance with the needs of the Jewish museum and the city archives. Via the main entrance in the north the visitor enters a hall that opens to the museum's lobby and to the staircase to the archives. The staircase can be closed off by a wrought iron gate decorated with a *Menorah*.

The foyer accommodates the ticket counter (book and postcard sale). The room to the right (west) is used for presenting the Video Documentation, lectures and special exhibitions. To the left (east) is a gallery dedicated to the "History of the Jewish Community". On display are a collection of stone fragments, charters and



Rashi Chapel as Exhibition Room

other written documents, maps and showcases with ritual objects, and the models "Sukkah" and "Seder Eve". The exhibition covers the time from the 11th until the 20th century.

Stairs lead from the foyer down to the basement. Two nearly life-sized reproductions of the images of a Jew and a Jewess from Worms are situated in the south-eastern barrel-vaulted cellar. They were depicted by Markus to the Lamb in his *Thesaurus Picturarum*¹⁴. The showcase next to them displays a passage of the 1584

Judenordnung (regulations concerning the Jews) repeating the regulations concerning the costumes and the Jewish badge from 1525. The description corresponds to Markus' pictures in every detail. To the left is a model of the "Synagogue around 1620". Several showcases on the walls display artefacts like the goblet of the Funeral Society, chanukka lamps, *treidel*, a manuscript with synagogal hymns, prints, pictures etc.

In the north-eastern vault we find showcases with ritual objects (for morning prayers and festivals, Torah



Rashi House, Lecture Room with Video Documentation

binders, silverware etc.) and the model of a “Jewish Wedding”. The small vaulted room to the north-west is dedicated to the Torah scroll, Torah decoration and Torah mantles. Fragments of the *Aron ha-Kodesh* (Ark) of 1620 are arranged on a concrete tablet to form a partial reconstruction.

The western part of the cellar accommodates bathrooms and storage rooms. Due to the then advanced state of the construction, it was not possible to integrate visibly the Roman wall fragments discovered

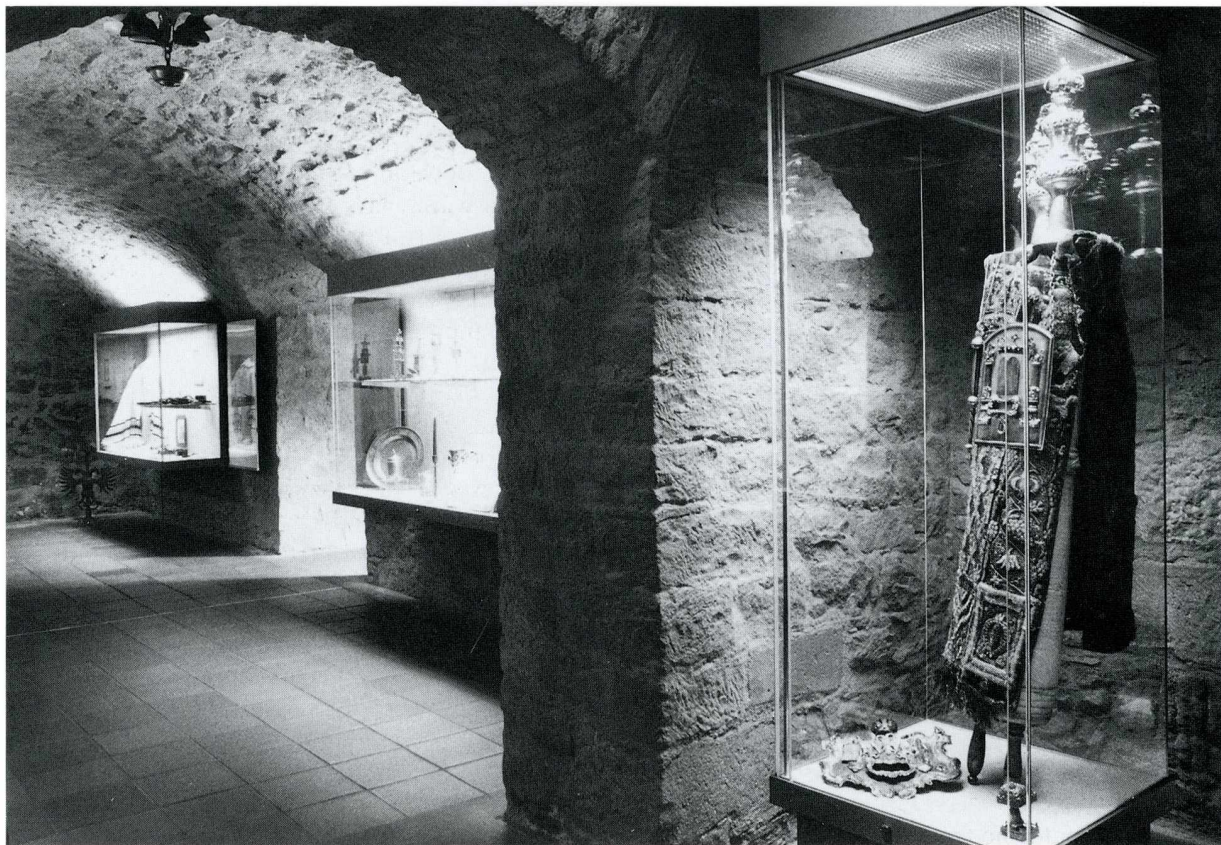
only in 1980. They are now underneath the basement floor.

The first floor accommodates rooms for administration, employees and visitors of the city archives. The second floor has been equipped with a system of stacks providing 1500 running meters of storage capacity up to a maximum of 163 tons of weight. As the historical cellar was set aside for the museum it was necessary to locate the repository on an upper floor. The archives’ photographic department with office, studio and lab is



Rashi House, Display

situated on the top floor. The attic serves as a storage room for photo negatives (glass plates, films). Presently, neither the archives, which has to use additional storage rooms elsewhere³⁵, nor the Jewish Museum can be extended. The need, however, is obvious. Topics like "Rashi", and especially "Persecution 1933–1945" are legitimately demanded by visitors. Not only the City of Worms, but also the State of Rheinland-Pfalz should see their obligation here.



Rashi House, barrel-vaulted cellar with showcases

V. Models of Jewish Life

A museum serves a documentary and, equally important, a didactic function. Thus, it is necessary not only to display beautiful or significant objects but also to show them in their historical context. In my opinion, it is inadequate to present the goblet of the "*Chewra Kadisha* [funeral society] of the Holy Community of Worms" (inscription) of 1609 just as an accomplished example of Frankenthal goldsmith's art. Rather, the goblet originated as a fraternity symbol of the funeral society and may be compared to guild goblets. Its high-quality craftsmanship indicates that the funeral society spent quite a sum on it. This, in turn, indicates that the society had adequate financial means and the corresponding self-assurance. The funeral society took care of certain communal tasks in the Jewish community – a town within a town with administrative autonomy and under special legislation (*Judenordnungen*). Thus, the goblet gives us a glimpse of the legal and social order this minority had to live by.

As it is, to convey all these aspects to the public just by means of short captions is an impossible task. The question remains how the visitor may be introduced to the characteristics and peculiarities of Jewish life – in addition to the Video Documentation.

What is different from the everyday life, the festivals, the home and the worship of the town's Christian majority? Or phrased differently: are four walls and a roof already a house? They are not. Rather, the inhabitants furnish their home according to their needs, cultural and religious affiliations, social status etc. We asked ourselves: What makes a Jewish house or a room inhabited by a Jew different? We were able to name such things as a *Mezuzah*, *Mizrach* plaque, Shabbat lamp. However, they by themselves alone are not meaningful enough. Thus, we – this is, my wife Paule and I together with our longstanding friend, the stage designer Hanns Willy Herbert (1929–1989) – went on meditating: Which scene typical of Jewish life could

take place in such a room? First we thought of Shabbat. But what to choose: the start or the end – for it is inappropriate to mix them both up. Besides, synagogal worship is an important feature of Shabbat and that would lead us out of the house – thus destroying the "unity of place". Finally we arrived at Seder Eve: a domestic Jewish festival within the family. The historical context (freedom from the Egyptian bondage) as well as quite a few religious references (Elijah's significance as the herald of the Messiah; the relationship to the Christian reinterpretation of bread and wine etc.) could be touched upon.

Even more significant, we were able to create a relationship between the exhibited objects and their symbolic use in the model. The *mezuzah* of *Judengasse 2* in one of the showcases reappears on the right-hand side of the doorpost of the model. Elijah's cup, a donation of a former Jewish citizen of Worms, not only displays artistic skill, but tells us about family events (the inscription informs us that it was presented at the Guggenheim – Sander wedding). As a ritual object the cup is present on the Seder table of the model. The Haggadah of the model is mirrored in various shapes: as an original like the "Offenbach Haggadah", commissioned by a member of the Guggenheim family, a native of Worms, or as a facsimile, like the 13th-century "Darmstadt Haggadah". In my opinion, the mixing of originals and (complementary) facsimiles and photocopies is legitimate, as long as it helps to convey a broad range of information, and as long as the distinction between original and duplicate remains clear. So far, this principle has been applied only to writings, there is no intention to use it in respect to silver or pewter objects etc. As to *Beschneidungswimpel* we chose a compromise: The Torah binders which were scorched in 1938 are too sensitive to be exposed to the usual lighting. Extremely weak lighting, used nowadays in respect to delicate objects, would have made them nearly unrecognizable which seemed not appropriate. Therefore, we asked the painter Agathe Sander to make original-sized co-

pies. The copies are now displayed together with the light-protected originals.

In general miniature replica serve as the “props” of the models. Miniature furniture etc. from dealers specialized in modelbuilding had to be picked and adapted. This procedure corresponds to the actual practice. A silver cup or a pewter plate are not Jewish ritual objects in themselves. Only if they are used as such and/or identifiable through engravings, inscriptions, and pictures, they become “Jewish”. The modelbuilder acts accordingly. However, many things had to be made-to-order, e.g. the Shabbat lamp or the *Lulav* for the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). From this point of view, a large part of the objects are originals *sui generis*, newly made without prior use in a Jewish household.

Model 1: A Jewish Family on Seder Eve

The model of “Seder Eve” has been partly described already to illustrate our basic concepts in respect of the planning and the construction of our models.

The legend (explanatory text for the visitors) deals with both the Seder and the peculiarities of the room. The time setting is not stated explicitly, but the setups of “Seder Eve”, “Sukkot”, and the “Wedding” allude to the turn from the 18th to the 19th century. Details from 19th-century lithographs by Moritz Oppenheim inspired the arrangement of the “Seder Eve” and “Sukkot” scenes, but they were not simply copied. The models were also influenced by the description of customs peculiar to Worms Jewry found in the *Minhag* Book of Yuspa Shammes, dating from the late 17th century³⁶.

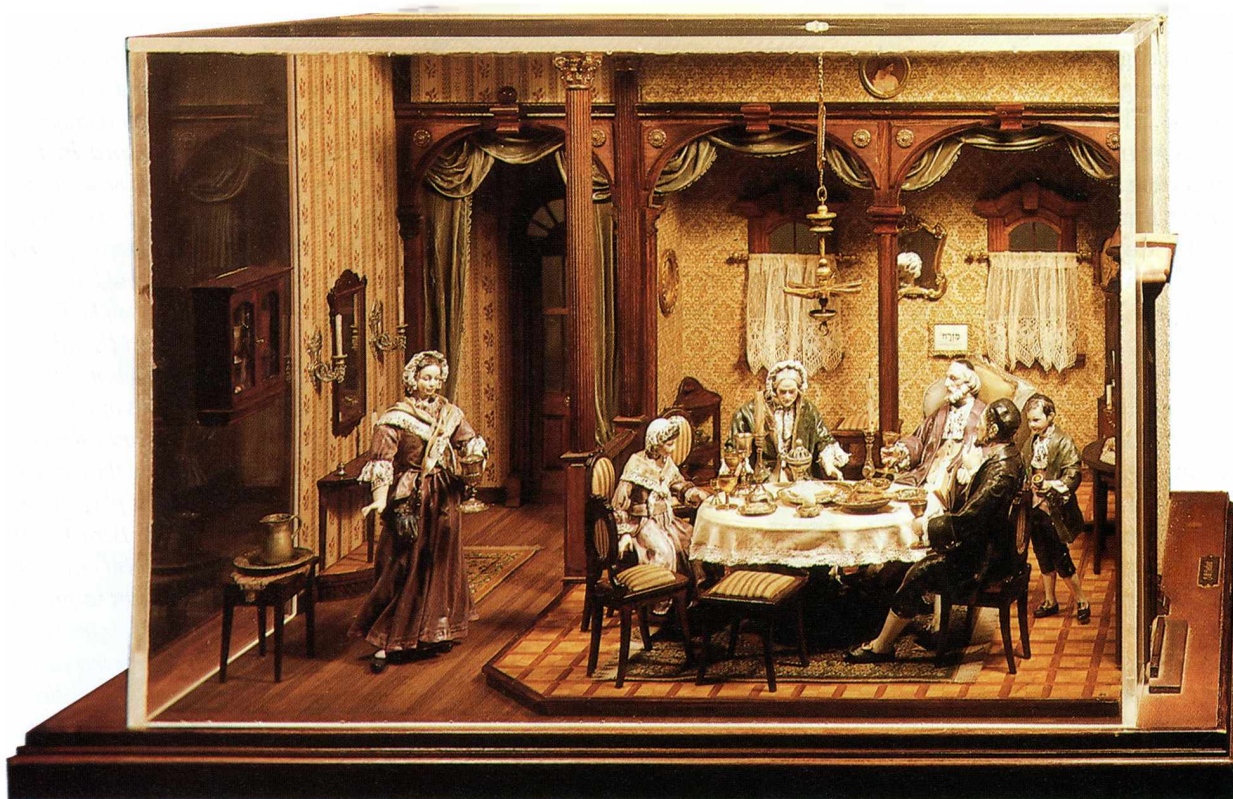
Measurements: H 45 cm, L 72 cm, W 54 cm

Legend:

A Jewish Family on Seder Eve Model after Moritz Oppenheim

On Passover Eve the family commemorates the Exodus of the children of Israel from the slavery in Egypt. The family head reads the story from the Haggadah. Three Matzot are placed on the Seder plate: unleavened bread baked in haste. Bitter (horse radish) and sweet (parsley) herbs recall good and bad days. Charoset, a paste made from apples and nuts, evokes the clay the Jews had to make bricks from. Salt water stands for shed tears. The egg symbolizes Israel's rebirth. A roasted lamb bone commemorates the temple sacrifice. Red wine is served. There are a cup and a chair waiting for the prophet Elijah.

Note several special features in the room: a Mizrach (“East”) plaque to determine the correct prayer direction towards Jerusalem; the eightbranched Chanukkah lamp (Feast of Lights in December); the Sabbath lamp for Friday nights; a small cabinet containing religious objects for Sabbath; a Ketubbah (marriage contract). The Mezuzah containing the invocation “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one”, is affixed to the doorpost.



Hanns W. Herbert, 1983/84: A Jewish Family on Seder Eve

Model 2: A Jewish Wedding in the 18th Century

Yuspa Shammes' description of Worms Jewish customs was especially important for the "Jewish Wedding": The wedding ceremony takes place outdoors, in the small garden to the south of the synagogue between the synagogue and the dance hall, today's Rashi House. The gentile supervisor can be identified by his coat-of-arms as an emissary of the Barons of Dalberg who were entitled to the protection of the Jews (*Judenschutz*) during weddings and funerals. They received a fee for this obligatory service.

The "18th century" refers to the costumes and the rabbi's garb. The latter was inspired by a portrait of Rabbi Samuel Levi – who officiated around 1800 – in his official attire. The figure of the musician was suggested by a rabbinical decision from Worms: Around 1700, Chaim Yair Bacharach ruled that there has to be music during a Jewish wedding. If no musician is present but a rabbi who is able to play an instrument, he is obliged to perform in the wedding parade.

We find the depiction of a wedding scene already in the Worms *Machzor* of 1272. Originally the sequence of the exhibition ran from the *Beschneidungswimpel* to a tablet with a copy of the mentioned *Machzor* page and then to the next showcase with the goblet of the funeral society. Consequently, marriage and married life did not receive sufficient attention. Even the presentation of a German *Ketubbah* (marriage contract) and a wedding ring from our collection could not completely solve the problem. The visually impressive and carefully designed model, thus, filled the gap.

Jointed dolls, 18 cm high, were used as figures. They are dressed in late 18th-century fashion. Each piece of clothing was handmade by Hanns W. Herbert, soaked in glue and modelled onto the dolls' bodies. Bridal belt, wedding ring, *Ketubbah* etc. had to be made-to-order, whereas glasses and such as well as the dolls are offered by specialized miniature dealers.

Measurements: H 50 cm, L 62 cm, W 34 cm
Legend:

A Jewish Wedding in Worms in the 18th Century

In Jewish Worms, the marriage ceremony took place in the garden between synagogue and dance hall on Wednesdays. The bride (Kallah), wearing a bridal belt, and the groom (Chatan) are placed under the wedding canopy (Chuppah) symbolizing the bridal chamber which is carried by four unmarried boys. A friend of the family recites benedictions over the wine and the couple drink from the cup. The groom places the wedding ring on the bride's right forefinger and recites the marriage formula (Kiddushin): "Behold, thou art consecrated unto me by this ring, according to the law of Moses and Israel!" Now the marriage contract (Ketubbah) is read aloud by the rabbi. Seven marriage benedictions (Sheva Berachot) are recited over a second glass of wine and the couple drink from it. Then the groom throws the glass against the Traustein (marriage stone). Joyfully the wedding guests exclaim: Mazel tov, the musician starts playing and the guests proceed to the dance hall. The Sheva Berachot are recited again after the meal to express the feelings of gratitude. An emissary of the Barons of Dalberg is present to prevent disturbances during the wedding (as well as during Jewish funerals). For this protection (Judenschutz) the Dalbergs (whose coat-of-arms is shown on the emissary's coat) are entitled to receive a fee.



Hanns W. Herbert, 1985/86: A Jewish Wedding in the 18th Century

Model 3: Feast of Tabernacles

Of the three pilgrimage festivals *Sukkot* is especially well suited for the representation in a model. The museum owns an original *Lulav* from Israel together with an *Eitrog* fruit, owing to a donation by Ms. Dr. Seifert of the Jewish Community of Budapest. There are also two separate *Eitrog* containers in our collection, as well as a third one which belongs to the holiday silverware presented to the museum by Ms. Gertrudis Guggenheim (exhibited in a separate showcase).

After checking numerous illustrations we decided to depict the *Sukkah* ("booth") in accordance with the pictures of Moritz Oppenheim. The building of the *Sukkah* recalls the time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. The small structure resembles a wooden garden pavillion that lacks a firm roof, thereby visualizing the transitoriness of the construction and – if need be – the easily accomplished demolition. Pergola-like, wooden frames bear leaves through which you can see the sky. Inside, the family gather around a table to entertain friends, eat, pray and study. Two boys are shown coming home from the synagogue with *Lulavim* in their hands.

The "Sukkah" model is accessible from all four sides, just as "Seder Eve" and "Synagogue". For the benefit of the visitor these models are placed on pedestals and most of the walls consist of plexiglass to guarantee both transparence and protection. The "Jewish Wedding" is exhibited in a wall case.

Measurements: H 35 cm, L 70 cm, W 43 cm

Legend:

Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) is a harvest festival, and like Passover and the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) it was celebrated as a pilgrimage festival to the Temple in Jerusalem. It takes place in the fall. The booth (Sukkah) recalls the time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. Therefore it is a light temporary structure and its roof loose enough to see the sky. It serves as a temporary home for the family where meals are served, prayers recited and guests entertained.

The Lulav, a cluster of "Four Species" of vegetation is brought first to the synagogue, then to the Sukkah as a symbol of thanksgiving for God's blessings and gifts. It consists of one palm branch, two willow and three myrtle twigs and a citron (Eitrog).



Hanns W. Herbert, 1987: Feast of Tabernacles

Model 4: The Worms Synagogue around 1620

In contrast to the scenes represented in the models I have described so far, the Worms Synagogue, rebuilt in 1959–1961, is existent and open to visitors. Therefore, this model serves a different function. You are introduced to the appearance of the synagogue in the time between 1353 and the extensions of 1624, partly even until the remodeling in the liberal spirit around 1840. The period “around 1620” was chosen because shortly after the synagogue’s reconstruction after the social disturbances in the wake of the Frankfurt Fettmilch uprising, the vestibule in the north and the so-called “Rashi Chapel” (actually a *Yeshiva*) to the west of the men’s shul were added (1624). Both buildings which changed the exterior of the synagogue and enlarged its functions were donated by David Oppenheim, a member of the Worms community.

Outside and indoors the strict separation between the men’s shul (1174/75) and the younger women’s shul (1213) is distinguishable. The circular window in the western wall allows the worshippers to check the sky and the stars in order to determine the beginning of a new day at nightfall. The courtyard is lined by benches on both sides. The women use a separate entrance. Men’s and women’s shul are connected by four windows and a door.

The furnishing of the men’s shul corresponds largely to the interior decoration of the *Altneushul* of Prague which has been preserved to this day. The *Bimah* or *Almemor* (platform) between the two columns is depicted on lithographs and drawings. Additionally, some stone fragments have been preserved. The two circumcision chairs were reconstructed on the basis of photographs of a circumcision chair from the old Jewish Museum destroyed in 1938.

The model is accessible from all sides. You can see the apse of the *Aron ha-Kodesh* and the niche of the “*Yehuda he-Chasid Wall*”, also called “Rashi Niche”. The shape of the original gable was not outlined as it

has not been established. Most likely it was a steep stone gable, perhaps stepped like in Prague.

Whereas the other three models were made in the same scale (according to the height of the jointed dolls) we chose a smaller scale for the synagogue to allow the visitor to look into the rooms from above. Two wooden figures (copies of the miniatures made by Markus to the Lamb) were placed in the courtyard and in the women’s shul respectively to illustrate the proportions. Fragments of the donor’s inscription of the women’s shul (1213), a showcase with Hebrew texts from the Bible and the Talmud and a reference to Rashi’s bible commentaries, and pictures of the synagogue and the “Rashi Chapel”, have been arranged around the “Synagogue” model. The “Rashi Chapel” with the “Rashi Chair”, a stone seat for the rabbi, is a place of special reverence, especially for orthodox Jews. The “Rashi Yeshiva”, as is its proper name, is the only building of the Diaspora which is shown almost in the original size as a replica at the *Bet Hatefutsot* (Diaspora Museum) in Tel Aviv. In Worms, as in Tel Aviv, it serves as a symbol of the high standard of Jewish learning on the Rhine.



Men's Synagogue before
the remodeling in 1842.
Watercolor
by Heinrich Hoffmann

Measurements: H 45 cm, L 92 cm, W 69 cm
Legend:

The Worms Synagogue around 1620

The model shows the synagogue (Bet Knesset) as it looked after the remodeling around 1620. The Rashi Yeshiva ("Rashi Chapel") to the west and the vestibule to the north are still missing, as they were added only in 1624 by a commission of David Oppenheim.

The "men's shul" (to the right, facing east) and the "women's shul" are separated by the northern wall of the former. Four small windows enable the women to hear the men's prayers and singing.

The entrance for men leads through the courtyard. With its niches sheltering seats it serves also as a place for discussions and proclamations.

Two steps lead from the main portal down to the two-naved hall which rests on two columns adorned by capitals. During services the Torah scroll – adorned by mantle, shield, pointer, and additional ornaments – is removed from the Ark (Aron ha-Kodesh) in the eastern wall and carried to the enclosed platform (Almemor or Bimah). The Torah scroll is placed on the table and unrolled. Seven men are called to the reading of the Torah.

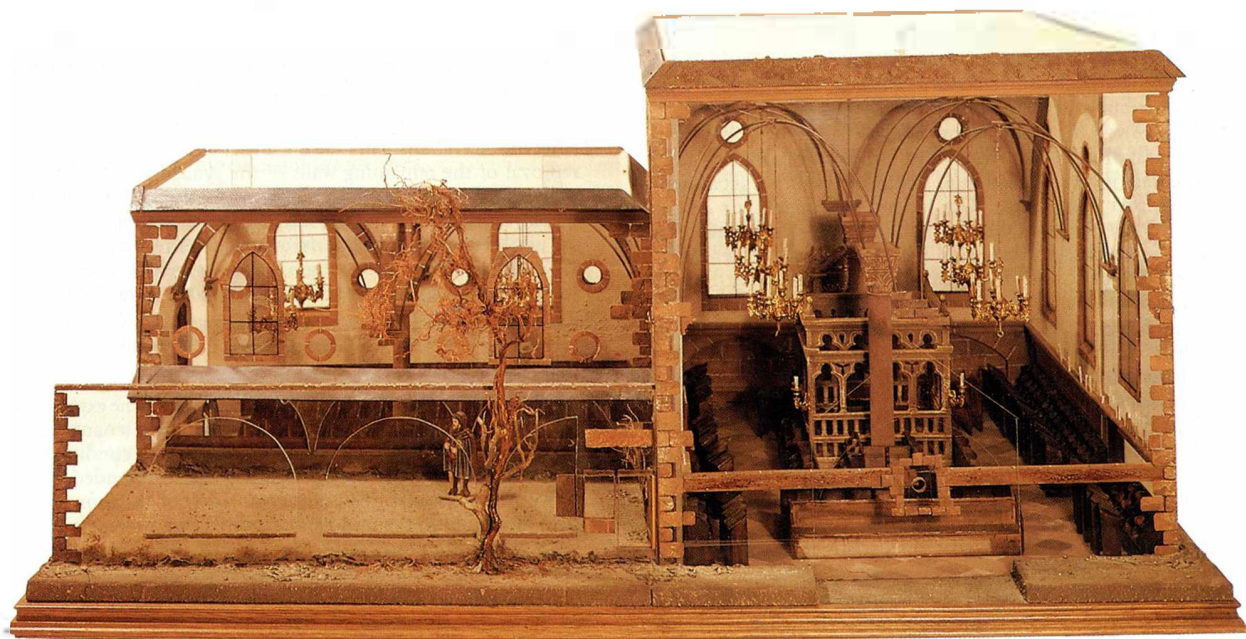
In the men's shul we find permanent seats and movable high desks with drawers for prayer books and phylacteries (Tefillin). The desk (Amud) in front of the Aron ha-Kodesh is used by the cantor.

Chandeliers are suspended from the vaults. They are crowned with imperial double-headed eagles, thus alluding to the imperial Protector of the Jews. The small doorway on the right connects the synagogue with the courtyard to the south of the building where marriage ceremonies take place ("Wedding Door"). Through the circular window in the western wall you can check the sky. When the evening twilight sets and three stars can be seen in the west, a new day begins. A special entrance leads to the women's shul, a hall supported by a central column. There are several rows of benches to seat the women.

During a circumcision ceremony (Berit Milah) the door between the two shuls is opened. The godmother hands the baby boy over to the godfather who places him for a moment on the chair designated for the prophet Elijah (in front of the stairs to the Ark). Then he sits down with the boy on the second chair and the Mohel performs the circumcision.

The ritual bath (Mikvah) is accessible via the synagoge courtyard and the gate on the right of the men's portal. A stone tablet informs us of the donation of the mikvah in 1185/1186. The even more ancient inscription to the right of the men's portal relates to the first Worms synagogue of 1034.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Otto Böcher, Mainz/Worms, guided us with his counsel during the preparatory stages of the model building. To him, the best expert on the history of the Worms synagogue³⁷, we are especially indebted for important advice on the synagogue model. His reconstructions of the Aron ha-Kodesh and the Almemor of the 1600s served as the basis of the model³⁸. By now, the models have proved to be attractive and didactically valuable objects in the Rashi House. They were also displayed at important exhibitions: "Seder Eve" in Nuremberg³⁹ and Metz⁴⁰, the "Synagogue" in the exhibition "The Architecture of the Synagogue" at Frankfurt/Main⁴¹.



Hanns W. Herbert, 1985: The Worms Synagogue around 1620

Notes:

- ¹ See Fritz Reuter, "Altertumsverein und Pauluseum. Aspekte der Wormser Wissenschafts-, Personen- und Stadtgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert als Beitrag zum hundertjährigen Jubiläum des Museums der Stadt Worms 1881–1981", *Der Wormsgau*, vol. 13 (1979/81), 21.
- ² Worms City Archives, Abt. 145/10.
- ³ Fritz Reuter, *Warmaisa. 1000 Jahre Juden in Worms* (Frankfurt/M., 1987), 27 f.; Mathilde Grünwald, *Die Römer in Worms* (Worms, 1986), 26.
- ⁴ Grünwald, *Römer*, 41 f.
- ⁵ Reuter, *Warmaisa*, 28.
- ⁶ Heinrich Boos, *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Worms*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1893), 223 f. (*Mauerbauordnung*); vol. 1 (Berlin, 1886), 49, No. 57 (1080). Cf. Hellmuth Gensicke, "Beiträge zur Wormser Stadtbeschreibung des Hochmittelalters", *Der Wormsgau*, vol. 3 (1951/58), 49 ff.; Reuter, *Warmaisa*, 28.
- ⁷ The year 5109 is a leap-year with a 13th month, namely, Adar II. The date in my *Warmaisa*, 6, has to be corrected accordingly. Cf. Alfred Haverkamp, "Die Judenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Schwarzen Todes im Gesellschaftsgefüge deutscher Städte", in *Zur Geschichte der Juden im Deutschland des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Stuttgart 1981), 37 and 91.
- ⁸ Otto Böcher, "Das Hörsaalgebäude der mittelalterlichen jüdischen Hochschule in Worms", in *Kunst und Geschichte in Rheinland-Pfalz* (Mainz, 1981), 40 (first published in *Ärzteblatt Rheinland-Pfalz* [June 1969]).
- ⁹ Otto Böcher, "Die Alte Synagoge zu Worms", in *Festschrift zur Wiedereinweihung der Alten Synagoge zu Worms*, ed. Ernst Roth (Frankfurt/M., 1961), 61; idem, "Hörsaalgebäude", 40. To Yuspa Shammes who collected many legendary stories cf. Reuter, *Warmaisa*, 55; Shlomo Eidelberg, "Das Minhagbuch von Juspa Schammes", *Der Wormsgau*, vol. 14 (1982/86), 20 ff.
- ¹⁰ Böcher, "Die Alte Synagoge zu Worms", 60 ff.
- ¹¹ Fritz Reuter, "Bischof, Stadt und Judengemeinde von Worms im Mittelalter (1349–1526)", in *Neunhundert Jahre Geschichte der Juden in Hessen. Beiträge zum politischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Leben*, ed. Christiane Heinemann (Wiesbaden, 1983), 55 ff.; idem, *Warmaisa*, 71 and 90 ff. Both with map of *Judengasse* around 1500.
- ¹² Reuter, *Warmaisa*, 68.
- ¹³ Ibid., 81 f.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 122 ff.; idem, Peter und Johann Friedrich Hamman. Handzeichnungen von Worms aus der Zeit vor und nach der Stadtzerstörung 1689 im "Pfälzischen Erbfolgekrieg" (Worms, 1989), 39. Peter Hamman's list of intact buildings does not contain any houses in *Judengasse*. Cf. drawing on Page 70 f.: View of the destroyed town from the North. Only gutted ruins are depicted in *Judengasse* between Martin's and Jews' Gate.
- ¹⁵ Worms City Archives 1B/2024–19, published by August Weckerling, "Zur Kenntnis der Stadt Worms, ihrer Gebäude und Bewohner im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert", in *Monatsblatt des Wormser Altertumsvereins*, vol. 6 (1907), 23. Böcher, "Hörsaalgebäude", 38 f., assumes that the additional floor was added only in 1840. The appearance of the building suggests a partial remodeling including an alteration of the northern facade in the 19th century. A third floor, however, was mentioned already in the visitation record of 1760.
- ¹⁶ Böcher, "Hörsaalgebäude", 40, with thorough description of the building and the *Klaus* and reference to a huge buttress, a rare feature in secular building, at the south-east corner which fell victim to the demolition in 1971; cf. Reuter, *Warmaisa*, 139 f.
- ¹⁷ Fritz Reuter, "Leopold Levy und seine Synagoge von 1875. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Selbstverständnis der Wormser Juden im 19. Jahrhundert", *Der Wormsgau*, vol. 11. (1974/75), 59.
- ¹⁸ Reuter, "Levy", 60 and 62 ff.
- ¹⁹ After the incendiarism in 1938 the town planners intended a total removal of the remaining walls of the synagogue. In 1942 the walls were thrown inwards by means of oil-pumps. As the interior quickly filled with stones the surrounding walls remained intact up until 2 meters above surface level. The reconstruction in 1959–1961 included these original walls as well as ornamented stones and inscriptions that could be rescued from the rubble.
- ²⁰ Annelore and Karl Schlösser, *Keiner blieb verschont. Die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945 in Worms* (Worms, 1987), 42.
- ²¹ Ibid., 67.
- ²² Almost all the Jews left *Judengasse* for other parts of the expanding town after 1830. As most of the new owners and tenants came from lower social strata the buildings were in poor condition. In the early 1970s Deputy Mayor Willi Hirschbiel intended to improve this condition by demolitions and the construction of modern buildings. In the mid-1970s, however, an awareness of the value of careful and adequate redevelopment developed. Hirschbiel eventually endorsed these principles and the ensuing results.
- ²³ See *Festschrift zur Wiedereinweihung der Alten Synagoge zu Worms*, ed. Ernst Roth (Frankfurt/M., 1961).
- ²⁴ Alfred Epstein, Mainz, was elected chairman. The most active members of the board were Dr. Hans Lamm, Munich, Prof. Dr. Eugen Rapp, Mainz, and Prof. Dr. Otto Böcher, Mainz/Worms.
- ²⁵ During a visit in Worms Prof. Dr. Cahnman insisted on the revival of this "historical Jewish memorial of the utmost rank".
- ²⁶ Fritz Reuter, "Thesen des Altertumsvereins Worms e.V. zur Sanierung der Judengasse", *Der Wormsgau*, vol. 10 (1972/73), 86, Paragraph 5; *Stadtplanung Worms. Die Judengasse. 5. Bürgerinformation der Stadtverwaltung Worms zur Altstadtsanierung*, ed. Town Planning Department, City of Worms, in collaboration with the City Archives (1978), 8 f.: Das Raschi-Haus, mit Erneuerungsvorschlag Rittmannsperger + Kleebank.

- ²⁷ "The new Rashi House will be a center of dialogue, research, and scholarly preservation of the past. In addition to a Jewish Museum it will house the city archives, the place where the monuments of the past – on paper and parchment – including Jewish Worms, are being preserved." (Fritz Reuter, Foundation-Stone Ceremony, 1980). The construction of the Rashi House according to my proposal was approved by the town council and strongly supported by the Mayors Dr. Kuhfuß and Neuß and the Deputy Mayor Pfister.
- ²⁸ At present, there is no Jewish community in Worms. The synagogue is owned by the Mainz Jewish Community.
- ²⁹ Cf. Henry R. *Hüttenbach*, Herta Mansbacher. Porträt einer jüdischen Lehrerin, Heldin und Märtyrerin (1885–1942), (Worms, 1981).
- ³⁰ The construction was financed by the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Rheinland-Pfalz and the City of Worms, partly with subsidies from public redevelopment funds. The costs amounted to a little less than two million marks, inclusive of the furnishing of the museum and the archives.
- ³¹ *Planungsgemeinschaft Rittmannsperger + Partner*.
- ³² E.g. the houses "to the Jug" (*Judengasse* 16–18), and "to the Box" (*Judengasse* 39) where the medieval gables have survived.
- ³³ To Rashi cf. *Germania Judaica*, vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1963), 447 (Nos. 4–5) and 450 f. (No. 21); Reuter, Warmaisa, 20 f.
- ³⁴ Possibly, Markus to the Lamb (1544–1606) was a Worms Jew. This, at least, might be conjectured from name lists in the city archives. We know of a house "to the Little Lamb" (1642) or "to the Golden Lamb" (1760), cf. Reuter, Warmaisa, 97 (No. 84) and 133 (No. 45). It is striking that Markus indeed incorporated a Jew and a Jewess *zu Wormbs* in his collection, cf. illustration in Reuter, Warmaisa, 69 f.
- ³⁵ The archives uses a large storeroom in *Adenauerring* 1, in addition to the historical "Archives of the Free City" in the town hall. The extension of the latter was financed by the leather industrialist Cornelius Wilhelm von Heyl in 1884. It was designed by the Munich architect Gabriel von Seidl. The vaults were decorated by Otto Hupp with murals depicting coats-of-arms.
- ³⁶ Cf. Reuter, Warmaisa, 53 ff. and 104 ff.
- ³⁷ Otto Böcher, *Die Alte Synagoge zu Worms*, = Wormsgau-Beiheft 18 (Worms, 1960). Reprinted in *Festschrift*, 11–154, and illustrations.
- ³⁸ Idem, illustrations, No. 45 and 53.
- ³⁹ Cf. *Siehe der Stein schreit aus der Mauer. Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Bayern*, Exhibition Catalogue (Nuremberg, 1988), 305.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. *Les Juifs Lorrains 1721–1871. DU GHETTO A LA NATION*. Exhibition Catalogue (Nancy, 1990), 13, No. 2.
- ⁴¹ Cf. *Die Architektur der Synagoge*, ed. Hans-Peter Schwarz, Exhibition Catalogue (Frankfurt/M., 1988), 405, No. 8.

APPENDIX

A Chronology of Worms Jewish History

Before 1000 C.E.	For the first time Jews from Worms are mentioned as visitors of the Cologne Fairs.	1689	Troops of King Louis XIV of France destroy the city, including the Jewish quarter, during the "Palatine War of Succession".
1034	The Jewish Community of Worms which has been established meanwhile builds its first known synagogue.	1801	Abolition of the ghetto. During the 19th century the Worms Jews leave the former Jewish quarter for the city. They establish themselves as merchants and participate strongly in the intellectual and political developments. The liberal Jew Ferdinand Eberstadt serves as mayor of Worms from 1849 until 1852. The Jewish citizens make important contributions to the local cultural life and associations.
Around 1060	Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, 1040–1105) studies at the Worms Talmudic Academy.		
1074	The "Jews and the other inhabitants of Worms", i.e., the Jewish international traders and the other merchants from Worms are granted customs privileges by a charter of King Henry IV.		
1076	Oldest tombstone on the Jewish cemetery of Worms.	1875	Dedication of the Levy Synagogue (destroyed in 1945; demolished in 1947).
1096	Fanatic participants of the First Crusade ravage the synagogue and the Jewish quarter.	1933	The 1100 Jews who live in Worms in 1933 are expelled or murdered during the reign of the "Third Reich".
	The course of the Worms Jewish community's history is marked by times of peaceful development, but also by grave interferences and disruptions.	1938	"Kristallnacht" Pogrom on Nov. 9/10 1938: The synagogue is burned down, Jewish homes and shops are devastated and Jewish men carried off to concentration camps.
1174/1175	Completion of the synagogue which in spite of repeated destructions and reconstructions is still extant today. (1174/1175: men's shul, 1185: ritual bath, 1212 women's shul)	1945	After 1000 years of Jewish presence in Worms, the Jewish community in Worms has perished. The Jewish cemetery alone withstands the Nazi period.
1349	Devastation of the Jewish quarter due to the false accusation that the Jews had caused the Black Death by poisoning the wells.	1961	Inauguration of the reconstructed (1959–1961) Old Synagogue.
1495	Empress Maria Blanca, the wife of Maximilian I, listens to the "famous chant of the Jews of Worms".	1982	Inauguration of the Rashi House, the remodelled former dance and wedding hall of the Jewish quarter now housing the Jewish Museum Rashi House and the City Archives.
1615	Social unrest erupts into the devastation of the Jewish quarter and the synagogue.		

List of Houses according to the Visitation Record of 1760

A Walk through Jewish Worms

The Houses in Judengasse in 1760

(in *Reuter, Warmaisa*, p. 132–133)

Starting at the Upper Gate (Martin's Gate)

with the northern houses

1. To the White Sword
2. To the Golden Sword
3. To the Black Eagle
4. To the White Goat
5. To the Golden Ring
6. To the Black Bear
7. To the Horseshoe
8. To the White Dove
9. To the Golden Monkey
10. To the White Monkey
11. To the Black Monkey with
the Bricktower behind
12. To the Drum
13. To the Golden Goose
14. To the White Swan
15. To the Paradise
16. To the Nickel's Gate
17. To the Red Crossbow
18. To the Green Tree;
garden with the Tower of Torture
behind
19. and 20. To the Peacock
21. To the Kettle
22. To the Red Apple
23. To the Box
24. To the Rabbit
25. To the Flower
with Hangman's Tower
26. To the Upper Acorn
27. To the Lower Acorn
28. To the Plough
29. To the Garlic
30. To the Powder Flask
31. To the Bluetit
32. To the Yellow Bottle
33. To the White Bottle
34. A space
35. To the Black Hart

36. To the Ladder
37. To the Golden Hart
38. To the Middle Hart
39. To the White Hart
40. To the Young Wolf
41. A space

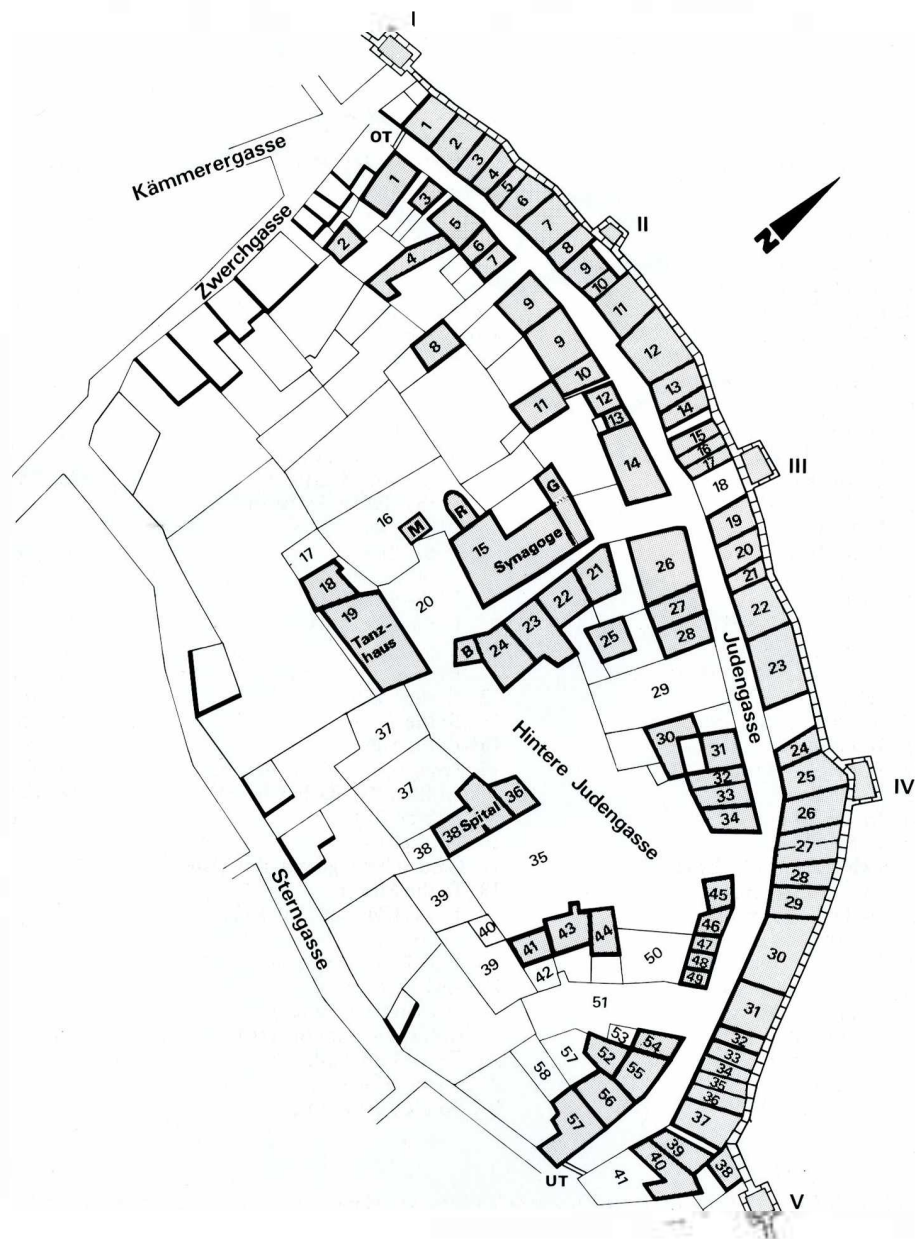
Starting at the Upper Gate with the southern houses

1. To the Black Horse
2. To the White Horse
3. To the Black Cock
4. To the White Cock or
To the Long Corridor
5. To the Golden Horse or
To the Stone-house
6. To the Bellows
7. To the Fountain
8. To the Rear Star
9. To the Golden Jar
10. A space
11. To the Rear Crown
12. To the Sickle
13. To the Scales
14. To the Sun
15. Synagogue with store-room
for flour (G), Rashi Chapel (R),
Mikvah (M)
16. Two cellars
17. Garden belonging to the Claus
18. To the Mirror
19. To the Claus or Dance Hall
20. A space
21. and 22. To the Beaker
23. Jewish Bakery
24. Two unnamed houses
with mikvah for men (B)
25. To the New Building
26. To the White Lion
27. To the Merry Man

28. To the Lute
29. The former horse-mill, now a space
30. To the Golden Chain
31. To the Basket
32. To the Pike
33. and 34. To the Red Lion
35. A large space
36. Slaughterhouse
37. Wine-garden
38. Jewish Hospital
39. A spacious garden
40. A cellar
41. House without Name
42. A space
43. and 44. To the Glove
45. To the Golden Lamb
46. To the Chair
47. To the Green Hat
48. To the Red Bull
49. To the White Bull
50. A cellar
51. A narrow lane with a well
52. To the "Gutruff"
53. A space
54. To the Key
55. To the Vine
56. To the Wheel
57. To the Giant
58. Cellar, with a well no longer
in use

Numbers and Letters:

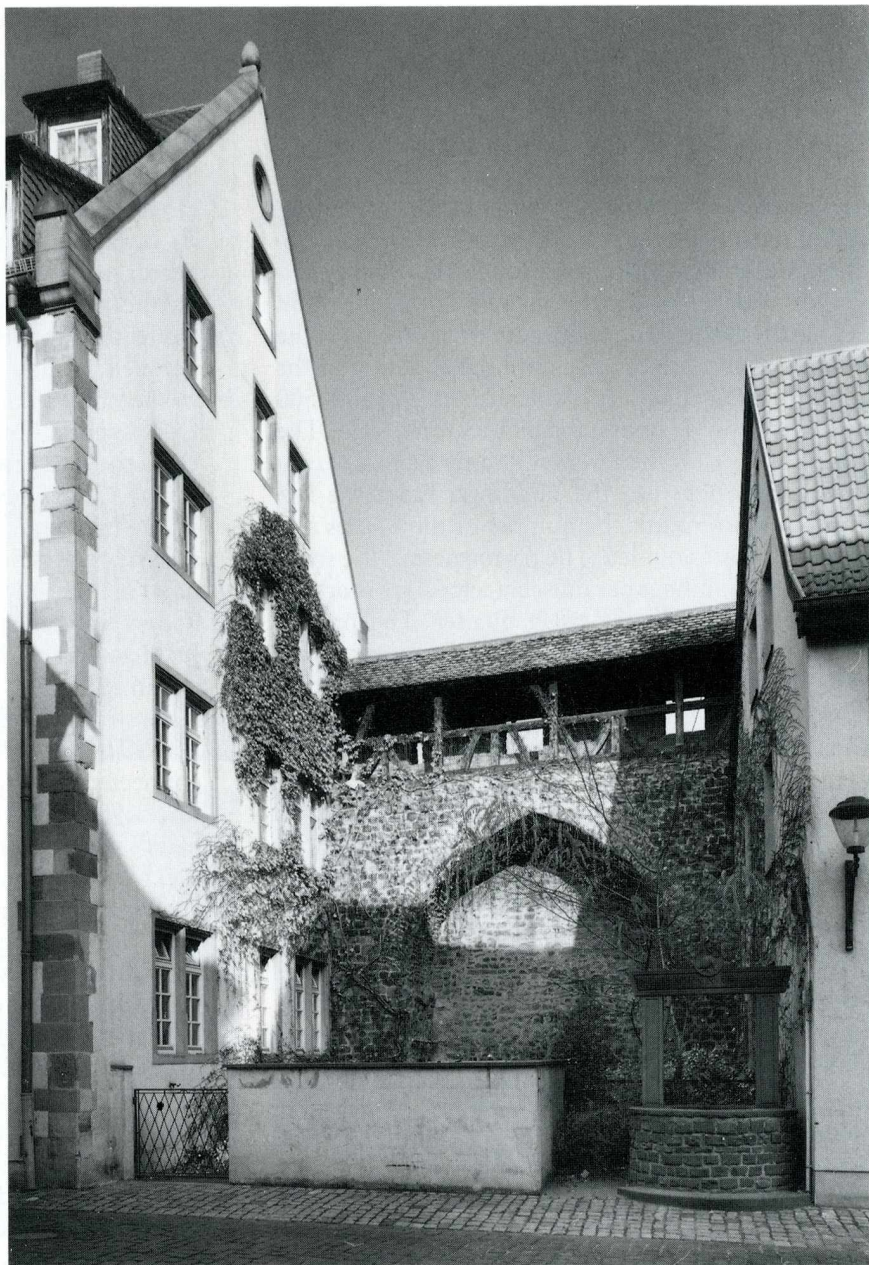
I Martin's Gate, II Bricktower, III Tower of Torture, IV Hangman's Tower (today next to the Rashi Gate), V Jews' Tower,
OT Upper Jews' Gate, UT Lower Jews' Gate





Rashi Gate and town wall at *Herta-Mansbacher-Anlage*

House "to the Box", *Judengasse 39*



Judengasse

The *Judengasse* (Jews' Street) is situated in the north-east of the medieval town center. Starting at *Martinspforte* (Martin's Gate), the street follows the slightly curved course of the medieval town wall. The buildings on the northern side of the street are even built into the wall. From the 11th century until the abolition of the ghetto in 1801 exclusively Jews lived here. Around 1500 there were only 42 houses for about 300 residents. The towers of the town wall were still easily accessible, not yet incorporated into the buildings. From the late 16th century onwards the number of the houses and the inhabitants doubled. The narrowness of the street and the tall buildings became characteristic features of the densely populated Jewish quarter. The present impression conveys this situation rather accurately – aside from the improvements in the housing conditions, resulting from two decades of renovation.

As in the other parts of the town the *Judengasse* houses were given individual names. Near Martin's Gate, for instance, we encounter the 14th-century buildings "to the Black Bear" (No. 11) and "to the Horseshoe" (No. 13). The latter displays skillfully layed brick vaults supported by consoles in the cellar and on the ground floor. A typical 18th-century building is the stately home of the Wertheimer family called "to the Jug" (No. 16/18). It was built in the period of reconstruction after the destruction of Worms by troops of King Louis XIV of France in 1689.

A few steps further at *Synagogenplatz* (Synagogue Square) 2 is the house "to the Sun". Like the houses "to the Jug" (No. 16/18), "to the White Lion", "to the Merry Man" (Nos. 26 and 28) and "to the Box" (No. 39) it contains a large vaulted cellar, supported by pillars. These cellars were used as storage rooms and wine-

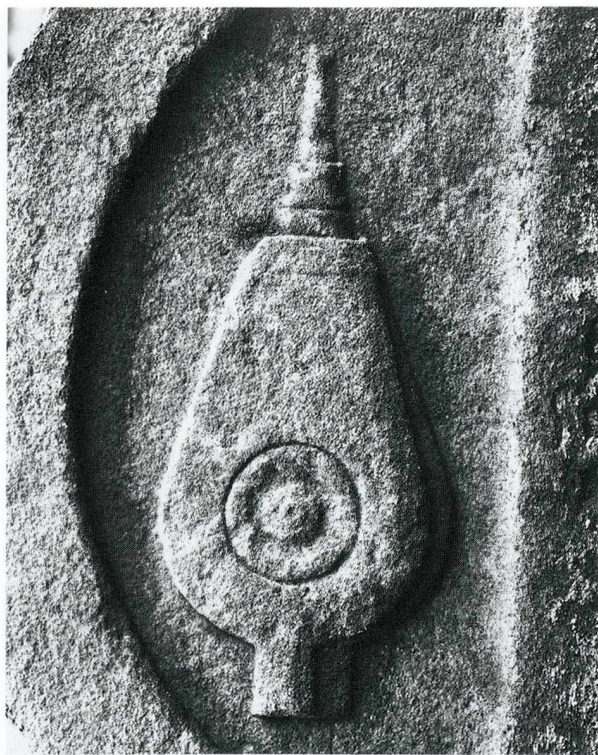
cellars, as we know from 17th-century inventories of stored wines.

Jewish doctors of the Wallisch family who treated Jews and Gentiles alike, inhabited the buildings "to the Goose" (No. 21) and "to the Flower" (No. 43). The house "to the Box" (No. 39), also called Guggenheim House after its former owners, has a rather odd feature: As it was built directly into the town wall, the town guards' walk of the battlements ran through the rooms on the upper floor. The doorway leading from the battlements into the house is still visible. The fountain between the houses "to the Box" and "to the Rabbit" was recently reconstructed.

Opposite the house "to the Box" is an open square. Until the 18th century the *Judenmühle* (Jews' Mill) was situated here whose grinding wheel had to be driven by the Jews under the supervision of a servant of the magistrate as is depicted on an 18th-century drawing, now in the city archives. The imperial *Hoffaktor* (Court Jew) Samson Wertheimer, a native of Worms, succeeded in its abolition after the destruction of the city in 1689.

A few steps further, next to the *Scharfrichterturm* (Hangman's Tower), is the three-arched Rashi Gate which has connected the town center and the northern suburb since 1907. Prior to that, the house "to the Powder Flask" was situated here. The keystone of its archway is exhibited at the Rashi House.

In the east *Judengasse* used to end at the *Judenpforte* (Jews' Gate), a gate tower of the town wall, first mentioned in 1080, destroyed in 1689. The residents of *Judengasse* lived according to a special law (*Judenordnungen* – regulations concerning the Jews). 12 Jewish community leaders (*parnasim*) were held responsible for its observance. From the 15th century the Jewish quarter was closed off against the town. There were only two gates at Martin's Gate in the west and Jews' Gate in the east which were locked at night and during Christian festivals. In 1801 they were demolished symbolically as a sign of the legal equality of all citizens.



House signs: powder flask, bellows, horseshoe, wheel



Interior of the synagogue

The Synagogue

The medieval synagogue, first mentioned in 1034 (donors' inscription, to the right of the doorway), rebuilt in 1174/75, the ritual and topographical center of the Jewish quarter, has been described in detail on page 22. A staircase leads from the synagogue's garden down to the Romanesque *Mikvah*, a subterranean bath donated in 1185/86 (donors' inscription, at the west wall of the courtyard). Its function is the restoration of ritual purity. The prescribed "living water" is supplied by a

ground-water flow originating from the Palatine mountains. The water level changes according to its varying strength. The pool must contain at least 800 liters of water to meet the requirements of the ritual law.

After a period of social unrest in 1614/15 two annexes were added to the synagogue. A vestibule was added in the north, and, more important, the so-called Rashi Chapel, a *Yeshiva* (Talmud Academy) was built to the west of the men's shul. It contains the so-called Rashi Chair, a stone seat for the rabbi.



Synagogenplatz with house "to the Sun" (right), synagogue vestibule, and entrance to the courtyard

Hintere (Rear) Judengasse

The *Hintere Judengasse* branches off to the south at *Synagogenplatz* (Synagogue Square) to meet *Karolinger Street*. Originally, however, it ran back to *Judengasse* vis-a-vis the house "to the Powder Flask". At the beginning of the street is the synagogue's *Rashi Niche* (also called *Yehuda be-Chasid Wall*). A legend tells that the Almighty once caused the niche to appear in order to rescue a pregnant woman from a boltering horse. The woman, of course, was identified with the mother of one of the mentioned scholars.

The stone apse of the men's shul shelters the Holy Ark. Vis-a-vis are the former baking house (No. 5) – next to it used to be a second *Mikvah* – and the Rashi House (No. 6), named after the famous *Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac* of Troyes (Northern France; 1040–1105). Rashi frequently referred to his Worms teachers in his writings. Thus, the link between Rashi and the Holy Community of Worms was established. The history and functions of the dance hall and today's Rashi House have been described in detail on page 3. East of the Rashi House used to be the Jewish slaughter-house and the hospital.



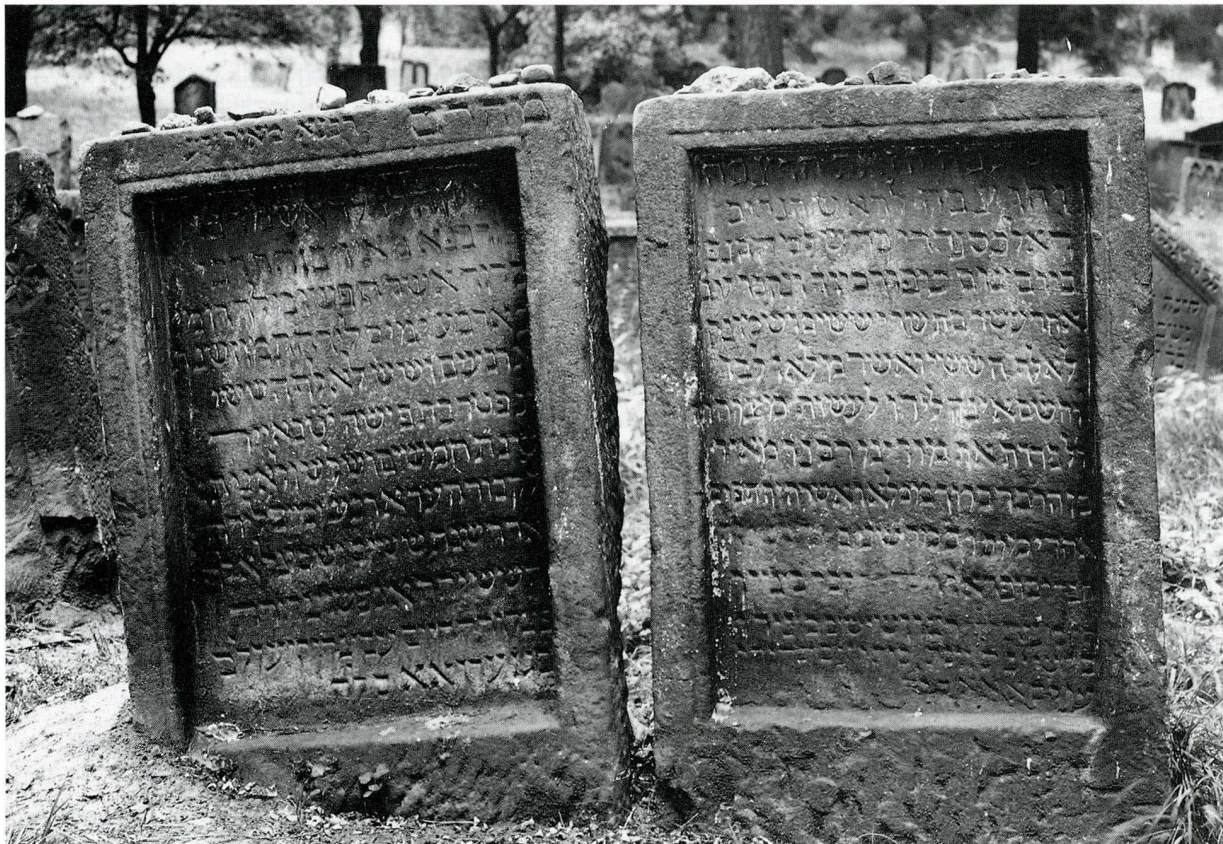
Memorial plaque in honor of Leopold Levy

Community Hall and Levy Synagogue

In 1874, the house “to the Sun” at Synagogue Square (No. 2) was enlarged to serve as a community hall. From 1933 to 1938 it housed a district school under Jewish administration for Jewish boys and girls whom the Nazis had driven out of the state schools.

In 1875 the inauguration of the New or Levy Synagogue took place. The synagogue, situated in a remodelled granary, was donated by Leopold Levy.

Bronze plaques in the Synagogue courtyard and at Judengasse No. 29 tell the visitor about its fate. The liberal majority of the community attended the services in the Old Synagogue. In 1842 the liberals decided to remove the wall separating men and women against the will of the orthodox minority. Moreover, they had a gallery with an organ installed. By his donation Leopold Levy attempted to subdue the conflict of the *Örgler und Nörgler* (supporters of the organ and the ones who “crabbed” about it).



Tombstones of the *Maharam* and of *Alexander*

Jewish Cemeteries

Since Jews become ritually impure on a cemetery in the midst of death and decay Jewish cemeteries are usually situated far away from the living quarters. The ancient Jewish Cemetery of Worms in *Andreasring* (outside the inner town wall, to the south-west of the ancient town center) is the oldest extant Jewish cemetery in Europe, even more ancient than the Prague cemetery.

The oldest tombstone, still at its original place, was erected for Jacob ha-Bachur in 1076.

After passing a forecourt with the guard's house, a water basin for ritual purification, and the entrance to the small house where the bodies used to be washed, the visitor enters the actual cemetery by a wooden gate. 3000 graves dating from the 11th to the 20th century are situated in the more ancient lower and the newer elevated parts. The latter was set up about 1700 on top

of the former outer town rampart. Members of Cohanite (priestly) families who are not allowed to become ritually impure and are therefore not able to enter the cemetery, can look at the graves through the window-like openings in the cemetery wall.

The most ancient gravestones are situated in the *Rabbinertal* (valley of the rabbis) at the back (south). Not far from the entrance we encounter the tombstones of the martyr *Maharam* (acronym of Rabbi Meir Baruch of Rothenburg) and his last benefactor Alexander ben Solomon Süßkind Wimpfen. In 1286 the *Maharam* organized the emigration of a group of his coreligionists to the Land of Israel. King Rudolf of Habsburg, however, had him imprisoned. The *Maharam* forbade the German Jews to ransom him. In 1293 he died in prison, but not until 1307 was Alexander able to fulfill his wish to be buried in the *Holy Sands* of Worms. When he died in the same year he was buried next to the *Maharam*.

Since the old Jewish cemetery had to be closed at the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish Community set up a new Jewish cemetery in Eckenbertstraße in 1911. Beside the graves of well-known families, the mortuary, built in the style of Darmstadt Art Nouveau, and the memorial for the Jewish soldiers from Worms who fell in the First World War are worth mentioning.

Holy Community of Worms

At the Worms Cathedral there is a statue of *Synagoga* with blindfolded eyes and broken staff. Christianity deemed Judaism outdated. Hardly anyone recognized their common biblical origins. Even though, there were periods of a tolerable coexistence, even of a fruitful relationship during the 19th and 20th century. After 1000 years of Jewish history in Worms, the National Socialists destroyed the Jewish Community and persecuted, expelled and murdered its members. The plaques containing the names of every Jewish martyr from Worms in the women's synagogue, and the *Herta-Mansbacher-Anlage*, a street named in honor of a murdered Jewish teacher (situated outside the town wall near *Judengasse*), are memorials to the fate of the community. Still impressive, the remains of Jewish Worms tell of what has been destroyed.

Literature on Jewish Worms

Henry R. *Huttenbach*, The Emigration Book of Worms. The Character and Dimension of the Jewish Exodus from a small German Jewish Community 1933–1941. Koblenz 1974.

Henry R. *Huttenbach*, The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Worms 1933–1945. A Study of the Holocaust Experience in Germany. New York 1981. (Only obtainable through: Mr. Gerhard Spies, 219 Delancey Ave., Mamaroneck, NY 10543.)

Manfred *Maier*, The Jewish Cemetery of Worms. Worms ¹1988.

Otto *Böcher*, Der Alte Judenfriedhof zu Worms. Rheinische Kunststätten. Heft 148.

Otto *Böcher*, Die Alte Synagoge zu Worms. Deutscher Kunstverlag München, Große Baudenkmäler Heft 181.

Henry R. *Huttenbach*, Herta Mansbacher. Porträt einer jüdischen Lehrerin, Heldin und Märtyrerin (1885–1942). Worms 1981.

Fritz *Reuter*, WARMAISA. Tausend Jahre Juden in Worms. Frankfurt am Main ²1987.

Annelore und Karl *Schlösser*, Keiner blieb verschont. Die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945 in Worms. Worms ²1989.

These publications are available in bookstores, at the STADTINFORMATION, and at the Jewish Museum Rashi House.

General Information

Synagogue at Synagogenplatz: Open daily, May through October 10–12 a.m. and 2–5 p.m., November through April 10–12 a.m. and 2–4 p.m.

Jewish Museum Rashi House, Hintere Judengasse 6, phone: 062 41 / 85 33 45 and 85 33 70: Open Tuesday through Sunday 10–12 a.m. and 2–5 p.m. The city archives in the Rashi House are open to the public Monday through Friday 8–12 a.m. and 2–5 p.m.

Old Jewish Cemetery in Adreasring: Open 8 a.m. until sundown.

Male visitors are requested to wear a head covering both at the synagogue and the cemetery.

Guided tours of Jewish Worms are arranged by Stadtinformation, Neumarkt 14, phone: 062 41 / 2 50 45.

STADTPLAN

- 1 Museum im Andreasstift
- 2 Magnuskirche
- 3 Judenfriedhof
- 4 Dom
- 5 Kunsthaus Heylshof
- 6 Siegfriedbrunnen
- 7 Dreifaltigkeitskirche
- 8 Rathaus
- 9 Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen
- 10 Romanische Wand
- 11 Stadtmauer am Torturmplatz
- 12 Pauluskirche
- 13 Rotes Haus und Friedrichskirche
- 14 Wehrgang am Raschitor
- 15 Raschi-Haus
- 16 Synagoge
- 17 Martinskirche
- 18 Lutherdenkmal
- 19 Lutherkirche
- 20 Hauptbahnhof
- 21 Liebfrauenkirche
- 22 Hagenstandbild
- 23 Brückenturm

- Stadtmauer
- Fußgängerzone



