
A HISTORY OF
THE JEWS IN
BICKENBACH
AND SOUTHERN
HESSE

Karl Schemel

About this book

At Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the heroic memorial for the Holocaust, the memory of three Jewish fellow-citizens from Bickenbach who were victims of the Nazi terror, lives on – Rosel Wolf, aged 12, and her parents, Benno and Settchen Wolf, were murdered in a camp in Minsk, Belorussia, in 1941 or 1942. This book, which is about the history of the Jews in Bickenbach and in southern Hesse, is dedicated to their memory.

After intensive study and years of research, Karl Schemel, the author of the book and mayor of Bickenbach, has set out a lasting literary monument for the former Jewish citizens. Based on the earliest reports of Jewish life in Bickenbach, he reconstructs the history of the Jews in the region over the centuries, who found their terrible end in Nazi persecution.

This book remembers the fate of many Jewish families from Bickenbach and neighbouring communities, drawing an impressive picture of the culture, religion and language of Jews of southern Hesse, and reminds us of still visible traces of Jewish history in the nearby region. Numerous illustrations also depict the lives of Jewish families and communities.

In countless conversations, Karl Schemel has collected information that inevitably would have been forgotten without this book, and he has made and maintained contact with families of the survivors – in the knowledge that “planting a small seed of possible friendship requires care and assistance from every side, as well as constant attention”.

**Stefan Rebenich,
Professor of Ancient History and the Classical
Tradition, University of Bern, Switzerland.**

Bickenbach on the Sand
Bickenbach community local history
Volume 2

Karl Schemel

**A History of the Jews
in Bickenbach and
southern Hesse**

English edition
Edited by Andrew Wolf and Anna Wolf

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Author: Karl Schemel

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Memorial stone in Bickenbach dedicated to Benno Wolf and his family.

Original edition dedication

**For Rosel Wolf and her parents
Benno and Settchen Wolf
murdered c.1941–1942
in an extermination camp
in Minsk, Belarus**

English edition dedication

**Ernst and Ludwig Wolf
and their families**

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Introduction

Years ago, I read that without a prologue, a book is not a book. And so I present this work, which is my attempt to reconstruct the history of Jews in Bickenbach, and as such it remains an experiment, as you will see.

It is the work of a layman, interested in Jewish history and Jews in the present-day. This project commenced over 20 years ago, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have helped me, provided me with hope and support, and made it possible for me to finish what I had begun.

I was inspired to research this largely unexplored field by Rudolf Kunz, a school teacher, who was very familiar with the history of the Bergstrasse, Odenwald, and Ried regions. I have an enormous amount of respect and gratitude for him. Herr Kunz gave me the courage to pursue this project and provided me with a solid foundation upon which to begin my research.

In the book of local history *Bickenbach uffm Sand* (1973), Rudolf Kunz provided an initial overview of Jews in Bickenbach.¹ Also, I cannot properly express how grateful I am to Hugo Wolf and Marion Mayer from Chicago, USA, for the countless times they have assisted me and provided me with direction, and most of all for paving the way by helping me to make contacts and establish relations.

My goal in writing this was, and still is, to perhaps be able to shed light on the time and place, and on the hidden and forgotten. It was not having immediate access to the records in the municipal archive of my home community that was most useful to me in my endeavours, but rather being able to consult with witnesses who shared with me what they had experienced, and the knowledge that had been passed on to them.

Today, I understand that not everyone would have been able to help, even if he or she wanted to. Sometimes it meant opening old wounds, and reliving suppressed memories.

Though sometimes uncomfortable, I wanted to learn about, and record if possible, the still visible traces of this community's life together.

For the reasons I have mentioned, I must thank in particular the families of Hugo Wolf, Ludwig Wolf, Ernst Wolf, Werner Baruch, Hilde Korr, and not to forget, my pen-pal Frau Rosa David, as well as the Mayer, Mosbacher, Landsberg and Levi families for all their contributions. In spite of the humiliation, misery, and indignity they suffered, for the most part they returned to and visited Bickenbach, and the wounds appear to have healed.

Finally, this book is in memory of Rosel Wolf and her parents; sometime between 1941 and 1942 they died – were murdered – in a concentration camp in Minsk, Belarus, simply because they were Jews. I hope her brothers Ludwig and Ernst understand me.

Bickenbach did not have an independent Jewish community. The Jewish school was in the neighbouring community of Alsbach, and the Jewish cemetery there was the final resting place for the dead from 30 cities and communities in the region of southern Hesse. For this reason, a brief description and mention of locations and cities outside of our region, as well as centres of Jewish life and learning along the Rhine and Main Rivers is necessary.

After a visit to Israel, I came to truly appreciate the meaning of the phrase: “Next Year in Jerusalem”.²

Karl Schemel

Bickenbach, summer 1993

1. *Bickenbach uffm Sand* (short for *Bickenbach auf dem Sand*) translates to *Bickenbach on the Sand*. The title alludes to the fact that the local soil around Bickenbach is historically known to be sandy.

2. Next Year in Jerusalem – L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim. Recited in commemoration at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur service and the Passover Seder outside of Jerusalem. A spiritual phrase expressing the Jewish hope for the coming of the Messiah and for their return to Jerusalem.

English edition introduction

Ernst Wolf, my father, was born in Bickenbach on 30 December 1921. By his account, he had a very happy childhood and told us stories of growing up in Bickenbach with his parents Benno and Settchen Wolf, his brother Ludwig, and his sister Rosel. Much of it sounded idyllic to my sister Lisette, and I.

The first time I saw Bickenbach was in 1995. My wife Anna and I accompanied my parents on a trip to Europe which included a visit to Frankfurt and Bickenbach.

My father had not seen his home town since his family moved to Frankfurt in April 1938. He finally saw his old home again on 7 November 1995, after an absence of 57 years, most of it spent in Australia. It was my parents' first trip to Europe.

We were warmly welcomed in Bickenbach and greatly enjoyed our visit. Ernst was very moved by some old friends and acquaintances who came to see him.

Ernst visited Bickenbach again in April 2012, this time with Lisette and her two sons Daniel and Lewis, Susan Wolf, daughter of Ludwig Wolf, and myself. We were invited to attend a Stolperstein ceremony commemorating Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf. The ceremony took place in front of what used to be the Wolf family home in Schulstrasse.

Ernst and Karl Schemel never actually met, but the two men corresponded over the years. On both our German visits, we were privileged to meet with Karl's family. Ernst had a copy of Karl's book from his first visit in 1995 and we received two more copies in 2012. However, as the books were in German, most of us were unable to fully understand the precious contents.

As I grew older, I began to develop a greater interest in my family's history. Our father was a humorous and optimistic man, who refused to dwell on past events. He could still read and speak German, but was bemused at our interest in his family's life in Bickenbach.

We knew Karl's book contained information about the Wolf family and its history, but my high school German was woefully inadequate when it came to reading it. I came to realise that what was needed was an English-language version. This would make it more accessible to a greater audience, even if it was just for the descendants of people mentioned in the book. So, a project of translation began in early 2015.

At the time, Ernst was in poor health, making it difficult to involve him too much and, sadly, he died in July 2015. Nevertheless, we decided to persevere with the project.

Anna and I are graphic designers, so we have some understanding of the publishing process. Firstly, we had to find a way to get the words and images from the book into a digital form. As it was originally published in 1993, there were no digital files archived from its production, and to key in the whole book accurately would take much time and patience.

We eventually found that by using optical character recognition software we could make each page an accessible word file. I scanned all 550 pages of the book and then separated the images from the words.

I then realised that translating the book would also be complex. Aside from the fact that it was expensive to translate at commercial rates, some of the content was in local dialect. Fortunately, the Goethe Institute recommended Evi Rühle, a professional translator who was willing to assist us on this project. Not only was Evi familiar with the local dialect, she was also very generous with her help. She is responsible for about a third of the total translation.

For the remaining two-thirds, I am most appreciative to Christopher Newton, a translator who suggested I contact Dr Leah Gerber at Monash University Language Department. Leah suggested that, under Chris' guidance, her students in the Master of Interpreting and Translation Studies could work on sections of the book. It would have to fit into their semesters, and the final work would then be checked by Chris. I am therefore sincerely grateful for the philanthropic attitude of Leah and Chris, and the efforts made by the students.

The first translated section arrived in December 2015 and the final section was completed in March 2018.

I know Ernst would be astonished that this book about his home town is now available in English. And I sincerely hope that Karl Schemel, after his great efforts in writing what is a significant gesture of goodwill, would be equally pleased.

Andrew Wolf
Melbourne 2018

The Jews

A chapter from the history of the Bickenbach community (874–1974)

The Counts of Erbach were no friends of the Jews, and thus did not allow any Jews into their district of Seeheim, in spite of the fact that some had already been living in the Hessian neighbourhood for many years (in Zwingenberg since 1312, in Alsbach since 1563). It wasn't until shortly before 1700, when the Seeheim administration had to be mortgaged to pay off significant debts (it was eventually sold to Hesse in 1714), that a Jewish influx was no longer opposed. Jews appeared in Seeheim in 1699, in Bickenbach in 1701 and in Jugenheim in 1704.

From 1701 to 1707, a Jew named Mändel, was mentioned in the Bickenbach municipal account balances, where his non-burgess fee was noted to be four *gulden* annually.¹ Like all other citizens without full civic rights, upon his arrival he was required to pay the quartering costs and to carry any additional money with him. He had almost no share of common land.

From 1710, two Jews were mentioned – Schaime, and Jessel (until 1754). The community came to an agreement with Jessel three years after his arrival in the area. The terms were, he must provide the community with a capable bullock for riding, and provide it with food. Should the bullock become no longer useful, he must replace it immediately. As compensation, Jessel was permitted to use the village green, and to raise two head of cattle in the pasture (with his livestock trade he should not need an excess), and he was exempt from all taxes and dues. He was also exempt from the quartering of soldiers, both in winter and during marches. This agreement was renewed multiple times.

In 1725, the community allowed him to tend his cattle for eight days on shared pasture, and he was required to report it to the mayor if he acquired more livestock.

That the Jews of Bickenbach raised cattle was also made clear in a Zwingenberg cattle market record from 1746:

Jessel, a Jew from Bickenbach, had a red-brown cow with long horns, which he had recently brought from the Giessen market. He sold this cow to Zentleutnant Joh. Gg. Franck of Seeheim for 20 Reichstaler, which was paid immediately.

At the fair, Itzig, a Jew from Bickenbach, sold a golden-coloured cow, which he had recently brought from the Giessen market, to Elisabetha Barbara, widow of Peter Bauer of Auerbach, for 18 Reichstaler and one simmer of beans.² The money was immediately paid in cash, but the simmer of beans would be delivered after the harvest, as promised, providing customary protection.

These first Jews of Bickenbach were poor people, door-to-door salespeople, and second-hand dealers. By selling simple objects of everyday use, (oil, nails, rope, paper, etc.) they eked out a living. Even raising cattle at the time did not yield much profit and was high-risk. The communities often exempted older Jews and widows from the non-burgess fee, because they were so poor. A report made by the Hessian government in 1809 established that the Landjuden (rural or country Jews) were on the lowest rung of society.

In 1808, Jews were required to have a hereditary family name to use for legal and public purposes. Until this time they just had first names, and only gradually received full civil rights (recorded: 1821, 1848, 1874, 1919).

A register of the Jews in Bickenbach was not made until 1839 (it was comprised of three volumes – births, deaths and marriages). Therefore the family trees of Jewish families in Bickenbach can only be properly traced from this time on.

1. The gulden was a gold or silver coin used in Germany. It was the currency of the southern states which included Frankfurt. This coin was based on the gulden or florin of the Holy Roman Empire, the coin was in use until German unification.

2. A 'simmer' was an old measurement for grain.

Jewish Families		Bickenbach's Jewish population 1704–1945	
1701	Mändel	1704	5
1710	Schaime and Jessel (till 1754)	1774	8
1723	Josua Benjamin	1801	11
1739-54	Isaak Lazarus	1828	48
1767-84	Isaak (Wolf) and Salomon (Herz)	1858	38
1803	Hirsch, Moses, Isaak, Wolfs (widow), Salomons (widow)	1871	26
1824	Hirsch Herzberger, Moses Feitel (from Seeheim), Isaak Löb Oppenheimer, Moses Wolf, Abraham Bentheim (from Bensheim), Simon Mainzer (from Heppenheim)	1880	14
1870	Salomon Bentheim, Abraham Bentheim, Feist Berger, Israel Gugenheimer, Löb Mainzer, Max Mainzer (baker), Hirsch Mainzer, Isaak Wolfs (widow), Berle Wolf, Lazarus Wolf, Gabriel Wolf	1890	19
1920	Lazarus Wolf, Emil Wolf, Benno Wolf	1900	14
		1905	16
		1910	6
		1925	9
		1933	11
		1938	3
		1945	–

The tables above give some insight into Bickenbach's Jewish population.

After the Franco-German War of 1870, the Jewish population in Bickenbach decreased rapidly. The German economic boom drew them to the cities. Before and after WWI, only Lazarus Wolf and his descendants still lived there. Benno Wolf (b.1890), his wife Settchen (b.1890) and their daughter Berta Rosel (b.1929) were all victims of the Nazis. (It had been previously thought they were murdered in Auschwitz but this was incorrect – in about 1990 it was discovered they died in Minsk.)

The local Jews had their synagogue in Alsbach, where they also buried their dead. (Jewish cemetery for 30 communities, *Alsbach Heimatbuch*, p. 314).³ There was also a Jewish bathhouse located at Bachgasse 24.

In 1987, owing to his ties with Bickenbach, Lothar Schwabach of Flensburg put together the list of Jewish families of Bickenbach, shown on the page opposite. It was based on a template by Rudolf Kunz.

In *Bickenbach uffm Sand*, some families did not get

a mention. There was a lack of information about the Langer family, who lived in Bickenbach from 1930–1934 and later emigrated to Palestine. Also missing was the suffering endured by the city doctor from Berlin, Dr. Wilhelm Grumach and his family.

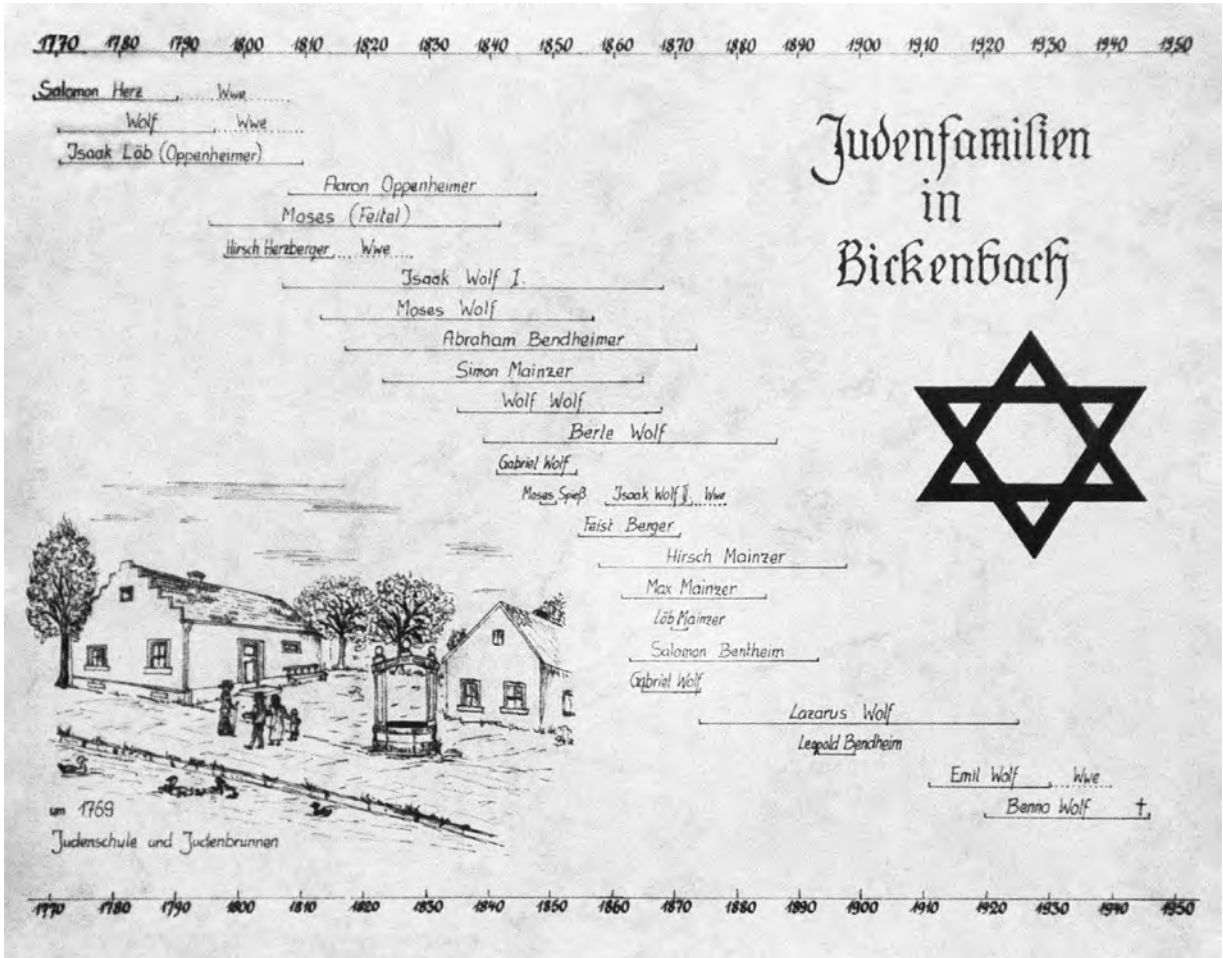
As the Jewish register was not maintained until 1839, as a precaution, enquiry was made in about 1981 to the district court in Darmstadt to find out if any documents or records were available from before or after 1808. The suggestion to submit an enquiry to the Hessian state archive in Wiesbaden brought new records to light.

On 8 April 1943, Priest G. Boeckner compiled from the church registers held at the Sippenamt in Frankfurt, the relevant records of births and marriages of Jews for the periods 1741–1774, and 1780–1808.⁴ The information found is included in this book.

Additionally, the Hessian state archive in Darmstadt suggested that rabbinic records may have been preserved in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.

3. Heimatbuch: Book that tells the local history, lore, traditions and practices of a village.

4. The Sippenamt (literally Genealogical Office) was the Reich Kinship Research Office, which was concerned with the racial descent of children.



Jewish families in Bickenbach. Image by Lothar Schwalbach, Bickenbach/Flensburg.

Jewish families of Bickenbach, 1701–1945

At this point, it is necessary to express my gratitude to Rudolf Kunz, a school teacher who retired to Jugenheim, for his work in compiling the list of information regarding the Jewish families of Bickenbach, so that this information can be accessed for the first time by the general public.

The information regarding street names and house numbers was recorded on 14 January 1977, at a meeting of senior citizens in the community centre nursing home. It was an interesting – and interested – group of 20 men and women, who spoke about their experiences and the memories handed down to them. As such, this chapter is made up of verified facts and these communal memories.

According to Rudolf Kunz, from the time before the introduction of the civil registry office in 1875, the only information we had about the Jews of Bickenbach is in the 1839–1874 register. Some information could be sourced from municipal accounts. However, as instructed by the landgraves, priests were also encouraged to compile records in addition to the church register.

Surnames were first adopted in 1808 (Berger, Feitel, Oppenheimer, Wolf). Before this time, only first names were available to us. For these reasons, exact family trees can only be established as far back as 1800.

The following list presents the families alphabetically, typical of ancestry books.

A number in brackets, for example (6), refers to the entry number in the list where the person is linked or represented with further detail.

In this translated edition, information has been added to the following list from material gathered from later chapters, and research done to fill in some of the unknown details.

The editors would welcome any further information regarding this list – andrew@wolfandwolf.de

-
- 1 **MARRIAGE** – c.1813, Bickenbach
Abraham Bentheim, b. 9 Nov 1790, Seeheim–
d. 24 Dec 1874, Bickenbach, merchant.
Hannchen Feitler, b. 1796–d. 31 Aug 1857,
Bickenbach. Daughter of Moses Feitler (6).

CHILDREN

Of the 13 children from this marriage only seven names are known.

Götge, b. 1818–d. *unknown*. Married Abraham Feitler from Seeheim in 1838.

Feitel, b. 6 Nov 1822–d. *unknown*. c.1845 emigrated secretly to the USA.

Jütle (Jettche), b. 1827–d. 12 Nov 1892, Bickenbach.

Salomon (2), b. 16 Sep 1832, Bickenbach–d. 5 Feb 1913

Mayer, b. 1834–d. 1936*

Simon, b. 1837–d. 1837*

Ester, b. 7 Apr 1839–d. *unknown*. She was the last child, the 13th, and lived at house no. 62, today Darmstädter Strasse 25. Her husband's name is unknown. They had three children, Rosa (b.1865), Simon and Michael.

(*Source: Marion Mayer, daughter of Johanna Hedwig Bentheim and Julius Steiermann, 1988.)

- 2 **MARRIAGE** – 11 Jun 1862, Bickenbach
Salomon Bentheim, b. 16 Sep 1832, Bickenbach–
d. 5 Feb 1913, merchant, mohel. Recorded as a
citizen of Bickenbach since 1858.
Nannchen Steiermann, b. 1838, Biblis–d. 26 Dec
1890, Bickenbach. Daughter of Mayer Steiermann
from Biblis.

CHILDREN

Hanna, b. 25 Apr 1864–d. *unknown*. (She lived at house no.132, today Darmstädter Strasse 25).

Leopold, b. 4 Mar 1866–d. 1866

Leopold (3), b. 24 Jul 1867–d. 1907, Reinheim.

Married Bertha Frohmann from Reinheim in 1892.

Simon, b. 17 Jul 1869–d. *unknown*

Moritz (4), b. 10 Apr 1873–d. *unknown*. Married

Mina Frohmann from Reinheim in 1907.

Emma, b. 28 Nov 1875–d. 1875

3 MARRIAGE – 1892

Leopold Bentheim, b. 24 Jul 1867, Bickenbach–d. 1907, Reinheim, merchant, mohel.

Bertha Frohmann, b. *unknown*–d. 1955, Chicago, USA.* Daughter of Abraham Frohmann from Reinheim, and Fanny Feitler from Seeheim.

Lived in Bickenbach until 1898.

(*Source: Marion Mayer, daughter of Johanna Hedwig Bentheim and Julius Steiermann, 1988.)

CHILDREN

Nannchen, b. 21 Jan 1893, Bickenbach–d. 1973, California, USA. Married Michael Loeb.

Martha, b. 16 Jan 1894, Bickenbach–d. *unknown*. Married Sigmund Steiermann, b. 1884, Biblis–d. 1973, Chicago, USA. Martha was living in a Chicago aged-care home in 1989.

Johanna Hedwig, b. 24 Jan 1898, Bickenbach–d. 1986, Chicago, USA. Married Julius Steiermann, b. 1891, Biblis–d. 1985, Chicago, USA.

4 MARRIAGE – 1907

Moritz Bentheim, b. 10 Apr 1873–d. *unknown*

Mina Frohmann, *details unknown*. Sister of Bertha Frohmann, from Reinheim. Mina died young.

Moritz and family moved out of the Bickenbach area and little information is available.

5 MARRIAGE I – *details unknown*

Feist Berger, b. c. 1824–d. *unknown*, likely in

Pfungstadt, shoemaker, citizen of Bickenbach from 1854. He was probably the son of Hirsch Berger and Breinle David from Hähnlein.

Fanny Pauli, *details unknown*

Marriage II – c. 1854, likely in Hähnlein

Karoline Pauli, b. c. 1826–d. *unknown*, sister of his first wife Fanny.

Lived at Schulzengasse 1 from 1854–1870.

CHILDREN

Sohn, b. 12 Oct 1854–d. 1854

Hirsch, b. 25 Jan 1856–d. *unknown*, teacher and writer.

Rosa, b. 19 Sep 1857–d. *unknown*

Hermann, b. 20 Aug 1859–d. *unknown*

David, b. 3 Sep 1861–d. 1864

Hannchen, b. 22 Jul 1863–d. *unknown*. Married Hermann Sternau from Bretzenheim, Mainz, on 26 Jul 1896.

Marx, b. 12 Jun 1865–d. *unknown*

Jakob, b. 28 Sep 1867–d. *unknown*

6 MARRIAGE – 21 Oct 1795, Bickenbach

Moses Feitler, b. 23 Jul 1765, Seeheim–d. 6 Apr 1842

Ester Herz, *details unknown*. Daughter of Salomon Herz (22) from Bickenbach.

Lived at house no. 62, today Darmstädter Strasse 25.

CHILDREN

Hannchen, b. 1796–d. 31 Aug 1857. Married c. 1813 to Abraham Bentheim (1).

Details of other children unknown.

7 MARRIAGE – *details unknown*

Israel Gugenheimer, *details unknown*. Died prior to 1871. He was probably from Hähnlein.

Buchte Wolf, b. c. 1815– d. 28 Jun 1871, Bickenbach. Possibly the daughter of Isaak Wolf (25) or Moses Wolf (26) of Bickenbach.

8 MARRIAGE – c. 1790

Jud Hirsch, b. c. 1762–d. c. 1813, Bickenbach, merchant. In 1808, he changed his surname to Herzberger.

Wife, *details unknown*, records showed she was still alive in 1824. After her husband died, she had to pay the Beisassgeld.¹

1. "Beisassen" were those who lived in a town but did not have full citizenship rights and wanted the protection of urban authorities. Those who did not have full rights had to pay special taxes – Beisassgeld – but could be exempt from these if they were poor.

9 MARRIAGE – c.1825

Herz Herzberger, *details unknown*, merchant.
Probably son of Jud Hirsch/Herzberger (8).

Jette, *details unknown*
Lived at house no.48.

CHILDREN

Sara, b. 16 Feb 1839–d. *unknown*, she was the sixth child.

Details of other children unknown.

10 **Abraham Jakob**, b. c.1808–d. 2 Sep 1877, Bickenbach.

He was from the Altleiningen area which is near Wattenheim.

11 **Jud Jessel**, *details unknown*

Records show he was in Bickenbach 1710–1754.
Perhaps with a connection to **Josua Bentheim**, c.1723/24, cattle dealer (*Ortschronik*, p.169).

12 MARRIAGE – prior to 1741

Isaac Lazarus, b. 1715–d. *unknown*, records show he was in Bickenbach 1739–1747. It is possible that Isaac Lazarus was the progenitor of the Wolf family in Bickenbach.

Röß, *details unknown*, mentioned as a widow in records from 1780.

CHILDREN

Wolf (24), b. May 1741–d. c.1780–1800

Joseph, b. 22 Oct 1743–d. *unknown*

Vogel, b. 12 Aug 1747–d. *unknown*. Married c.1770 to Isaac Löb (19).

Details of other children unknown.

13 **Jud Mändel**, *details unknown*

Records show he was in Bickenbach 1701–07, making him the first Jew recorded in Bickenbach.

14 MARRIAGE – c.1822

Simon Mainzer, b. c.1798–d. 19 Aug 1865, fruiterer, originally from Heppenheim.

Teichel, *surname unknown*, b. c.1798–d. 17 Nov 1834, Bickenbach. Father called “Hirsch”.

Lived at Sandstrasse 12.

CHILDREN

Max (15, 16), b. 29 Mar 1823–d. 22 Nov 1884

Löb (17), b. 1832–d. *unknown*

Hirsch (18), b. 1833–d. *unknown*

15 MARRIAGE I – c.1849

Max Mainzer, b. 29 Mar 1823–d. 22 Nov 1884

Hermine May, *details unknown*.

It is probable that their son is Max Mainzer, b. 20 Jul 1860, Bensheim.

16 MARRIAGE II – 20 Nov 1861

Max Mainzer, b. 29 Mar 1823–d. 22 Nov 1884, matzoh baker.

Babette Strauss, b. 1838–d. 10 Oct 1884, Bickenbach.
Daughter of Simon Strauss of Dieburg.

Lived at Alte Strasse 16.

CHILDREN

Diana, b. 16 Sep 1862–d. 21 Nov 1865

Jakob, b. 25 Jan 1865–d. 10 Jun 1886, Heppenheim

Siegmund, b. 23 Sep 1867–d. *unknown*.

In 1893, he was recorded as married and living in Hanau. He had a son, Max, b. 17 Apr 1894.

Max Mainzer emigrated to Denmark in 1936.

Betty, b. 12 Feb 1870–d. 29 Dec 1930. Married

Heinrich Eichel, and had a daughter, Pessel.

17 MARRIAGE – 6 Oct 1869, Darmstadt

Löb Mainzer, b. 1832–d. *unknown*, merchant.

Ester Schott, b. Feb 1848–d. *unknown*. Daughter of Lazarus Schott from Groß-Gerau.

Lived at Schulstrasse 5, 1863–75.

CHILDREN

Dina, b. 4 Dec 1869–d. *unknown*

Simon, b. 20 Nov 1871–d. 9 Jan 1943, (perished at Theresienstadt). Travelling salesman (cereals and grains), baker at Kasinostrasse 31, Darmstadt.

18 MARRIAGE – 16 Jul 1857, Bickenbach
Hirsch Mainzer, b. 1833–d. 6 Dec 1899
Goldche Steiermann, b. 1833–d. 21 Dec 1897,
 Bickenbach. Daughter of Meyer Steiermann
 from Biblis.
 In 1857, was living at Alte Strasse 16; 1866–1871,
 Sandstrasse 12; 1871–1874, Schulstrasse 4; 1875–
 1882, Schulstrasse 5; 1882–1894, Bachgasse 34;
 1894–*unknown*, Zwingenberger Strasse 22.

CHILDREN

Deichel (female), b. 26 May 1859–d. *unknown*
Gutchell, b. 7 Oct 1861–d. 1861
Gutchell, b. 19 Feb 1863–d. *unknown*
Eva, b. 24 Feb. 1865–d. 1865
Simon, b. 11 May 1866–d. *unknown*.
 In 1938, he was living in Frankfurt am Main.
Johanna, b. 17 Aug 1867–d. *unknown*
Settgen, b. 5 Nov 1868–d. 1868
Rosa, b. 19 Jun 1870–d. 1870
Köhlchen, b. 28 Jun 1871–d. 1871
Ester, b. 13 Dec 1873–d. 1874
Mayer, b. 29 Mar 1877–d. *unknown*

19 MARRIAGE – c.1770

Isaac Löb (Oppenheimer), b. 1743–d. 12 Dec 1840,
 Bickenbach
Vogel, b. 12 Aug 1747–d. *unknown*. Daughter of Isaac
 Lazarus from Bickenbach.
 It is probable that the family lived at what is now
 Darmstädter Strasse 35.

CHILDREN

Aaron Isaac (20), b. 17 Dec 1785–d. 24 Sep 1848,
 Bickenbach.
Details of other children unknown.

20 MARRIAGE – 23 Nov 1808, Bickenbach
Aaron Isaac Löb Oppenheimer, b. 17 Dec 1785–
 d. 24 Sep 1848, Bickenbach
Jentle Baruch, b. 1785, Crumstadt–d. 13 Jun 1846,
 Bickenbach
 Lived at Darmstädter Strasse 35.

CHILDREN

Löb, b. 28 Jun 1809–d. *unknown*
Abraham, b. 9 Feb 1812–d. *unknown*
Vogel, b. 27 Apr 1814–d. *unknown*
Mamel, b. 23 Nov 1816–d. *unknown*
Händel (21), b. 26 Jun 1819–d. 25 Dec 1853,
 Lampertheim
Feilchen, b. 1820–d. 7 Apr 1849
Baruch, b. 25 Dec 1822–d. 22 May 1848,
 Bickenbach
Hanna, b. 1 Jun 1830–d. *unknown*

21 MARRIAGE – 1851

Händel Oppenheimer, b. 26 Jun 1819–d. 25 Dec
 1853, Lampertheim
Wife, *details unknown*

CHILDREN

Aaron, b. 6 Jan 1852–d. 1860

22 MARRIAGE – prior to 1767

Salomon Herz, died before 1800
Wife, *details unknown*, died c.1808. Recorded as a
 widow from 1800, and she was exempt from the
 Beisassgeld due to lack of funds.

CHILDREN

Esther, *details unknown*. Married in 1795 to Moses
 Feitel (6), Seeheim.

23 Jud Schaime, *details unknown*

(Name variations: Schimme, Süme)
 Recorded in Bickenbach prior to 1710, merchant,
 chandler, also sold oil, paper and property lights.

24 MARRIAGE – prior to 1780

Wolf Lazarus, b. May 1741–d. c.1780–1800
Sara, *surname unknown*, b. c.1754–d. c.1810

CHILDREN

Isaak (25), b. 7 Oct 1780, Bickenbach–d. 23 Oct 1869,
 Bickenbach
Moses (26), b. 6 Jan 1782, Bickenbach–d. 16 Apr
 1857, Bickenbach

25 MARRIAGE – c.1809

Isaak Wolf I (Isaak Lazarus adopted the Wolf surname in 1808), b. 7 Oct 1780, Bickenbach–d.24 Oct 1869, Bickenbach
Hannchen Spieß, b.1789, probably in Hähnlein–d.28 Apr 1875, Bickenbach
 Lived at Bachgasse 24 from 1838–59, then likely lived at Erbsengasse 2.

CHILDREN

Wolf (27), b.1808–d.5 Sep 1868, Bickenbach
Berle (28 and 29), b.23 Dec 1812, Bickenbach–d.20 Sep 1889
Gabriel (presumed)(30), b.1816–d.c.1850–1854
Isaak (presumed)(31, 32), b.6 Feb 1821–d.5 Dec 1911, Bickenbach

26 MARRIAGE – 22 March 1814

Moses Wolf, b.6 Jan 1782, Bickenbach–d.16 Apr 1857, Bickenbach
Rös Meierfeld, b.c.1787–d.28 Jun 1871, Bickenbach
 Lived at Sandstrasse 3.

CHILDREN

Gabriel (presumed)(33), b.1830–d.18 Feb 1903, Bensheim

27 MARRIAGE – c.1832

Wolf Wolf, b.1808–d.5 Sep 1868, Bickenbach, merchant.
Hannchen N., *full name unknown*, b.1811–d.18 Jun 1851
 Lived at Darmstädter Strasse 32.

CHILDREN

Details of first three children unknown.
Babette, b.6 May 1839–d.2 Jan 1934, Chicago, USA.
 Married Leopold Waixel (1849–1899). Her married name was Wolf-Waixel.*
Berle, b.20 Jun 1841–d. *unknown*
 (*Source: Nancy Front [née Wolf-Waixel], 1991.)

28 MARRIAGE I – 28 Oct 1839, Bickenbach

Berle Wolf, b.23 Dec 1812, Bickenbach–d.20 Sep 1889
Ester Feitler, b.15 Jun 1816, Seeheim–d.20 Aug 1848, Bickenbach. Daughter of Joseph Feitler and Vogel Gatzert.
 Lived at Sandstrasse 4. No information on children.

29 MARRIAGE II – 20 Mar 1849, Bickenbach

Berle Wolf, b.23 Dec 1812, Bickenbach–d.20 Sep 1889
Male Bruchfeld, b.Mar 1829–d.23 Aug 1868, Bickenbach. Daughter of Lazarus Bruchfeld from Crumstadt.

CHILDREN

Lazarus (34, 35), b.19 Jun 1850, Bickenbach–d.6 Aug 1924, Bickenbach
Wolf, b.10 May 1854–d. *unknown*
Jakob, b.3 Dec 1856–d.20 Nov 1934

30 MARRIAGE – 23 Aug 1841, Bickenbach

Gabriel Wolf, b.1816–d.c.1850–1854
Friedericke Feitler, b.10 Mar 1819, Seeheim–d. *unknown*. Daughter of Joseph Feitler and Vogel Gatzert. After Gabriel's death, she married Raphael Maier II from Seeheim in 1854.
 Lived at Darmstädter Strasse 37.

CHILDREN

Details of first three children unknown.
Gabriel, b.29 Dec 1846–d. *unknown*

31 MARRIAGE I – 28 Nov 1849, Bickenbach

Isaak Wolf II, b.6 Feb 1821–d.5 Dec 1911, merchant.
Elisabeth Bendheim (possibly Bentheim), b. *unknown*–d.14 May 1857, Bickenbach.
 Daughter of Binder Bendheim (Bentheim) from Sprendlingen.
 Lived at Erbsengasse 2 from 1852–1867.

CHILDREN

Wolf, b.19 May 1850–d.1851
Abraham, b.19 May 1851–d.possibly 12 Aug 1920.
 Married Betty Tannenbaum (1859–1900).
Ester, b.3 Feb 1852–d. *unknown*
Elise, b.14 May 1857–d.1857

-
- 32 MARRIAGE II** – 24 Aug 1858, Bickenbach
Isaak Wolf II, b.6 Feb 1821–d.5 Dec 1911, merchant.
Sara Fränkel, b. *unknown*–d.27 Jul 1877. Daughter of
 Löb Fränkel from Biblis.

CHILDREN

Moses, b.5 Apr 1860–d.28 May 1927, Bensheim.
 Married to Hannchen Rosenthal.
Mina, b.30 Oct 1861–d. *unknown*. Married to
 N. Kaufmann in Wöllstadt, lived there until 1938.

-
- 33 MARRIAGE** – 18 Jan 1864, Bickenbach
Gabriel Wolf, b.1830–d.18 Feb 1903, Bensheim
Jettchen Süß, b.c.1841–d.12 Mar 1902. Daughter of
 Gutschel Süß from Lampertheim.
 Lived at Darmstädter Strasse 25, moved away c.1873.

CHILDREN

Moses, b.20 Oct 1864–d. *unknown*
Hennche, b.1 Nov 1865–d.1866
Wilhelm, b.21 Feb. 1868–d. *unknown*
Leo, b.22 Jan 1871–d. *unknown*. In 1938, he was
 living in Frankfurt am Main.
Gustav, b.25 Feb 1873–d. *unknown*. In 1938, he was
 living in Frankfurt am Main.

-
- 34 MARRIAGE I** – 9 Feb 1873, Bensheim
Lazarus Wolf, b.19 Jun 1850, Bickenbach–d.6 Aug
 1924, Bickenbach, merchant.
Rosa Hochschild, b.1851, Bickenbach–d.2 Jan
 1891. Daughter of Ephraim Hochschild and
 Sara Steiermann, from Groß-Rohrheim.
 Lived at Schulstrasse 4.

CHILDREN

Emil (36), b.28 Oct 1873–d.21 Dec 1929
Isaak, b.22 Jan 1876–d.3 Dec 1883
Ludwig, b.10 Jul 1879–d.1879, Bickenbach
Meta, b.18 Feb 1885–d.11 Sep 1906, Bickenbach
Benno (37), b.3 Nov 1890–d.c.1942 (perished in
 Minsk, Belarus)

-
- 35 MARRIAGE II**
Lazarus Wolf, b.19 Jun 1850, Bickenbach–d.6 Aug
 1924, Bickenbach, merchant.
Cerline (Lina) Mosbacher, b.23 Dec 1865–d.1 May
 1930. She was the daughter of Chaim Mosbacher
 from Miltenberg.

CHILDREN

Rosa, b.2 Mar. 1894–d.5 Dec 1978. Married
 Friedrich David from Alsbach, emigrated to USA
 in 1940.

-
- 36 MARRIAGE** – 23 Mar 1910, Bickenbach
Emil Wolf, b.28 Oct 1873, Bickenbach–d.21 Dec
 1929, butcher, merchant.
Sara Oestreicher, b.22 Sep 1876 – d.11 Jan 1970,
 Chicago. Daughter of Herz Levi Oestreicher
 and Fanny David, from Ehrstädt bei Sinsheim.
 She emigrated to USA in 1937.
 Lived at Schulstrasse 3.

CHILDREN

Hugo Ludwig, b.27 Mar 1911, Bickenbach–
 d.13 Apr 2006, Chicago. He left Germany in 1933
 to go to France, then emigrated to USA in 1939.
Rena, b.20 Jul 1916–d.10 Feb 1976, Tel Aviv.
 She emigrated to Israel in 1937.

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- 37 MARRIAGE** – 5 Jan 1919, Bickenbach
Benno Wolf, b.3 Nov 1890, Bickenbach–d.c.1942
 (perished in Minsk, Belarus), livestock merchant.
Settchen Gutjahr, b.13 Sep 1890–d.c.1942 (perished
 in Minsk, Belarus). Daughter of Julius Gutjahr and
 Berta Bruchfeld, from Stockstadt am Rhein.
 Lived at Schulstrasse 6 (possibly originally no.4).

CHILDREN

Ludwig, b.12 Oct 1919, Bickenbach–d.18 Oct 2008,
 Sioux Falls. He emigrated to USA in 1938.
Ernst, b.30 Dec 1921, Bickenbach–d.30 Jul 2015,
 Melbourne, Australia. Left Germany for UK in
 1939, deported from UK to Australia in 1940.
Berta Rosel, b.28 Jun 1929–d.c.1942 (perished
 in Minsk, Belarus)

Bickenbach community Land Registry

This list of residential buildings owned by Jewish locals was compiled by Erich Ahl from Zwingenberg as part of the Ahl family history.

Two of the street names – Chausseegasse and Alte Strasse – are the oldest street names in Bickenbach, besides Bachgasse. Chausseegasse was traditionally called the Bickenbach Hauptstrasse (Main Street), and in accordance with a decision by the municipal council in 1920, its name was changed to Darmstädter Strasse. Alte Strasse was known as Horst-Wessel-Strasse during the Nazi era, and in 1945 was renamed August-Bebel-Strasse.

Chausseegasse

2 Bodenheimer, Herz	1863
25 Feidler, Moses	1816
Bentheim, Abraham	1832, 1841
Bentheim, Salomon	1859
Bentheim, Leopold	1892
<i>About 1978 or 1979 the house was demolished in order to expand the fire station.</i>	
32 Wolf, Wolf	1856
Wolf, Berle	1865
35 Oppenheimer, Jaidel	1840
Oppenheimer, Aron	1840
Oppenheimer, Handel	1847
Wolf, Gabriel	1858

Alte Strasse

14 Bodenheimer, Herz	1877
16 Mainzer, Max	1849
Wolf, Lazarus	1885

Bachgasse

24 Wolf, Isaak I	1816, 1838
Israelite Community Bickenbach	1859
Similarly, represented by:	1868
Bentheim, Abraham	
Bentheim, Feitel	
Wolf, Berle	
Wolf, Gabriel	
Wolf, Isaak II	
Berger, Ernst	
Mainzer, Hirsch	
Israelite Community Bickenbach	1872
Israelite Community Alsbach	1885
Israelite Community Alsbach 1906–1911	
<i>The house was still standing in 1992 but had been uninhabited for years; eventually it fell victim to the pickaxe.</i>	
34 Mainzer, Hirsch	1882

Bahnhofstrasse

<i>Bahnhofstrasse was named in dedication of the old "cattle track", as the path led to pastures in the western district of Bickenbach.</i>	
1 Bodenheimer, Herz	1891
3 Bodenheimer, Herz	1891

Ersengasse

2 Wolf, Isaak II	1855
4 Bentheim, Heinrich (?)	1854

Pfungstädter Strasse

13 Bodenheimer, Herz	1879
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Sandstrasse

3 Wolf, Moses	1816, 1840
Wolf, Gabriel	1861
7 Jaidel, Lazarus	1882
12 Mainzer, Simon	1828, 1840
Mainzer, Hirsch	1866

Schulstrasse

2 Oppenheimer, Aron	1816
Wolf, Berle	1873
Wolf, Lazarus	1890
3 Wolf, Emil	1913
4 Mainzer, Hirsch	1871
Wolf, Lazarus	1909
Wolf, Benno	1920
5 Mainzer, Löb	1863
Mainzer, Hirsch	1875

Schulzengasse

1 Berger, Feist	1854
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Zwingenberger Strasse

2 Bodenheimer, Herz	1879
22 Mainzer, Hirsch	1894



On the corner of Bachgasse and Pfungstädter Strasse is Bachgasse 34, Daum House, a plastered half-timbered house that today is plastic-clad. On the left of the entrance is a mail box, to the right a community notice board; above the door is a recessed sign: 'Butcher's shop, Peter Daum'. The tree at left, named the Bickenbach "Linden", fell victim to the axe in 1967 when the road was widened. (The linden tree is common in the northern hemisphere. In Britain it is called a lime tree, though it is not related to the tree that bears lime fruit. In Germany, as in other European countries, the linden tree was sacred, and its presence is said to repel bad luck.)



View of Pfungstädter Strasse c.1900–1910. Number 13 is unable to be identified. At the centre of the image is the Gasthaus Zur Krone of George Herpel, a well-travelled man. Herpel, known as "De Scholz", was a journeyman and a cooper by trade, and came from a French-speaking area of Switzerland. The wooden structure at left belonged to the community garden and also served as a market space. At the beginning of the 1960s the house and structure made way for a new building.

The Jewish school and the Jewish bathhouse

Assumptions that there was an official Jewish school in Bickenbach are untrue. The building at Bachgasse 24 was known as the “Judenschul” (Jewish shul) or in local dialect, “Jurreschul”. Adjacent to this was a bathhouse. These two buildings, and the well standing in front of them, made up the Jewish centre at that time, albeit small, and led to the colloquial use of the name “Jewish School”.

For years, the main building stood practically uninhabited, and served as a sort of granary. A planning permit for gable renovations was granted in 1891 to the Israelite Community of Bickenbach by what was then the Hessian Grand Ducal municipal planning and building department.

We know that until it was sold to Philipp Schneider, of the Israelite Religious Community of Bickenbach, Bachgasse 24 belonged to the Israelite Religious Community of Alsbach.

As the number of Jews in Bickenbach decreased towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, in 1902 the Bickenbach bathhouse was closed and the bathhouse in Alsbach was used. At this time, the bathhouse passed on to the Hennemann family.

In 1927-28, the buildings at Bachgasse 24 were demolished and replaced with a new building. Bachgasse 24 became the property of the Hennemann family.

Although the number of men necessary to hold religious services was barely reached, thereby not always able to constitute a minyan (the quorum of adult men required in Jewish tradition to hold public worship), we can assume that Jews in Bickenbach were able to provide their children some religious instruction, and so perhaps there was a prayer room at Bachgasse 24.

For the most part, Jewish families in Bickenbach belonged to the Alsbach Synagogue, and “Jurreschul” was a description used by the Christian population in reference to it until the end of the 1920s.

Since the beginning of time, Jews have regarded education as one of the most sacred duties. The ‘People of the Book’ strove to familiarise their children with teachings from an early age. Children were introduced to religious teachings as soon as they could speak. Bible lessons started at the age of five, and reading lessons even earlier than that.



Bachgasse 24.

In 1983, Mrs Evelyn Aßmus produced an image of the former Jewish school in Bachgasse, based on sketches made by a teacher, Christian Kaltwasser.

In about the early 19th century, in Starkenburg province, there were several Jewish primary schools, specifically private schools for children who did not attend Christian primary schools (in this instance, ‘Christian’ means ‘public’). These Jewish schools were in Bürgel, Michelstadt (including Steinbach) – Rabbi Wolf Muhr and trainee, Isaak Kamp; Groß-Umstadt – teacher, Löb Simon; Schafheim – teacher, Alex Berlin; Altheim – teacher, Emanuel David; and Groß-Zimmern – teacher, Löb Ochs. In Biblis, the teacher was Abraham David Herzfelder from Sulzbach in Bayern.

Unfortunately, statistics provide little information about the professional qualifications of individual teachers; doubtless there were many who had received training. In Altheim and Groß-Zimmern the teachers were not certified and had no residency permits.

In Reichelsheim, the teacher was Abraham Hecht. He received free accommodation and free light meals at the ‘Wandeltisch’ (literally ‘movable table’; there was a policy that offered a teacher a place at the table of every family in the district on a rotational basis). He received



48 kreuzer from each student, in addition to a yearly advance payment of 105 gulden, 24 kreuzer.¹

In Darmstadt, in the Bessungen district, there wasn't a separate Jewish primary school. Some of the children attended the Christian school, while others were taught by the Jewish teacher, Blum. On 3 April 1841, a report in a Darmstadt newspaper announced the establishment of a public Jewish school under instruction the of an appointed elementary school teacher, Mr Schönhof.

Mina Jonas, living in Chicago in 1988, is the daughter of the last Jewish teacher of Alsbach, David Frank. She provided the photo, above, of the class from Alsbach. The date of the photo is 1911, and it is estimated that

33 Jewish boys and girls attended the school.

In a letter from 2 March 1988, Hugo Wolf, the son of Emil Wolf of Bickenbach, was able to tell us more about the photo:

“The picture was taken in 1911. The children at the religious school (in Alsbach) were mostly children from Alsbach, Seeheim and Hähnlein; only a few were from Bickenbach and Jugenheim. The girl next to Mr Frank, the teacher, is my Aunt Rosa David (née Wolf) the mother of Hilde Korr (née David) from Oakland, California. The boy (first row to the right) is Arthur David, who was killed in action in WWI. He got a medal for that!”

1. A kreuzer (*English*: kreutzer) was a silver or copper coin used in Germany and Austria till German unification. Originally the coin had a cross (kreuz) on one side.

Official statistics from the year 1827 for the county of Bensheim, showing qualifications and salaries of the Israelite religious teachers, as well as a brief description of the school classrooms.

Place	Classroom	Salary per year	Qualification
Alsbach	The schoolroom was the living room of Simon Gatzert, resident of the house.	36 gulden	Very young and barely qualified.
Bickenbach	There was no permanent school here. Half a year the class was taught in one room, and the other half was in another room. <i>(Assuming the location was Bachgasse 24.)</i>	60 gulden	Poor
Eberstadt	The Jewish teacher went from house to house and taught.	95 gulden	Unknown
Seeheim	As above	75 gulden	Poor
Hähnlein	Good	48 gulden	Poor
Zwingenberg	Every Jewish person who had school-ready children, had a tutor.		

These sorts of conditions, as in the latter case, were found in many places.

Following are the official statistics of Israelite religious schools taken in the year 1840 in the provinces of Starkenburg and Rhein Hessen (in the province of Oberhessen, only information regarding the area of Friedberg was available):

Starkenburg

Number of Israelite schools	No. of Jewish people	Children aged 6–14 years	Officially certified teachers	Teachers who were residents	Teachers who were foreigners	Teacher salary levels on average
68	7362	1044	51	8	43	35–500 gulden

Note: Most teachers had free room and board. Several municipalities had no teacher.

The figures above applied to the county of Bensheim; below are figures for Bickenbach and surrounding communities:

13	1237	208	12	2	10	36–230 gulden
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Rhein Hessen

30	5834	706	26	8	18	15–320 gulden
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Jewish months and holidays

The Hebrew calendar has months based on the lunar cycle, but years based on the solar cycle, so that the Jewish holidays can always take place in the appropriate season. The Hebrew dates are used in many areas of Jewish life and appear on all official documents. The Hebrew calendar begins on 7 October 3761BC, when the world was ostensibly created.

The 12 Months

Tishrei: September–October, 30 days (Libra)

Psalm 104.19: *“You created the moon to mark the months ...”*

Marcheshvan: October–November, 29 or 30 days (Scorpio)

5th book of Moses 11.14: *“That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season ...”*

Kislev: November–December, 29 or 30 days (Sagittarius)

Luke 1.14: *“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth ...”*

Tevet: December–January, 29 days (Capricorn)

Psalm 147.16 and 18: *“He gives snow like wool”; “At his command the ice melts.”*

Shevat: January–February, 30 days (Aquarius)

3rd book of Moses (Leviticus) 19.23: *“When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden.”*

Adar I: February–March, 29 days (Pisces)
1st book of Moses (Genesis) 48.16: *“... and may they increase greatly upon the earth.”*

Adar II: (Called ‘Adar Beit’ in leap years)
February–March, 30 days (Pisces)
Book of Esther 8.16 (1989): *“For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honour.”*

Nisan: March–April, 30 days (Aries)

4th book of Moses (Numbers) 6.27: *“So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*

Iyar: April–May, 29 days (Taurus)

2nd book of Samuel 1.25: *“How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!”*

Sivan: May–June, 30 days (Gemini).

Proverbs 12.11: *“Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread ...”*

Tammuz: June–July, 29 days (Cancer)

Isaiah 35.6: *“... Streams of water will flow through the desert.”*

Av: July–August, 30 days (Leo)

Ecclesiastes 8.15: *“... Man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful ...”*

Elul: August–September, 29 days (Virgo)

Psalm 21.1 and 13: *“O Lord, the king rejoices in your strength.”*

In the Jewish calendar only the Sabbath has a name (Shabbat). The other weekdays are named by ordinal numbers (1st day, 2nd day, etc.), which are the same as the first six characters of the Hebrew alphabet. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath (Saturday).

Current year (2018) is Jewish year 5778.

The Jewish holidays

Rosh Hashanah

New Year.

1st or 2nd day of Tishri (Sep/Oct)

Fast of Gedaliah

A day of fasting to lament the assassination of Gedaliah, whose murder ended Jewish autonomy following the destruction of the First Temple.

3rd day of Tishri

Yom Kippur

Day of Atonement. 10th day of Tishri

Sukkot

Feast of Tabernacles. 15th–21st of Tishri

Shemini Atzeret

Closing Festival. 22nd day of Tishri

Simchat Torah

Marks the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings. 23rd day of Tishri

Hanukkah

Festival of Lights, Feast of Dedication. (Nov/Dec) begins 2nd or 3rd day of Tevet (Dec/Jan)

Asarah BeTevet

First day of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. 10th day of Tevet

Tu B'Shevat

New Year of the Trees. 15th day of Shevat (Jan/Feb)

The Fast of Esther

The day before the date that Haman wanted to kill the Jews.

13th day of Adar (Feb/Mar)

Purim

Rescue of the Jews through Esther and Mordecai. 14th day of Adar

Shushan Purim

Purim of the walled cities. 15th day of Adar

Pessach (Passover)

Festival of Liberation. 14th/15th–22nd days of Nisan (Mar/Apr)

Lag B'Omer

33rd day of the counting of the Omer. 18th day of Iyar (Apr/May)

Shavu'ot

Festival of Weeks. 6th day of Sivan (May/Jun)

Shiv'ah Asar B'Tammuz

Commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple.

17th day of Tammuz (Jun/Jul)

Tisha B'Av

Fasting and mourning day, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. 9th day of Av (Jul/Aug)

The Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest

Sabbat or Schabbat, which in Bickenbach dialect is called 'Schawwes', comes from the Hebrew 'schabess' meaning 'rest day'. Since for Jews the day begins on the previous evening, the Schawwes begins on the Friday evening and ends on Saturday at nightfall.

In commemoration of the seventh day, on which God rested from his creation, the pious Jew also interrupts his work on Friday evening and raises his hands in prayer.

'The day of rest', referred to in Hebrew as 'Schabess', differs from the rest of the weekdays, which are named by number (first day, second day, etc.). After the Jewish high and special holidays, additional rest holidays are solemnised.

On the Sabbath almost the only activity allowed is spiritual in nature. Physical activity is kept to a minimum. The rules and commandments are strictly regulated. Among other things, writing and smoking are also prohibited, the latter because it requires the lighting and putting out of a flame, and lighting and extinguishing of fire is forbidden on the Sabbath. You obtain these necessary requirements from non-Jews. It is also forbidden to order a non-Jew to do prohibited work or acts on the Sabbath.

In Hebrew, the word 'goy' generally stands for non-Jew, so one or two 'Schabbot goy or goyim' fulfill the vital services and administration. In Bickenbach, as far as can be recalled, they were called a 'Schawwesfraa'.

Bickenbach councillor, Karl Wolf, born in 1929 in Darmstadt, did the 'light and fire' on Fridays as a boy, despite a public ban, at the behest of his parents, until 1941 at a house at Elisabethenstrasse 45, (the house of the linen seamstresses, the four Rothschild sisters, whose first names are unfortunately forgotten) until their deportation. Young Karl Wolf was their 'Schawwesbub'.

The Sabbath, received and 'celebrated as a bride', includes not only religious rites and commandments but is also celebrated as a domestic holiday, and solemnised in festive and ceremonial form.

The mother of the house has to pre-prepare the meal for the evening and also the Sabbath day, because even she is not allowed to work on that day.

For the Sabbath meal on Friday evening the table is usually covered in a white tablecloth. In the middle of the table there are two candles and salt. Before the

father of the house lie two loaves, called challah, hidden under a special cloth. These loaves are covered because of an ancient tradition and memory. When the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years, they survived on the manna that fell from heaven each day. The challah eaten on Shabbat is a symbol of the manna. Since the manna was encased in dew that kept if fresh, the challah is enveloped between the tablecloth or cutting board, and the challah cover. Also, as a double portion of manna fell on a Friday – one for that day and one for the following day of rest – there are two challahs on the Shabbat table to commemorate this.

In addition to challah, (in Germany once called 'Barches', a white Sabbath bread) stands a cup with wine.

As soon as the first star is in the sky, the woman of the house lights the candles and says the blessing over the lights, which represent the symbol of world creation. With this action, traditionally reserved for the woman, the Sabbath is solemnly ushered in.

After the man returns from the synagogue, he says the Kiddush blessing over the bread and drinks from a cup of wine which is filled to the brim, a portent of overflowing blessings. Then the festive meal begins for the whole family.

In bad times, the poorest of the poor saved a leftover meal during the week to honour the Sabbath meal all the more.

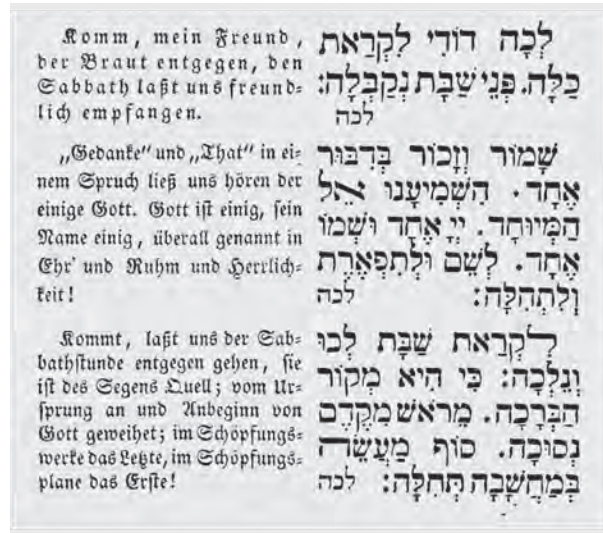
It was part of an old Jewish tradition and outlook on life that poor, single and transient foreigners were invited by the synagogue to the Sabbath meal at the home table, to join a family in Sabbath celebration. It was a requirement, a '**mitzvah**', for invitations to be issued in this form as it honoured both the guest and those inviting them and created a common bond.

The evening is accompanied not only by prayers, but also beautified by numerous ancestral chants. **Shalom Aleichem** (Peace be upon you) is a traditional song sung every Friday night upon returning home from synagogue prayer, and signals the arrival of the Sabbath.

Havdalah rounds off the Sabbath as a farewell on Saturday evening. Havdalah means 'separation' and marks the distinction between the 'saintly' Sabbath and the 'secular' weekdays. Havdalah is also recited over a cup of wine, which is poured to the brim, to symbolise the intent

to produce enough for your family in the week ahead, as well as an excess that may benefit others.

Besamim (fragrant spices like cinnamon and clove) are offered. They are often preserved in besamim containers and are put away at the end of Sabbath. Havdalah candles are also burned. After the wine is tasted and everyone has smelled the spices, the new week starts and each person wishes each other a good weekend and a good year. For blessed be the eternal one, who sanctifies the Sabbath.



Shabbat prayer, taken from: "Festgebete der Israeliten" (Holyday Prayers of the Israelites), Vienna, 1840. Printed and published by Franz Edlen von Schmid.

Lekah Dodi ('Come, my Beloved')

Come, my Beloved, the bride to meet,
the inner light of Sabbath, let us greet.

"Observe" and "recall" in a single word,
He made us hear, the one and only Lord,
God is one and His Name is one,
In fame and splendor and praiseful song.

Come, etc.

Come, greet the Sabbath, let's progress,
She is the wellspring from which to bless,
From the beginning, from ancient times,
Last in deed, but in thought prime.

Come, etc.

The Bentheim family



Abraham Bentheim (1790–1874)
Painting in possession of the Mayer family.



Gravestone of Abraham Bentheim.



Salomon Bentheim (1832–1913).

The Bentheim family history began in Bickenbach with Abraham Bentheim, born in 1790 in Seeheim. Until 1988, it was incorrectly assumed that he was born in Bensheim.

In the 19th century, three generations of Bentheims lived at what is today Darmstädter Strasse 25 – Abraham Bentheim, from 1841–1859; Salomon Bentheim, from 1859–1892; and Leopold Bentheim who, in 1892, moved to Reinheim (Odenwald).

The Bentheim family, from Bensheim, Auerbach and Zwingenberg, were Kohanim (plural of Kohen, Hebrew for priest).

The Bentheim family, from Bickenbach, were Levites and Mohalim (plural of Mohel, a Jew who is trained in the practice of circumcision).¹ The insignia of the Mohalim can be found on the headstone of Salomon Bentheim, who died on 5 February 1913 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach.

Since Marion and Frank Mayer from Chicago made a visit in November 1988 for the opening of the Darmstadt

Synagogue, many things from the past have become more understandable and complete.² The family history of the Bentheims has also become much clearer.

About the same time, the *Findbuch* (archival register or index) which contained information about the historical community archives of the Bickenbach community was completed, and the municipal archive (up to 1945) was organised, allowing further insights into the history of Jews in Bickenbach, including the Bentheims.

From facts gathered, the Bentheims were one of the well-off Jewish families in town. The boys attended Dr Joel's Teaching and Education Institute in Pfungstadt. Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first President of Israel, had worked there as a teacher, and described the institute in his autobiography, *Trial and Error*.

The teaching institute was attended by Leopold Bentheim and Salomon Bentheim in 1879–80; by Moses Bentheim in 1885–86; and again by Moses Bentheim in 1886–87.

1. The Levites were members of the Hebrew tribe of Levi, they traditionally assist the priests in Jewish temples. The symbol of the Levite, the handled jug, is ritually used to wash the hands of the kohanim before the high priests perform blessings.

2. Marion Mayer is the daughter of Johanna Hedwig Bentheim and Julius Steiermann.



Gütchen (Götge) Feitler (née Bentheim).



Nannchen Bentheim (née Steiermann).



Gravestone of Nannchen Bentheim.

Over three generations, the Bentheims were Mohalim, traders, merchants and kosher butchers. For a time, after the founding of the Penny Savings Bank of Bickenbach, Salomon was a money collector.

The statements and documents in this chapter give insight into the skills of the Bentheims. In addition to reference material, which has remained unpublished up to this time, the innumerable photographs and written documentation that Marion Mayer's parents managed to save before they fled to the US made it possible to shed light on the past.

At this point, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to Hugo Wolf, born in Bickenbach in 1911, and to his wife, Fanny, for introducing me to the Mayer family and subsequent to that, their visit to Bickenbach in 1988.

Besides the information gleaned from the Jewish registers (birth, marriage and death records), and the archive documents that have been supplemented with pictures of the headstones in the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach, we also find – as happens with family history researches – a public reference to Abraham Bentheim and his wife Hannchen in the *Großherzoglich Hessischen Zeitung* (*Grand Ducal Hessian Newspaper*), Darmstadt, issues 35 and 42, 1814. From 22 March and 7 April,

under the title 'Public Announcement' we read:

The present wife of the protected Jew, Abraham Bentheim, Hanne Feitler, explained at the time of her marriage that she was not undertaking any joint business ventures with her husband, but rather that she wanted to reserve her benefits, which is thus made public here.

Seeheim, 17 March 1814

Grand Duchy of Hesse, Administration.

The following is a brief overview of the Bentheim family tree.

■ **Abraham Bentheim** (1790–1874), married **Hannchen Feitler**, (1796–1857).

They had 13 children, details of only seven of whom are known. **Götge** (1818–*unknown*), **Feitel**, (1822–*unknown*), **Jütle** (1827–1892), **Salomon** (1832–1913), **Mayer** (1834–1936), **Simon** (1837–1837), **Ester** (1839–*unknown*).

■ **Salomon Bentheim** (1832–1913), married **Nannchen Steiermann** (1838–1890).

They had six children, **Hanna**, (1864–*unknown*), **Leopold** (1866–1866), **Leopold** (1867–1907), **Simon**



Sisters, Martha, Nannchen and Johanna Hedwig Bentheim.



The Bentheim house at Darmstädter Strasse 25, photographed mid-1930s.

(1869–*unknown*), his descendants are in Florida, USA, **Moritz**, (1873–*unknown*), he married Mina Frohmann from Reinheim, she died young. Mina was the younger sister of Bertha Frohmann. Their daughter, Nelly (1908–1978), married Hans Troll. Their descendants live in Chicago, USA. The last child of Salomon and Nannchen was **Emma**, (1875–1875).

■ **Leopold Bentheim** (1867–1907), probably buried in Dieburg, married **Bertha Frohmann** (*unknown*–1955). They had three children, **Nannchen**, (1893–1973), **Martha** (1894–*unknown*), **Johanna Hedwig** (1898–1986).

Nannchen (known as Nanny) married Michael Loeb. They had no children. She worked at the Continental Grain Company in Chicago, set up by her great uncle, Friedrich Frohmann, with capital from the Fribourg family who founded the original Continental Grain Company in Belgium. Nanny Loeb died in 1973 in California, USA.



Signage for Julius Steiermann's wholesale confectionery business.

Martha married Sigmund Steiermann (1884–1973). They had two sons and a daughter, five grandsons, three great-grandsons and two great-granddaughters. In her youth Martha attended the Fröbel Institut in Darmstadt.

Johanna officially changed her name to Hedy in the USA. She married Julius Steiermann (1891–1985), the son of Moses Steiermann and Eva Mathilde Metzger (1851–1927) from Weisenau in Mainz. Until his forced migration in 1937, Julius Steiermann owned a wholesale confectionery business at Schulstrasse 10 in Darmstadt. After the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses, his wife joined the company.

In the USA, Julius Steiermann initially worked as a night watchman at a grocery store but later he reached the position of Head of Department in the administration of the Continental Grain Company in Chicago, and worked until the age of 69.

Their child, Marion (1924–), married Frank J. Mayer



Engagement photo of Leopold Bentheim and Bertha Fromann.

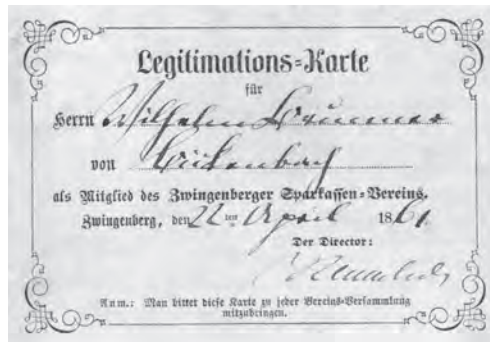


Family photo, 4 September 1983, Chicago. Back row, left to right: Phillip Bischaf, Frank Mayer, Rebecca Bischaf, Marion Mayer, Alice Bischaf, Ronald Mayer. Front row, left to right: Johanna Hedwig (Hedy) Steiermann, David Bischaf, Julius Steiermann.

from Klein-Bockenheim in 1945. The Mayers have a son, Ronald S. Mayer (1947–), and a daughter, Alice (1951–). Alice’s married name is Bischaf, her daughter, Rebecca Lynn Bischaf, was born in 1980.

According to ‘Regulations regarding the Penny Savings Bank of Bickenbach’, opened on 9 February 1882, Salomon Bentheim was its first initiator.³ This bank was an additional branch of the Zwingenberg Savings Bank, and is today part of the Bensheim regional bank.

In accordance with its statutes, the Penny Savings Bank only accepted small deposits, starting from 10 pfennig. Deposits of over 1 mark could also be made. Upon reaching the target deposit amount, the money would be transferred into the Zwingenberg Savings Bank by the initiator. This type of bank offered the poor, and the poorest of the poor – mostly day labourers and factory workers – the opportunity to create a long-term “nest egg” which, though not a huge source of security, was a chance to save for old age.



Membership card for Wilhelm Brunner of Bickenbach, a member of the Zwingenberg Savings Club.

3. An Initiator was the individual responsible for communicating funds transfer information to the financial institution.



Salomon Bentheim, the first "initiator" of the Bickenbach Penny Savings Bank.

Regulations regarding the Penny Savings Bank of Bickenbach, opened 9 February, 1882.

§ 1

In contrast to the already existing Zwingenberg regional bank, the Penny Savings Bank accepts only smaller amounts – starting from 10 pfennig. As soon as the target deposit is reached, it will be transferred to the Zwingenberg Savings Bank, where it will be checked according to the statutes. Deposits of over 1 mark can also be made at the Penny Savings Bank.

§ 2

The initiator of the Penny Savings Bank acknowledges the smaller collected sums in a special booklet (Penny-Deposit-Booklet), passes on – in accordance with section 1 – the full saved value to the main branch in Zwingenberg and obtains the savings books which have been received for this purpose from the President of the Penny Savings Bank. Upon the request by the depositors to inspect these savings books, the President will provide them, and the initiator will also at this time release the entire sum of the deposit made to him.

§ 3

In Bickenbach there is one particular location and one day weekly on which deposits can be made, namely Sundays from 8am until 3pm. As initiator, Mr Karl Schörner (Salomon Bentheim) will receive deposits to the Penny Savings Bank in his house.

§ 4

Appointed to the Management Board, which is made up of five members, are:

- 1. As president
Grand Ducal Mayor Herpel of Bickenbach,*
- 2. As controller/supervisor
Christian Hennemann II of Bickenbach*
- 3. Christian Herpel I of Bickenbach*
- 4. Adam Rebenich III of Bickenbach and*
- 5. Peter Hennemann III of Bickenbach*

Agreed upon and accepted, Bickenbach, 8 February, 1882

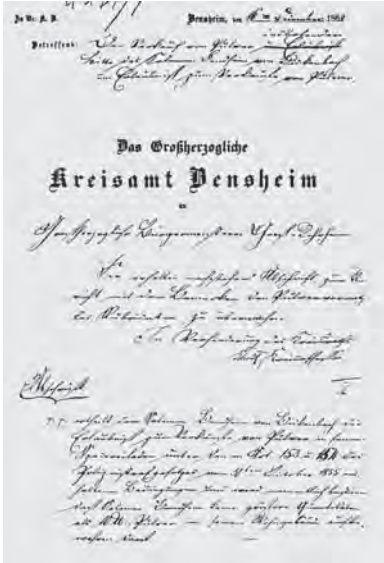
Management Board

President Supervisor
(Signed) Herpel (Signed) Christian Hennemann II
(Signed) Christian Herpel I
(Signed) Adam Rebenich III
(Signed) Peter Hennemann III

Initiator

(Signed) Karl Schörner

Extract from Commercial Register of the Bickenbach community (no date given)



From The Grand Ducal District Office of Bensheim

Bentheim, Salomon.

Canvas and cotton cloth shopkeeper. Seller of yard ware (painted textiles), also pedlar, shopkeeper of spices and potato dealer; pedlar of canvas, yard ware as well as scythes, sickles and brandy tappers on the street or in the shop without means for management.

Bensheim, 16 December 1862

Regarding: The sale of powder. In particular the request of Salomon Bentheim of Bickenbach for permission to sell powder.

The Grand Ducal County Office of Bensheim

Grand Ducal Mayoralty of Groß-Rohrheim

Below you will find a copy of the message with the note to monitor the Rubriat's powder stock.

In prohibition of the County's stock (Signature), County Initiator

Transcript

p.p.⁴ grants Salomon Bentheim of Bickenbach permission to sell powder in his spice-shop under the conditions set out in Articles 153 and 154 of the Police Criminal Act of 30 October 1855 and it is particularly determined that Salomon Bentheim will not store quantities of powder over 10 pounds in his residential building.

Re: Commercial Register of the Bickenbach community (extract)

82 Salomon Bentheim / 1873, Bickenbach

Canvas and linen sales house

Dealer of potatoes, scythes and sickles

84 Salomon Bentheim / 1871, Bickenbach

as stated in No.82

Fruiterer, and dried vegetables merchant

No.105 Leopold Bentheim / 1885, as assistant to Salomon Bentheim

Bickenbach

E. (unreadable)

Extract from the Business Registration Register of the Bickenbach community:

<i>Date of entry</i>	<i>Name of company</i>	<i>Names of company owners</i>
<i>15 April 1863</i>	<i>Lazarus Wolf</i>	<i>Lazarus Wolf</i>
<i>29 April 1863</i>	<i>S. Bentheim</i>	<i>Salomon Bentheim, now Leopold Bentheim</i>

4. p.p. – Most likely representing “per procura”. Latin for “through the agency”. Used to indicate that a person is signing a document on behalf of another person.

Beizehnen: Das Gesuch des Moses Leopold Bentheim in Bickenbach seine Zulassung zum Verrichten seiner Ehescheidung im Großherzogthum Baden.

Das Großherzogliche
Kreisamt Bensheim
 Großh. Ducesor. Amte Bickenbach

Sie wollen sich erkundigen über den Character des Leopol. Bentheim dorfällig (der israelitisch. Beschneider) nachsteh.

I. V.
 Maer

Regarding: The application of Moses Leopold Bentheim in Bickenbach for authorisation to carry out circumcision(s) in the Grand Duchy of Baden

The Grand Ducal Bensheim County Office at The Grand Ducal Mayoralty of Bickenbach

Immediately they want to talk about the reputation of Leopold Bentheim (the Israelite circumciser).

I. V. (Signature)

District Medical Certificate
 The undersigned certifies ex officio for the purpose of appointing an independent Israelite circumciser, that Leopold Bentheim, son of the Israelite circumciser Salomon Bentheim of Bickenbach, 22 years old, except for other conditions is also under our supervision (?) his father performed a circumcision and he has to this end proven

Heimliche Bescheinigung

Unterzeichnet bescheinigt von Amtswegen für Frank den Kreisamt Bensheim, daß Leopold Bentheim, Sohn des israelitischen Beschneiders Salomon Bentheim von Bickenbach, 22 Jahre alt, auf den von uns angeordneten Umständen sich als israelitisch Beschneider bewiesen hat, und daß er unter unserer Aufsicht sich als israelitisch Beschneider betheiligen wird, und daß er unter unserer Aufsicht sich als israelitisch Beschneider betheiligen wird, und daß er unter unserer Aufsicht sich als israelitisch Beschneider betheiligen wird.

Bensheim, 4. December 1889

Dr. Heumann
 Großherzogliches Kreisamt Bickenbach

Das Gesuch des Leopold Bentheim in Bickenbach wird mit demnachstgehenden Bescheinigung für die Zulassung zum Verrichten seiner Ehescheidung im Großherzogthum Baden, 4. December 1889.

Dr. Heumann
 Großherzogliches Kreisamt Bickenbach

himself quite capable. The same handling of disinfectants in operations was taught by us, just as the same has now been introduced as essential in the modified rite.

Bensheim, 1 December 1889
 Dr. Heumann
 Grand Ducal District Medical Officer

Leopold Bentheim of Bickenbach is, due to the above certificate, granted permission to carry out circumcisions under strict observation of the provisions of Article 360 of the Police Criminal Code.
 Bensheim, 4 December 1889
 County Office Bensheim
 (Signature: illegible)

Note: The original copy of the above certificate is located in the family files of Marion Mayer.

Final resting places at Alsbach Jewish cemetery



Abraham Bentheim.

*Here rests a man, who put
his trust in God,
He faithfully practised the
service of the Levites,
He was a Mohel and
introduced a number of
children of the Israelites to
the alliance of Abraham,
He was treasurer of the
Brotherhood for Charity
with many years of loyalty;
He showed charity to the
living and deceased,
He shared his bread with
the hungry,
That is Herr Abraham,
Son of Herr Simon
Bentheim ha-Levi from
Bickenbach
Died on Friday, preparation
day for the holy Sabbath,
16th Tevet 5635*
TNZBH⁵.
(*25 Dec 1874)*



Salomon, son of Abraham
Bentheim.

*Here rests the first chairman
of his municipality,
A director and leader of
a community and the
Synagogue over many
years,
Treasurer of the
Brotherhood for Charity,
He was a Mohel and
introduced a number of
children of Israel to the
alliance of Abraham,
This is the respected man
Salomo, son of Abraham
ha-Levi Bentheim from
Bickenbach
Died well-reputed on
Wednesday, 28th Shevat
5673 TNZBH.*
(*5 Feb 1913)*



Back of Salomon Bentheim's
gravestone.



Jettche (Jütje) Bentheim,
d.12 Nov 1892.



Nannchen Bentheim,
d.26 Dec 1890.

5. TNZBH is a Hebrew abbreviation for "tehe nishmata zrura bazor hachayim" which translates as "May his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life".

A visit from Marion Mayer

In 1988, news arrived from Hugo and Fanny Wolf in Chicago, that Frank and Marion Mayer, also from Chicago, would be coming to Darmstadt in November for a synagogue opening, and that they would also visit Bickenbach.

Late in the afternoon of Friday, 4 November 1988, Marion and Frank Mayer arrived in Bickenbach from Worms with their friends, a family from Mosbach (previously: Ober-Ramstadt in Darmstadt), to visit the birthplace of Marion's mother.

The encounter remains in my memory, as if we had already known each other for a long time. We fell into immediate conversation, exchanged ideas, and the short amount of time escaped us. Two more brief encounters, in Seeheim and Darmstadt were possible, and many unanswered questions remained, but the connection was established – a contact to the Bentheim family (the ancestors of Frau Mayer).

Meanwhile, a lively exchange of ideas followed between Chicago and Bickenbach, as shown in the following sections.

Ritual objects belonging to the Mayer family in Chicago were: a Mohel cup, circumcision knife, Kiddush cup, Havdalah plates, Havdalah spice box and some unique documents such as the 'District Medical Certificate' for Leopold Bentheim as Mohel from 1 December 1889.

Mohel Cup (double cup)

Two footless silver cups can sometimes be found screwed into each other; these are the so-called Elias cups, named after the prophet Elijah, which come into use at Passover (Easter), at the Bris Milla (circumcision ceremony), and the Chuppah (wedding).

The Bickenbach Mohel cup of 1796 belonged in succession to Abraham Bentheim of Bickenbach, and then his son Salomon and grandson Leopold Bentheim.

In the Bickenbach municipal archives we found reference to an appointment as mohel – namely the request of Moses Leopold Bentheim in Bickenbach for authorisation to perform circumcisions in the Grand Duchy of Baden. It was undated, and the local mayor was invited to make a statement about the reputation of the applicant. The mayor seems to have spoken well of him – a transcript was not available, but the presented approval document from America sheds some light.

The granting of such an approval seems to have been something unusual, especially since the applicant was known to have lived in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, and this approval was applied for and received for Baden. From Bickenbach to the Hessian and Baden border it is a little over 20 kilometres, the first municipality being Laudenbach.

Today, we may now assume that Leopold did not want to get in the way of his father, Salomon, and wanted permission to be admitted as a mohel for the Grand Duchy of Baden, and to be licensed to practice by Bensheim City Council so he may follow the family tradition of being a mohel at a young age.

Missing though is evidence as to when, or if ever, Leopold worked as a mohel in Baden.



Mohel cup, disassembled.

On 27 November 1988, Marion Mayer wrote to me with the following memories of Bickenbach:

“A long time ago, my parents told me that ‘Salomon, son of Abraham’ was written on the cup. Three years ago, someone else told me that ‘Bickenbach’ was also on it. Of course no one in the family knew until now, that Abraham was also a mohel. Now, the single cup is very weathered. The other is very easy to read and I will have the Hebrew text translated by our Rabbi.”

On 18 January 1989, Rabbi Jehoshua Ben-Abraham of the Norman and Helen Asher Library in Chicago, wrote to Mrs Mayer:

“To answer your question regarding the identification of the Hebrew letters on the silver cups, which you showed me, I can only offer some speculative remarks. However I must point out that:

- 1) The letters are pale;
- 2) Use of () indicates that words or letters are missing;
- 3) The Hebrew itself has been either:
 - a. Written by someone with little or no knowledge of the Hebrew language; or
 - b. Written in a form of German/Hebrew, which I am not familiar with.”

Mrs Mayer kindly did the translation of the English text into German.

The final translation below of what was engraved on the Mohel cup with the place name ‘Bigenbach’ was undertaken by Mrs Mayer in Spring, 1992 at the Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago.



Closed mohel cup, owned by Marion Mayer.

ביגנבך

Bigenbach (Bickenbach)

קאס שאל בה"ה אברהם הני מק"ק ביגנבך ת'קנז'לפך

Cup A: Cup from the Abraham Synagogue here of the Holy Community of Bickenbach 5(557) 1796.

הינה מק"ק ביגנבך קאס שעל מציעה בה"ה ת'קנז'לפך

Cup B: From the Holy Community of Bickenbach the cup of the infant from the Abraham Synagogue 5(557) (1796).

Circumcision Knife

The most common form of circumcision knife was a steel one, sharpened on both sides, with a handle made of jasper, quartz or ivory – rarely metal – assembled with silver, or an artistically finished sculpture in relief or engraved.

The mother-of-pearl handled circumcision knife, used by Bickenbach mohelim, Abraham, Salomon and Leopold Bentheim, was from the 18th or 19th century. The mohel's instruments belonged to the old days: the circumcisers, blessing cup, shield or plate, knife, space tin, tape (mull), bowl with towel and oil, little plates with sand, and powder compact. The circumcision ritual consisted of three parts – 'milah'; 'peri'ah'; 'mezizah'.

The Bickenbach Bentheims belonged to the Levites, and could, accordingly, be mohels. In ancient times, there were many superstitions associated with the birth of a child. A female demon, Lilith, was particularly feared as it was believed she could endanger the baby and its mother. To avert Lilith's evil influence the custom arose to hang up paper amulets on the wall around the mother and child. These were often decorated with delicate animals, flowers and incantations against Lilith.

In this context Marion Mayer described that even 'wimples' could be seen. This custom first began in the 16th century in Germany. Torah wimples were sewn from

the child's diapers and painted with the name and the birthday of the child, as well as important life symbols (e.g. a bar mitzvah, a chuppah, and those provided by the synagogue).

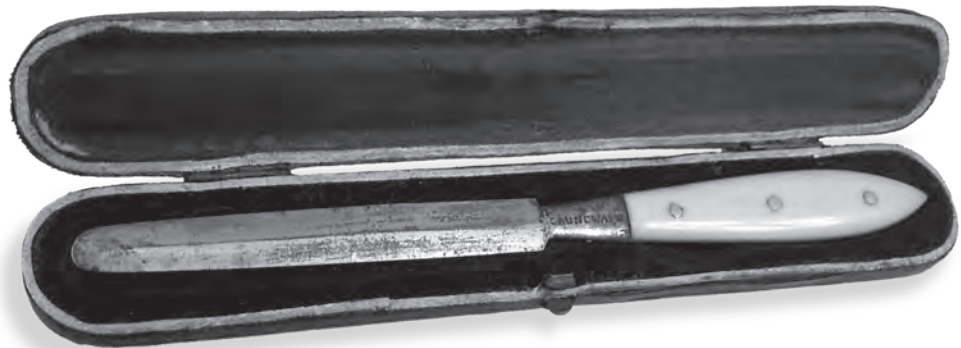
When the child was brought to the synagogue for the first time, the wimple was brought to wrap the Torah scrolls. Mrs Mayer wrote:

"I painted my son's and three other wimples, which are at the ECRA (most probably the Edgewater Community Religious Association) Haloniae Community in Chicago. The custom requires that a boy is circumcised on the eighth day after his birth whereby, after the liturgy, he is allowed to enter into the 'Brit (covenant) of Abraham, our father'.

During this ceremony, one often uses a beautifully carved chair or bench, which is called the 'Elias Chair' or 'Elias Throne', because traditionally the prophet Elijah was the guardian spirit of the child. In Germany one often makes elaborately embroidered cushions for the circumcision chairs or benches.

The sacrifice of Isaac is often portrayed on the circumcision items, because in the prayers of the Father and the Mohel the pious hope is expressed, that the act of circumcision may be credited to them, as if they had sacrificed to the altar of God, as Abraham had once done with Isaac."

A mohel knife, probably from the late 1800s. It has a steel blade and an ivory handle.⁶



6. The image shown is not the knife from Marion Mayer that was used in the original book. The quality of the original image was not suitable for reproduction. This image is courtesy of: Rob Lehrer, circentral.bobmeyer99.com

Silver Kiddush Cups 18th-19th century, Babenhausen, Hesse

Since ancient times beautiful ritual objects have been used on the Sabbath, one of the holiest days for Jews. From earliest times Jews have rested on the Sabbath. As God rested after his six days of creation for the benefit of his people, Jewish people also pay tribute to God by resting on the seventh day.

At the same time, the Sabbath has always been a foretaste of the perfect rest day for more pious Jews in messianic times. Since ancient times, it was one of the main tasks and duties of a Jewish woman to be called 'Shabbat HaMalka' (The Sabbath Queen) and to welcome most holidays by lighting candles. After the woman of the house has lit the lights, it is customary for the host, after his return from the Synagogue, to initiate the Sabbath and most holidays through the prayer of consecration, called **Kiddush**. This prayer is said over wine, which is usually drunk from a silver cup. After Kiddush, another blessing is called over the two Sabbath loaves, challah or 'barches', and recited over the table set with a white tablecloth. During Kiddush, prayers over the wine, the loaves remain covered with an embroidered cloth.

Jewish tradition symbolically links these two loaves with the double Manna gift, which the Israelites received on the Friday during their wanderings in the wilderness (Exodus 16:22). One of the many explanations of the mentioned covering is that it symbolically exercised the same function as the dew that covered and protected the manna in the desert (Exodus 16:13).

As the Kiddush prayer initiates the Sabbath, it is then sanctified.

Kiddush cup handed down in the Bentheim family by the daughter and son-in-law of Hanna Bentheim, who was the daughter of Salomon and Nannchen Bentheim.

Havdalah: taking leave of Shabbat

At the end of Shabbat, it is time for the brief ceremony of Havdalah (literally separation or distinction) which expresses the separation between the Sabbath and the workday, between sacred and secular.

The pictured Havdalah plate (next page), from 19th-century Hesse, originally belonged to Berthold Frank (1850) from Babenhausen in Hesse. Prior to emigration he lived in Auerbach on the Bergstrasse, and had a real estate business, Wolf Moses & Co. in Bensheim. The plate was passed to Julius and Hedy Steiermann (née Bentheim – formerly from Darmstadt). Today it is owned by Frank and Marion Mayer (née Steiermann). The inscription on the plate is described by Mrs Mayer after explanation from Rabbi Elliot Gertel, in Chicago.

Encircled by the Star of David it states in Yiddish: *"Gut Woch und gut Jahr"* (Good week and good year).

Rabbi Gertel explained that the Hebrew writing was read as German and also pronounced that way. The inscription on the edge of the plate, with errors in Hebrew, reads: *"Mitzwot Haschem Barah Aynayim"*.



Psalm 19, verse 8: “The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”

Psalm 19, verse 9: “The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.”

During the Havdalah ceremony, blessings are spoken over wine, spices and candlelight. According to Jewish tradition, on Shabbat Jews are given an extra soul. At Havdalah, that soul is relinquished to soar again, bringing peace of mind and increased spirituality. Their separation on the evening of the Sabbath brings sadness, but the Havdalah ceremony helps to return one gently to the responsibilities of the coming week.

The fragrance of the spices is used symbolically to give comfort and courage at the parting of the Sabbath spirit. In Western countries, these spices are commonly kept in special silver containers, called **Besamim** boxes or Hadas (a box or container of spices).

The first indications were mentioned in literature from the 15th century. At the beginning of the 16th century, Christian goldsmiths in Germany created spice containers in a tower form, which are still popular today.



The Mayer family's Havdalah boxes

The box on the left is from 19th century Germany, with silver filigree, a motif of a castle as a symbol of safety, and has belonged to the family for a long time. The Havdalah box on the right, also a tower design, is a modern silver work from 1948 in Israel.

In memory of the historic victory of the Hasmoneans over the Syrians and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 165bc, the consecration festival, Hanukkah, was solemnised. According to rabbinic tradition, oil was burned in the temple, and though it was only enough to last one day, it burned miraculously for eight. In memory of this miracle the Hanukkah lights are lit during the eight-day festival; one on the first night and every additional night following.

A ninth light, the **Shamash**, ('helper' or 'servant') is usually slightly higher than the others and serves to light the other lights. Its initial task is to make the other lights usable for the custom, as the Hanukkah lights should not be used for mundane purposes.



Other celebrations also gave rise to the production of religious objects. During the High Holidays at the end of summer or early autumn, a wind instrument in use since ancient times, the **shofar**, or ram's horn, was sounded. The shofar plays a special role during **Rosh Hashanah**, the New Year's service in the synagogue. According to tradition, it is an object to awaken the slumbering conscience of every Jew to prayer and repentance during this solemn time of judgment.

On **Yom Kippur**, the Day of Atonement, male worshippers wear a loose white linen garment, a smock called a **Sargenes**.⁷ Although the gowns are often tied only with a rope, to symbolically separate the 'lower parts' of the body from the 'purer' parts, it has become common since the 18th century to use a belt instead of rope.

According to tradition, on this day the repentant prayer is equal to the serving angels, whose sin-free reputation is as white as snow. The Atonement prayer, concerning repentance and restoration, is as follows:

"On this day offerings of purification will be made for you, and you will be purified in the Lord's presence from all your sins." (Leviticus 16:30)

And lastly there are the Ten Days of Penitence, that begin with the first New Year's Day.

On **Sukkot**, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jew builds a **Succah**, a tabernacle, in which he takes his meals during the seven festive days and says his prayers. Instead of a roof, this Succah is covered with branches so that during the day the sunlight penetrates, and through which the stars can be seen during the night. Inside it is



Blowing the 'shofar' at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

decorated with fruit, vegetables and flowers. The Succah symbolically reminds Jews of the divine protection which was granted to their ancestors when they lived in tabernacles during their wanderings in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42). The decoration of tabernacles with fruit and plants emphasises that the Sukkot is also a festival of thanks for the rich harvest of wealth (Deuteronomy 16:13-15).

The agricultural impact of this festival is also highlighted during worship through the use of special natural products such as the **lulav**, the palm branch with three myrtle and two willow branches and the **etrog**, a citrus fruit.

On the first two evenings of Passover, a **Seder** is organised in the Jewish home. For this occasion the Seder plate is prepared according to tradition.

Bitter herbs are served as symbolic dishes. They symbolise the bitter time that the Jews had to endure in Egypt. Freshly grated horseradish or coltsfoot is used for this.

Charoset, a sweet paste, symbolises the mortar which was used to build the Egyptian cities. Charoset is a thick puree of apples, walnuts, wine and cinnamon.

Karpas, a vegetable dish which symbolises spring and the spirit of hope, is made with fresh celery and parsley. A hard-boiled egg symbolises the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The egg is a traditional Jewish symbol of mourning.

Included in the Seder dishes is a roasted shank bone. It represents the Passover offering, Omer, i.e. the sacrificial offering, which at the time of the temple was brought to the shrine. Saltwater symbolises the tears, which the children of Israel shed during slavery. The three

7: In western Europe a *sargenes* was a white linen robe which also served as a burial shroud for male Jews. Also called a kittel.

unleavened breads, called 'matzah', which are used during the Seder ceremony, should remain separated from each other, and like the remaining dishes, are kept in particular Seder containers. The food preparations vary according to the offerings in home countries.

Wine, the symbol of joy and happiness, is drunk from specific wine cups, the Elias cups. This drinking vessel is intended for the prophet Elijah, whose appearance is eagerly awaited on the Seder night as, it is believed, the Messiah's arrival is announced.

Over time, the custom arose of storing the Etrog when not in use, in a container usually in the shape of the fruit, because any damage makes it unfit for ritual use.

On Purim, a festival of joy for the salvation of the Jews in ancient Persia under Minister Haman, through the heroic courage of Mordechai and his cousin, Queen Esther, Megillat Esther, the role of Esther is read in the synagogue. Written on parchment or leather, the function of the Torah scroll differs from the Esther scroll in that it only has one rotating bar instead of two.

As the Esther scroll is read aloud in the synagogue, the children of the community use a particular rattle, named a **Purim Gragger**, which they use every time the name of the cursed Haman is mentioned. The joyful occasion of Purim finds its expression in mutual gift giving among friends and relatives as well as gifts to the poor (Esther 9:22).

Pesach is the celebration of the commemoration of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt (Genesis 2:12). Pesach is also called 'exemption' or 'Passover'. The holiday is called this because in the killing of the Egyptian first-born, the angel passed over the houses of the Israelites. During the eight-day Pesach only unleavened bread, the 'matzah', is allowed to be eaten. The matzah commemorates the haste with which the Israelites had to leave Egypt, so there was no time to bake leavened bread. In addition, it represents the bread they ate as slaves in Egypt.

The Seder also offers the pious Jewish women many opportunities to demonstrate their talents; they embroidered blankets for the matzah, towels for the proposed hand washing, and covers for the pillows against which the father of the house leans during Seder.

Every evening, starting with the second night of

Passover, the law-abiding Jew counts the days during a period of seven weeks, which peak during the **Shavuot** festival (Pentecost, Leviticus 23:15-16).

Shavuot, the festival of the revelation of the Five Books of the Torah on Mount Sinai, falls on the 50th day after Passover and at the same time is a festival of the 'first fruits' according to rabbinic tradition. The Omer, which was formerly offered in the Temple of Jerusalem, on the second Passover day, gave this count his name, 'Sefirat HaOmer'.

For additional context with the religious objects mentioned, page 15 also offers a brief insight into the Hebrew calendar (Luach).

Menorah

Ein kleiner, schlanker Silberbaum,
Der ist von wunderbarer Art:
Im Sommer treibt er den Wintertraum,
Doch kommt der Winter streng und hart,
Dann treibt das Bäumchen Blüten.

Die Blüten sind gar lieb und hold
In ihrem bunten Farbenspiel;
Ein blauer Kelch, ein Rand von Gold,
Das wiegt sich leicht auf schlankem Stiel,
Es sind acht strahlende Lichter.

Es blüht der bunte Kerzenglanz
Acht Tage lang im Silbergeäst.
Menora wird der Baum genannt,
Chanukka heißt das schöne Fest,
Da die Menora blühet.

Es mahnet dieses Fest uns heut'
an eine große Heldenzeit.
Den Makkabäern ist's geweiht,
Die da gekämpft in heißem Streit
Für Judas Sieg und Ehre.

THEODOR HERZL

The Menorah

*A small, slender silver tree,
That has a wonderful origin:
In summer it chases a winter dream,
Then winter comes severe and hard,
Then the little tree chases flowers.*

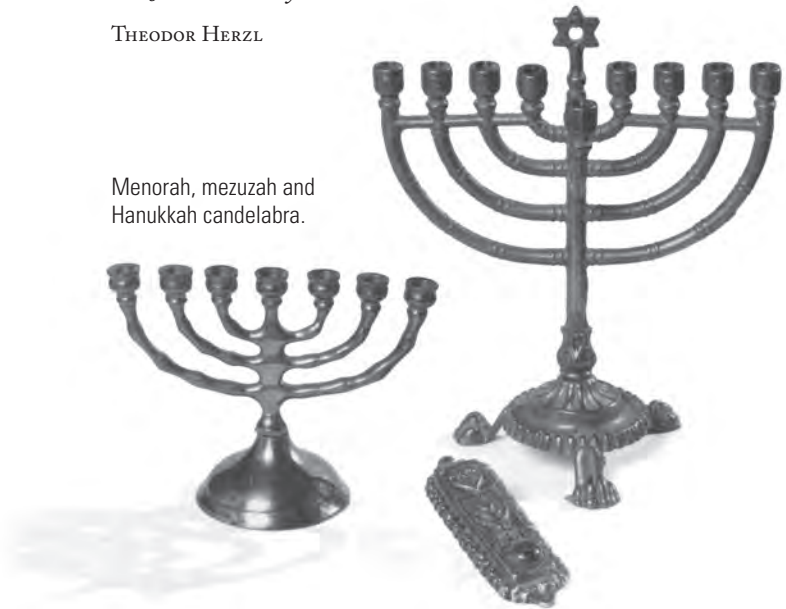
*The flowers are quite kind and fair
In their bright play of colours;
A blue cup, a border of gold,
They lightly sway on a slender stem,
There are eight bright lights.*

*It blooms its bright candlelight
For eight days in silver branches.
Menorah, the tree is called,
Hanukkah is the beautiful festival,
Where the menorah blooms.*

*This celebration reminds us today
Of a great heroic age.
It is dedicated to the Maccabees,
Who fought in a torrid dispute
For Judah's victory and honour.*

THEODOR HERZL

Menorah, mezuzah and
Hanukkah candelabra.



The Berger family

The family of local citizen and shoemaker, Feist Berger, most likely from Hähnlein, lived in Bickenbach at Schulzengasse 1 from 1854 to 1870. The newly married Berger came to Bickenbach with his second wife, Karoline, the sister of his late wife Fanny (née Wolf). There is no information about the birthplace of his wife. She bore him eight children, two girls and six boys. The second-born, Hirsch Berger, born 25 January 1856, brought great prestige to the Jewish community in Mainz. Hirsch Berger was the director and head of an educational institute, and also worked as a writer.

Feist Berger must have been a well-respected man. In 1864, according to entries in the old Bickenbach land registry, he was a member of the Board of the Alsbach-Bickenbach Israelite community which was concerned about a mikvah (a bath in which certain Jewish ritual purifications are performed) in the Bachgasse. But nothing about his childhood and youth, or which way Hirsch later went was to be found in Bickenbach, either verbally or in writing.

His birth certificate has the only reference to Bickenbach. In addition to the father's details, the birth was notarised by witnesses Isaac Wolf and Abraham Bentheim, the midwife was Margarethe Ganser, and the mayor's name was Schemel.

Dr. Renate Heuer from Bibliographica Judaica in Frankfurt urgently needed information about Jewish writers who had published in German (5,000 in number) for a bio-bibliography project. She asked about Dr. Osip Duchowetzki, or 'Hinrich' Berger (pseudonym unclear), who was born in Bickenbach on 25 January 1856.

Her query was dated 3 June 1975. As a result, a more than pleasant correspondence developed, which lasted until 1982. It was known that Hinrich Berger was chairman of a Jewish Institute in Mainz and that he wrote a number of texts, some school writing exercises, as well as novels and short stories. Until December 1981 no publications about Berger could be found in bookstores or libraries in the East or West [Germany].

In retrospect, and in order to understand the efforts that were needed to reach this goal in 1992, it must be understood that at the time of Dr Heuer's investigations, Germany and parts of Europe were still divided by the Iron Curtain. In January 1982, Dr Heuer made a find



Bickenbach, Schulzengasse, 1935.

in the Clementinum library in Prague, the capital of the former Czechoslovakia. A novel, *Sittab*, had come to light. Through an inter-library loan from the Prague University Library, the book reached Frankfurt University library and thus copies of it finally arrived in Bickenbach.

At the end of 1981 Dr Heuer provided an overview of Hirsch Berger, and some facts:

- It was quite common for German Jews, aside from their Jewish first name, to take another, second name, so to speak, for German usage. According to lexicons, and according to birth registration and an inscription on a headstone, Berger's name became Heinrich rather than Hirsch (or Hinrich).
- The pseudonym of Dr Osip Duchowetzki was undoubtedly taken by Berger.
- No photograph of Berger could be found anywhere ...
- ... nor could much of his work be detected.
- The books by Berger were all published in German.
- His [following] known publications are taken from 'Kürschners', a German literature calendar from 1900:

Author: Heinrich Berger

Pseudonym: Dr Osip Duchowetzki

Born: 25 January 1856, Bickenbach

Died: 11 January 1898, Mainz

Director and Head of Institute in Mainz, Betzelgasse 20.

Selection of work:

Wahl der Aufsatzthematika an Mittel- und Höheren Töchterschulen ('Choice of essay topics for secondary school and Lyzeum') Hamburg 1882 (Boysen), 34 pages.

Sittah, a novel, 1889 and Prague 1896: Jüdische Universalbibliothek (Jewish University Library) No. 23/24 (double volume), 326 pages.

Hohe Kreise ('High Spheres'), novella. Mainz 1892 (J. Wirt'sche, publisher), 47 pages.

The following titles are probably not independent publications but reproduced in a magazine:

Gofrith wome lach [??] novella, 1891.

Wucherer ('Profitteer'), 1892.

Nur eine Tochter ('Only One Daughter' or 'Only A Daughter'), 1895.



Sittah. A novel by H. Berger. Prague. Printed and published by Jakob B. Brandeis. Double volume.

Jewish Universal-Bibliothek (a publishing house begun in 1867).

The following description is intended to give a rough synopsis of the novel *Sittah*.

Sittah, the youngest daughter of Rabbi Elioh, is at the centre of the novel. Her and her family's life, religion, religious experience, lifestyle, their existence in the Kehilla (the local Jewish community), and Sabbath evenings, are all described. The image of life in feudal times is portrayed, juxtaposing its excesses with the lack of the right of domicile for documented Jews, forgetting the ideals of the French Revolution achievements.

Encounters with poor and rich people, crooks, and noble scoundrels are depicted. Suffering, death, destruction, phases of life, the deportation of 40 Jewish families from Poland, "Polonisation of German parts of the territory – the train to Galicia" are all described, as well as passage through European lands. *Sittah*, touchingly, experiences love and heartache, felt until her late marriage in London to her childhood friend.

She then embarks on the journey from Liverpool to New York to endless freedom, and the narrowness and hardship of continental Europe is forgotten in the liberty of America. She asks:

"Will we also be fortunate?"

"Will joy finally find me after this long suffering?"

"Be comforted," says Rabinowitsch, "as the sun rises shining out of the darkness of night itself, with its splendor scaring away all the shade, so will our happiness arise from our suffering." In other words, "Trust in 'Him' for protection of our people", because:

"Hineh lo yanum velo yishan shomer Yisrael!"

(Psalm 121:4 "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep!")

There were no books by Dr. Duchowetzki, or Berger, available in the extensive library of the Jewish community of Mainz in 1982, nor could his name be found in the Jewish Encyclopedia.

The two still-existing gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in Mainz are of Heinrich Berger and his wife Pauline (née Magnus) and the grave index gave the following information which is readable to this day:

“Faithful as a husband and father, eager as formative youth, noble and helpful as a human being, you built yourself a memorial which is more permanent ... than this stone.”

It also remains unclear as to whether any descendants of Heinrich and Pauline Berger survived the prevailing years. Finally, a question that must remain unanswered: Why did Hirsch Berger give his fateful novel the name “Sittah”? May it be assumed that it appears he was influenced by the style of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*, and as such chose a woman’s name?



Gravestone of Heinrich Berger from the Jewish cemetery in Mainz.



Gravestone of Pauline Berger from the Jewish cemetery in Mainz.

The Parable of The Three Rings from *Nathan the Wise*

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729–1781) *Nathan the Wise*, the ripest poetic fruit of the Enlightenment, was published just as the German language was threatening to run wild again. It was the first step towards classicism. The dramatic play, set at the time of the Crusades in Jerusalem, appeared in 1779 and was first performed in Berlin in 1783.

It is about the utopia of peace and solidarity between Jews, Christians and followers of Islam on the basis of reason and practical humanity, as a measure of every religion's core. The Rings Parable forms the centre of the action.

Third act, fifth scene: Saladin and Nathan.
(*An audience hall in Saladin's palace*)

Saladin: Draw nearer, Jew, yet nearer; here, quite by me, without all fear.

Nathan: Remain that for thy foes!

Saladin: Your name is Nathan?

Nathan: Yes.

Saladin: Nathan the wise?

Nathan: No.

Saladin: If not thou, the people calls thee so.

Nathan: May be, the people.

Saladin: Fancy not that I think of the people's voice contemptuously; I have been wishing much to know the man whom it has named the wise.

Nathan: And if it named him so in scorn. If wise meant only prudent. And prudent, one who knows his interest well.

Saladin: Who knows his real interest, thou must mean.

Nathan: Then were the interested the most prudent. Then wise and prudent were the same.

Saladin: I hear you proving what your speeches contradict. You know man's real interests, which the people knows not—at least have studied how to know them. That alone makes the sage.

Nathan: Which each imagines himself to be.

Saladin: Of modesty enough! Ever to meet it, where one seeks to hear dry truth, is vexing. Let us to the purpose – but, Jew, sincere and open –

Nathan: I will serve thee so as to merit, prince, thy further notice.

Saladin: Serve me – how?

Nathan: Thou shalt have the best I bring. Shalt have them cheap.

Saladin: What speak you of? – your wares? My sister shall be called to bargain with you for them (so much for the sly listener), I have nothing to transact now with the merchant.

Nathan: Doubtless then you would learn, what, on my journey, I noticed of the motions of the foe, who stirs anew. If unreserved I may –

Saladin: Neither was that the object of my sending: I know what I have need to know already. In short I willed your presence –

Nathan: Sultan, order.

Saladin: To gain instruction quite on other points. Since you are a man so wise, tell me which law, which faith appears to you the better?

Nathan: Sultan, I am a Jew.

Saladin: And I a Mussulman: The Christian stands between us. Of these three religions only one came be the true. A man, like you, remains not just where birth has chanced to cast him, or, if he remains there, does it from insight, choice, from grounds of preference.

Share then with me your insight – let me hear the grounds of preference, which I have wanted the leisure to examine – learn the choice, These grounds have motivated, that it may be mine. In confidence I ask it. How you startle, and weigh me with your eye!

It may well be I'm the first sultan to whom this caprice, methinks not quite unworthy of a sultan, has yet occurred. Am I not? Speak then – speak. Or do you, to collect

yourself, desire some moments of delay—I give them you – (whether she’s listening? – I must know of her if I’ve done right.) Reflect – I’ll soon return –

Sixth scene: Nathan alone.

(Saladin steps into the room to which Sittah had retired)

Nathan: Strange! how is this? what wills the sultan of me? I came prepared with cash – he asks truth. Truth? As if truth too were cash – a coin disused that goes by weight – indeed ’tis some such thing – but a new coin, known by the stamp at once, to be flung down and told upon the counter, it is not that. Like gold in bags tied up, so truth lies hoarded in the wise man’s head to be brought out. – Which now in this transaction which of us plays the Jew; he asks for truth, is truth what he requires, his aim, his end? That this is but the glue to lime a snare ought not to be suspected, ’twere too little, yet what is found too little for the great – in fact, through hedge and pale to stalk at once into one’s field beseems not – friends look round, seek for the path, ask leave to pass the gate – I must be cautious. Yet to damp him back, and be the stubborn Jew is not the thing; and wholly to throw off the Jew, still less. For if no Jew he might with right inquire – why not a Mussulman – Yes – that may serve me. Not children only can be quieted with stories. Ha! he comes – well, let him come.

Seventh scene: Saladin and Nathan.

Saladin: *(returning)* So, there, the field is clear, I’m not too quick, thou hast bethought thyself as much as need is, speak, no one hears.

Nathan: Might the whole world but hear us.

Saladin: Is Nathan of his cause so confident? Yes, that I call the sage – to veil no truth, for truth to hazard all things, life and goods.

Nathan: Aye, when ’tis necessary and when useful.

Saladin: Henceforth I hope I shall with reason bear one of my titles – “Betterer of the world and of the law.”

Nathan: In truth a noble title. But, sultan, e’er I quite unfold myself allow me to relate a tale.

Saladin: Why not? I always was a friend of tales well told.

Nathan: Well told, that’s not precisely my affair.

Saladin: Again so proudly modest, come begin.

Nathan: In days of yore, there dwelt in east a man who from a valued hand received a ring of endless worth: the stone of it an opal, that shot an ever-changing tint: moreover, it had the hidden virtue him to render of God and man beloved, who in this view, and this persuasion, wore it. Was it strange the eastern man ne’er drew it off his finger, and studiously provided to secure it for ever to his house. Thus – He bequeathed it; first, to the MOST BELOVED of his sons, ordained that he again should leave the ring to the MOST DEAR among his children – and that without heeding birth, the FAVOURITE son, in virtue of the ring alone, should always remain the lord o’ th’ house – You hear me, Sultan?

Saladin: I understand thee – on.

Nathan: From son to son, at length this ring descended to a father, who had three sons, alike obedient to him; whom therefore he could not but love alike. At times seemed this, now that, at times the third, (accordingly as each apart received the overflowings of his heart) most worthy to heir the ring, which with good-natured weakness he privately to each in turn had promised. This went on for a while. But death approached, and the good father grew embarrassed. So to disappoint two sons, who trust his promise, he could not bear. What’s to be done. He sends in secret to a jeweller, of whom, upon the model of the real ring, he might bespeak two others, and commanded to spare nor cost nor pains to make them like, quite like the true one. This the artist managed. The rings were brought, and e’en the father’s eye could not distinguish which had been the model. Quite overjoyed he summons all his sons, takes leave of each apart, on each bestows his blessing and his ring, and dies – Thou hearest me?

Saladin: I hear, I hear, come finish with thy tale; is it soon ended?

Nathan: It is ended, Sultan, for all that follows may be guessed of course. Scarce is the father dead, each with his ring appears, and claims to be the lord o' th' house. Comes question, strife, complaint – all to no end; for the true ring could no more be distinguished than now can – the true faith.

Saladin: How, how, is that to be the answer to my query?

Nathan: No, but it may serve as my apology; if I can't venture to decide between rings, which the father got expressly made, that they might not be known from one another.

Saladin: The rings – don't trifle with me; I must think that the religions which I named can be distinguished, e'en to raiment, drink and food,

Nathan: And only not as to their grounds of proof. Are not all built alike on history, traditional, or written. History must be received on trust – is it not so? In whom now are we likeliest to put trust? In our own people surely, in those men whose blood we are, in them, who from our childhood have given us proofs of love, who ne'er deceived us, unless 'twere wholesomer to be deceived. How can I less believe in my forefathers than thou in thine. How can I ask of thee to own that thy forefathers falsified in order to yield mine the praise of truth. The like of Christians.

Saladin: By the living God, the man is in the right, I must be silent.

Nathan: Now let us to our rings return once more. As said, the sons complained. Each to the judge swore from his father's hand immediately to have received the ring, as was the case; after he had long obtained the father's promise, one day to have the ring, as also was. The father, each asserted, could to him not have been false, rather than so suspect of such a father, willing as he might be with charity to judge his brethren, he of treacherous forgery was bold t' accuse them.

Saladin: Well, and the judge, I'm eager now to hear what thou wilt make him say. Go on, go on.

Nathan: The judge said, If ye summon not the father before my seat, I cannot give a sentence. Am I to guess enigmas? Or expect ye that the true ring should here unseal its lips? But hold—you tell me that the real ring enjoys the hidden power to make the wearer of God and man beloved; let that decide. Which of you do two brothers love the best? You're silent. Do these love-exciting rings act inward only, not without? Does each love but himself? Ye're all deceived deceivers, none of your rings is true. The real ring perhaps is gone. To hide or to supply its loss, your father ordered three for one.

Saladin: O charming, charming!

Nathan: And (the judge continued) if you will take advice in lieu of sentence, this is my counsel to you, to take up the matter where it stands. If each of you has had a ring presented by his father, let each believe his own the real ring. 'Tis possible the father chose no longer to tolerate the one ring's tyranny; and certainly, as he much loved you all, and loved you all alike, it could not please him by favouring one to be of two the oppressor. Let each feel honoured by this free affection. Unwarped of prejudice; let each endeavour to vie with both his brothers in displaying the virtue of his ring; assist its might with gentleness, benevolence, forbearance, with inward resignation to the godhead, and if the virtues of the ring continue to show themselves among your children's children, after a thousand thousand years, appear before this judgment-seat – a greater one than I shall sit upon it, and decide. So spake the modest judge.

EXCERPT FROM 'NATHAN THE WISE' BY GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING. TRANSLATION FROM WWW.FULLBOOKS.COM

The Breunich family

Konrad Breunich, b.25 Dec 1905–d.Dec 1981, printer. Emigrated to the USA in 1948.

Melanie Michel, b.12 Oct 1905–d.6 Oct 1989.

Emigrated to the USA in 1948.

Marriage details unknown.

Children: **Marianne**, b.1928–d.26 Sep 2006.

For the Breunich family, Bickenbach was to become a coincidental refuge during the periods of war and Nazism. It was the end of March 1944 and not, as previously assumed, 1942 or 1943, when the family – father Konrad, mother Melanie and daughter Marianne – came to Bickenbach. The Breunichs were forced to go underground to survive, as Melanie Breunich was Jewish.

Reliable statements from Philipp Röder, drawn from memory in a personal conversation on 25 August 1988, will be retold here with his permission. In order not to re-open old wounds, no further details were sought from the family in the USA.

Konrad Breunich stood by his wife and daughter, who was born in 1928 in Frankfurt. Because the mother was Jewish, the Gestapo had seen fit to take the whole family into account. So, after an air raid on Frankfurt, the thought of leaving the city offered the family a small chance of surviving. Their arrival in Bickenbach was described as follows:

They were filthy, exhausted; their faces were black with grime and their only possessions were the usual hand luggage they had taken into the air-raid shelter.

The family had survived a horrific air attack and used the ensuing general chaos to flee the city. The three took a chance and boarded a train heading south, in the direction of Heidelberg, but without a clear destination in mind. When the train stopped at Bickenbach station, a quick decision was made after appraisal of their situation. It was ostensibly a small town with barely any houses around the railway station. Would this be the place to disappear? They disembarked and went to the town hall where they duly registered with Mayor Rau as a “bombed out” family from Frankfurt seeking shelter.

Melanie Breunich (née Michel) was, like her husband, born in 1905 in Hettenleidelheim in Pfalz. For police registration she gave details that the family were German citizens of an evangelical faith.

Mayor Rau directed the Breunichs to the house of the Röder family who had a room available. Marianne, who was 16 at the time, found accommodation in the house of Ludwig Schneider and his wife at Darmstädter Strasse 30. Later, the Breunichs found accommodation in the home of Emil Wolf in Schulstrasse, which the municipality had requisitioned in 1935.

Konrad, a printer, found work in the Horn & Höhn printing house in Jugenheim. Melanie worked in Bickenbach with the South German cotton and wool waste factory, Anton Argenton KG.

Living together under one roof quickly brought with it a certain sense of trust. It was noticed after some time, that the daughter often caught the train to Frankfurt to seek out school friends. The local hosts also noticed that the parents reprimanded their daughter because of these trips. It soon became known that the Breunichs came from Eisenberg in Pfalz near Grünstadt. The wife was Jewish and the husband was Christian, with a brother-in-law who was a Sturmführer with the Brown Shirts.

The Breunichs feared for their lives and had undertaken their flight into the unknown with this hope of survival their only tangible chance. They sought security and risked everything to go on living, but this tiny chance of survival was potentially put at risk by their daughter’s youthful, uninhibited behaviour. Therefore, the family decided to take the Röders into their confidence, with the hope of getting some help.

Melanie confided that while heavily pregnant with their second child, she was taken by the Gestapo to a Frankfurt school, along with other Jewish women from so-called intermarriages. The treatment meted out there was horrific and inhumane, right from the moment the prisoners’ numbers were called out. The fear of being called to be transported could not be described in words.

As the birth of her child approached, no help was given. The child was born on a bare floor and immediately removed from Melanie. Nobody was able to say how this newborn child died, and Melanie was physically and mentally close to collapse. After this traumatic experience she was allowed a few hours to recover, albeit under house-arrest, again in the expectation of being taken by the Gestapo and transported. Then came the air-raid alarm, the bomb attack and, with it, a double chance of



Melanie and
Konrad Breunich,
1975, USA.

survival. The Breunichs used this opportunity and made it to Bickenbach where they lived as Germans among Germans until the bitter end.

The *Volkssturm*, Hitler's civilian militia, was mobilised in the autumn of 1944, so Sunday mornings meant instruction in the use of carbines and rocket-propelled grenades at the Alsbach sports ground. Everyone from old men, 15-year-old boys, and enlisted frontline fighters had to be educated in weaponry. Even Konrad Breunich, as a fellow German citizen, belonged to Hitler's last deployment, marching next to the party member Mayor Rau, who commented: "Breunich, we shouldn't have to march today; it's all the Jews' fault!"

On Sunday, 25 August 1945, an unforgettably beautiful spring day, after the occupation of Bickenbach by the US Army, Konrad Breunich was finally able to shout to his wife: "Now you have won!"

The US forces took over the local refugee camp, which was mostly for Polish Jews freed from the concentration camps, and the former School for the Deaf, which lay opposite and had served as a Gestapo prison until 27 March 1945, to set up their command centres. People were able to register there, and some received accommodation in the house of a former Nazi

heavyweight in Schönbergerstrasse in Bensheim.

However, the Breunichs decided to emigrate to the United States. They managed this in 1948. Their daughter Marianne had by this time won the affections of Hans Weiss from Auerbach, so within a year, Marianne was once again back living with her husband "GI" Weiss in West Germany, in the Barracks at Babenhausen, Hesse.

In January 1975, in a letter addressed to the local council from Dumont, New Jersey, part of which is quoted below:

... As long as we live, we will never forget Bickenbach, since, as complete unknowns, in a difficult period of persecution, we were able to save our lives there, and that's why we hope to be given the honour of considering Bickenbach our second home.

Dr. Wilhelm Grumach's family

Wilhelm Grumach, b.2 Jan 1865, Berlin–
d.26 Jan 1943, Bickenbach, doctor.

Margarete Jaeck, b.12 Dec 1883, Berlin–
d.13 Mar 1959

Marriage details unknown.

Children: *details unknown*. Granddaughter
mentioned, **Ruth Urbas**, married to Heinz
Hinz, *details unknown*.

As in many other cases, at first glance there
seemed very little to be found regarding
Dr. Wilhelm Grumach and his family. “Haus
Waldeck” (Waldeck house) was known locally
by Bickenbachers as being from the Grumachs,
and was built some time during the 1930s.

As with the research on the family of
Chaim Langer (in the next section), a
starting point for the Grumachs turned
out to be a letter from the municipality,
dated 29 December 1947, addressed to the
Darmstadt local council regarding formerly
Jewish-owned assets in the district of
Bickenbach.

After a report on stories of Bickenbach
Jews in the *Darmstadt Echo* from 6 August
1988, contact was initiated by Dr. Grumach's
granddaughter Ruth Hinz from Darmstadt,
who had spent her youth in Bickenbach with
her grandparents and was thus a direct witness.

Memories were awoken, new contacts were
made and thankfully, surviving documents and
pictures made available. At the same time, there
appeared an archive file in the local branch of
the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) dated
24 January 1949, which shed some light on the case of
Dr. Grumach.

Dr. Wilhelm Grumach and his wife Margarete wanted
to live in peace and contentment in Bickenbach, but after
1933, went through dark times. Even their granddaughter
Ruth was humiliated.

In 1931, Dr. Grumach, a humanitarian and renowned
physician, began a well-earned retirement. He decided,
mostly for reasons of family connection, on the suitably
peaceful town of Bickenbach. He had his house



Wedding photo of Dr. Grumach
(in uniform to honour the Kaiser)
and his wife, Margarete
(née Jaeck).



The Baumunk house at Hugelstrasse 37, c.1936-37. The Grumach family lived there for two years while their house in Bickenbach was being built. The Baumunk house was totally destroyed by bombing on 24-25 August 1944, as were the two neighbouring houses.

“Waldeck” built by Master Mason Schafer of Hahnlein.

Dr. Grumach and Mason Schafer were nearly driven bankrupt by a certain architect, Spalt, of Alsbach. During construction, Grumach had to rent a temporary residence from Phillipp Baumunk in Hugelstrasse for nearly two years.

On 12 March 1931, Dr. Wilhelm Grumach was handed a letter bearing the address of the Mayor of the District of Berlin-Friedrichshain:

Your retirement from duty is an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for your tireless and painstaking work as City Doctor. For nearly a decade you have totally dedicated your deep knowledge and experienced wisdom to the work of building healthcare.

It is your purposeful practice in harmonious cooperation with colleagues and charges that, despite financial crisis, lack of space and personnel, has resulted in the healthcare in our district being developed to an exemplary standard.

In addition to the improved medical care in health facilities, public hygiene has been extended and increased among important welfare institutions. Your work in the establishment of marriage and

sex counselling, alcohol and cancer treatment and advice on rheumatism have been your most valuable contributions. But the most enduring memory of your success, however, will be your establishment of the Treatment Centre for children with rickets, which is a blessing for those in our community living under social disadvantage and which has already served as an example for both domestic and international health authorities.

In concluding our gratitude, we hope that retirement will grant you an even healthier and more harmonious life, filled with happy memories of your successful and productive role as the City Doctor of the District of Berlin-Friedrichshain.

Dr. Grumach, his wife and granddaughter, Ruth Urbas, came from unemployment-ravaged Berlin – capital of the German Reich – to a poor Bickenbach. Dr. Grumach, Jewish by birth, had served the Kaiser as a military doctor during WWI and was a member of the SPD. In light of the persecution that would follow, it should be mentioned that the family were listed as “non-denominational”. Friendly contacts were made with kindred spirits, such as Jakob and Margarete Engelhard.

**Letter from Local Hitler Youth leader,
Christian Crössmann, to Ruth Urbas.**

The National Socialist German Workers Party
Hitler Youth, District 249, "Christian Crössmann"
(Odenwald)

Postal address:
Bensheim, Gartenstrasse 21
Telephone No. 537 Bensheim

Bank account:
District savings bank Bensheim 1181
Giro account Frankfurt am Main 64467

Battalion leader, Adjutant

Bensheim, 28 August 1937

Miss Ruth Urbas, Bickenbach, Wald-Eck House

Subject: My conversation with your grandmother
on 25 August.

During my conversation with your grandmother,
I promised to ensure that the objections and allegations
raised by the other side would be withdrawn, so the
matter could be brought to clarification.

This morning I received a phone call wherein it was
confirmed that you were satisfied with the paths
proposed by me.

I hope that as a result, this matter is settled.

Heil Hitler!

Adjutant for District 249
Christian Crössmann, squad leader.

Attachment: your postal reply card!



It could be asked whether it was Margarete Grumach's socio-political engagement that earned her the nickname "Rosa Luxemburg" from the Bickenbachers. However, in early 1933, everything imploded and all went quiet concerning the Grumachs. In order not to put oneself in danger, disputes were deliberately instigated by locals to show the newcomer that it was not a good idea to have anything to do with Jews. Any meetings with them had to be in secret.

The City of Berlin had already parted with Dr. Grumach on 10 August 1933, meaning that due to the new law on the restructuring of the Civil Service, no pension would be possible. In other words, they were saying to Grumach – to our knowledge, you are a Jew!

The Magistrate of Berlin quickly changed the name of the district Friedrichshain to "Berlin-Horst-Wessel-Stadt". Those in power had nailed their colours to the mast! On 1 November 1933 the news came that from 31 March 1934, no more pension payments would be available from "existing welfare funds". The 6.50 RM per month voluntary donation towards national construction was also withheld from Dr. Grumach's pension.

The Grumachs were suffering extreme hardship! To be fair, the Bickenbach mayor at the time, Mayor Rau, took a stand – even if it was only once. In a report to Berlin dated 19 November 1937 about the financial situation of the Grumach family, he spoke on behalf of them, and highlighted their health situation, as well as the fact that they had no health insurance. Ultimately, this had no effect.

Perhaps some locals helped out and perhaps others exploited the situation. Thus, when Mrs Grumach went to buy milk, she was given watered-down goat's milk. This was about 1941 or 1942. The so-called retirement payment was finally discontinued on 12 February 1942. Almost a year later, on 26 January, 1943, Dr. Wilhelm Grumach died in Bickenbach. His granddaughter, Ruth Hinz (née Urbas) explained by telephone in August



A section of a World War II milk card (from a Flemish dairy) from 27 December 1943 for two quarter litres of milk. It's not apparent whether it is for full cream milk or so-called "skimmed fresh milk".

1988: "Our grandpa died fourteen days before they (the Gestapo) appeared to take him away." Death had saved the sick man from his evil tormentors.

In the summer of 1937, Ruth faced questions from the Leader of the local militia, Squad Leader Anton Schmidt, about her Aryan roots. Her description of her genealogy as "non-denominational" was said to constitute a false declaration. Schmidt accused her of lying and declared that, on his solemn oath to Hitler, he wasn't

going to end up in jail as a result. In a letter dated 28 August 1937 from Local Leader 249 of the NSDAP Hitler Youth, Christian Crössmann (Odenwald) in Bensheim, these accusations and insults respectively were declared as groundless. Schmidt's career went as far as leadership of the Hitler Youth in Berlin.

Ruth Urbas married Heinz Hinz and lived in Darmstadt. She had a few more problems to overcome regarding her marriage during the war. The house "Waldeck" was sold in 1956 and Mrs Grumach died in 1959.

Anyone going past the house in the woods near Bickenbach today could not imagine what suffering its walls contained between 1933 and 1945.

The Langer family – from Bickenbach to Palestine

Chaim Hirsch Langer, b. 31 Jul 1896, Chernowitz–d.*unknown*, shoe dealer. Emigrated to Palestine on 15 Jun 1933.

Elli *surname unknown*, b. 11 Jul 1896, Lodz–d.*unknown*. Emigrated to Palestine on 17 Mar 1934.

Marriage details unknown.

Children:

Sophie Langer, b. 21 Nov 1923, Darmstadt–d.*unknown*. Emigrated to Palestine on 17 Mar 1934.

Berta Langer, b. 11 Sep 1927, Bensheim–d.*unknown*. Emigrated to Palestine on 17 Mar 1934.

In a report to the Darmstadt District Administrator from the Bickenbach municipal administration, entered on 29 December 1947, are the details about Chaim Hirsch Langer and his family, presumably in regard to restitution claims.

To date, there is a lack of references and memories about the Langer family. Notably, they lived in Bickenbach for barely three years. In none of the interviews carried out over the years did a participant ever mention the family. However, in August 1988, some details came forth from Georg Coradill, Philipp Röder, Philipp Laborgne Snr and his son Karl.

It was confirmed that the Langers moved from Bensheim to Bickenbach in 1930. Perhaps in a time of economic depression, there was too much competition in the market and, for this reason, the Langers chose to move to the countryside.

Langer, a shoe salesman, did not have a trading premises in the town, but travelled around the villages of Odenwald and Ried with a specially altered coach and a “nag”. To get a description of the nag from a man like the farrier, Philipp Röder, whose life was so attached to horses, was no problem: “... the little horse seems to have been tough, frugal with feed, and undemanding.” What is not known is its colour – though it was definitely not white – nor whether the beast was a mare or a gelding. What is for sure, is that it was shod by Philipp Röder.

Langer had a little storage cupboard, that was built onto the back of the coach, fortified with tin and steel strapping. The reason for this was provided by the almost 90-year-old Philipp Laborgne – Langer once had all his shoes stolen from the cupboard, hence the fortification.



The Pieler house in Bachgasse (now belonging to the Laborgne family), photographed in the early- to mid-1960s.

The men still remember it well – Langer offered good quality, inexpensive ox-hide shoes. Real, tough workshoes, certainly not *Madameschickelscha* (little madam’s shoes).

Incidentally, after the theft, Langer found a secure parking place for the coach, safe from thieves, in the workshop of “Reiners Cement” belonging to Heinrich Hennemann in Erbsengasse. The horse was stabled next to the barn at the *Pfeifferaacher* of the pipe-smoker, Georg Pieler, in Bilchgasse. The Langer family had initially lived at the *Pfeifferaacher*.

With their plan to leave Germany, and of having to generate sufficient income for travel costs, it was arranged for the Langer and Laborgne families to swap homes. The Langers relocated to the house of Peter Hennemann in Pfungstädter Strasse. It is believed that his wife and daughter lived for a short time with Heinrich Hennemann in Erbsengasse before their move. Georg Coradill remembers very well the “stately man” who went with his family to the “promised land”.

Due to all the work to complete the exhibition

about the history of Bickenbach Jews in the Town Hall (at Kolbschen House) from 11 September to 24 October 1988, there was very little time after the discovery of the Langer's story to delve further into local archives to gain additional insights. However, a note displayed at the exhibition seeking information on the Langers brought some success. Adam Blaum handed over a photograph from the first day of school on 28 April 1930, at the old Steingasse school for the class of birth year 1923/24. The class teacher was Georg Horst.

Like Adam Blaum, Ria Ross (née Stein) also responded after visiting the exhibition. She remembered her school friend, Betty Langer, and made her class photograph available from the first school day after Easter 1933. The photograph was taken in Steingasse between the playground entrance and the "Freibank" opposite, and shows the class of birth year 1926/27 with their teacher Georg Horst.

Through the exhibition it was also revealed by the family of Heinrich Backfisch that Chaim Langer contacted his old friend Jakob Glock in 1957. The family was then living in Qiryat Frostig near Haifa. Unfortunately this contact was lost. According to incomplete records in the local archives, it seems one of the Langer daughters was living in London. All investigations from Bickenbach, as well as the efforts of friends in Israel, to shed light on the location of the Langer family and on their daughters remain unsuccessful to date.

The Freibank

It seems to me that, in none of the numerous publications that have thus far appeared about Bickenbach, has there been mention about the "Freibank". At the end of the 19th century, the local council acquired the property "Ecke Steingasse" in Chausseegasse. The Bickenbachers immediately dubbed it, simply and soberly, Stadthaus ('town hall'). Until the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, many families had lived in this house, and in an annex with access to Steingasse, the Council built the local "Freibank". The Freibank was a sales point for barely usable and/or low quality meat that was strictly forbidden for sale at the butchers. The so-called Freibank meat, which upon inspection could only be judged as low quality or as barely edible, and which could only be sold with clear identification, had to be made usable through approved processing. Previously, the non-edible meat was left in fields while the usable pieces were sold at a low price. It was in this context that people learned how to correctly apply the Hebrew terms 'kosher' and 'trefah' (not kosher).



First day of school for the 1923/24 birth year group, 28 April 1930 at the old school in Steingasse. The class teacher was Georg Horst.

Top row, left to right: Heinrich Geiß, Willi Aßmus (killed in action WWII), Kurt Brunner, Hans Ahlheim, Walter Hill (killed in action WWII), Karl Hennemann, Kurt Hartmann (killed in action WWII).

Second row: Hermann Graul (killed in action WWII), Heinrich Heckmann, Philipp Volk, Willi Suttheimer, Georg Peter, Hermann Grimm, Adam Gast, Adam Blaum.

Third row: Ria Leuthner, Ludwig Hölzel (killed in action WWII), Sophie Langer, Else Lavato, Greta Hennemann, Franziska Schneider, Dina Kissel, Elfriede Satorius, Gertrud Müller, Margarete Schroth, Jakob Heß.

Fourth row: Martha Glock, Hella Schuster, Ruth Staufenbühl, Ida Bettermann, Frieda Gehrish, Elisabeth Aßmus, Elisabeth Emmerich, Erika Kollerer.



First day of school for the 1926/27 birth year group, Easter, 1933. The photo was taken in Steingasse between the schoolyard entrance and the "Freibank" opposite. The class teacher was Georg Horst.

Top row, left to right: Hermann Blum (missing in action WWII), Annemarie Seyfried, Gertrud Crössmann, **Betty (Berta) Langer**, Johanna Flemmisch, Else Müller, Helene Blaum, Georg Horst.

Second row: Walter Klöppinger, Werner Kreß, Marie Laborgne, Ilse Hartmann, Hilde Engelhard, Erna Schneider, Änne Sutthaimer, Else Hill, Heinrich Hennemann, Robert Hennemann, Erwin Hoffmann, Günter Roß.

Third row: Wilhelm Götz, Karl Kaffenberger, Marianne Aßmus, Gretel Billing, Waltraud Seitz, Wiltrud Horst, Alwine Müller, Betti Zubrod, Wilma Seeger, Karl Peter, Heinrich Seibert (killed in action WWII).

The Mainzer family

Mainzer family

– Refer to “Jewish families of Bickenbach, 1701–1945”, page 6, entries number **14** to **18**.

Simon Mainzer (c.1798–1865), from Heppenheim on the Bergstrasse, brought the Mainzer name to Bickenbach. He was born in 1798, and by about 1822 he seemed to have been married and living in the house at Sandstrasse 12. No information can be found regarding his wife, other than that she died before her husband.¹ Simon Mainzer died on 19 August 1865.

Mainzer was a fruiterer by trade. On 11 April 1866, the *Bergsträsser Anzeiger* newspaper revealed that Simon Mainzer, Berle Wolf and Isaac Wolf of Bickenbach belonged to the list of 70 most highly-taxed traders. Mainzer must have had a considerable fortune.

Further we found reliable indication (of possible wealth amongst the Jews in Bickenbach) in the files from the old municipal archives from 8 September 1838:

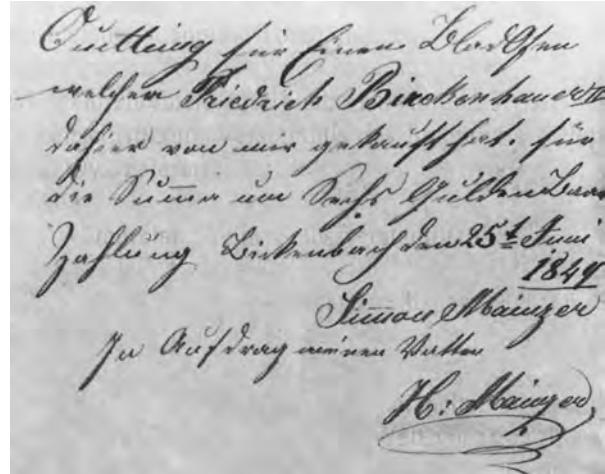
Regarding the distribution of the Bickenbach pastures, in particular considering Jews, it was decreed to the Mayor of Bickenbach by the Grand Duchy of the Hesse District of Bensheim to “inform the Jewish refugees of Bickenbach that their application for a portion of the distributed pastures is denied.”

Simon Mainzer had three children: Max, Löb, and Hirsch. The first-born, Max, was a matzo baker by trade and his family lived at Alte Strasse 16, which is now August-Bebel-Strasse.

Max Mainzer was married twice. The first marriage took place in 1849. Information as to the name and background of his wife has not been found.

The second marriage took place in 1861 and was to Babette Strauss of Dieburg. She died on 10 October 1884 in Bickenbach at the age of 46. Her husband died just over a month later. Four children came from this marriage: **Diana** (1862–1885), **Jakob** (1865–1886), **Siegmund** (1867–*unknown*) and **Betty** (1870–1930).

From information accessed in April 1991 at the Cultural Office of the city of Hanau, Siegmund Mainzer relocated from Darmstadt to Lamboygasse 6 in Hanau



Mainzer passbook.

on 26 July 1893. A woman, presumably his wife, is listed as belonging to the household. In the address books of 1893–95 Siegmund was simply described as a merchant and in 1896–1897, as a merchant with the firm G.H. Henckel. From 1898, there were no more references to Siegmund Mainzer in the address books.

Because his date of death was not recorded in the Hanau synagogue parish, which ended in 1911, it is evident that he did not die in Hanau. In addition, the registry from this time was destroyed during WWII, so it cannot be established where he moved to.

No documents relating to Siegmund Mainzer's son Max exists in Hanau. We found a directive from the county office records of Darmstadt to the Mayor of Bickenbach dated 28 May 1936:

Regarding: the citizenship status of Max Mainzer – born 17 April 1894 in Hanau – of Solvgade 10 in Copenhagen. We confirm receipt of your letter of 25 May 1936, in which you inform us that you acquired Danish citizenship on 7 April 1936 and thereby legally forfeit your German citizenship.

Inquiries initiated in 1991 to the authorities in

1. During production of the English translation, it has been discovered that Simon Mainzer's first wife was Teichel (father's name was Hirsch, but it's unclear if this is first name or family name). Teichel was born c.1798 and died 17 Nov 1834, in Bickenbach.

Copenhagen regarding information for Max Mainzer and possible family members remain unsuccessful to date.

The archival documents of Hanau yielded two further pieces of information relating to the family.

In 1891, a Max Mainzer (b. 20 Jul 1860, Bensheim) is recorded as being in Hanau. From 1894 to 1919, he was a partner in the firm Mainzer & Bruchfeld. From 1920 to 1930, he was a businessman and sales agent. He married Hermine May. In the Hanau address book of 1934–35, there was no further record of him.²

On 18 October 1893, the 23-year-old Betty Mainzer moved from Bürgel by Offenbach to Hanau, moving into Lamboygasse 6. Sigmund Mainzer appears to have taken his sister into his home. No further details were available about the rest of their lives.

Löb Mainzer, as the second child of Simon Mainzer, married Ester Schott from Grossgerau. The ceremony took place in Darmstadt. Löb was a merchant and lived with his family at Schulstrasse 5. The marriage produced a daughter, Dina, and a son, Simon.

Hugo Wolf wrote from Chicago in March 1990:

In my time, no Mainzers lived in Bickenbach. I knew a Dina and Hannchen (?) Mainzer in Kasinostrasse in Darmstadt. They were old ladies in the 1920s. A brother (?) Moritz Mainzer lived in Bad Homburg and ran a home maintenance business.

In Bleichstrasse in Darmstadt there was a baker, Freudenberger, who took over the Mainzer Bakery from a Mainzer who came from Bickenbach. The workbook of Ludwig Ganser (b. 1 Apr 1879, Bickenbach) confirms the information given by Hugo Wolf.

Ludwig Ganser was employed as an errand boy in the Grand Ducal court bakery, L. Mainzer, from 18–30 October 1897. According to oral accounts, he traversed the city's Jewish streets and around the Grand Ducal Palace at the crack of dawn everyday with baked goods. He did not last the probation period and quit the job.

We know something about Löb Mainzer's son, Simon, and his luckless fate from the book *Jews as Darmstadt*



The workbook of Ludwig Ganser.

Citizens (1984, edited by Eckhart G. Franz):

On 10 February 1943, with a so-called change of residence to Theresienstadt, another 53 people from the Jewish aged-care facility at Eschollbrücker Strasse 4½ went on their journey to a planned death. Among them were two from Bickenbach – Simon Mainzer of Eschollbrücker Strasse 4½, travelling grain salesman and baker (b. 20 Nov 1871, Bickenbach–d. 9 Jan 1943, Theresienstadt concentration camp); and Malchen Schiff of Eschollbrücker Strasse 4½ (birth name Oppenheimer, b. 2 Feb 1860, Bickenbach–d. 12 May 1943, Theresienstadt concentration camp).

The persecution of Jews in mixed marriages, not to mention the persecution of more privileged Jews, continued, then took an horrific development. The Jewish

2. During production of the English translation, it is presumed that Max Mainzer (b. 20 Jul 1860) mentioned in this paragraph could be the son of Max Mainzer (1823–1884) and his first wife, details of whom we do not have. No previous mention of this Max Mainzer (b. 1860) has been found in the book. He was born more than a year before Max Mainzer's (1823–1884) second marriage to Babette Strauss in November 1861.

Advisory Council had done its work and was dissolved in June 1943. By September 1944, the city was in flames.

Simon Mainzer's (c.1798–1865) third son, Hirsch Mainzer, married Goldchen Steiermann. Their wedding took place on 16 July 1859 in Bickenbach. From the total of 11 children that Goldchen gave birth to between 1859 and 1877, six died at a young age.

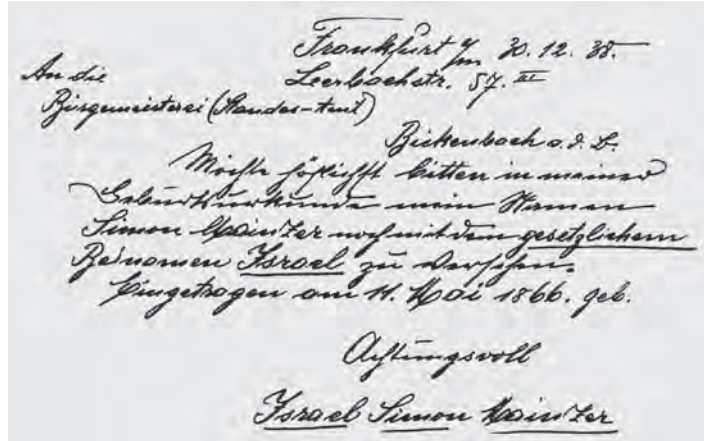
We know that in 1938, Hirsch Mainzer's fifth child, Simon (b.11 May 1866), lived with his family on the third floor of the house at Leerbachstrasse 57 in Frankfurt. A detail of Simon's life was found in Bickenbach. The Nazi state required that all male Jews had to add "Israel" to their given name, while female Jews were to add the name "Sara". This was to make plain their lack of rights and above all to make Jews immediately identifiable.

We know this requirement was imposed upon Simon Mainzer with a letter from the District Office of his birthplace, Bickenbach, sent on 30 December 1938. Looking at this letter more than 50 years later, one is left with little doubt – the letter showed certainty and inevitability. There remained, however, the unanswered question: what did this man think as he held the letter?

Inquiry at the Municipal Archives in February 1991 regarding the fate of the Mainzer family provided no results due to registration records being lost during the war. In 1984, in Frankfurt, a look into a deportation book compiled by Adolf Diamant, about Jews forcibly sent from Frankfurt in the years 1941–1944, did not result in any information about the Mainzers.

Hirsch Mainzer was a fruit merchant and recognised kosher butcher. Things appeared to have not gone well for him and his family. This assumption was supported by the numerous moves the family made within the area between 1857 and 1897. Their last residence was the premises at Zwingenberger Strasse 22.

An oral account made public for the first time, at the usual evening drinks, attended by Hirsch Mainzer when one or two drinks too many were consumed and, as expected at such occasions, one talked about God and the world and boasted of one's own assets and riches but kept



A note by Simon Mainzer who, in 1938, became Israel Simon Mainzer.

one's poverty to oneself. When it came to "Härsch" as he was known, he noted, to everyone's surprise:

"Nu, mer hawwe es Bajes, es kloane Bajes, un hawwe e Säwelbajes! – Un, nu, ach, Godda G'rachde', dou dahinna hawwe ma 5 Moje, 'Himmelblou'!"

"So, we have the house, the little house (meaning a small annex that served as a woodshed and goatpen) and we have a toilet and now – ah, God almighty, behind that we have five mornings of 'blue sky' (meaning nothing; no field, just a beautiful view of untouched nature.)"

The only asset Härsch and his wife Goldchen had was their abundance of children. The Bickenbachers adapted an old rhyme to the family, which was supposed to portray their financial situation and their poverty. It became so well-known that children would call out this satirical verse to him in the street:

"Hinnas Hoannes Härsche Haus
hänge hunnard Hemmer raus.
Hunnard Hemmer hänge raus
hinnas Hoannes Härsche Haus."
"Behind Hannes Härsche house
hang a hundred shirts about.
A hundred shirts a' hanging out
behind Hannes Härsche house."

What was meant was that wash day was an opportunity for the housewife to display a family's wealth

to the neighbourhood – her linen, shirts, towels – what she had in her chests and wardrobes. The poor did not have the “hundred shirts”; they often did not even have the bare essentials and, in addition to poverty, had to endure the ridicule of their fellow human beings. Nowadays, towards the end of the 20th century, one speaks of “hidden poverty”, but not in the public eye. One overlooks it with elegant restraint.

A hundred years ago, no one spoke of an active, functioning welfare state. The attitude then was “Help yourself, and God will help you”, because you belong to the category of the local poor.

A verse, written in the vernacular of the time and using the local dialect, “Härsch” instead of “Hirsch” can well be imagined as a malicious reference to the Mainzer’s difficult circumstances. However, this interpretation is a mistake. Up to only a few decades ago, every child knew that a “härsche” was a very old woman or a very old man, and despite this, it was applied to the Hirsch family. Today it is only a folk tale. It was used in respect to age and the stock of worldly wisdom relating to “Härsche”.

The development of the less respectful meaning points back to Middle High German. These days High German is preferred, even in the countryside and thus also in Bickenbach, so that nuances involved in transcribing dialect are soon forgotten. The result is that old dialects are being lost.

‘Hersch’, ‘herisch’ or ‘härrisch’ meant ‘herrisch’ (lordly or gentlemanly). But it could also refer to older people becoming “herrisch” (bossy or overbearing) and due to their obstinance or stubbornness they become “härsche”. In Bickenbach there was very little difference in pronunciation between “härsch” and “hersch” (‘Hirsch’ also means ‘deer’), so the word acquired a double meaning when applied to Hirsch Mainzer.



M. Mainzer, Ironmongery

Louisen Strasse 38,
Telephone No. 300.

Supplies of iron bars, girders, metal sheet, all varieties of ovens and stoves, tools, shorter lengths of iron, brass, cast iron ware, home and kitchenware, pumps, scales and weights, farming machinery and equipment.

Enamelwork and nameplates.

Hugo Wolf’s information on the Mainzers provided assistance in tracing the 11th child, the youngest of Hirsch and Goldchen Mainzer. The only information for Mayer, or Moritz Mainzer (b.1877) was that he was still alive in 1927. After that, his whereabouts are unknown.

The Moritz Mainzer in Bad Homburg turned out to be correct. In April 1991, the Bad Homburg State Archives revealed that in the address books from 1898–1927, there were entries for a Moritz Mainzer. Also regularly appearing in the address registers were advertisements for an ironmonger named Moritz Mainzer. From 1928 to 1937 there were no other records, and the name Mainzer did not appear in the address register after 1938.

However, records for a Klara Mainzer (née Hirsch, b. 9 Jul 1883, Gross-Gerau) were found, and she was deported to Lodz, Poland in October 1941 along with a Heinrich Mainzer (b. 10 Jan 1908, Homburg), presumably her son. Heinrich Mainzer died on 21 March 1943 in Auschwitz. Klara Mainzer died in Holland. It could be assumed they are related to Moritz Mainzer, however, no further information about Moritz Mainzer was available to us.

The family name Mainzer was also documented in Zwingenberg and Pfungstadt. On Sunday, 29 April 1928, just after 4 o’clock, a terrible storm hit

Zwingenberg, resulting in devastating destruction and damage. A photograph showed the situation and the extent of the destruction on the corner of Obergasse and Untergasse – the business and residence of Leopold Mainzer. Reconstruction and clearing of debris, as well as replacement of buildings and road surfaces took considerable time.

The man coming out of the gate of the small castle that is today the Town Hall, as well as the two men,

Storm damage
in 1928 in
Zwingenberg,
corner of Obergasse
and Untergasse.



The Klein house in
Lundgreenstrasse,
mid-1930s.



one of whom holds a newspaper, are no longer known by name. The cigarette smoker appears to be Leopold Mainzer. The sign on the first floor reads: “Furniture, Beds, Accessories”.

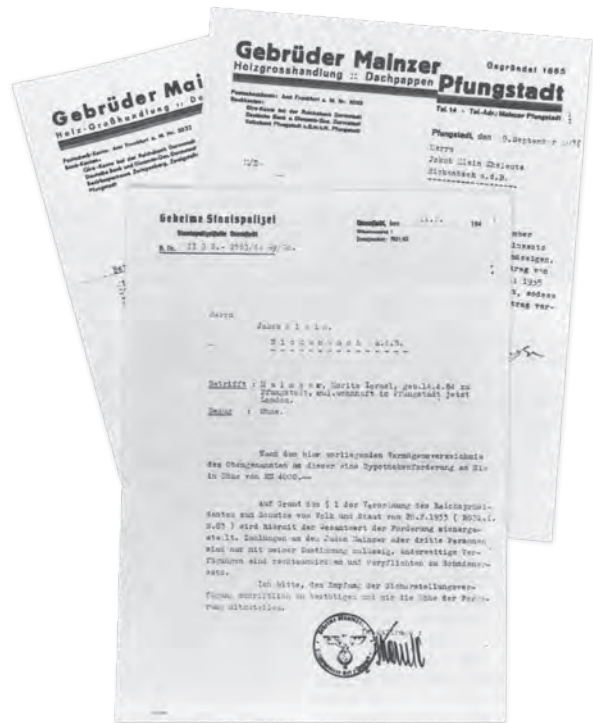
To the left of the front door in the window were what appeared to be draped sheets and tablecloths. The shield that hung there, containing many lines of print, is unfortunately too small to read. The lower placard on the corner of the house facing Untergasse cannot be deciphered. The upper placard is an enamelled metal shield advertising a sewing machine of the brand “Veritas”. The house is adorned with a public gas lantern.

According to oral accounts, when the “Meenzer” in Bickenbach was out visiting houses and customers, a Bickenbacher enjoyed the privilege of carrying the sample case from house to house. This after-work activity allowed the ‘Sandbuckler’ railway worker, a “Koffergoy”, to pocket a few extra “fivers” (fifty pfennigs) or even a few marks, and also to be well informed about the solvency of local Mainzer customers.

The following story of the situation regarding the Pfungstadt Mainzers was told by Adolf Ritz, son-in-law of Jakob and Susanne Klein of Lundgreenstrasse.

In the 1920s, the Kleins had ordered and undertaken a mortgage with the Mainzer brothers in Pfungstadt under the file number: ‘B No. II B2.-2536/40 My/Kn’. One had to look back and remember that despite it being a time of the deepest economic depression, unemployment and poverty, the house was built. With the beginning of the dictatorship and pressure from the “powers that be”, in early 1933, as two documents from the years 1935 and 1936 establish, creditors were determined to procure repayments for outstanding mortgages. The situation was further confirmed through the Savings Bank and Loan Society of Bickenbach.

Moritz Mainzer emigrated to London on 17 January 1939. What was surprising for the Kleins was that after 25 months, the Darmstadt Gestapo appeared. From the declaration of assets submitted by Mainzer before his emigration, a mortgage claim of 4000 RM was quoted. However, it was decreed by the Reich, “payments to Jews” were prohibited and this applied to either Mainzer or to any third party.



Mainzer Brothers stationery (wood wholesalers, roofing bitumen) and a Gestapo letter.

Secret State Police (Gestapo), State Police Office, Darmstadt

Darmstadt, 11 February 1941

Wilhelminenplatz 1, Telephone: 7851/53

Mr Jakob Klein, Bickenbach a.d.B.

Subject: Mainzer, Moritz Israel, born 14 April 1884 in Pfungstadt, now living permanently in Pfungstadt.

According to the list of assets for the above, there is a mortgage demand on you of RM4,000.

On the basis of Decree §1 by the Reich President for the Protection of People and State of 28 February 1933, the total amount of the claim is hereby ensured. Payments to the Jews of Mainz or third parties are only permitted with my consent. Other regulations are invalid and liable for compensation.

I ask you to confirm in writing receipt of the guarantee order and to inform me of the amount of the claim.

On behalf of: (Signature)

A Bickenbach fable

In mid-1980s, Bickenbacher Alfred Grabitske rescued a “record book” of historical files, that had been discarded into the garbage. A bit of history came in the form of an anecdote, prompted by the discovery of a receipt from 1849, which gave me pause for thought and which could possibly be attributed to the “Bentheim” family history. It also supported an assumption that the story involved the Zwingenberg Mainzers, since the known Bickenbach “Simons” were born in 1866 and 1891 respectively.

This anecdote, which has become a Bickenbach fable, can be compared with the story *The Bright Sun Brings it to Light* (Brothers Grimm). Justice prevailed in the end!

Around the turn of the century, lived a Bickenbacher who had become more than a little short of cash and so sought an elegant and unique method of getting rid of his debts. After much careful consideration, he had come upon a plan to get himself out of the red by visiting a Salmen.³

The host, Salomon, provided the cash but recorded the debt in the record book in black and white. When Salomon went travelling on business, our man saw his opportunity to turn things around and visited Salomon’s wife in their General Store and, by deception, redeemed the amount written down in the record book. Legally, this was extortion. Was the man a good neighbour of Salomon? Was he a day labourer, factory worker or even a farmer? Nothing of the sort. He threatened and extorted the wife in the truest sense of the word to write off the long overdue debt, whereupon she wrote in the record book, recording the amount with the date and a shivering hand, but shrewdly adding the word “must”.

What could she have done differently in her situation? These four letters – one word – were overlooked by the extortionist, who was thoroughly satisfied that he had freed himself from his mountain of debt and hurried back home.

Salomon was lost for words that evening when he returned from his tour of the regions and sat at the family table and learned of the transaction from his wife – this on the Sabbath too! He cursed his wife and even called her a “stupid Goy”.

First thing the following morning the Salmen hurried straight to the Zwingenberg District Judge, explained his unfortunate predicament and initiated criminal charges against the extortionist. The case was heard before the bench of the Zwingenberg District Court. The man held the record book in his hands, false honesty on his face and sure of victory, until he stumbled across those four letters of the word “must”.

This story, often repeated by my grandmother, Marie Schemel, always ended with: “And the Salme was proud and happy with his Salmina. ’Twas a clever wife – she kept orderly receipts after all, the goy”.



Front and back of the gravestone of Hirsch Mainzer, d.6 Dec 1899.

Source: © Commission for the History of the Jews in Hesse, Wiesbaden.

3. At the time of translation, the precise meaning of the word ‘Salmen’ could not be found. It is assumed it refers to a Jewish money lender with a name of ‘Salomon’.

The family of Moses Spieß

Moses Spieß, *details unknown*, buried at Alsbach
Gabriel Spieß, son of Moses, *details unknown*, d.11 Oct 1917, buried at Alsbach. Married to **Babette Weil** *birth date unknown*, Steinfurt, Baden—d.1939-40, Basel, Switzerland.

Children: Six daughters, one son.

Son, **Moses**, *details unknown*.

Only one daughter's details are available, **Elena Spieß**, b.13 Jan 1881, Hähnlein—d.3 Dec 1974, Chicago, USA. Married to Gerson Mosbacher, *details unknown*, died 19 Aug 1930, Darmstadt.

On the occasion of the opening of the Darmstadt Synagogue in November 1988, the Mosbacher family from Skokie, Illinois, and the Mayer family from Chicago, both visited Bickenbach out of interest in their family histories.

Heinz (Henry) Mosbacher was born in Darmstadt, and his wife Alice in Ober-Ramstadt. Their Bickenbach visit to the local town hall took place at the beginning of Shabbat on 6 November 1988. In a short but touching conversation, Henry Mosbacher made mention of his maternal great grandparents – the Spieß family of Hähnlein.

Due to his invaluable investigation of the Spieß family, Hähnlein master baker, Peter Hechler, was able to give the Mosbachers records and documents of their Hähnlein ancestors. Moses Spieß of Hähnlein lived with his family in Bickenbach at Bachgasse 4 from 1848 to 1850. Other than these dates, there are no further references to the Spieß family living in the area.

What also came to light was that, at the time, a certain “Spieß” had been cantor at the Alsbach School. Henry Mosbacher had been told by his mother that their ancestors had come from Spain in the 16th century and had settled in the region.

Henry Mosbacher's mother, Elena Spieß, had five sisters and a brother, Moses, who was named after his grandfather. Henry's father, Gerson Mosbacher, died in Darmstadt in 1930. Elena, known as Lina, was born on 13 January 1881 in Hähnlein and died on 3 December 1974 in Chicago, USA.

Elena Mosbacher and her son were able to leave Darmstadt and Germany before the beginning of

hostilities and made it to the USA. Elena's father, Grandfather Spieß, affectionately known as “Gavriel” was, like great-grandfather Moses, laid to rest in the Alsbach cemetery. Grandmother Babette Spieß, (née Weil) came from Steinfurt in Baden and died in Basel, Switzerland in 1939-40 where she was laid to rest.

I thank Henry Mosbacher for leaving me the following unabridged letter from 27 June 1989, addressed to his son Gerson. It gives some insight and answers to seven questions that the son had asked his father.

We should also not forget that Henry celebrated his 70th birthday with his wife, Alice, in his native city of Darmstadt on 1 May 1990.

(The original text of the following letter was in English.)



The Spieß house in Gernsheimer Strasse, Hähnlein, recorded in the mid-1920s.



The tomb of Gabriel Spieß at Alsbach Jewish cemetery.

Source: © Commission for the History of the Jews in Hesse, Wiesbaden.

27 June, 1989

To my son, Gerson,

Thank you for your letter with the seven questions (as in the Haggadah). I did not answer your letter immediately because I had to think about all of the questions. I could write many pages on each one, but I would like to condense my answers by offering some highlights to my personal history.

When I was a ten year old boy, my parents sent me to Bad Durrheim which was located in the Black Forrest, for a vacation. It was the second time I had gone to attend a Jewish summer camp for four weeks. Upon my return, I found out that my dear father, Gerson, had been taken to a Jewish hospital in Frankfurt. A couple of weeks later, on 19 August, 1930, he died. I was told that his death was caused by some type of illness which he had originally contracted while he was serving in the army, stationed in France during World War I. Apparently, the illness had resurfaced and had attacked his nervous system.

My dear mother, Elena, was a young widow with only one ten year old boy. I was too young to really understand the impact of that tragedy and remember only that my dear mother raised me. Mother had her own business. She was a dress designer and dressmaker, and she made a good living from it for the two of us. I attended grammar school for four years and at ten years of age, I went to the "real gymnasium", an eight year program. I only went there for four years.

In 1933, I became a bar mitzvah, the same year the Nazis came to power in Germany. I will never forget, as long as I live, one particular day when I was on my way to my bar mitzvah lesson at the home of my teacher, Cantor Loewenthal, I saw several Jewish men, including one of parents' best friends, being forced by some storm troopers to wash the outside walls of some buildings that had some political slogans written on them by the opposing party to the Nazis. It was a difficult time for Jews because the Nazis had won a recent election and were in power. So you can see that my bar mitzvah was not the happiest of occasions. I had no father, the Nazis were in power, and my closest relative, Uncle Julius (Kurt David's father),



November 1988, at Bickenbach town hall: Heinz (Henry) Mosbacher, Alice Mosbacher (née Bendorf), mayor Karl Schemel, Franz (Frank) Mayer.

would not attend the service in our synagogue.

We belonged to a liberal congregation with an organ and a choir, and because Uncle Julius was an orthodox Jew, he chose not to participate. Many other relatives and friends did come, and my mother, a very courageous woman, made the best of the whole situation.

The following year, my Uncle Max (Moses) Spiess (my mother's only brother) paid a visit to our home. He suggested that my mother take me out of the "real gymnasium", and he would help me to get a job as an apprentice at Joseph Trier and Company to learn a cabinet maker's trade. At that time my uncle, an executive with a world-wide leather tannery manufacturing business, had moved from Germany to Holland. He was already a citizen of Argentina where he went annually to purchase hides. Because he realised that eventually we would have to leave Germany, he explained that it was much easier to find work, wherever I went, if I had a trade. So, I began as an apprentice.

My dear mother employed several girls who worked in her dressmaking business. One of them was a new apprentice by the name of Alice Bendorf from Ober-Ramstadt. That is where it all began. The two of us met and became good friends. Because young Jewish people

were no longer allowed to participate in any general activities, we started our own sports club, youth groups etc. We had our own dance classes in which your mother and I, as well as many of our friends, participated. Many of them were eventually killed by the Nazis. Of the ones who were fortunate enough to leave Germany, we met several of them last year in Darmstadt at the dedication of the new synagogue.

In 1938, just a few weeks before the Kristallnacht, Kurt (David) and I were lucky enough to get papers (again, with the help of our Uncle Max) to go to Holland. We went to a camp in Wieringen on the North Sea. The Joint Distribution Committee had set up a beautiful camp for young people who had escaped from Germany and Austria to learn agriculture and other trades. There were about 300 to 400 young Jews, some former doctors and lawyers, many wanting to go to Palestine. We worked with cattle on some of the big farms in the area.

In 1939, we flew from Amsterdam to Geneva, Switzerland, to meet my mother and Uncle Julius. The four of us had a date at the Cuban Consulate to receive visas to go on to Cuba. We later learned that the ship which sailed before the one we were supposed to take never got to Cuba, but was returned to Germany instead. Most of the passengers ended up in concentration camps and perished. The entire deal was a big swindle for all of us who had to pay a good amount of money for the visas. Once again, our luck held. Shortly thereafter, we received papers from a cousin of my mother and Aunt once more, good luck prevailed. We left Rotterdam, Holland with the second to the last ship, "SS Veendam", right before the Nazis invaded Holland. In March 1940, we arrived in the good old USA. The trip, taking longer than two weeks to complete, was made while World War II was going on, and included a stop in England and sailing through mine fields and the dangers of war.

One of our mother's cousins (Weil) picked us up and deposited us at the home of Gerhard and Lottie Neisser, a very cultured and educated family with whom my mother had communicated through a series of letters. We found living quarters as boarders at the home of another second cousin to my mother, Flora May, her husband Edwin and their ten year old son Harold, now a Vice President with the brokerage firm of Shearson-Lehmann-Hutton.

In fact, we still keep in touch with Harold.

Kurt and I each paid Uncle Edwin and Aunt Flora \$6.00 a week for room and board, which included a packed lunch to take to work. I found a job as a cabinet maker's assistant in a small, but high quality, cabinet shop known as Shalomon Brothers. I began my employment three or four days after our arrival at a salary of 40 cents an hour. Within four weeks, I was given a 50% pay increase (highly unusual at that time) to 60 cents an hour. The owner had noticed that I had been trained in this field and that I understood the art of cabinet making. Both the owner and his foreman were Hungarian, so there was a definite language barrier to overcome. When we were assigned a big job, additional workers were hired temporarily through the union, then let go once the job was completed. Only the foreman and I, the low paid newcomer, remained as full time employees.

Kurt, on the other hand, had a difficult time finding and keeping a job because he had no work experience to speak of. He finally found employment in Toms River, New Jersey on a chicken farm owned by German Jews. He worked very hard, many hours a day, simply for room and board and a meagre allowance. He was not happy with his situation and after several months, he decided to go to Chicago to visit relatives and to seek employment. He did find work at the Sun Shoe Company, owned by immigrant Jews who had owned a large shoe factory in Frankfurt. Many of our good friends began their first employment in the US with this same company.

While all these events were taking place in America, my mother and Kurt's parents, Uncle Julius and Aunt Sophie witnessed Kristallnacht, and Uncle Julius was subjected to a short stay at Buchenwald Concentration Camp. With the aid of Uncle Max, they were able to leave Germany for Basel, Switzerland. Your mother managed to obtain papers to go to England, where she worked as a dress maker and did domestic work in people's homes. She was able to come to the US in 1940. I met her at her arrival in New Jersey. After a brief stay with her girlfriend's family, she came to Chicago and settled there, with her Aunt Rosie and Cousin Hertha.

Alice's parents and her brother, Lee, also escaped from Germany with the help of Uncle Dave Levi, Oma Hilda's brother. He got them a special agricultural visa, so they all worked on a farm after arriving in Ottomwas, Iowa.

Opa Joe, who was a cattle dealer and had owned farmland in Ober-Ramstadt, managed a farm in Ottomwas, owned by a Jewish man. They discovered other German farmers in that rural area and established friendships. The stipulations of the visa required that they live and work on the farm for at least one year. Oma Hilda was not happy on the farm and was homesick for her family. Shortly after the year was over, they settled down. Opa Joe found a job in a meat packing house; Oma Hilda made money babysitting; your Uncle Lee went to school; and your mother continued her craft as a dressmaker. Lee later worked as a butcher. Everyone pooled their earnings and managed to adjust to their new world.

On my first Vacation in the spring of 1942, I took a Greyhound Bus to Chicago to visit my cousin, Kurt, and my girlfriend, Alice. I liked Chicago very much and through a friend, I found work as a cabinet maker at Butler Specialty Company. I returned to New York, packed my belongings and moved permanently to Chicago, much to the dismay of Uncle Edwin and Aunt Flora, who were losing their border and steady income.

The romance continued, and on 28 February, 1943, your mother and I were married at the Fairfax Hotel on Hyde Park Boulevard. Many relatives and friends attended the ceremony, with the exception of my mother and Kurt's parents, who were still living in Montevideo, Uruguay. They had settled there with Aunt Sophie and Uncle Julius after leaving Switzerland. Once we were married and maintaining a steady income, we sent for my mother. I continued to work for Butler Specialty Company and worked my way up to assistant manager.

On 26 April, 1944, we had our first baby boy and named him after my later father, Gerson. Twenty-two months later, on 20 January, 1946, our second baby boy arrived. Shortly after Lester's birth, my dear mother's ship arrived in Boston from South America. In a one-bedroom apartment, on 918E. 55th Street, all five of us managed to make a go of it. We and the two boys shared the bedroom, and Oma slept on a rollaway bed in the living room. At that time, we didn't even have a car. My first car was a five or six year old Chevrolet which had been the company car where I worked. It was such a wonderful experience to be able to afford a car in America. We were all very happy in our small apartment and always remembered how lucky we were to escape that horrible Hitler Germany. I cannot

describe the happiness we shared those years with our two lovely little boys, my mother and Alice's parents nearby, not to mention the feeling of being the proud owners of a car. We felt like millionaires!

During that time, while I was a member of a Jewish soccer team, I tore some cartilage in my knee. The injury put an end to my soccer career, but also kept me out of the Service and the war. I didn't miss the game that much because we still had the opportunity to watch some matches, and your mother and I had many other social activities to keep us busy. Both of us were very active in the Habonim Congregation, composed mostly of emigrants from central Europe. Your mother had lots of families in Chicago, and we frequently attended family picnics and other get-togethers. And of course, there was baseball. I became a fan while living in New York, when Harold May (who was ten years old at the time) took me to my first game. I went to countless White Sox games and even travelled by the elevated train to Wrigley Field to see the Cubs play the Dodgers.

The pressure of having to support my wife, two children and mother eventually led to some physical problems, such as pains in the stomach and chest. Despite examinations and x-rays, Dr. Paul Joseph could find nothing wrong other than a "nervous stomach" condition and a heart murmur, which I had since birth. Later on, the stress of working as the Plant Manager of the Playskool Toy Company with many people working for me, finally took its toll. One day, I experienced pains in my chest, so the Company nurse took me to Michael Reese Hospital for observation. They kept me there for three weeks. My symptoms were treated as though I had suffered a heart attack, but the doctors called it cardiac deficiency. Fortunately, I was never in intensive care or required oxygen. Throughout the years, before and after we had moved to Skokie, I have had several heart tests, echo cardiograms, and stress tests. The results, especially during the stress tests, showed that my heart performed better than under most normal conditions.

On 14 June, 1954, our third son, Bruce, was born. What happiness!

I have always enjoyed working in my profession and never felt that I wanted to do any other type of work. Even today, I enjoy working in a woodworking plant as a part time consultant. Most of my work now consists of

providing cost estimates for new products. Over the years, I have held my positions for long periods of time – one job in New York; then eleven and a half years with Butler Specialty Company in Chicago; and then, with the help of my first foreman at Butler, I was hired as Plant Manager for Playskool Toy Company. He had been instructed by the owners to find himself the best assistant available. So, he chose me. After a great deal of soul searching, I decided to come to work with him as Assistant Plant Manager. About nine years later, Al suffered a nervous breakdown, and I was appointed the new Plant Manager. I held that position until Playskool was sold to Milton Bradley in 1973.

Milton Bradley wanted to retain some of their own people to run the operation, so I was placed in the Research and Development Department and given the fancy title of “Director of Wood Technology”. I was also put in charge of all wood products, such as lumber, hardboard, wood turnings and dowels. These new responsibilities were no longer challenging, as more and more toys were being created out of plastic. So, in 1975, two other partners and I purchased Sandberg Manufacturing Company, an old speciality woodworking plant which made blocking wood and cutting sticks for the printing industry. We bought the company with the intention of making wooden toys. We began with our toy manufacturing on a small scale, and all went pretty well. In 1978, one of my partners, with the help of a former Playskool salesman, decided to offer our toys to Sears. They introduced our 1979 line to Sears. I will never forget when they returned from a meeting with Sears officials one late afternoon and were ecstatic.

We were really going to celebrate that night because our product was now in Sears, with six items. Yet, after they provided me with facts as to what price they had sold the items, I became very discouraged. I told them that their price was too low and that we would lose money with this arrangement. My partner was certain that the volume would take care of the problem, and we would do just fine. To make a long story short, we all worked extremely hard during 1979 to meet the requirements of the contract. When the year was over, we had lost a good deal of money, just as I had predicted. When my partner went to a finance company to arrange for additional funds, he wanted my personal signature as one of the responsible parties for repayment of the loans. My attorney advised against it.

Thus, the partnership dissolved, and I resigned from the Company. You can imagine how difficult a decision that was. It was the toughest time of my adult life, except for those last years in Germany. At age 60, I was without a business and a job. Not a very pleasant prospect.

So, I took a chance. I contacted the Chairman of Milton Bradley. He invited me to come to Springfield, Massachusetts, and hired me on the spot for the Playskool operation in Chicago. I was back in my old position of Director of Wood Technology in the Research and Development Department, as well as the Purchasing Department. I remained there until the Company was sold to Hasbro, headquartered in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and they asked me to relocate to Springfield, Massachusetts. This occurred just before my 65th birthday, and your mother and I decided to take retirement instead. I then took a consulting job with Jay-Gee, the position I still hold today.

I think I have answered all your questions, except for one regarding our financial situation and future. I believe that we are in fine shape financially. I give all of the credit to your mother, who during our forty-six and a half years of very happily married life, has always helped to keep us out of debt. She has saved us a great deal of money by always doing a great job taking care of our home, cleaning, washing, cooking, and baking without outside help. She has always been very economical!

In the early days of our marriage, we set ourselves a goal to always set aside a certain percentage of our income for a rainy day. We never changed this policy and only purchased items for ourselves when we could afford them. Maybe an old-fashioned idea, but it worked!! Your dear mother has run our household on a budget over the years and has controlled our expenses. We now receive social security, a pension from Germany and a small pension from Playskool. With these three incomes, we can live comfortably and pay all our expenses, such as mortgage, food, insurance, etc. Most of our other income (dividends, interest, and my income from work) are additional benefits to be used for vacations, travel and social activities. We hope that our children will never have to worry about us and, at the end, there will be some benefits for our children and grandchildren.

Henry Mosbacher

The Stahl-Feitler cigar factory



The Stahl-Feitler cigar factory, Darmstädter Strasse 54, c.1944–46.

In 1989, an overseas enquiry about the connections between the Bentheim family in Bickenbach and Feitler family in Seeheim, brought about a look into the history of the Stahl-Feitler cigar factory as well as other cigar factories in Bickenbach. The research for this chapter also provided some insight into the development of our Council.

In the mid-19th century, with the expansion of the railways, local entrepreneurs began to shift their operations and production sites away from coastal regions toward inland areas, no doubt also taking advantage of cheaper labour. It was in this way that the tobacco industry made its way to Bickenbach, with the largest operation in the Jagdschloss (hunting chateau).

The Main-Neckar railway from Frankfurt to Heidelberg began its regular service on 1 August 1846. In the beginning, Bickenbach was just a “stopping point” but later had its own railway station. A secondary railway, the Bickenbach-Seeheim line, was in service from 1894 to 1955.

With construction of the Main-Neckar railway, and the Thurn-und-Taxis Post service, the Frankfurt-Heidelberg line became redundant and ceased operations in 1848.¹ The *Grand Ducal Hessian District Gazette* gave the news that the Bickenbach Post House, which had operated in the Jagdschloss since 1827, was also decommissioned.

In the 1970s the goods shed was demolished as automation replaced human labour. There were no more stationmasters and judging by these developments, it seems that by the end of the 20th century there might be little left of the Bickenbach railway station. One can only hope that at least a “stopping point” might remain.

The municipal trades register of Bickenbach from 1873 provided information on tobacco-related businesses in the area. We can confirm that Seeheim merchant, Feitel Feitler, had set up a cigar factory with a Bickenbach

businessman, a certain Mr Stahl. This Jewish-Christian business partnership seemed to have continued for many years and both had “made something” of it.

The Thorbecke cigar factory

Since 1851, several owners had operated at the Jagdschloss before Amalie and Franz Heinrich Thorbecke, and Heinrich Küfer from Mannheim took over the factory in 1872. The business was the largest in the area and employed up to 150 people.

The manor house served as the residence for the management. The two tower blocks of the shed (in Bickenbach slang “Front and Back Babylon”) housed the master and overseers. The manor house, which was on the eastern side of the area between the barracks and the sheds, was torn down in 1965. The L-shaped shed served, at least partially, as a tobacco storage shed until after WWII.

Production ended in the late 1920s and early 1930s and shifted to Lorsch. The barracks area was the actual

1. Thurn-und-Taxis Post was a private company, operated by the Princely House of Thurn and Taxis between 1806–1867. The company provided postal services to large areas of Germany. The company started with headquarters in Regensburg and in 1810 relocated to Frankfurt am Main where it remained until 1867.



Grand Ducal Hessian
District Gazette

Page 100/1848

Notification, concerning the confiscation of the post office and mail delivery to Bickenbach.

It is hereby brought to public knowledge that, from the 31st day of this month, the Bickenbach post office and mail delivery will have its functions transferred to the Grand Ducal post office at Zwingenberg or Bensheim.

Darmstadt, 27 March 1848.

Grand Ducal Hessian
Post Inspection.

“factory”. The “Postgarten” opposite, on the corner of Chausseegasse and Alten Strasse, was also part of the factory. This area has now been divided into seven parcels, six of which had houses built on them after WWII, The Postgarten was surrounded by an approximately 1.8 metre-high quarry-stone wall. A wide cast-iron gate with bars, the entry to the Jagdschloss opposite, was the only available entrance to the property. The name “Postgarten” came from the time when the Jagdschloss served as a horse-changing station and grazing area for the Post service. From the beginning of the cigar factory, this area of land served as a bleachery for the preparation of cigar wrappers and binding leaves.

It is barely possible today to picture how these work and production processes took place. Close to the gate, there were once long work tables and enormous wooden vats in which the leaves selected to become wrappers would be carefully sorted, softened, and treated. Much of the Postgarten area had wooden posts sunk in it, which held up the washing lines that were used to hang the linen sheets used for drying the cigar wrappers. An unexpected storm or heavy rains would create a sudden scramble to attempt to minimise the damage.

The cigar boxes were produced in the company’s own workshop. It was largely short-term contract work that was offered. In addition to their pay, workers received payment in kind of two cigars per day – second-class

quality. Women and children would bring home the little cigar bands called “Leibbinden” by locals, and sell them in hundreds for a token pennig.

In some Bickenbach families, even long after the war, it wasn’t uncommon for the doll houses of little girls to contain furniture made out of cigar boxes. In the same way, beautifully decorated picture frames were created for personal use, without the knowledge of the firm. An exemplar can be seen in the Bickenbach Local History Museum.

Büsenberg cigar factory, formerly Hartmann and Henkel

No oral accounts were available pertaining to this firm. Even the documents available in the archives of the Council from the time offer very little information. It is believed that this company operated out of the Jagdschloss before Thorbecke.

Konrad Rebenich II and later, Wilhelm Schüler cigar factory

This small business was operated in the annex of the Chausseegasse House, today Darmstädter Strasse 34. In addition, the family ran a spice shop and general store, as the image discovered in 1991 confirmed. The company sign reads: “Wilhelm Schüler – Cigar Factory, Spices etc.”. Wilhelm Schüler was the son-in-law of

the founder of the firm, Konrad Rebenich. Enquiries uncovered that there had been a cigar maker – locally called “Sigarriwweiler” – working there called Johannes Stahl, who evidently found some moonlighting work here and there for the occasional household worker. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, this business ceased operation, along with the general store.

Wilhelm Stahl & Co, the Stahl-Feitler Cigar Factory

This business was in the Riding School in Chausseegasse, what is today the house at Darmstädter Strasse 54. The business partner of Wilhelm Stahl was a Jewish merchant named Feitel Feitler from Seeheim. It seems there were at least 20 to 30 men and women employed there. What is not clear is exactly when this business ceased to operate. It can be assumed that the economic depression that followed WWI marked the end for this small business, as it did for many other small and medium-sized enterprises.

The owners, Stahl, sold the estate to the Betz family, and their house still sits on the property. For posterity, it should be mentioned that the wife of Wilhelm Stahl served as a knitting teacher at the local elementary school over the course of many years. Mrs Stahl taught the Bickenbach girls the basics of knitting, crocheting and sewing. It was all long, long ago!

However, it is necessary to note that it has often been misery and suffering that has shaped the history of humanity, and not joyful occasions. And who knows this better than Jews? The “Great German Mania” of Hitler brought about WWII. With the air raids and attacks by allied bomber squadrons, air raid protection become more and more important and cellars in houses were converted to air raid shelters. In the case of the Stahl-Feitler cigar factory, the front annex was built in front of the emergency exit – the cellar window. The annex was to provide protection in case of collapsing walls and beams. Bickenbach suffered an air raid on the nights of 24-25 August 1944, in which seven people lost their lives.



“Consultation about the cigar factory” at the Bürgerhaus gallery, 1972.

First row, standing from left: Georg Knoos, Nikolaus Dingeldey, Ludwig Kaffenberger, secondary school teacher Rudolf Kunz, Elisabeth (Lisbeth) Stein, Heinrich Hornung, Karl Schemel, Klaus Böhme, Ludwig Kann, teacher Christian Kaltwasser. Sitting: Ludwig Flemmisch, Peter Rebenich, Jakob Klein, Georg Seibert, Karl Röder, Fritz Krämer.



The Rebenich's small business, and later, Wilhem Schüler's at Chausseegasse.

The Wolf family (and Moses Feitel)



Wolf Wolf (1808–1868), Bickenbach merchant. Son of Isaak Wolf.



Hannchen N. Wolf (1811–1851), married to Wolf Wolf.



Babette (Barbara) Wolf, (1839, Bickenbach–1934, Chicago). Daughter of Wolf and Hannchen. She married Joseph Waixel (1849, Germany–1899, Chicago).

The Wolf family

– Refer to “Jewish families of Bickenbach, 1701–1945”, page 6, entry number **12**, pages 7–9, entries number **24–37**, beginning with **Isaac Lazarus**, b.1715.)

It was believed that two “Wolf” lines existed in Bickenbach, however, it seems that the families can be traced back to a “den Wolf”. This person could be Wolf Lazarus born in 1741 to Isaac Lazarus (b.1715). It was Wolf Lazarus’ son, Isaak Lazarus (1780–1869), who took his father’s first name “Wolf” to be his surname or family name, so he became Isaak Wolf in 1808. His brother, Moses (1782–1857), also did the same.

A letter to the Bickenbach Council was received in March 1982 from Kurt Landsberg of Wellfleet, Massachusetts. It contained enquiries about his maternal grandfather, Abraham Wolf, born in Bickenbach on 19 May 1851. In the letter, Kurt Landsberg introduced himself:

“In the year 1936, I came to America from Germany, for understandable reasons. Very few of my family members remain there (in Germany). I will be visiting

Germany with my wife, including my birthplace of Eschollbrücken at Pfungstadt.

Please excuse my German: I have not written in German for over 45 years.”

In May 1982, the Landsbergs arrived in Bickenbach, free of grudges for past events. Kurt Landsberg did not have much information regarding the life and death of his parents and sister.

However, through lively correspondence with Marion Mayer, daughter of Johanna Bentheim, a new connection came to light in 1991 arising from a coincidental meeting. This aroused further interest in the Wolf family. In their “Schmusen”, or talks during their visit to Bickenbach, Marion Mayer and Nancy Front (née Wolf-Waixel) – both from the USA, established that there were more Wolf connections to the town of Bickenbach.

Nancy Front and Kurt Landsberg made some of their family photographs available. The photos were an inspiration, leading in particular to the “Obligation Documents” of 1814 held in the council archives. These touched on the lives of the ancestors of the Wolfs.

The Landsberg family in Eschollbrücken before 1936. (It is presumed that Kurt Landsberg is in the centre photo with his sister.)



Thus started a much more intensive search than first anticipated. The result gave a more complete profile of the Wolf family and of Moses Feitler – who had been known by name alone in connection with the Wolfs. These findings were a genuine contribution to the Jewish history of Bickenbach.

Some additional facts have also come to light about an Isaak Wolf. The following items are taken from the *Bergsträsser Heimatblätter, Contributions to the History of Bensheim and the Surrounding Area* (a supplement to the *Bergsträsser Gazette*), Monday, 19 Oct 1987 (ed. no. 70):

Isaak Wolf II, b.6 Feb. 1821, Bickenbach–d.5 Dec. 1911, Bensheim, at Schlinkengasse 10. Married to Emma (née Schmidt), b. 25 Sept. 1853, Kleinkarlbach.

It can be assumed that this is Isaak Wolf, son of the first Isaak Wolf (1780–1869), and he had a third marriage after Elisabeth Bendheim and Sara Fränkel.

In the *Bergsträsser Heimatblätter* the following was noted about Abraham, the son of Isaak Wolf's first marriage, and the maternal grandfather of Kurt Landsberg:

Abraham Wolf, b.19 May, 1851, son of Isaak Wolf, and wife Elisabeth Wolf, (née Bendheim) from Bensheim, married to Betty Tannenbaum, b.17 Dec. 1859, Eschollbrücken, d. c.1900.¹

The following information that was found provides more about Moses Wolf:

Moses Wolf I, merchant, b.5 Apr. 1860, Bickenbach – d.28 May 1927, Bensheim. Son of Isaak Wolf and Sara (née Fränkel). Married 11 Nov (year unknown) in Beerfelden (Odenwald) to Hannchen (née Rosenthal), Hauptstrasse 58. Hannchen was the daughter of Jakob Rosenthal and Adelheid (née Kaufmann). Children: Jakob, b. 14 Mar. 1888, Bensheim.

1. Gravestone details revealed that Betty Wolf (née Tannenbaum) died on 10 January 1900, Eschollbrücken. There is a record of a gravestone for an Abraham Wolf, but the stone is broken and lacks the birth date to confirm actual identification. However the date of death was 12 August 1920, Eschollbrücken. Source: LAGIS – Hessian Information System on Regional History.



*Here rests Benjamin,
A favourite of the Lord who shall
dwell in safety.
Always loved, below (on Earth) and
above (in heaven).
Great piety was his treasure until
death.
In the land of the living the Lord will
be his salvation and his light.
Wolf, son of Isaak from Bickenbach,
Died on the holy Shabbat, 18th of
Elul,*
And was buried on Sunday, 19th day
of the same,
[5]628 after a small reckoning.
His soul is bound up in the bond of
eternal life!
(*5 September 1868)*

Grave of Wolf Benjamin Wolf, son of Isaak and Hannchen Wolf, Alsbach Jewish Cemetery.

(In Karl Schemel's original text, he attributed the following to Moses Wolf and family, but more likely, this description applies to Jakob and his family escaping Germany as Moses Wolf died in May 1927.)

On 25 Sep 1939 they went to Offenbach am Main, Frankfurter Strasse 40; on 4 Apr 1940 they returned; on 15 Mar 1941 they went to Niederad in Frankfurt.

In regard to information about the deportation of the Wolf spouses, there is a veil of darkness.

In 1991, Hugo Wolf, great-great grandson of Isaak Wolf (1780–1869), speaking from memory, was able to provide some further details about Moses Wolf:

Moses Wolf & Co. Real Estate in Bensheim.

Moses Wolf, was a trader in flour and grains, and originally from Erbsengasse in Bickenbach. His son, Jakob, with his wife and daughter were able to escape the Nazis and made it to Portland, Oregon.

In the Bensheim annals the following was also found regarding another Moses Wolf, son of Gabriel Wolf (1830–1903) and Jette Süß (c.1841–1902):

Moses Wolf II, businessman, b.20 Oct 1864, Bickenbach, married Johanna (née Lehmann) b.15 Aug 1872, at Mannheimer Strasse 52, Lengfeld. They had three children, Rieda, b.25 Apr 1901, Irma, b.28 Apr 1902, and Herda, b.12 Jul 1904. All three children were born in Bensheim.

Also, this information came from conversations with Hugo Wolf:

Isaak Wolf seemed to be in possession of a considerable fortune to have his business listed, as it was, in the *Bergstrasse Anzeiger* newspaper, in Bensheim, on 11 April 1866, in the article “Register of the 70 highest taxpaying traders”, under the heading “Bickenbach”:

- No.16. Simon Mainzer, fruit merchant;
- No.17. Berle Wolf, fruit merchant;
- No.18. Isaak Wolf, fruit merchant; ...

It can certainly be determined that, after 130 years, Bickenbach counted this threesome among the wealthy locals of their time.



The family of Abraham Wolf, Bensheim, c.1905.

Standing: Joseph, killed in action, WWI.

Moses, lived in Wertheim am Main and had two daughters. Ilse went to the USA in 1938 and now lives in East Hempstead N.Y.; Trudel went to Israel in 1936 and still lives there in the same kibbutz; their parents perished in a concentration camp.

Ella went to America, but is now deceased.

Samuel also lived in Eschollbrücken; he and his wife and their oldest daughter, Helene, also perished (according to Yad Vashem Samuel was in Treblinka).

Son, Fred, got out in 1938 and is living in Calgary, Canada.

Ruth was married to a Protestant and fled with a daughter. For more than five years the child sheltered with Catholic Sisters in Belgium. At the end of the war Ruth was in France; she remarried and lives in Richmond, Virginia, USA.

Bernhard died in 1914.

Gustav emigrated to America in 1932. He died in 1989 aged 96.

Arthur, son of the second wife, died in 1931.

Abraham Wolf (grandfather of Kurt Landsberg).

Kurt Landsberg's mother.

Not in the picture is Samson, the eldest son of Abraham, who was already in America by this time, before Gustav was born.

Picture description by Kurt Landsberg, February, 1992.

There was an interesting story about Gustav and Samson Wolf. In WWI, Gustav was wounded at the Russian Front – shot through the lungs and declared dead. Six months later, through a Red Cross postcard, the family learned that their son and brother Gustav was a prisoner of war in Siberia. He was then taken to Vladivostok, where the Russians handed him over to the Americans as a prisoner of war. In 1919, Gustav returned to his hometown after seeing his brother, Samson, for the first time in the USA. Samson returned to his hometown in 1927. Then he brought his brother over (presumably to America), and later, the two brothers brought us all over.

The following contribution to the Wolf family history came from some documents found in Council archives. These were, “The legal obligations of Isaak Wolf and Moses Feitel, concluded in the year 1814”.

Family details for Moses Feitler from Seeheim can be found in the list “Jewish families of Bickenbach, 1701–1945”, entry number 6 on page 5.

The contents of the legal obligations give an insight into life at the time. In business, it was common practice to take on, dissolve or incorporate obligations, connections and liabilities. The contracts between the Jewish merchants, Wolf and Feitel, with the Council, served as contributions to the war effort.

People who should be brothers and sisters have fought with each other from almost the beginning of humanity, right up to our own times, including to this very day. War and its consequences cost money. That has always meant: “The little man picks up the tab!”

In 1814, the Bickenbach Council needed money – a lot of money – and took out loans from merchants in order to be able to cover the costs of war. It was, in part, used to pay for securing military supplies that had already been delivered.

The era of Napoleon was limping to an end. The Corsican King, who crowned himself Emperor of France in Paris in 1804 – just as 130 years later a certain Hitler would declare himself absolute ruler of Germany – was brought to his downfall by Moscow and the Russian winter during the campaign of 1812–13, and with him, the largest army in the world. The reputation of invincibility, brought about by his successes in Italy in 1796–97 and his expeditions to Egypt, was gone.

The ideas and slogans of the French Revolution may have been greeted at the beginning with enthusiasm by many, but led to upheavals in state order, the effects of which can still be felt today. But this enthusiasm



quickly waned as a new series of wars also came to sweep over our country.

The French revolutionary wars lasted from 1792 to 1801. In early 1799, Bickenbachers fled to Zwingenberg in fear of the French. On 1 September in the same year, 6,000 men marched through, and in October a further 12,000 cavalry and infantry under the command of General (Michel) Ney. In Zwingenberg, this called for 12,000 portions of bread, meat and brandy. When these were not immediately delivered, the soldiers began plundering. The clashes between French and German forces went back and forth and the population experienced great hardship.

The Treaty of Lunéville in February 1801 ended the revolutionary wars. Bickenbachers were forced to pay war reparations of 1,916 fl (gulden) between 1793 and 1798.

In 1806, under the protection of Napoleon, the Rhine Confederation, taking in most of the western and southern German territories, was established. This confederation allowed members to leave the German empire, acquire sovereignty, and to extend their territories through mediatisation (annexation of a principality by another state). The Rhine Confederation states were obliged to provide military support to Napoleon. In 1802, the Landgrave of Hesse was granted possession of the Mainz area along the Rhine as a reward for his losses along the left bank of the Rhine.

Along with Hesse, a further 15 German Principalities joined the Rhine Confederation and thus became part of the Napoleonic block. The Landgrave became a Grand Duke. In 1805, a campaign against Austria resulted and the Bickenbachers had to provide horses to the French army. In order to meet the war costs, an advance of 2,450 fl was made. To give an idea of the relative situation of the locals,

French square bayonet. Total length 32cm, square blade 21.5cm, crown 4.5cm, hilt 6cm.

it should be mentioned that the total yearly income of the Bickenbach Council coffers was less than one thousand gulden.

In 1806, in the war with Prussia, French troops marched through here once more. The occupation came at a cost to the Council. Once again, an advance was made, this time of 3,113 fl. The Council had to pay 585 fl to six local farmers for requisitioned horses and wagons.

To service their advance, the army converted the Jagdschloss into a military hospital, in which 77 French soldiers died in just a few weeks – mostly of typhus and gangrene. The dead were buried in the local cemetery, mostly near the church, as the discovery of a bayonet in the early 1970s seemed to indicate.

A decade earlier, a makeshift military hospital had been constructed to meet sudden demand. In the first quarter of 1795 alone, 86 soldiers from Hesse died within its quarters, not including foreign soldiers. In the end, death claimed its victims here in 1813-14 and most of the soldiers came from the local area.

Three Bickenbachers lost their lives in Napoleon's advance toward Russia – Johannes Ahl, b.1790; Johannes Jung, b.1792; and Jakob Engelhard, b.1789.

The period from the beginning of Napoleon's downfall until his final and decisive defeat in the battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, caused new misery and brought with it war debts. On 11 November 1813, Bickenbach incurred accommodation costs for: 888 officers; 30,457 soldiers; and 12,303 horses.

There were 1,106 malter of oats eaten, as well as 1,315 zentner of hay.^{2,3} These war debts alone came to 28,137 fl. In total, the Bickenbach Council was liable for over 41,146 fl.

To understand the situation in Bickenbach at this time, the following figures should speak for themselves.

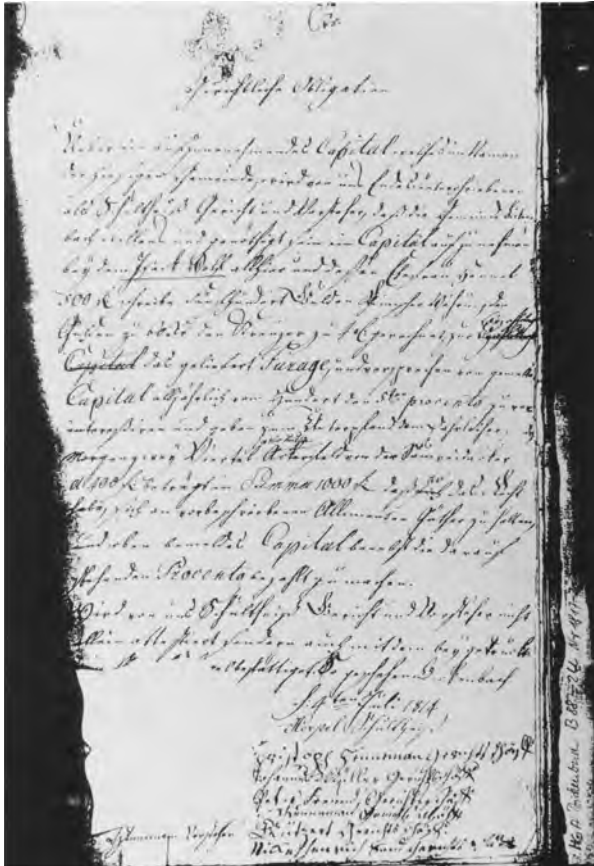
In 1500, the town had a population of about 250, a figure that, up until the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), had increased to almost 400. After the terrible famine and plague years from 1635–1637, the population sank to about 40 people. By 1750, the population had once again risen to about 400 people.

In 1774, there were 75 residential homes. In 1806, it was 90 and by 1828 there were 118 residential homes. In 1806, there were 553 residents and by 1828, this had risen to 824 people living in Bickenbach. Between 1800 and 1819, 476 children were born while 318 people went to their graves. Infant mortality rates were, as elsewhere, enormous.

In search of money and due to the depletion of natural fuels and resources, the local Sheriff was in a supplicatory mood when dealing with Isaak Wolf and Moses Feitel and conditions were negotiated. He was said to have negotiated with the "Oberamt" in Seeheim and his representative, Pistor, in order for them to keep the later monetary advances. It is to be assumed that the Sheriff, along with the (local) court had not come to meet with the Municipal Councillor and the Jurors in the Marktplatz for an act of celebration, but rather out of pressure from their lenders. However, it seems the assumption was correct that the local lenders had done well out of their conditions, otherwise the contracts – which can still be seen today – would not have been settled and brought to a conclusion.

2. Malter: an old measure in volume, usually of corn or grain, that was used in the 1800s.

3. Zentner/centner, or quintal, an old unit of measure – historically was about 50 kilograms, or 110 pounds.



Legal Obligations

Pertaining to the funds to be borrowed in the name of the local Council, it is confirmed by ourselves, the undersigned as Sheriff of the Court and Jurors, that the Council of Bickenbach is both willing and obliged to procure funds to which Isaak Wolf, present, and his wife Hannchen, underwrite 500 fl: five-hundred gulden in Rhineland currency, with gulden calculated at 60 kr, and the kreuzer calculated to 4 pfennigs, for the payment of the delivered livestock feed and list the above mentioned capital to be paid yearly with the stipulated interest to be provided as security:

Two and a quarter acres at 160 Ruthen of arable fields of the Saurweidäcker at 400 fl entails a sum of 1000 fl giving him the right to obtain goods from the above mentioned assets, and to make payments for the above capital in addition to the specified interest.⁴

This is verified not only by the Sheriff of the court and the Mayor, but also by the legal stamp and seal of the court.

Signed in Bickenbach

4 July 1814

Herpel, Mayor

Johannes Hennemann, Juror

Christoph Hennemann, Juror

Johannes Müller, Juror

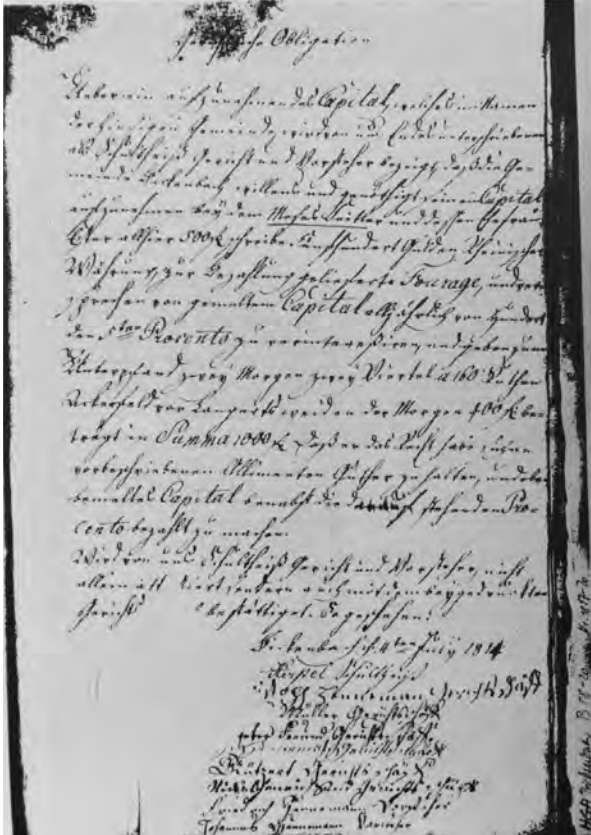
Peter Freund, Juror

? Hennemann, Juror

Rützert, Juror

Michael Heinrich, Sand Juror

4. Many different kinds of 'Ruthe/Ruthen' were used at various times in different areas of the German-speaking world. In 1830, in Hesse, their version of 'Ruthe' was just over 4 metres, or just over 13 feet.



Legal Obligations

Pertaining to the funds to be borrowed in the name of the local Council, it is confirmed by ourselves, the undersigned as Sheriff of the Court and Jurors, that the Council of Bickenbach is both willing and obliged to procure funds to which Moses Feitler, present, and his wife Ester, underwrite 500 fl. five-hundred gulden in Rhineland currency, for the payment of the delivered livestock feed and promise to pay back the specified capital yearly at 5 per cent and give as two and a quarter acres of arable field at Langertsweiden at 160 Ruthen. 400 fl. to the acre entails a sum of 1000 fl. that he has the right to draw goods from the specified assets, as well as to be paid the above specified capital in addition to the specified interest rate.

This is verified not only by the Sheriff of the court and the Mayor, but also by the legal stamp and seal of the court.

Signed in Bickenbach

4 July 1814

Herpel, Mayor

Christoph Hennemann, Juror

Jak., Juror

Peter Freund, Juror

? Hennemann, Juror

Rützert, Juror

Michael Heinrich, Sand Juror

Friedrich Hennemann, Provost

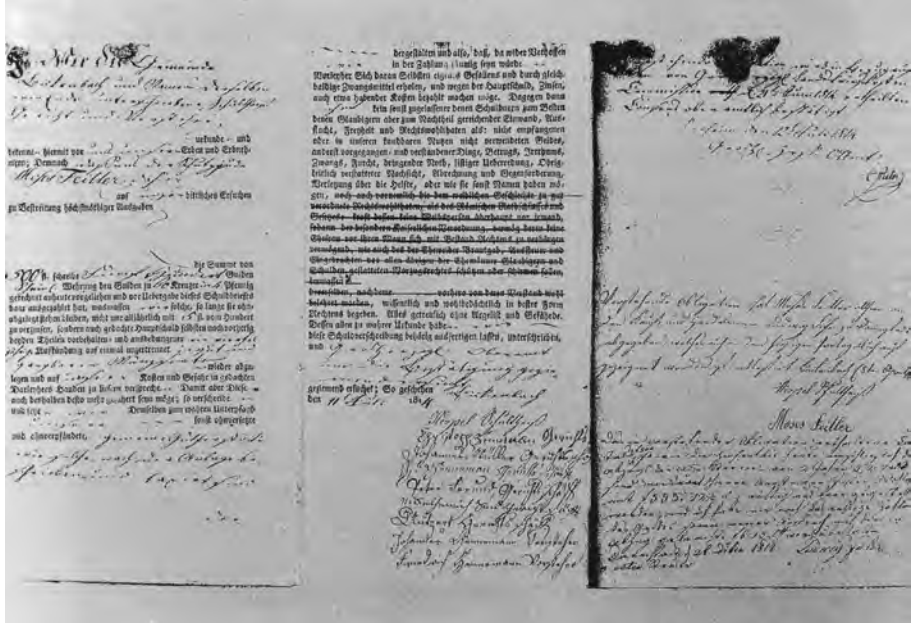
Johannes Hennemann, Provost

We, the Council of Bickenbach, the below signed – Sheriff, Court and Provost, hereby certify and recognise our benefactors and beneficiaries; thus the above and protected Jew:

Moses Feitler, therefore upon our request and petition for the mitigation of highly essential assets, makes available the sum of 500 fl. (in words five-hundred gulden) in Rhineland currency. Gulden calculated at 60 kreuzer and 4 pfennigs and has made the funds available in cash prior to delivery of this promissory note which will be considered paid, provided that it is not removed and shall be calculated not with interest of 5 fl per hundred, but rather on the statutory primary debt itself, including the two above mentioned components = and the agreed upon amount to be paid back quarterly and delivered in whole in usable coin denominations and at our cost and risk to the respective lender as cash-in-hand. Should the lender, however, require further security, as entered in writing, we deposit as payment in kind for security our unassigned and untransferred council lands as described and valued in the attached documents.

The (next page illegible) ... was with regard to ... (illegible) from the Grand Ducal Rural War Costs Commission, 21 June 1814. Consensus confirmed by the Grand Duke's Office.

Seeheim, 12 July 1814
Hessian Grand Ducal Office
Pistor



The above obligations were delivered to the businessman and trader Ludwig Fuhr in Darmstadt, and were entered into the local council minutes and attested. Bickenbach the eighth of April, 1816.

Herpel (Sheriff)
Moses Feitler

The obligations which were paid as cash-in-hand in the amount of 500 fl, as well as interest and including deductions to cover additional tax for two years at 5½ are delivered to me with (next five words completely illegible) for 555., 12½ correctly and in cash, and I have received the correct amounts and denominations of money as well as my requirement for 6.13 kr of the transaction. Darmstadt, 26 December 1818.

Ludwig Fuhr

The Wolf family of Schulstrasse and their descendants

The Wolf family of Schulstrasse

– Origins and descendants



Berle Wolf was the first Wolf to live in Schulstrasse. He lived at Schulstrasse 2 in 1873, Emil, his oldest son, was recorded as living at Schulstrasse 3 in 1913. Berle’s youngest son, Lazarus, was recorded as living in Schulstrasse 2 in 1890 and at Schulstrasse 4 in 1909.

One line of the descendants from Isaak Wolf living in Bickenbach, lived in Schulstrasse. The Bickenbachers called the area “Wolf Gully” in order to distinguish the families. It’s likely that the Wolfs were not very happy about this description.

Due to the fact that Jewish people did not provide surnames or family names prior to 1800, it is difficult for most people to find information about their family history and, often, we have to make an educated guess.

The first written records of the Wolf family in Schulstrasse were about Berle Wolf and his first wife, Ester Feitler.

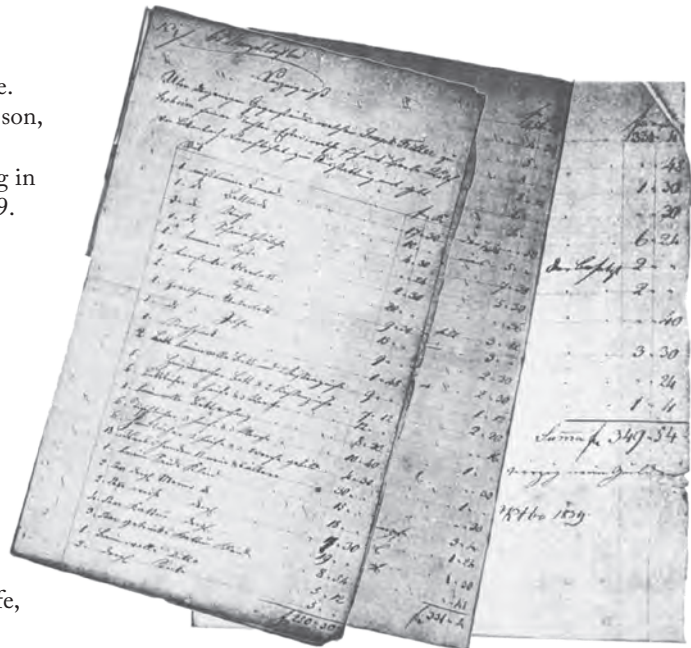
Berle Wolf married Ester Feitler on 28 Oct 1839. His home address was noted as Sandstrasse 4. Ester was the daughter of Joseph Feitler and Vogel Gatzert.

Unfortunately there are no records available as to whether the couple had any children.

After Ester died in 1848, Berle married Male Bruchfeld, daughter of Lazarus Bruchfeld. The marriage took place on 20 Mar 1849. The couple had three children, Lazarus (1850–1924), Wolf (1854–unknown) and Jakob (1856–1934).

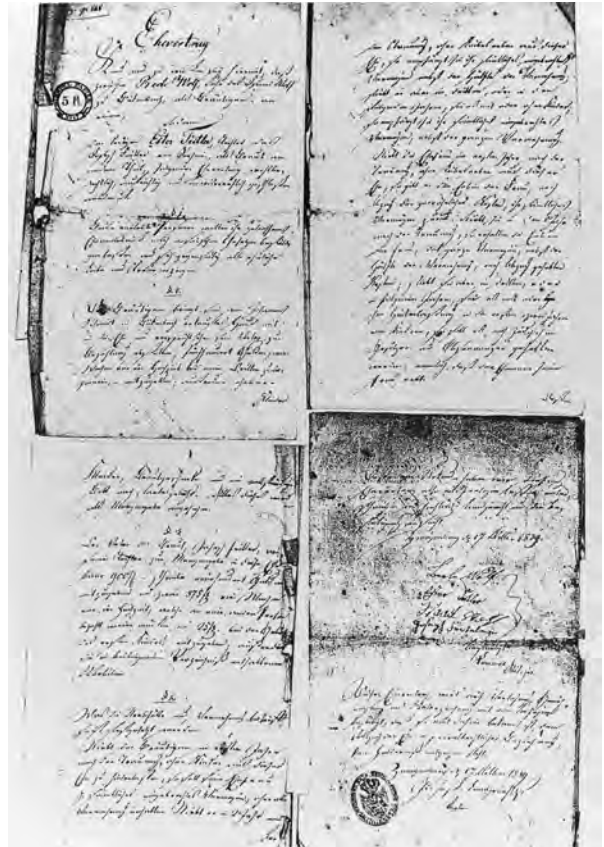
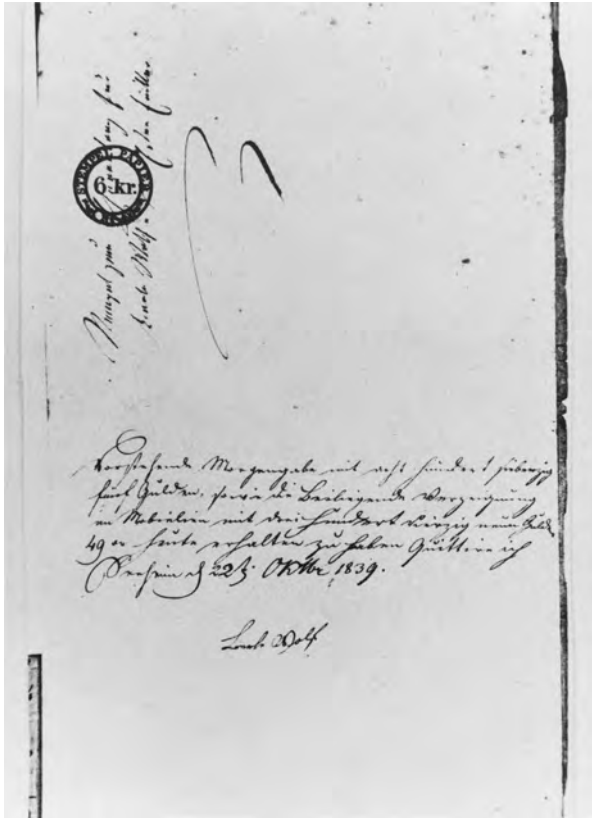
Lazarus’ daughter Rosa, from his second marriage, married Friedrich David. Rosa managed to keep the marriage contract of her grandfather, Berle Wolf, and Ester Feitler. A copy of this contract was sent to Bickenbach by Hilde Korr (née David), daughter of Rosa.

Lazarus’ grandson Hugo Wolf, son of Emil Wolf, also provided some information regarding Jakob Wolf. Jakob did not marry and lived in Frankfurt. He was buried in Alsbach in 1934.



The list of objects which Joseph Feitler gave as a dowry for his daughter. The list is itemised on page 77.

Marriage contract for Berle Wolf and Ester Feitler



Aforesaid dowry of eight hundred and seventy-five gulden, as well as the enclosed register of property with three hundred and forty-nine gulden, 49 kreutzer have been received today. Acknowledged Seeheim, 22 October 1839.

Berle Wolf.

Transcript of Berle Wolf's marriage contract to Ester Feitler

Marriage Contract

Hereby make known that between Berle Wolf, son of Isaak Wolf of Bickenbach, as bridegroom at one part thereupon

the unmarried Ester Feitler, daughter of Joseph Feitler of Seeheim, as a bride on the other part, the following marriage contract was concluded in a factual, sincere manner and is irrevocable.

§1

Both engaged persons want to confirm their closed marriage engagement to Mosaic laws, and mutually confirm and show all marital love and fidelity.

§2

The groom brings his house, bought from Johannes Schmidt in Bickenbach, to the marriage, and promises to her his Treaty of payment, five hundred guilders deposited with a third party four weeks before the wedding – also giving respectable dresses, bridal gifts and a full bed, befitting one's social status. All this is considered dowry.

§3

The bride's father, Joseph Feitler, promises his daughter a dowry of 900 fl in cash for this marriage – written nine hundred guilders, namely 875 fl four weeks before the wedding, which must be paid by me to another person, and 25 fl at the birth of the first child, also to give the movable property contained in the accompanying list.

§4

Concerning deaths and procreation, it has been decided: If the groom dies in the first year after marriage, without heirs from this marriage, the wife receives all the introduced assets without any increase.

If he dies in the 2nd year after the wedding, without children from this marriage, she receives the assets introduced together with half of the increase; but if he dies in the third, or in the following years, either with or without children, she receives all the introduced assets, along with the entire increase.

If the wife dies in the first year after the wedding, without heirs from this marriage, he returns, after deduction of the usual cost, the entire property back to the heirs of the wife. If she dies in the 2nd year after the wedding, the heirs of the wife get the whole property, along with half of the increase, after deducting costs, but if she dies in the third, or in the following years, ... it with ... without deduction in the first two years ... so is it according to Jewish laws and decrees ... are held, namely, that the husband inherits from his wife.

As witness of this, we see that this marriage contract has been produced, signed and highly solemnly submitted for confirmation.

Zwingenberg, 17 Oct 1839

Berle Wolf Ester Feitler
Isaak Wolf Joseph Feitler
authenticated

Signature (illegible)

This marriage contract is confirmed on reading, approval and signature with ... that it is not hereby known that any obstacles stand in the way of the consummation of the marriage in a private law relationship.

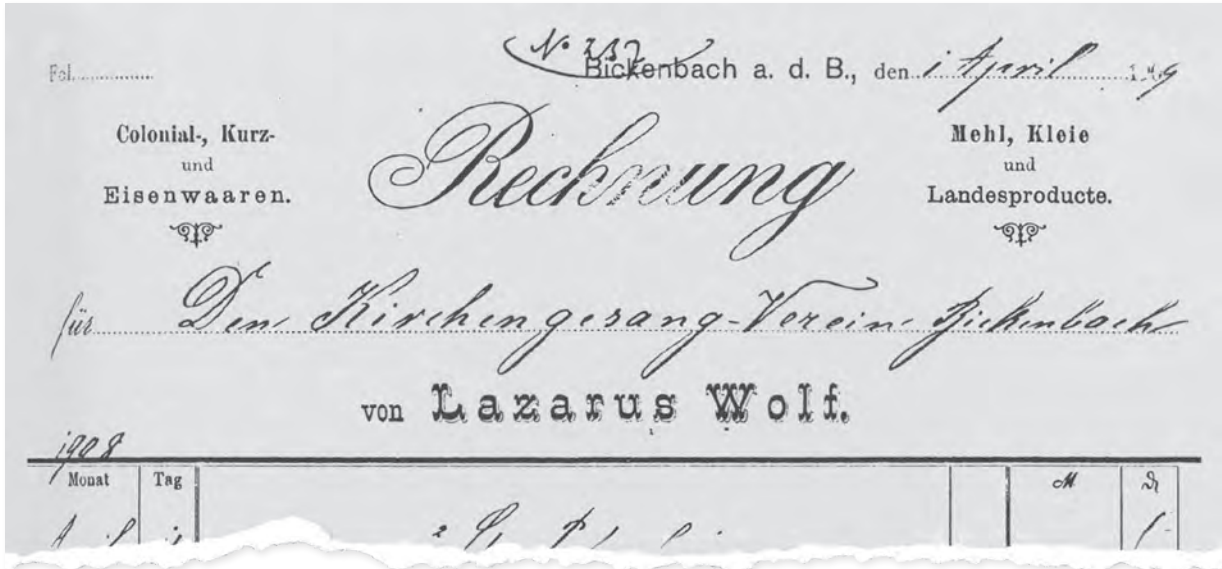
Zwingenberg, 17 Oct 1839
Grand Ducal District Court
Klippstein

Seal: Hesse Grand Ducal District Court
Zwingenberg¹

1. Bickenbach was in the District court of Zwingenberg.

The list of objects which Joseph Feitler gave as a dowry for his daughter, Ester, on her marriage to Berle Wolf.

Item	fl	kr	Item	fl	kr
1 nut-brown commode or dresser	17	30	5 silk scarves	7	30
1 bed drawer	10	00	3 woollen scarves	5	30
3 chairs	4	30	2 dungarees, or similar	0	36
1 footstool		24	2 merino aprons, 1 green, 1 checked	3	12
1 pine crate	2	30	2 like. silk 1 black & 1 brown	3	00
1 fustian duvet	20	00	3 like. cotton	2	30
2 cushions	9	30	2 like. calico	2	30
1 linen underblanket	15	00	3 like. linen	1	12
1 underblanket	9	00	2 like. white muslin fabric	2	20
1 straw sack (poss. a palliasse)	1	48	1 silk work suk [?]		16
2 beds of cotton fabric & 2 pillowcases	9	00	6 sackcloths, 4 white, 2 blue	1	00
1 home-made bed & 2 pillowcases	7	12	3 pairs of gloves		30
6 sheets, 3 hemp & 3 wool	12	00	2 camisoles	1	00
1 cotton bed curtain	8	20	1 corset of white hemp cloth		30
6 tablecloths, 3 hemp & 3 wool print	4	30	8 pairs of cotton stockings	3	40
18 women's singlets, 12 new & 6 older	30	00	3 like. pair of blue	1	24
1 brown silk dress	15	00	3 like. pair woollen white	1	30
2 pairs like. merino	18	00	1 white tulle grache [?]		48
2 pairs like. white	7	30	1 white tulle neckerchief		48
4 pair like. cotton	19	00	3 white lace chemise	1	30
3 pair print cotton dress	8	54	1 white knitwear		30
1 cotton ditto	5	12	4 pairs leather shoes	6	24
3 like. skirts	5	00	1 pair of canvas shoes with leather upper	2	00
1 flannelette skirt	4	30	1 pair 'good' shoes	2	00
1 calico padded skirt	5	00	1 pair slippers		40
3 calico caps	8	00	1 pair of golden earrings	3	30
4 white tulle bonnets	8	12	2 supplementary bags (poss. laundry bags)		24
1 white lace bonnet	6	00	1 length cord or rope (poss. curtain cord)	1	40
6 white tulle bonnets	4	00	Total	349	54
3 black under bonnets, 2 velvet bands /30/20		50	In words: three hundred and forty-nine gulden, fifty-four kreuzer.		
1 bridal shirt, apron & a sachet	5	00	Seeheim, 17 October 1839		



Lazarus Wolf's first marriage was in Bensheim, on 9 Feb 1873, to Rosa Hochschild (1851–1891) from Groß-Rohrheim, daughter of Ephraim Hochschild and Sara Steiermann. They had five children, Emil (1873–1929), Isaak (1876–1883), Ludwig (1879–1879), Meta (1885–1906), Benno (1890–1941/42).

His second marriage was to Cerline Mosbacher from Miltenberg, daughter of Chaim Mosbacher. They had a daughter, Rosa (1894–1987).

The following records about his first marriage with Rosa Hochschild of Groß-Rohrheim are taken from the old municipal archive.



Transcript of Lazarus Wolf's marriage contract with Rosa Hochschild

Marriage Contract

Lazarus Wolf from Bickenbach/Hesse and Rosa Wolf, née Hochschild from Groß-Rohrheim/Hesse, 1873

With regard to the groom no obstacles stand in the way here of the marriage of Lazarus Wolf from Bickenbach with Rosa Hochschild from Groß-Rohrheim.

Zwingenberg, 2 January 1873

Grand Ducal District Court Zwingenberg

(Seal): Grand Ducal District Court, Zwingenberg

Three signatures (illegible)

The aforementioned marriage with respect to the bride is also free of obstacles to locally known private law.

Gernsheim, 3 January 1873

Grand Ducal District Court of Gernsheim²

Signature (illegible)

19 January 1873

Signature (illegible)

Postage 8 kr; (illegible) 4 kr;

12 kr from Lazarus Wolf, Bickenbach

It is hereby officially testified the newly-weds mentioned were legally joined in wedlock by us on 9 February in Bensheim to Jewish religious rite.

Darmstadt, 18 February 1873

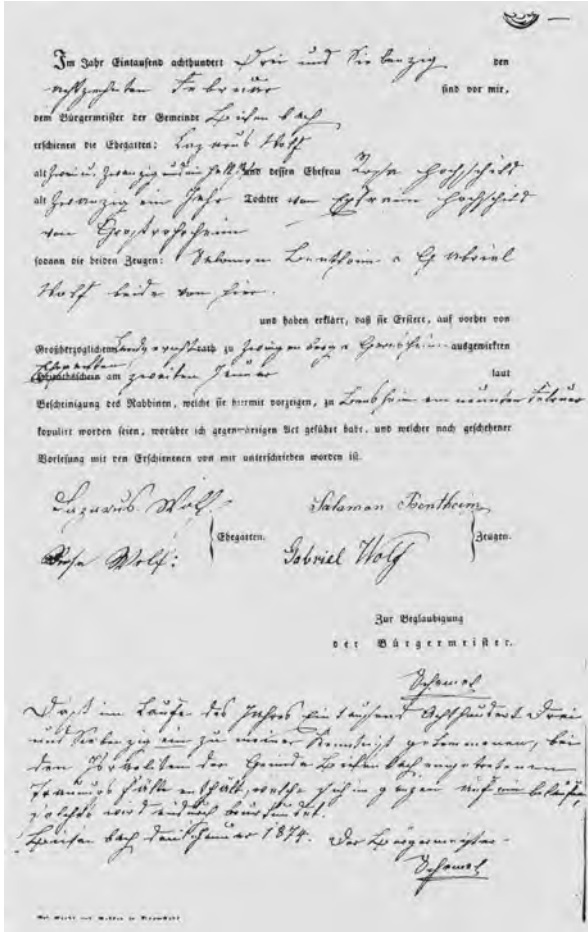
The Grand Ducal Rabbinate

Dr. Landsberger

(Official seal):



2. Groß-Rohrheim was in the District court of Gernsheim.



In the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy three, on the eighteenth of February, appeared before me,

The Mayor of Bickenbach,

The spouses:

Lazarus Wolf
 aged twenty-two and one half-years old,

And his wife Rosa Hochschild
 aged twenty-one years old,
 daughter of Ephraim Hochschild of Großrohrheim

then the two witnesses:

Salomon Bentheim and Gabriel Wolf both from here,

And have declared that the former were married in Bensheim on the second of January as affected by the Grand Ducal District Court of Zwingenberg and Gernsheim and certified by the Rabbi on the ninth of February (the certification of which is presented). I have recorded this act and after reading it out to the people before me signed it in their presence.

Spouses
 Lazarus Wolf
 Rosa Wolf

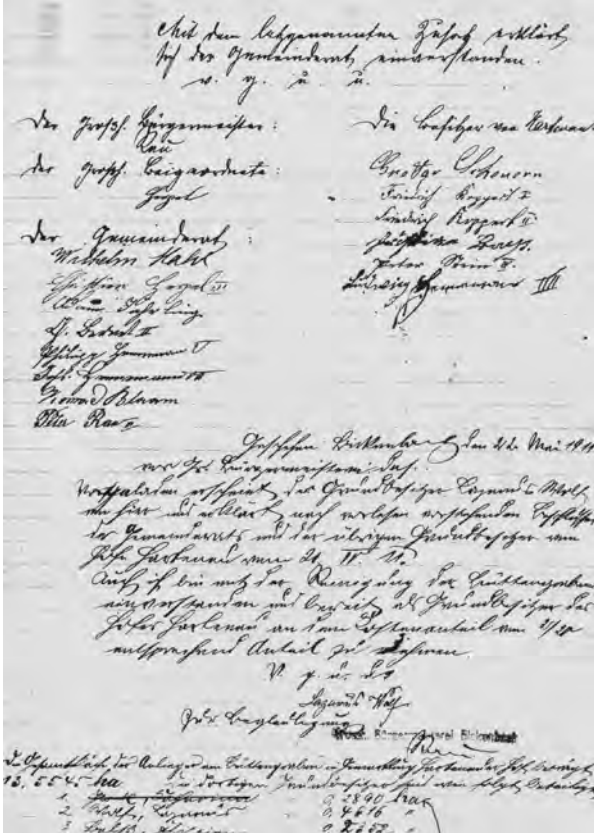
Witnesses
 Salomon Bentheim
 Gabriel Wolf

Certified By
 Mayor
 Schemel

Which according to my knowledge contains a marriage that occurred within the Israelite municipality of Bickenbach in the course of the year of 1873. Marriages amount to a total of one which has also been attested to us.

Bickenbach 1 January 1874

Mayor
 Schemel



Extract from the Council Minutes book 1895–1911

Grand Ducal Mayor: *Assessors from Hartenau:*
 Rau
 Gustav Scheuern
 Grand Ducal Deputy: Friedrich Koppert I
 Herpel Friedrich Koppert II
 The Council: Christian Balß
 Wilhelm Stabl Peter Stein IV
 Christian Herpel III Ludwig Hennemann (IV)
 Adam Jährling
 Ch. Bernet II
 Philipp Hennemann V
 Joh. Hennemann VII
 Konrad Blaum
 Peter Rau II

Transpired in Bickenbach, 22 May 1911
 before Grand Ducal Mayor

Summoned landowner Lazarus Wolf appears here and explains after reading the previous decision of the municipal council and the other landowners of Hartenau farmstead from 21. IV. 11. I agree to the cleaning of the trench and as landowner of Hartenau farmstead am willing to participate in the cost of 2/20 of the corresponding proportion.

R.o.a.s.
 (Read out and signed)

Lazarus Wolf

For certification:

(Official Stamp)

Grand Ducal Office of the Mayor of Bickenbach
 Rau

The plots of the adjacent owners at the ditch in district of Hartenau farmstead is 13.5545 ha.

The local landowners involved are as follows:

2. Wolf, Lazarus	0.4626 ha
3. Balß, Christian	0.2352 ha
5. Koppert, Friedrich I	2.7332 ha
6. Koppert, Friedrich II	1.8701 ha
7. Scheuern, Job. Gustav	7.7299 ha

Lazarus Wolf

In official documents, Lazarus Wolf was often described as a “merchant”, and in the marriage certificate of his son Emil, on 23 May 1910, Lazarus has the professional title of “businessman”. Many references to him can be found in municipal account books, as well as in the town registers.

The Bickenbachers called Lazarus, “den Leeser”, and he was known locally as “a made man”. Also, in Bickenbach the surname “Löser” is pronounced “Leeser”, which happened to be the name of a well-known magnate family, perhaps another reason why Lazarus was given the nickname.¹

Lazarus Wolf owned land in the Hartenau farming district. In the past, as the record on the previous page shows, responsibility for the cleaning of ditches in the community rested with the property owners. Presumably the municipality did not have the necessary financial resources for the cleaning costs.

Through decisions by the Landgraves – whose origins date back to the Roman Empire – and previously by the “Lords of Hartenau”, this hamlet formed its own district and was a so-called independent municipality, at times even with its own school.

Beginning in 1852, the “Harrehof”, represented by an alderman, was integrated into the municipality of Bickenbach. According to the land registry and survey records, the final integration only occurred at the end of land consolidation in 1937.

Due to immense groundwater extraction and the enormous growth of cities and towns in the Rhine-Main metropolitan area, groundwater level has fallen sharply in the Hessian reed bed area in the last 30 years. In some places, the landscape has totally changed, as in



View from the wide bridge (‘Weidbrücke’) to the Hartenau farmstead. In the foreground is the weir at the creek (‘die Bach’ or ‘Landbach’). It served to irrigate the adjacent meadows in dry years. To the right of the creek the huge reed bed, now no longer there apart from a few hundred square metres. This view was likely c.1949.

the western district of Bickenbach where the Hartenau farming area was located. The reed bed in the Schiffflache area has disappeared. Where reeds were growing in the 1960s, corn, sugar beet, sunflowers and grains are cultivated today.

The ditch or trench in Hartenau has had no water for years and therefore does not need to be maintained by the municipality. However, the hope is that the municipality will attempt to restore the situation in the Schiffflache region in the near future, which will help improve the environment for the local population.

Three professional butchers with connected farms supplied the population of Bickenbach with fresh meat and sausage products. The season for pig-slaughtering was late October to the end of February, certainly no later than mid-March.

In the period from 1871 to 1903 the Jewish butchers

1. In actual fact, the name Lazarus comes from the Hebrew “Elieser”. Perhaps the Bickenbachers heard him being referred to as Elieser by his family and took on the name “Leeser” to be Lazarus’ nickname.

Bickenbach population by denomination:

Year	Evangelical	Catholic	Israelite	Total
1905	1,318	28	16	1,362
1910	1,502	25	6	1,533

in Bickenbach were Salomon and Leopold Bentheim, and Hirsch Mainzer. As a side trade, Lazarus Wolf also worked as a Jewish butcher from time to time. This is confirmed by the diary of the Bickenbach municipality meat inspector, dating back to 1908. At that time, Adam Jährling held the position of meat inspector.

The meat inspectors' fees per piece of livestock were 80 pfg for large livestock (cows and cattle); and 40 pfg for small animals (calves, goats, pigs). The 25 "small animals" and one large livestock permitted to be slaughtered each week would have been predominantly pigs.

The rising population in the area brought better economic conditions for craftsmen, bakers and butchers. In Bickenbach, the population of 1,362 rose to 1,533 between 1905–1910. However, an exodus of Jewish families, mostly to the cities, was recorded in this five-year period. Only the family of Lazarus Wolf remained in the village so he became the only Jewish butcher.

In the entries from the diary of the meat inspector for the month of April 1908, the names of the three aforementioned professional butchers were missing, these were: Peter Daum, Bachgasse/corner Pfungstädter Strasse; Christoph Schemel V, Chausseegasse; and his oldest son Georg Schemel, Schulstrasse/corner Chausseegasse.

However, the butchers, as well as the bakers, could not live from their stores alone; they had to operate in agriculture as well, so it was common for working-class families to contribute to the supply of the daily needs by keeping small livestock. In addition to chickens and ducks, sometimes geese or a pig was kept.

Lazarus Wolf's grandson, Hugo Wolf, was born in Bickenbach in 1911. Hugo told how the local policeman, Heinrich Metzger, would go "bell ringing" if his father, Emil Wolf, slaughtered a piece of livestock. He would tell the locals, while walking through the streets ringing his bell and shouting in Bickenbacher dialect, so the housewives would be informed:

"Es werd bekannt gemacht,
de Emil hoad e Kuh g'schloachd."

*It will now be made known,
that Emil has butchered a cow.*

It was also said that the three professional butchers in the village were not too keen on their Jewish competitors, Lazarus Wolf and later his son Emil, because with the special offer of beef, they would take away their customers.

"Competition is good for business", is a common slogan today, but it was not a practice widely used at the time. Businesses relied mostly on their regular customers.

The "Leeser", together with his family, belonged to Bickenbach. In 1910, the community of 1,533 souls counted 1,502 evangelicals (Protestants), 25 Catholics, and six Israelites – the family of Lazarus Wolf.

The budget for the municipality of Bickenbach amounted in revenue to some 50,964 marks and had expenses of 49,426.26 marks. To meet all the municipal affairs, the municipal council had to meet 13 times.

With the help of midwife Margaretha Ganser, 29 boys and 22 girls came into the world. 13 marriages were performed, and 25 women and 11 men were laid to rest in the churchyard cemetery.

In the childrens' school – the word "Kindergarten" was not in use yet – sister Auguste Hayland had 75 children in permanent care that year. 275 boys and girls attended the primary school in the same period.

A few sports-minded Bickenbachers came together and founded a skittles club. However, the club immediately grew to 25 active members, and as it was not possible for all members to bowl at the same time, a solution needed to be found. A bolt gun was purchased without further ado, which resulted in hardly anyone wanting to bowl. Suddenly everyone just wanted to shoot a rifle. So the newly formed bowling club was converted into a shooting club. The 'Good Hunting' shooting club was founded at Pieler's Gasthaus Zur Rose in Chausseegasse.

There was already a lively club culture at this time – the men's singing club from 1859; the veteran's association from 1873; the workers' reading circle founded 1891; the workers' choir of 1894; the German athletic club of 1897; a poultry farming association of 1905; the fire

brigade from 1907; the goat breeders association of 1910; and a military association in the same year.

There was great excitement, when on 8 June 1909, the quartermasters of the 2nd Squadron of the 1st Baden Dragoon Regiment No. 20 moved in from Karlsruhe. For two days, 9-10 September 1909, the riders from Baden were accommodated in Bickenbach.

Four officers, three sergeants and 97 crew, along with 118 horses, were accommodated in 76 households. The gentlemen officers were housed in the rectory with the teachers because of their standing. Lazarus Wolf provided fodder for the horses, amounting to 355.65 Reichsmarks.

There are no written or oral testimonies about liaisons between the dragoons and local girls, and nothing about the aftermath nine months later.

In the few months in this seemingly still peaceful, but already armour-rattling time before 1914, a maid named Anna from Bavaria – her family name is not known – lived and worked for the butcher Christoph Schemel, in Chausseegasse.

Anna had lost her virginity back home in Bavaria, at a military ball given by her village. She gave birth to a “soldier’s brat”, and because the father of the child was “drowned on the walnut tree”(an absurd saying, meaning the father was unknown), she was sent away by her respectable family. In all likelihood the child was adopted by the respectable grandparents. Anna moved across the country to Bickenbach, and entered into service as a maid. It was said: “She was a good worker!”

It was autumn, time for manoeuvres, and the soldiers moved up to Bickenbach. Anna was seduced once more, and she bore her second child. When she realised that she was pregnant, she cried and lamented. She only knew his first name, Heiner. In her great distress, she composed a letter and addressed it:



Policeman Heinrich Metzger and his wife (both seated) with their son, Wilhelm and daughter, Lieschen. Probably taken c.WWI.

To my dear treasure,
Heinrich the woodwind player,
woodwind player above all woodwind players,
straight to Giessen,
with the soldiers.

With no reply, after weeks of waiting for a response from the woodwind player, who was really a trumpeter, she resigned, and took the train to Giessen. No one heard any more about her in Bickenbach. Maybe she did find the trumpeter, the father of her child.

No doubt Lazarus Wolf experienced the rising anti-Semitism around him, but he also experienced the reality of war, when his youngest son, Benno, went to the front from 1914–1918.

Towards the end of the war, Lazarus was appointed to the Nutritional and Economic Commission by the municipality in 1918-19. This was to ensure the most important staple foods, such as potatoes, bread and meat, as well as clothing, was supplied to the local population. He witnessed the decline of the Empire and the inflation that followed.



Bar mitvah celebration of Jerry Wolf with Sara, Hugo, Jerry, Fanny and Judith Wolf.

Lazarus Wolf died in 1924. Of his five children with Rosa Hochschild, Isaak, Ludwig and Meta died before him. His sons Emil and Benno were married and living in Bickenbach, and acquired the houses at Schulstrasse 2 and 4 respectively.³ His daughter Rosa, from his second marriage to Cerline Mosbacher, married Alsbach merchant, Friedrich David, and moved to Darmstadt.

Emil Wolf

Emil Wolf married Sara Oestreicher (1876–1970) from Ehrstädt on 23 May 1910. They had two children, Hugo (1911–2006) and Rena (1916–1976).

From 1910 to 1913 the family lived in the Kolbschen House, on the corner of Sandstrasse and Chausseegasse, then they lived in Schulstrasse 2 until 1934, when dispersion of the family began and Sara emigrated to the USA. Until the demolition of the house, and the barn and stables in the mid-70s, the municipality owned

the property. No Bickenbacher could be found to buy “Emil’s House” during the Nazi era. Emil’s son, Hugo, reminisced about the house after more than 60 years. He remembered a beautiful blue glazed tile stove in the living room. His parents purchased this gem in Darmstadt, after seeing an advertisement in the Hesse State newspaper in the early 1920s. The coal required for heating the stove was picked up in the Bensheimer gasworks by horse-drawn carriage.

Emil Wolf belonged to the German athletics club from 1897, the year it was founded, and was a member of the workers’ choir from 1894. He participated as an active amateur actor in performances of plays in both clubs. He died in

December 1929 in Bickenbach and was buried in the Alsbach cemetery.

Emil’s son, Hugo, left Bickenbach on Whitsunday in 1933 (April) at the urging of his mother, Sara. She was to follow him in 1937. Daughter, Rena, managed to emigrate to Israel in 1937.

Hugo Wolf

Hugo Wolf was born on 27 March 1911 in the Kolbschen House.⁴ He attended the local elementary school from 1917 and later went to school in Darmstadt. From 1929, he was a member of the German athletics club, like his father. As previously mentioned, he left Germany in 1933, five months after the so-called seizure of power of the empire by the Nazis, and went to French Saargemünd, and then on to Paris. From there his journey eventually led him to the United States in 1939.

He married Fanny Reinhardt in Chicago, USA,

3. In the “Bickenbach community Land Registry” on pages 10-11, the brothers are noted to be living in Schulstrasse 3 and 4 respectively. It is not possible to ascertain which is correct. Perhaps the street numbering system has changed over time.

4. “Kolbschen Haus” still exists today. Now a museum, located at Darmstädter Strasse 35. The house was built in 1583 and is one of the oldest houses in the village. In its history it has served as a restaurant, a cooperage, a butcher’s and an agricultural estate, before being used as the town hall from 1942–1972.

on 14 June 1942, her birthday. Fanny was from Wachenbuchen near Hanau, but her other family members did not survive the Nazi inferno.

Hugo and Fanny Wolf lived in Chicago and had a daughter, Judith, and a son, Jerry. They were happy parents and grandparents. In June 1992, they also celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.

In June 1976, Hugo and his family visited Bickenbach and Wachenbuchen. In the past, no one would have believed that a visit by those people directly affected by the war and who had to leave their ancestral home, would be possible. They came here briefly, stopping over after visiting Israel.

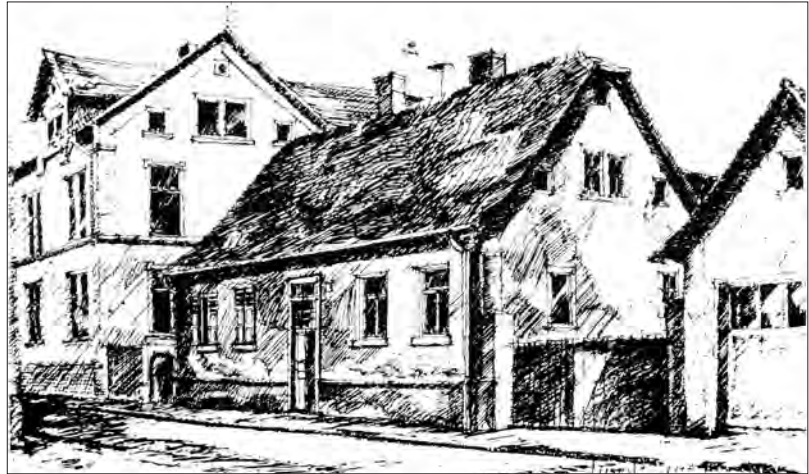
Our first meeting, walking towards one another at Frankfurt airport, is etched in my memory. With me was Philipp Röder who commented (in Bickenbacher dialect): *"Hugo, doa bisch 'de wirrer!"* (Hugo, there you are again!)

This personal contact, and the encouragement from the teacher Rudolf Kunz – who had previously asked me to investigate the history of Bickenbach Jews – was the impetus for me to write and to maintain this history. The correspondence from 1968 to mid-1992, in all its diversity, contained records worth publishing. All the information Hugo had on his own family, and the other Jewish families in Bickenbach, as well as the village itself, are revealed, and it allows us to glimpse into the past from a critical distance.

On the occasion of their visit to Bickenbach in 1976, Hugo expressed: "My mother was a wise woman when, in 1933, she gave me the advice to leave Bickenbach, Germany without further ado."

Hugo's mother, Sara Wolf, emigrated to the United States in 1937, and died in Chicago in 1970, at the age of 94.

In the municipal files, the affairs of Sara Wolf are documented as per the following transcription.



Emil Wolf's house in Schulstrasse, demolished mid-1970s. Drawing, Klaus Becker, 1975.

Re: Issuance of passports to Jews in Germany.

Confidential!

R.v. the Mayor (as local police authority)

Bickenbach

Sara Wolf née Oesterreicher [sic; correct spelling is 'Oestreicher'] widow, born 27 May 1876 [sic; correct date is 22 September 1876] was issued passport No. 169 on 28 May 1934.

We instruct you to collect the Passport for inspection and to submit it here immediately. Should the issuance of the passport be not possible, the reasons are to be specified.

Bensheim, 18 January 1938

District Office

By order of: (Signature)

Returned to the Bickenbach mayoral office and Hesse District Office of Bensheim – returned with the remark that the aforementioned person had been reported to the police in Bickenbach, but was still visiting Chicago. For this reason the passport cannot be collected for inspection.

Bickenbach, 24 January 1938

Bickenbach Town Hall

(Signature) Mayor Rau (Official Stamp)



Reception at Bickenbach town hall in June 1976. Philipp and Anna Röder, mayor Karl Schemel, Hugo and Fanny Wolf, Helene and Peter Rebenich.

A transcript of a letter dated 4 March 1943 from the mayor's office to the Darmstadt District Administrator regarding Hugo Wolf, says:

"On your RV. Available from the 23 February 1943 I inform you, that the Jew, Hugo Israel Wolf, has been deregistered in Saargemünd from the 30 June 1933. Subsequent requests of family deeds could conclude that the aforementioned has lived in Paris in a certain Grand Hotel. He did not leave assets (real estate) here in Bickenbach, but the deed of the house at Schulstrasse 3 and approximately 8 acres were still registered to Emil Wolf, or after the death of her husband, the widow Sarah Wolf née Oesterreicher.

*The personal data is as follows:
Hugo Israel Wolf, born 27 March 1911 in Bickenbach a.d.B.
Town Hall Bickenbach
Mayor Rau*

After 1945, Hugo Wolf resumed contact with his old Bickenbach neighbours, and for this, we cannot thank him enough. But the gravestones of Hugo Wolf's parents show how arbitrarily families were torn apart during this time. The grave of his father is in Alsbach cemetery, and his mother's is in Chicago, demonstrating this more clearly than words can express.

Just how connected Hugo Wolf still felt to Bickenbach was shown by the statement made by Mrs Lieschen Stein from Bachgasse. In November 1979, a group of long-established Bickenbach seniors got together and were asked what they remembered of the Jewish families of Bickenbach. Among other things, Mrs Stein announced this to the group:

"When Hugo visited in 1976, he greeted me at our yard gate, and in dialect said 'Lies'che, that's where the waste flowed!' And Hugo pointed to exactly the spot where the household waste flowed into the brook in those days."

Mrs. Stein then noted: "He knew [the dialect] better than I did!"

On a tour of the Hartenau farmstead area, Hugo also found the spot of the parental property, which would have been his grandfather Lazarus' field.

In 1977, a rediscovered "postcard from Hartenau" was sent to Chicago. Under the date of 14 December was the following: "... thank you for the letter from November." Written on the front was: 'from Emil'.

Hugo's response: "It's my deceased father's handwriting and it must be [from] a very long time ago that this picture was taken. All these images are between 70-80 years old – according to my calculations, maybe even 90 years. Please send greetings to all Bickenbachers asking about us."

Of Hartenau, 80-year-old Karl Röder spoke about the opening of the "Inn" of Friedrich Koppert:

"The opening ceremony was on a Sunday. Four or five men played music for all the business people from the village as well as the Jewish merchant, Lazarus Wolf, and the beer and liquor flowed freely. Towards evening the young guys were as full as 'water sacks', they were loaded onto a cart and, lying across each other, they were driven back to the village. And what did their Sunday suits look like?"

In 1991, a photo of the first day of school for the

children born 1910/11 turned up. Regarding attending school, Hugo Wolf recalled:

“In the war year of 1917, there was a wood and coal shortage, and the teacher often sent us home because the school room was not heated.”

Hugo could not recognise many in the photo. But he could remember the person next to him, the “Nazi-Atsch”. On their first day of school, the beginning of a new part of life, the farmer’s boy Adam Hennemann, nicknamed “Atsch”, stood next to Hugo Wolf, a Jewish boy. This was probably pure coincidence. Another way to look at it is a Jewish boy, Hugo Wolf, stood next to a peasant boy. The farmer’s son later became an SS thug, seduced by Nazi ideology, and the Jewish boy, because of this ideology, was forced to leave his ancestral home in order to survive. And one could wonder why these two young men were once members of the same Bickenbach athletic club.

At the end of his visit in 1976, 43 years after his first departure from Bickenbach, Hugo concluded:

“We, the Bickenbachers, are not in and of ourselves evil people. Yet we are German, and so we have to live with our past”.

Hugo’s son, Jerry Wolf, and his wife, Jan, also made a visit to Bickenbach. Together with Philipp Röder, they visited the graves of their ancestors at Alsbach cemetery in 1981.



Hugo Wolf at the grave of his mother, Sara Wolf, in Chicago.



The grave of Emil Wolf in Alsbach.



Postcard from Hartenau.



School photo of birth year group 1910/11, from left to right:

First row, seated: Christian Suttheimer, Adam Zeißler, Heinrich Zeißler, Adam Zeißler, Philipp Rebenich, Christian Hartmann.

Second row, seated: Elisabeth Kaffenberger, Elisabeth Schwarz, Anna Prinz, Marie Dingeldey, Irma Seitz, Karl Seitz, Katharina Rebenich, Anna Kaffenberger, Elisabeth Hill, Christian Suttheimer.

Third row, standing: Ludwig Reimund, Karl Weigert, Lina Schinkowsky, Greta Müller, Mina Blum, class teacher Heldmann, Margarethe Held, Anna Schneider, Marie Burckhardt, Elisabeth Aßmus.

Fourth row, standing: Georg Mink, Philipp Keil, Jakob Zeißler, Georg Schemel, Konrad Schemel, Heinrich Aßmus, Adam Hennemann, Hugo Wolf, Hans Stephan, Philipp Glock, Heinrich Kaffenberger.

Rena Wolf

Rena Wolf was born in 1916 at the family home in Schulstrasse. Neither her family nor her neighbours would have thought at the time that she would end up living in Israel. It was a decision partly determined by the Nazis, and surely not one that was easy for a young woman to make. However, through these difficulties came freedom.

Rena married Werner Baruch (1911–1996) on 27 March 1947. Werner was born in Bad-Wildungen. They had two children, Ruth and Ariel, known to family as Uri. In Israel, Rena Baruch made her home at Mount Carmel, which means “God’s vineyard”, and she died there in 1976.

In May 1988, Werner Baruch provided some personal documents, so that Rena’s journey from Bickenbach to Palestine, via Hamburg, could be included in this story.

Rena Wolf attended the Bickenbach primary school and later the commercial college in Darmstadt, Germany. She confirmed:

“I completed my course in 1934 at the commercial training institute in Darmstadt, Germany. After that it was impossible to find a relevant job. That’s why I planned to emigrate to Palestine, and decided to prepare myself properly for the emigration. I contacted Youth Aliyah, the Jewish youth welfare organisation in Berlin, and received information from them that I could receive a Hachshara place if it was preceded by a period of individual training in the subject chosen by me (housekeeping).⁵ In the years 1935–36 I worked for several months at Pension Koppel in Jugenheim a.d.Bergstrasse, and there I received rudimentary training in cooking and housekeeping. In late autumn of 1936 (October or November), I received a student place at the Cherut-Charut kibbutz (cherut: ‘freedom’; charut: ‘engraved’) at Steubenweg 36 in Altona-



Ruth, Werner, Ariel (Uri) and Rena Baruch.

Blankenese, Hamburg, again with training in cooking and housekeeping. I stayed until the end of July 1937 and immediately after finishing, I emigrated.”

A Kibbutz in Hitler’s Germany?

Kibbutzim (Hebrew for ‘Community’) were originally set up as agricultural collectives. The assigned work was not fully paid in cash, but ensured the livelihood of the family, as well as a minimum wage. From infancy, the children of the kibbutz members grew up in special community houses. The demand for professional equality for men and women in Israel originated from living in these communities.

What did we, the Germans, know of these preparation places?

In the summer of 1988, Werner Baruch, as well as the city of Hamburg senate, explained the following. The Cherut-Charut at Steubenweg 36 was a training school for Jewish youth in preparation for life in Palestine. Young men received horticultural and agricultural training, while young women completed a housekeeping internship.

The aid committee of the United Jewish Organisation

5. Hachshara: Special training before settling on farms.

Darmstadt, 7 December 1933

Certificate.

This is to certify that female student
Rena Wolf, of Bickenbach, Schulstrasse 3
attended municipal business studies
academy,
dept: Commercial College
for 34 hours a week from
1 April 193_ to 1 April 193_.



in Hamburg published a brochure in 1935 entitled *Hilfe und Aufbau in Hamburg* (Help and Construction in Hamburg). A section called "Occupational restructuring and initial training" provided insight into the situation which the German-Jewish youth found themselves in during the early days of Hitlerism:

"On the advice of many departing officials, doctors, lawyers, students, and business people, it became clear that we had to create schools to redeploy these people. *What became of our Jewish youth?* An academic career was closed to them, and the young realised that they must turn to the practical professions. One was uniformly imbued with the need for a normalised occupational structure."

The Cherut-Charut kibbutz was mentioned in an essay by Shimon Reich which appeared in the *Gemeindeblatt der Deutsch-Israelitischen Gemeinde zu Hamburg* (Journal of the German Israelite Community of Hamburg) on 12 June 1936. Because of its importance, the essay is reproduced here in unabridged form. It should be noted that the report contains words and references commonly used at the time, such as 'districts' and 'chapters'. This is surprising. It appears that they adopted, consciously or unconsciously, the prevailing German language, as well as the fonts, which had been in use since 1933.



Help and Construction in Hamburg

April 1933 to December 1934

Published by the Aid Committee of the
United Jewish Organisation, Hamburg

Rena Wolf's husband, Werner Baruch, visited Germany in the 1950s for the first time since his expulsion, and saw the birthplace of his wife as well as the graves of his family in Alsbach cemetery. In 1970, he wrote a book review of the Alsbach Heimatbuch for a German language Israeli newspaper.

In the summer of 1989, Werner, along with Ruth and Ariel, visited Bad Wildungen, Werner's home town. They also came to Bickenbach, visited the graves of their family and saw a part of the Bergstrasse and Odenwald. Rena never returned to Germany.

The following is the essay by Shimon Reich, from *Gemeindeblatt der Deutsch-Israelitischen Gemeinde zu Hamburg*, 12 June 1936.

The north-west district of the German Hechalutz

If at this point we report on the work of our Galil, it is because the Jewish public of Hamburg does not know much about the local Hechalutz and its Hachshara work.

The German Association of the Hechalutz includes a total of 13 districts. Our north-west region is bordered to the east by the Gau Pomerania [an administrative division of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 in the Prussian province of Pomerania] and includes a part of Mecklenburg, a part of Oldenburg and all Schleswig-Holstein. The southern border stretches over Bremen, Lüneburg and Rothenburg. Hamburg is the seat of the Galil leadership.

The Galil today includes: 6 Snifim with 245 friends; 5 Kibbutzim with 125 friends; 1 Bet Chaluz with 42 friends; 1 Hachshara 13 friends – a total of 425 friends.

The year 1933 brought countless new applications to the Hechalutz, which until then was only 600 members but grew tremendously to reach 15,000 members. All these young people needed to be taught before their Hachshara and to familiarise themselves with our ideas. The Hechalutz created its chapters, the Snifim.

What kind of work does the Snifim do, and what is the meaning of the Hachshara's work? The most important task of the Hechalutz is the mental and physical preparation of its members for Palestine. This means that it wants to educate its people about the reality of the country. The newly arrived are mostly young people who have hardly

any knowledge of Jewish things, let alone of Palestine and Palestinian reality.

Here lies the areas of responsibility of the Snifim:

1. Committing people in social terms (education to the community);
2. Teaching Zionist ideas;
3. Teaching elementary knowledge in the Hebrew language.

Only serious educational work was able to meet this difficult task. For many of these young people, there was a resistance to be engaged in things which were seen as strange, or were even rejected, and to which they had no connection thus far. If Chaverim could be given the spiritual foundation through at least half a year of intensive Snifim work, their physical and professional Hachshara could begin in various forms. For this Hachshara, our Galil created the following six Hachshara places:

1. Brüderhof Kibbutz, Ochsenzoll
2. Altona Rissen Kibbutz, Rissen
3. Cherut-Charut Kibbutz, Altona-Blankenese
4. Bet Chaluz, Hamburg
5. Jägerlust Kibbutz, Flensburg
6. Westerfeld Kibbutz, Aurich.

The rural kibbutzim, the form of which is already closely aligned to the kibbutzim in Palestine, offer an excellent preparation for the demands of the country through their primitiveness, isolation and their education. The Chaverim in Bet Chaluz primarily work in trade professions, while the country kibbutzim focus primarily on agricultural work. In the Brüderhof kibbutz in Ochsenzoll, about 30-32 Chaverim and Chaverot live together in a building. They are trained in all agriculture sectors: in the chicken, horse and cow shed (with about 14 cows) and in housekeeping and farming. In addition to the practical work, they obtained a farming diploma and also received theoretical lessons.

The kibbutz in Rissen essentially differed from Ochsenzoll only through vocational training. Here the boys, and sometimes the girls, were trained in horticulture. A relatively large house was available and this kibbutz had a small meshek (farm) in which the Chaverim grew their vegetables.

The Cherut-Charut kibbutz in Blankenese occupied its own place among our kibbutzim. This kibbutz, which

was one of 25 Chaverim, consisted only of religious young people. The Chaverot worked in housekeeping and the Chaverim worked in professional landscaping. They maintained a strictly kosher household and spent their spare time mainly with Tanach and Talmud study.

The Westerfeld and Flensburg Kibbutzim also belong to our Galil. Westerfeld has 14 people and Flensburg 12. At the moment, the kibbutz of Flensburg is just about to be expanded. With the help of the Central Office in Berlin we managed to obtain the resources for the reconstruction and the extension of the premises. In the near future we have the opportunity to increase the number of Chaverim to 25.

Bet Chaluz in Hamburg has a special status among the mentioned kibbutzim. It is the only collective in our Galil which is located in a city. For Bet Chaluz, the municipality made a building available with three floors. Of these, two floors are inhabited by the boys, and one by the girls. Bet Chaluz includes kitchen, laundry room, sewing room, a larger dining room and a reading room. The reading room, the pride of Bet Chaluz, was decorated extremely tastefully by the Chaverim and Chaverot. A large bookcase with good books (in addition to the private, small, but high-quality library of the Chaverim) and different newspapers and magazines, small tables, chairs and reading lamps beautify the room. Here the Chaverim spend their spare time reading, writing or playing chess. In this space the code of silence absolutely must be followed.

The size of Bet Chaluz makes the work and training opportunities for the Chaverot much more extensive and versatile. Two girls work in the kitchen, two in the sewing room, two in the laundry, and one girl does the work on the individual floors. There are nine girls working in the house at any particular time. Every four weeks work is swapped, so that they get to know all areas of housekeeping. The other girls work in households and commercial kitchens.



The Baruch family from Israel visited Bickenbach in 1989. From left: Philipp Röder, Karl and Ilse Schemel, Werner, Ruth and Ariel (Uri) Baruch.

The boys get their training in various professions, mainly as carpenters, locksmiths and masons, with some working as gardeners.

One of the most significant Hachshara branches, the Seafarer's Hachshara, is the only one of its kind in Germany and located in Hamburg. Eight Chaverim are employed at the Fairplay. We have Mrs. Borchardt and Mr. Groddeck to thank, who made it possible to integrate this training in our Hachshara. The Seafarer's Hachshara is one of the most difficult, and only Chaverim of good physical constitution are able to stay the course.

The intellectual training in the Snifim has been mostly insufficient due to the shortness of time. This is why in the kibbutzim and Bet Chaluz a special intensive Tarbut study is performed. The Tarbut plan provided for each week includes five evenings where the various Zionist and Jewish themes are discussed, as well as discussion of questions of general importance. The Hebrew study is regular and intensive, particularly in the rural kibbutzim.

On Friday nights all Chaverim come together to the Oneg Shabbat. They sing and learn new songs, read aloud and relax after the work and learning of the past week.

With the end of the school year coming, thousands

of young Jewish people in all localities in Germany leave their schools. The seriousness of the situation for the Jews in Germany is illuminated by the question about the future of their young people. Last year the Hechalutz started to set up a Hachshara in several places in Germany for the students who finished school, namely 15 to 17 year-olds, in the cities of Berlin, Breslau, Cologne and Hindenburg, as well as the agricultural estates of Neuendorf, Schneeblüthen and Gut Winkel.⁶ The experience is quite satisfying.

The north-west Hechalutz Galil is in the process of setting up this form of education in Hamburg, one of the largest communities in Germany. The boys and girls will be offered an artisanal, horticultural and domestic education.

The working time should be regulated, so that there is still enough time left for the young people to deal with Jewish history, Hebrew language, and things of general interest. A part of the role of the school will be assumed, because today a lot of young people finish at the school-leaving age of 14. The preparations for the implementation of this plan are so far advanced that we can now collect the necessary furnishings (cabinets, tables, chairs and utensils). We are sure that the Jewish public of Hamburg will recognise the importance of the matter and support it sufficiently.

So the various forms of our training will help us to get used to a different life to what we knew previously. For life in Palestine is serious, primitive and hard. And for German Jewish people who, in comparison to the Polish Jews, have a relatively good and secure existence, integration into this country brings countless difficulties. The purpose of the Hachshara is to prepare them. It will make them capable of integrating into the national tasks of the Jewish people.

Explanatory notes:

bet: house, home.

chaluz: pioneer; also engineer.

chaver: (pl. chaverim) male friend, comrade.

chavera: (pl. chaverot) female friend, comrade.

chaverot: also an umbrella name for Orthodox Jewish volunteer organisations.

cherut-charut: strictly religious attitude.

galil: district, county.

hachshara: Zionist pioneer training, including manual and agricultural labour, education in cooperative living, study of Hebrew and the geography of Palestine.

hechalutz: 'pioneer' in Hebrew; a Jewish youth movement that trained young people for settling in Israel. It became an umbrella organisation of Zionist youth movements.

kibbutz: (pl. kibbutzim) collective community, settlement.

meshek: farm settlement in which land is cultivated co-operatively.

oneg shabbat: 'joy of the Sabbath' in Hebrew; usually refers to celebratory gathering held after Sabbath services.

snif: (pl. snifim) chapter, local branch [of Bnei Akiva movement]. Bnei Akiva was a religious Zionist youth movement, established in 1929 in Palestine.

tarbut: education, development, culture; the Tarbut movement was a network of secular, Hebrew-language schools in parts of Poland, Romania and Lithuania.

6. In the 1920s, German Jewish department store magnate Saloman Schocken converted his estate in Brandenburg into Gut Winkel, an agricultural training farm where Jewish youth learned farming skills.

The family of Benno Wolf

Benno Wolf was a livestock and grain merchant, and a soldier in WWI.

He married Settchen Gutjahr (1890–1942), on 5 Jan 1919, who was from Stockstadt am Rhein.

They had three children, Ludwig, Ernst and Berta Rosel, known as Rosel.

Rosel Wolf and her parents, Benno and Settchen Wolf, were murdered in Minsk, Belarus (c.1941/42), in a Nazi extermination camp.

Benno's nephew, Hugo Wolf, confirmed the fact that Benno did not take the Nazis seriously: "Benno reckoned, it is not as bad as it looks ..."

A cattle and grain trader, Benno had a thriving business. "De Benno" was an institution. He loved life, was appreciated by many, and was good company, as the Jugenheim barber, Jakob Lehrian used to say. For those unfamiliar with Hessian or Bickenbach dialect, it must be explained, that "de" – usually associated with a French nobility title – means something different in Bickenbach. In written German dialect, "de" means "of". And this title is only used in the vernacular for special personalities. Benno Wolf was probably such a man!

In the mid-1920s Benno was the first man in town to own an Opel automobile, as well as an E.M.A. motorcycle from a company called Molitor in Aalen, Baden-Württemberg. The Wolfs also had a phone. Their telephone number, which was simply '8', was documented by the Jugenheim telephone office. Soon the family was one of the few in town who had a radio.

Benno Wolf served in the army and was at the French front during WWI. Georg Seibert reports that he (Benno) always had an extra wedge of bread, a piece of cheese or some sausage in his gunnysack, for every Bickenbacher who returned from the front line and the trenches of Verdun to the base.

It is assumed that Benno Wolf was a member of



Benno and Settchen Wolf (c.1919).

an artillery corps, probably the Grand Ducal Hessian Army Corps, belonging to the 115th Lifeguard Infantry Regiment.

The family lived in their own house in Schulstrasse 4, immediately next to the creek ("bach" in German). Anna Aßmus, the wife of meat inspector, Peter Aßmus, remembered them before she died very advanced in years. She was their immediate neighbour: "Settche was a good woman and neighbour, a good housewife and always there for her children and the whole family."

It was bound to happen in the end. From 1933, business declined; even farmers no longer bought from or did business with Jews. In April 1938, out of necessity, the Wolf family moved to Tiergartenstrasse 18 in Frankfurt. Their house in Bickenbach, which still has "die Bach" flowing by it today, was sold.

The mayor, Rau, could then announce to the District Office and the State party: "Bickenbach is free of Jews." He had, however, overlooked one Jew, Dr. Wilhelm Grumach, who left Berlin in 1931 and had since lived

in Bickenbach. Dr. Grumach was most probably deliberately overlooked due to the fact that he was a renowned physician.

On 19 May 1938, Benno's eldest son, Ludwig, left Germany and, 11 days later, arrived in the United States of America.

On 1 September 1939, just a few hours before the outbreak of WWII, his brother Ernst left Germany, via Holland, to go to England from where he was later transferred to Australia as an "enemy alien".

Benno and Settchen, and their young daughter, Rosel, remained at Tiergartenstrasse 18 in Frankfurt. In 1991, it came to light that they received some secret assistance – a secret hidden mainly because the families involved did not want to draw attention to themselves. Former neighbours and friends went to Frankfurt from time to time and supplied the Wolfs with food. Included were Anna Aßmus, Kath Kress and Jean Satorius. They did it until someone told Mayor Rau, and then they became more cautious, but ultimately they had to stop their trips, because they were putting themselves in danger.

It must have been just before their actual deportation, shortly before the so-called "resettlement" in the autumn of 1941 that, out of pure despair, distress and anguish, "de Benno" had the courage to secretly and illegally visit his home village of Bickenbach again, desperately looking for help.

He walked through Frankfurt to Louisa Station, then took the passenger train, moving through the wagons, using toilets to avoid detection, arriving at Arheilgen. Then from there, all the way to the Jugenheim Terminus (station) of tram line no.8. He didn't use the main roads to Bickenbach, but took a long walk of about two kilometres along dirt roads. He didn't want to be noticed by familiar faces at Bickenbach train station. He would

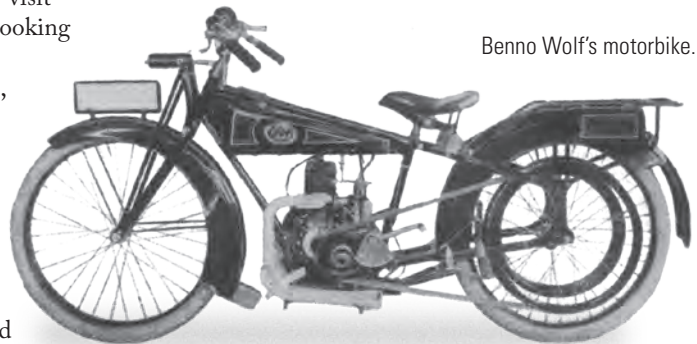


In Jugenheim, from left to right: Benno Wolf, Georg Emmerich (bicycle dealer), Mr Weniger from Leipzig, the brother-in-law of Georg Bersch (host of the Gasthaus Zum Grünen Baum, nowadays the "3 Moors"), Mr Edelmann, a casual baker for Glaser, which is opposite the "Grünen Baum" now the Speckhardt bakery.

mostly likely have retraced his steps for his return journey to Frankfurt.

Benno Wolf visited the following families to ask for food supplies: Philipp Hennemann (Administrator), Philipp Röder, Georg Schemel, Philipp Schemel and local farming leader, Karl Röder.

The local farming leader and Nazi party member



Benno Wolf's motorbike.

Karl Röder had given Benno a handwritten certificate, saying that Wolf was always a good trader and he knew him as a soldier in WWI where they had been good comrades. It did not help. It got much worse than “de Benno” had believed in 1933.

We know that on the following day, Mayor Rau confronted the people who had seen Benno, and let it be known that he knew Benno Wolf had stopped in town, unauthorised, and was seen begging. Accomplices and accessories made themselves liable to prosecution and this was to be the first and last warning, otherwise there would be consequences.

Benno Wolf walked through the community with a heavy heart. This is a known fact, and not just an assumption.

What might he have thought as he walked through the village, past his old house? Past the houses where his so-called friends lived, who had now written him off. These questions remain unanswered.

The man was wearing a hat and coat, it was already autumn and he had clamped a briefcase under his arm, so that no one would notice the yellow star. He knew the danger he was in. He didn't stay longer than was necessary in the houses, and didn't know if he would be welcomed.

Were the people he visited glad that he was not seen as he came out of their homes? As Benno Wolf made his way past the Hasengrund and returned to the tram stop in Jugenheim, did he perhaps wistfully recall photos of Jugenheim from the 1920s? From this autumn day in 1941, traces of him in Bickenbach became blurred, and only memories remain.

In 1956, after Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's administration banned the KPD (Communist Party) as subversive, the Liberal Electoral Association was formed in Bickenbach. This faction applied to the municipal council to build a memorial to be placed next to the war memorial on Jugenheimer Strasse for the members of the Wolf family who had perished.

All the horrors perceived about concentration camps are the same, then and now, whether in Osthofen, Dachau, Auschwitz or Minsk. Initially, “Auschwitz” was noted in bronze letters on the memorial as the family's



An invoice, an order docket, and a receipt that Benno Wolf used in his livestock and fodder business. The order docket mentions middlings, wheat bran, rye bran, brewers grain, and malt sprouts.

Bickenbach, 6 August 1925

Invoice: Bank of Trade and Industry, Bensheim branch.
Telephone: Jugenheim trunk no. 8

For: (unknown)

From Benno Wolf, livestock and fodder business.

Order Docket: Enclosed you will receive: middlings, wheat bran, rye bran, brewers grain, malt sprouts.

Benno Wolf.

Receipt: Received and certified, Bickenbach, (dated)

final destination. However, to make some sense of this, and to give answers to families in the United States and Australia, another search began, aiming to uncover the truth, and to pay the dead their due.

A request to the Residential Registry Office of the city of Frankfurt in 1981-82 led to the International Tracing Service of the Red Cross in Bad Arolsen, Hesse. This organisation was able to pass on information about the last journey of Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf – from Frankfurt to Minsk, in Belarus.

The following are extracts regarding the fate of Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf

Regarding: Deportation list of the Gestapo of 11 November, 1941, Frankfurt am Main:

The Wolf family has been deported to the Minsk Ghetto, according to the transport list of the Gestapo in Frankfurt. What is known about the fate of the German Jews who were deported to Minsk is that only a few survived the campaigns and relocations there. We are not aware of the fact that any German Jews deported to Minsk were later in Auschwitz concentration camp.

The abbreviations "V. C. C. 166/XII O. C. C. 16/2 (F. 18-30/1) I C / 1" is the signature of the transport list of 11 November, 1941 specified by us. Page 49 of this list contains 27 names of men, women and children, including Benno Wolf, Settchen Wolf and Rosel Wolf as listed. Further research into the Minsk death camp made known the extent of the terrible things that happened here, confirmed by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Extract from "Secret" paper of 6 February 1942:

The General Commissioner for Russia, Minsk

Advice given [to] Reich Commissioner for Ostland in Riga:¹

... 80% of the city of Minsk has been destroyed, so the chain of command of the City Commissioner, Regional Office leader Janetzke and his expressed concerns have been justified and dutiful.

It is impossible to house 25,000 people in a destroyed city, and since the ground in Russia is frozen up to two metres deep, other possibilities do not exist according to notification from my security service.

Added to this is the food situation, a result of the high demands of the Wehrmacht ...

Extract from "Secret Reich Business – Einsatzgruppe A":

Of all the countries in Ostland, Belarus is the area most densely populated by Jews. In 1926 well over 400,000 Jews were counted in the then BSSR. The last Polish census showed more than 500,000 Jews in the voivodeships (municipalities)



Ludwig, Rosel and Ernst Wolf, c.1931.

1. In July 1941, Hitler made a decree to create a new German administrative unit called Ostland. Germany turned the four independent states of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and what is now Belarus into a new territorial unit, for the eventual incorporation into the Reich.

still belonging to Poland – Bialystok, Novo, Crodlek (possibly Krolik), Polesia and Vilnius.² However, these figures are inaccurate and almost certainly assessed as too low. What emerges from this is that far more people specified “Yiddish” as their mother tongue, than Jews allegedly existed in the same district of counting. At the beginning of the WWII at least half of the Jews in the Belarus area of the settlement lived in the biggest cities. Minsk had a very large Jewish population; in 1939 about 100,000 Jews lived in a total city population of 238,000.

The sociological structure of Judaism already showed, in both the former Polish territory and before the Russian-Polish war, that Bolshevik territory of White Ruthenia had a broad underclass of very poor Jews.

A relatively small upper class dominates in the former Polish territory in all areas of life, in particular due to their strong economic position, and in the old Russian territory due to their influence in leading Government positions. The Jews in the formerly Polish region are a particularly dangerous element, because of their intelligence and activity. In the 25 years of Bolshevik rule, the Soviet Jew adopted a very confident and arrogant demeanour that he retained even with the arrival of German troops.

The final and basic elimination of the Jews remaining after the invasion of the Germans in the Belarus area is fraught with some difficulties. A high percentage of skilled workers are of Jewish descent and are essential to retain due to the lack of other skilled workers in the local area. In addition, Einsatzgruppe A occupied the area after the occurrence of a strong frost, which greatly complicated mass executions. Another difficulty is that Jews are widely dispersed all over the country.

The long distances, the difficult road conditions, the lack of cars and petrol, and the moderate forces of the security police and the SD make the shootings in the country only possible



The house of Benno Wolf in Schulstrasse.

Drawing: Klaus Becker, 1975.

with inclusion of all forces. Nevertheless, so far 41,000 Jews have been shot. This does not include the number of operations carried out by the former task forces. According to estimates from the Wehrmacht until December 1941 about 19,000 partisans and (unclear), so in the majority ... (unclear) ... At present, a total number of about 123,000 Jews is expected for the area of General Commissioner.

In Minsk itself about 18,000 Jews, excluding Imperial Germans, are still in residence, their shooting had to be rescheduled with regard to the work effort at present.

The Commander of Belarus is instructed, that despite the difficult situation, the Jewish question is to be liquidated as soon as possible. However, a period of about two months will be still necessary depending on weather conditions. The demarcation of the remaining Jews in particular ghettos is completed in the cities in Russia. They are employed to work in the departments of the army, the civil administration and German authorities.

The nutrition of Jews in the ghettos, especially in Belarus but also in Lithuania, poses significant difficulties. In addition to the general decline in the labour force, an increased vulnerability to all epidemic-like disease is observed.

2. A voivode is equivalent to a duke or governor, who overlooks or administers an area such as a county or duchy, a voivodeship. Voivodeships have existed since medieval times in central and eastern Europe.

Jews from the Reich

From December 1941, transports arrived from the Reich in short intervals. Of them, 20,000 Jews were taken to Riga and 7,000 Jews to Minsk. The first 10,000 Jews evacuated to Riga were partly housed in new barracks built in the vicinity of Riga. The remaining transports were, at first, taken to a separate part of the Riga ghetto.

The construction of the barracks continued, using the labour of all the working Jews, so that in spring all evacuated Jews who survived the winter were assigned to this camp.

Only a small portion of the Jews from the Reich were able to work.

Approximately 70-80% were women and children, as well as elderly, non-working people. The mortality rate steadily increased as a result of the exceptionally harsh winter.

The services of the few Jews from the Reich fit to work were satisfactory. They were more sought after than the Russian Jews as workers, due to their ability to speak German and their higher level of cleanliness. The adaptability of the Jews, whereby they try to survive despite their circumstances, was remarkable.

The overcrowding of Jews in a small space such as the ghettos naturally increased the risk of epidemics, which was kept under some control by Jewish doctors. In some cases, contagious Jews were singled out, under the pretext of being moved to a Jewish nursing home or hospital, but in fact were executed.

Today, we know that the three Bickenbachers, Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf, went from Frankfurt to Minsk, like many others, to their sad fate.

They first went from Tiergartenstrasse 18 to Frankfurt's Grossmarkthalle (market hall). The diagram on page 102, drawn in 1966 by Heinrich Baab, the former head of the Judenreferat (Jewish Affairs Office) of the Gestapo in Frankfurt, shows the process through which the people went through to be put onto the transports of the Reichsbahn, on their way to a certain death.



The house of Benno Wolf in Schulstrasse, early 1980s.

“In the Camp of the German Jews”

This report of suffering by Dr. Karl Loewenstein (Berlin) is titled *Minsk: In the Camp of the German Jews*, and was published in 1961 by the Federal Agency for Home Service in Bonn.

Three Bickenbachers were among the victims of this Nazi mass extermination camp. Nobody can prove the exact hour or cause of their death. Whether shot, starved or gassed, all three were murdered in Minsk. They are among the victims, an estimated 170,000 people, who were annihilated there in the most bestial of circumstances.

It is scarcely imaginable, in the present state of technology, to determine under what precise method the SS used in its administrative machinery to carry out the destruction of, what they then called, worthless life. However, even before the attack on the Soviet Union on 21 June 1941, the necessary decisions were made.

The so-called evacuation, the deportation of the Jews of Frankfurt, was made on 11 November 1941. When the Berlin transport arrived in Minsk on 18 November 1941. Dr. Loewenstein noted:

“When we got to the camp, we found that we were the fourth transport to arrive in Minsk. Before us transports from Hamburg, Düsseldorf and Frankfurt had arrived.”



Street scene in the Minsk ghetto.

The SS and their Latvian volunteers previously arranged a bloodbath among the local Jews, and now “Germans” would live in their houses.

There were different camps, according to the origins of the ‘transport participants’ (deportees) – Hamburg camp had inmates from Hamburg and Frankfurt; Berlin camp had Berlin and Brno Jews; the Rhineland camp had Düsseldorf Jews; and there was also a Bremen and a Vienna camp.

Living conditions were terrible; distress and fear of death were contagious. The harsh Russian winter brought additional victims.

Five doctors, without tools and medicine, serviced, if you can call it that, approximately 7,300 camp inmates. 1,425 of the inmates were used as compulsory labour, and another 300 worked in the hospitals.

On 2 March 1942, the SS executed several thousand Russian Jews in the Minsk ghetto. The camp authorities reported 25,000 deaths. According to a report of the main Reich Security office from 9 March 1942 (Nuremberg document No. 3241) it says:

“During a ‘Jewish action’ on the 2nd and 3rd, 3,412

Jews were shot in Minsk, 302 in Vileyka and 2,007 in Baranovichi. As a whole 5,721 Jews were executed.”

In other places, Minsk reported 5,000 deaths. The local SS camp authorities had made this information available for the purpose of terrorising the remaining inmates. The camp was decimated daily. People were shot, died due to hunger and disease, were killed by the gas cars, or simply were murdered.

In the period from 28–30 July 1942, Jews from Vienna, Brno, Bremen, Berlin and some of the Rhinelanders, who were crammed together in the lower areas, were “liquidated”. (This was confirmed by a letter of General Commissioner Kube to the Commissioner of the Reich, Lohe (Nuremberg document PS 3428).

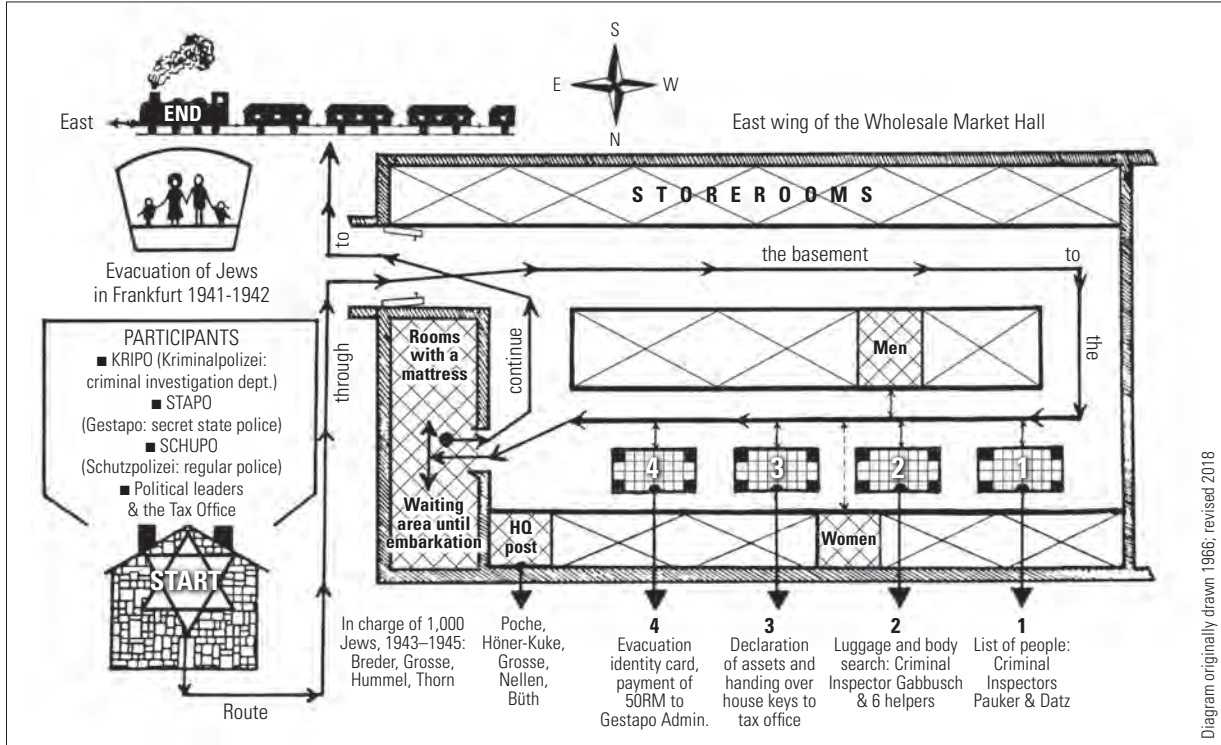
The Hamburg Jews and most of the Jews from the Rhineland who lived in the upper areas, were killed on 8 May 1943. Thus, Minsk was no longer needed as a concentration camp or rather an extermination camp for German Jews.

When entering the German Embassy in Tel Aviv today, one is confronted by an unassuming commemorative book, where the names of murdered German Jews – Nazi victims – are chronicled. Among them we find on page 1603: **Benno, Settchen, Rosel Wolf “lost” in Minsk.**

Whoever has experienced Yad Vashem – The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre – in Jerusalem, will understand the burden Nazi Germany left on Germans, even if they have no connection to Jewish history.

From Yad Vashem, the site of “Persistent memory” (Isaiah 56:5):

“Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off”.



At Yad Vashem in the Children’s Memorial, erected for the memory of the one and a half million child victims of the Holocaust, where the flames of the five candles symbolise the souls of the children, the Bickenbacher thinks at this moment of Rosel Wolf, whose life light was simply blown out at the age of 12.

I saw the following article in the *Tribüne – A Journal for the Understanding of Judaism* (issue 122 from 1992): “For many years, not taken for granted” – In Israel: The First German-language Holocaust Seminar.

The seminar dealt with a wide range of issues: the Jewish world before 1933, taking into account the prior situation of war in Germany and Austria, the state and the issues of research, anti-Semitism, and reactions during the two World Wars.

At this moment one is aware, why the survivors, the family members, keep a close eye on Germans, not just the Bickenbachers. The seed of friendship asks for

management and care, and requires constant assistance from both sides.

It raised awareness of what it meant to us that Fanny and Hugo Wolf visited Bickenbach via Israel in 1976, and that other family members, especially children, returned to visit Germany.

Wounds heal and break open again, perhaps the possibility of atonement can help forgiveness. Oblivion and forgetfulness will not let unpunished murders of innocent people fade, for the dead remind us.

Ludwig Wolf

Ludwig Wolf and his family in the USA, lived in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

In particular, we thank Ludwig Wolf who, after all the suffering of his family in Germany, decided in 1982 that he was ready to write about himself and his brother after their expulsion. This was what he wrote:

Our Wolf family had lived in Bickenbach for many generations. My earliest memories are of my parents' house at Schulstrasse 6. I was still very young, but I remember Lazarus, my grandfather, lived next door to us in the house at number 4, which later became the Rebenich's and the consumer association's.³

My father Benno and my mother Settchen married just after WWI ended – as soon as he came home after more than four years' service in the 115th Regiment in Darmstadt. My mother's maiden name was Gutjahr and she was from Stockstadt am Rhine.

I was born on 12 October 1919, and my brother, Ernst, two years later on 30 December 1921. Our father worked in the livestock trade. His brother Emil lived opposite us in Schulstrasse. I was almost 10 years old, when my sister Rosel was born.

Our life was simple, and we were good friends with all the Bickenbachers – with many, very good friends.

After four years at primary school in Bickenbach, I went to the Liebig-Oberrealschule in Darmstadt, along with Peter Stein (who lived in Bachgasse). Before my studies there were finished, it became clear that Germans who belonged to the Jewish religion had much to fear. Further study was banned, so I joined grocery wholesaler, Herz Bodenheimer, in Darmstadt. However, because they were Jewish, they were forced to close their business in 1937.

The farmers in our area and our neighbours and friends could no longer do business with my father in the Hitler era, so my family was forced to leave Bickenbach.

I migrated to America in May 1938. A few days before the outbreak of WWII, my brother Ernst went to England and from there was sent to Australia. The disaster that befell my parents, and my sweet little sister is impossible to comprehend. The world should never forget the millions of innocent people murdered in the concentration camps, so that such a thing can never happen again.

In 1941, I was conscripted into the U.S. Army. I served five years and returned from New Guinea and the Philippines as a captain. At the end of 1946 I married



Hilde and Ludwig Wolf, 1992.

Hilde Mandelbaum in Chicago, whose extended family came from Aub near Würzburg in 1940. We have been together for more than 35 years, are content with our life and happy with our children and grandchildren.

Our son, named after his grandfather, Benno, is an attorney in Chicago, and our daughter, Susan Rose, is Professor of Philosophy in Washington, D.C.

My work for all these years was as superintendent in three large slaughterhouses in Illinois, New Jersey, and now South Dakota. I often talk about my youth. As hard as our destiny is to bear, I know that the good people of Bickenbach were not personally responsible. I hope that the future will bring a better understanding for people all over the world.

Ludwig Wolf 1982

FROM THE DARMSTÄDTER ECHO, 16 JULY 1972:

Charles Benno Wolf, from the United States, visited Bickenbach yesterday.

The municipal board organised an official reception for Charles Wolf and his fiancée on Sunday afternoon in the Bickenbach Town Hall. The young student from New York wants to become a lawyer and previously worked for the sports section of newspapers.

3. Editor's note: House numbers can change over years for many reasons. Ernst remembered their address as number 4, whereas Lou was sure that it was number 6. To check, I looked at some photos of their house from visits in 1995 and 2012 and was amused to find it had become number 5.

He is the grandson of Benno Wolf, a member of an old Jewish family from Bickenbach, who was killed in a concentration camp.

Charles Wolf, known as Chuck, said in 1972 he would try to convince his father, if necessary “with force”, to visit Bickenbach.

Nobody thought it possible, but on 12 October 1989, together with his wife Hilde, Ludwig Wolf celebrated his 70th birthday in Bickenbach.

Hilde Wolf published a travel diary in December 1989: “*Our Trip to Germany 11- 21 October 1989*”. The writing is deeply moving. Ludwig added a short comment and, thankfully, Klaus Böhm translated it for us.

All the impressions, the feeling of what has been experienced, and memories of both good and bad days should be represented in their entirety, but the personal observations are prioritised, and so certain passages stand alone. About Bickenbach, she wrote: “I had heard about “die Bach” (the brook) for more than 40 years. This small stream really does flow right by the house and through the entire town, along the cobblestone pavements and the sidewalk. The house Lou was born in is really beautiful, white with a timber-frame.”

About Aub in Würzburg, the birthplace of Hilde: “I felt nervous when I saw the first road signs that mentioned Aub, then Munich, Augsburg, the Bavarian royal castles and Würzburg – suddenly the past was present.”

Before returning home, there was another meeting in the Bickenbach town hall with school friends, and Hilde Wolf wrote: “... we have talked a lot about our journey in the meantime, and we can honestly say that we are glad to have made it. After we told each other about our homes and the people of our youth for 43 years, it was an incredible event to have had the experience of this reunion. Frankfurt, Heidelberg and Nuremberg had to be removed from our travel itinerary to give us the opportunity to achieve just that. For what we most wanted was to visit the sites of origin of our families. An hour after we left Frankfurt, I returned in my dreams to the beautiful house belonging to my uncle Max in 1938, and on the nightstand of Aunt Else I saw the book



Ernst Wolf, Ludwig Wolf and Ernst's wife, Letty, in Sioux Falls, 1991.

Gone with the Wind. What an incredible title. So, just as Tara and the old American South were blown away by the winds of fate, our German world was shattered, destroyed and scattered. We have put down new roots.”

Ernst Wolf

Ernst Wolf and his family lived in Melbourne, Australia.

When Ernst was 14, his father, Benno, helped Ernst commence an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker through a contact at Trier Brothers, a furniture factory in Darmstadt. After two and a half years, further restrictions introduced by the Nazis made training there no longer possible, so Ernst attended a Jewish training school in Frankfurt, discovering that this school had a scheme to send students to the UK to continue their tuition. Ernst admitted he was unaware of exactly how his father obtained his passage to England, as he was one of the last to get into the Jewish training school. However, on 1 September 1939 he left Frankfurt by train and travelled to the Netherlands, eventually leaving mainland Europe from the Hook of Holland, arriving in Harwich, England, the next morning.

He boarded in London with some other German Jewish lads, waiting for his chance to travel to the USA, but there was a long queue of people waiting for the same thing, and Ernst still needed an affidavit from the USA, which his brother Ludwig was trying to arrange for him.

The early months of the war did not go well for England and, after France fell, there was increased fear of “fifth columnists” and a German invasion. As a result, those who were previously “friendly aliens of enemy origin” and exempt from internment until further notice, were suddenly subject to being rounded up with no chance of appeal. After Winston Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, and Italy allied itself with Germany, Churchill gave his apocryphal order to “Collar the lot!”

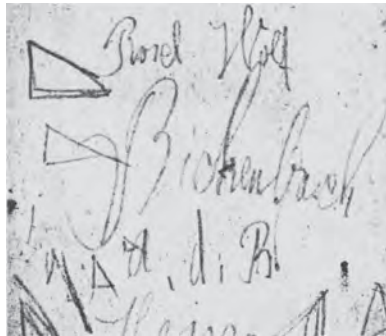
So, on 26 June 1940 Ernst was arrested by three Scotland Yard officers and taken to Liverpool where he was interned as an enemy alien, along with thousands of others.

England wanted all internees removed from the UK, so Canada and Australia, both former colonies, were approached to take them.

Ernst was told he could volunteer for transfer and internment in Canada. Assuming this was the best way to make it to the USA, on 11 July 1940 he found himself aboard the HMT *Dunera*, a former troopship that proved vastly inept in terms of the treatment meted out to its passengers and the conditions they had to endure for their 57-day journey. It was about two weeks into the voyage when those on board were told that their destination would not be Canada, but Australia.

The *Dunera* docked in Sydney on 6 September 1940, and the men then spent time in internment camps in Hay, New South Wales, then Tatura, Victoria. After English authorities realised they had made an error of judgement, these refugees were released from detention in 1942. Many joined the Australian Army’s 8th Employment Company, while others returned to England. Ernst was one of about 900 who chose to stay in Australia.

A brief reunion was possible for the brothers in 1944 when Ludwig, or Lou as he had become, was stationed in New Guinea with the U.S. Army. After that, letters and the telephone were their only connection for many years.



Ernst settled into life in Australia. He married Letty Hicks on 24 December 1953, and they had two children, Lisette and Andrew.

It was not until 1991 that Lou and Ernst met again face to face, when Ernst and Letty travelled to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. After almost 50 years, the brothers had to get to know each other again. In December 2001, Lou and Hilde also made a trip to Australia to help Ernst celebrate his 80th birthday.

Ernst returned to Bickenbach for the first time in November 1995, and visited again in April 2012 for a Stolperstein ceremony that commemorated Benno, Settchen and Rosel.

The accidental discovery of two books concludes this story about the Wolf family. In April 1990, during renovations by the family of Erich Lang of Ludwig and Ernst’s childhood home in Bickenbach, two books were found in the attic. It can be said with certainty that the two novels had lain undiscovered in the attic since 1938. Both novels were from the time of WWI: *The Labyrinth* and *The Light above the Door*. The first book was a hardcover and in good condition. The second volume was missing its cover. In this book, three photographs were stored. The images were of two young women and a

workman standing in front of a barracks. It was only through the RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst – Reich Labour Service) that more information could be learnt. The man was Adam Klein from Rodau near Zwingenberg, he worked for Benno Wolf at the beginning of the 1930s. He was killed in WWII, location unknown.

The books and pictures found their way to America, as was the wish of the Lang family. Two books, three pictures – they don’t seem that significant, but they make a connection to people from long ago. On the last page of the book *The Light above the Door*, we can see the handwriting of Rosel Wolf.



**First day of school for the 1922 birth year group,
grade one, 1928.**

Top row from left to right: Karl Krämer, Walter Satorius, Adolf Friedrich, Karl Röder, Willi Hornung, Albert Schneider, Georg Götz, Willi Engelhardt.

Second row: Philipp Reimund, Hans Schüssler, Karl Winnewisser, Philipp Pfeiffer, Ludwig Weidner, Fritz Hennemann, Ernst Wolf, Ludwig Zubrod, Valentin Hauk.

Third row: Greta Ganzen, Käthe Götz, Elise Flemmisch, Elise Becker, Marie Kaffenberger, Hella Klein, Alice Hilss, Erika Hill, Anna Glock, Johanna Flemmisch, Hilde Brunner.

Fourth row: Ria Stumpf, Emilie Ludwig, Marie Suttheimer, Lisa Ganser, Lisa Stoll, Dora Brunner, Marie Hennemann, Greta Nickel, Eva Marquardt.

Bottom row: (the author was unsure – one of the first two is Hermann Stiegelmeier), Willi Jacoby, Philipp Götz, Erich Schaidler, Georg Hölzel, Georg Schemel, Philipp Zeissler, Anton Müller.

The David, Korr and Kawin families



Above left: Rosa David with her grandchildren, Sharon and Fred Korr, 1955. Above right: Sharon Korr with her parents, Hilde and Irving Korr.

Rosa Wolf

Rosa Wolf is the daughter of Lazarus and Cerline Wolf, his second marriage after his first wife Rosa (née Hochschild) died.

Rosa Wolf married businessman Friedrich David, from Alsbach, and went to live in Darmstadt with her husband. The Davids had two daughters, Hilde and Liesel, who grew up in Darmstadt and went to school there until the Nazis made it impossible. The paternal business had to be abandoned and the family escaped in 1940 on the SS *Washington*, the last ship from Europe that was allowed to dock at Genoa. The family made their life in California, USA and managed to gain prestige and prosperity.

Unfortunately, Friedrich David passed away at the age of 57. Rosa lived with their daughter, Hilde, until her death in 1987. Hilde had married Irving Korr and they lived in Oakland. Their daughter Sharon visited Bickenbach in 1970, and son Fred in 1972. Fred is a pharmacist, like his father, and Sharon is a medical internist. Hilde and Irving were happy parents and grandparents.

On the occasion of a school exchange in the early summer of 1988, the Director of the Melibokusschule

in Alsbach, Jürgen Schmidt, visited the Korrs in Oakland and delivered greetings from Bickenbach. Asked upon his return if Hilde Korr would ever visit Germany, he said: "I do not believe so."

Yet the Korrs did pay a visit in the summer of 1991. On the occasion of their visit to Darmstadt they also came to Bickenbach and Alsbach cemetery. Till her death in 1987, Rosa David was the family's link to Bickenbach. Thankfully, Hilde Korr continued this connection.

Unfortunately, there has been precious little correspondence with her sister Leslie David. Leslie married Bergene Kawin, and lived in Washington DC. We aim to improve future communication with the family in America, in order to not completely break their connection with Bickenbach.

The meeting with Irving and Hilde Korr lasted only a few hours, and a stroll along "die Bach" concluded their visit to the town.

When reminiscing about Bickenbach, Hugo Wolf said: "*und die Bach fließt weiter (and 'die Bach' continues to flow)*". In this, he touches on the expression, 'under the tide of time', but most people do not know that Bickenbachers use "die Bach" in their speech, their writing, and how they think.

Welcoming Sharon Korr (1970) in the former public library in Kolbschen House. From left to right: mayor Karl Schemel, community representative chairman Werner Krämer, Anna Röder, Ilse Schemel, Sharon Korr and Philipp Röder.



Fred Korr in Philipp Röder's blacksmith workshop, Bickenbach, 1972.



The Jewish community in Alsbach

In the account books of the Lords of Bickenbach (1130–1486), several references were made of a Jew named Jakob Liebmann living in Alsbach, the first being in 1423. After the plague ended in the 1439, deportation of Jews began. It was not until 1569 that new entries regarding Jews were found.

Since the 18th century, Jews of Alsbach, Zwingenberg, Bickenbach, Hähnlein, Jugenheim and Seeheim municipalities had built a religious community. With the growth of Zwingenberg in 1861 and Seeheim in 1866, independent municipalities with their own synagogues formed.

Information about the Alsbach synagogue is sparse. In 1767, the Jewish community acquired a house in the main street from the Zwingenberg town administration. However, due to its state of disrepair, the building had to be gutted. Before the erection of the synagogue, there appears to have been a prayer hall, and the house of the teacher was built in 1788.

On Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) in 1938, the synagogue was looted and the religious artefacts were burned by the SA (Brown Shirts). Though there were no remarkable works of art, a seven-armed bronze chandelier dating from 1890, and a handwritten memorial book from 1731, were amongst the objects destroyed.

On 11 November 1938, the SA of NSDAP Brigade 50 (Starkenburger) in Darmstadt reported back to SA group Electoral Palatinate at Mannheim on the implementation of the destruction of 35 synagogues in southern Hesse, including the house of prayer in the Jewish cemetery of Alsbach, which was “destroyed by fire”.



Inscription on the Alsbach synagogue.
“This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter.”
– Psalm 118, line 20

The order given to the SA – “The action is to be executed in civilian clothes” – really tells us everything.

In *Synagogues in Hesse – What Happened Since 1945*, published in 1988 by architect Thea Altaras, which documented all 221 Hessian villages whose synagogue buildings survived Kristallnacht of 1938 and WWII, the following is noted about Alsbach.

Architectural features:

[The synagogue was] In the centre of town, free-standing, situated right next to the main road (No. 19) on a large garden plot. More information about the appearance of the synagogue is not known. It is reported that the teacher’s apartment had been in the synagogue building, however, the schoolhouse with the bath was situated in the garden. The impressive “L-shaped” estate, with a length of about 10 and 16 metres, and a width of 7.5 and 8.5 metres, was thoroughly changed, as can be seen in the altogether new appearance.

Specified in the Alsbach Heimatbuch (local history) from 1970, renovations were made to the synagogue in 1864. However, Dr. Stefan Rebenich from Bickenbach, who is now Professor of Ancient History and the Classical Tradition, University of Bern, Switzerland, and once worked in the Department of Ancient History at the University of Mannheim, identified 1868 as the year from a photograph in the book about the renovation of the Alsbach synagogue. Dr. Rebenich also identified the inscription on the building, as Psalm 118, line 20.

The synagogue and the house of the teacher were torn down in 1967 and replaced by a new building.

וְהַשַּׁעַר לַיהוָה צְדִיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ

“This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter.”



Oratory (chapel) of the Alsbach synagogue, destroyed in 1938. Image by Mina Jonas (née Frank).

The Hebrew inscription of the Torah curtain reads:

To honour the Torah,
for the 50th year since the wedding of Jaakob,
son of Ury Scharaga, who calls himself Keppel Dapid,
with his wife Blimel on the 14th (Menachem) Av 5652 (1882)
[sic; correct converted date is 7 August 1892]
donated by the Dapid family

The text on the top of the Torah reading desk:
To the memory of our good life.

*Original translation into German done by
County Rabbi Chaim Lipschitz from Darmstadt.*

Due to the destruction of the synagogue on Kristallnacht in 1938, and multiple reconstructions over the last few decades, all traces of the Alsbach school have disappeared. Efforts to obtain information over the years had been unsuccessful until 1988 when by surprise Hugo Wolf sent a series of images of the Frank and Jonas families, as well as the interior of the Alsbach school.

However we know the teachers and cantors in Alsbach were: Rabbi Wolf, 1776; Rabbi Mahrun, before 1790; Aron Simon, 1790; Simon Abraham Gatzert, 1792–1842; Simon Geis, 1842; and David Frank, 1891–1938/39.

Teacher David Frank was a respected figure in Alsbach. Not known until 1988 was the fact that his neighbour, Ludwig Schneider, a National Socialist, had hidden the Frank family from the Gestapo in his house.

Teacher Frank endured the tragedy of the destruction of the Alsbach school and Jewish cemetery. Hugo Wolf informed us that Frank and his wife managed to emigrate to the USA in 1939. Both are buried in Chicago, in a cemetery that was created in 1940 by people who fled Germany and Austria in the Hitler era. The headstones at the cemetery are all 18 inches high (approx. 50cm).

In 1925, the Alsbach community planted the “Friedenslinde” – peace linden tree, in remembrance of the suffering caused by WWI, and to warn against future warfare. Five of the last 21 Jews residing in the community had perished in concentration camps.

In March 1991, during the Week of Fraternity (an event organised for the Christian-Jewish cooperation in Germany since March 1952), the community of Alsbach-Hähnlein unveiled a public memorial panel, a bronze work by Darmstadt artist, Gotthelf Schlotter.

In his work, Schlotter presented a period of Alsbach history, beginning in 1569, and ending in 1938, with a burning Star of David. Shalom (peace) becomes Chalom (dream) and peace and dreams become nightmares.

Regional Rabbi Chaim Lipschitz led the unveiling of the plaque at the Alsbach community centre. He said: *“This panel is a work of humanity, ensuring that events from the Nazi era may never be forgotten. The suffering of the Jewish people in Germany has torn many deep wounds. Families had hoped for peace, but they were plunged into a nightmare.”*



Memorial panel in Alsbach.



Map of Alsbach showing parcels of land in 1831.

The "X" marks the location of the Jewish synagogue and school.

Planting the “Friedenslinde”
in Alsbach c.1925. David Frank
is circled, near the centre.

(Planting a linden tree was
a symbolic act of peace to
commemorate the end of WWI.)



David Frank, with his wife
Bettchen and grandson Walter
Jonas, on the occasion of
the couple's golden wedding
anniversary. c.1939.





**The children of the religious school and their teacher,
David Frank, 1911**

The image shows the children from Alsbach, Seeheim, Hähnlein, Bickenbach and Jugenheim in the courtyard of the Alsbach school.

Hugo Wolf commented: There were only a few from Jugenheim.

The original photo is owned by Mrs Mina Jonas, the daughter of the teacher, David Frank. The girl to the left of Frank is Rosa Wolf (Bickenbach), daughter of Lazarus Wolf, future wife of Friedrich David, and mother of Hilde Korr and Leslie Kawin.

The big lad to the right of the photo is Arthur David (Alsbach), who was killed in action during WWI for the Kaiser and Germany. "He'll get a medal for that!" commented Hugo Wolf.



Originally, the grandson of David Frank, Rabbi Jack Frank, translated the Hebrew text on the headstones into English; then Hugo Wolf translated the English into German.

The editor hopes the translation here of the German back into English is adequate.

*Here lies buried the esteemed
and respected David,
son of Rabbi Zvi Zev Frank
(a Levite)
who passed away on the
14th Kislev, 5708 (27 Nov 1947).
May his soul live on in eternity.*

*Here lies the diligent
Betty Frank,
daughter of Rabbi Abraham,
wife of the revered Rabbi David,
a Levite, interred.
She was buried here on the
6th Elul, 5725 (3 Sep 1965).
May her soul live on in eternity.*

Overview of Jewish inhabitants of Alsbach from 1933

Of the 21 Jewish inhabitants of Alsbach in 1933, five were murdered.

No.	Surname	First name	Year of birth	Status	Fate
1.	<i>David</i>	Helene	1863	widow of Lazarus D.	1939 went to USA
2.	<i>David</i>	Ludwig	1902	businessman, son of 1	1937 went to USA with family
3.	<i>David</i>	Berta	1906	wife of 2	1937 went to USA with family
4.	<i>David</i>	Evi Beate	1932	daughter of 2	1937 went to USA with family
5.	<i>David</i>	Rosel Fränze	1932	daughter of 2	1937 went to USA with family
6.	<i>David</i>	Felix	1882	businessman	went to USA with family
7.	<i>Duff</i>	Josef	unknown	prokurist ¹	1936 went to England
8.	<i>Frank</i>	David	1864	cantor	16 June 1939 went to USA
9.	<i>Frank</i>	Betty	1862	wife of 8	16 June 1939 went to USA, died 1967
10.	<i>Frank</i>	Frieda	1892	daughter of 8	16 June 1939 went to USA
11.	<i>Horowitz</i>	Anna	1904	housekeeper	1937 went to USA with children
12.	<i>Marx</i>	Daniel	1863	unknown	died in Alsbach 17 July 1935
13.	<i>Marx</i>	Auguste	1878	wife of 12	c.1940 went from Trieste to USA
14.	<i>Marx</i>	Elias	1894	merchant	1936 went to Frankfurt, murdered
15.	<i>Marx</i>	Sophie	1894	wife of 14	1936 went to Frankfurt, murdered
16.	<i>Marx</i>	Josef	1921	son of 14	1936 went to Frankfurt, murdered
17.	<i>Marx</i>	Nathan	1909	son of 12	1938 went to USA
18.	<i>Marx</i>	Helmut	1911	son of 12	1938 went to USA
19.	<i>Mayer</i>	Zacharias	1896	stone mason	Went to England, then Australia ²
20.	<i>Sußmann</i>	Elisabeth	1864	widow of Samuel S.	1938 went to Holland, murdered
21.	<i>Sußmann</i>	Johanna	1899	daughter of 20	1938 went to Holland, murdered

From: *Heimatbuch. The municipality of Alsbach* by Rudolf Kunz, published in 1970 by the parish council of Alsbach a. d. Bergstrasse.

1. A "Prokurist" can approve payments, and many other things that are normally only carried out by the highest management. What he or she may do is usually agreed in a special contract. eg. represent the company in court, or hire and fire employees. Source: *German Words Explained*.

2. Zacharias Mayer was aboard HMT *Dunera*, the same ship on which Ernst Wolf, son of Benno and Settchen Wolf, was sent to Australia in July 1940.

The number of Jews in Alsbach and surrounding areas (figures for the years 1570, 1618, 1704 are estimates)

Place	1570	1618	1704	1774	1828	1871	1890	1900	1910	1925	1933	1939
Alsbach	5	10	20	17	31	30	40	51	58	27	21	6
Auerbach	–	–	unknown	19	79	80	50	50	41	45	31	unknown
Bickenbach	–	–	5	8	48	26	19	14	6	9	11	–
Hähnlein	–	–	–	13	42	25	27	23	27	15	4	–
Jugenheim	–	–	5	9	14	7	15	11	11	8	7	1
Seeheim	–	–	10	20	48	51	50	62	38	32	19	3
Zwingenberg	5	5	5	17	39	54	64	56	55	51	40	2

Jewish population as a percentage of total (German) population

Place	1570	1618	1704	1774	1828	1871	1890	1900	1910	1925	1933	1939
Alsbach	1.4	2.5	8	4.7	5.4	4.5	4.8	5.9	5.4	2.2	1.6	0.3
Auerbach	–	–	–	2.6	5.0	5.4	2.7	2.4	1.6	1.4	0.9	–
Bickenbach	–	–	2.0	2.2	5.8	2.7	1.8	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	–
Hähnlein	–	–	–	3.0	5.6	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.0	0.26	–
Jugenheim	–	–	2.0	3.0	2.4	0.9	1.4	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.1
Seeheim	–	–	2.5	3.3	5.0	4.7	4.2	4.3	2.1	1.6	0.8	0.1
Zwingenberg	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.4	2.7	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.1	2.5	1.9	0.1
Hesse-Darmstadt	–	–	–	–	3.1	3.0	2.6	–	1.9	1.5	1.2	–
Germany	–	–	–	–	1.2	1.2	1.1	–	0.9	0.9	0.8	–

From: *Heimatbuch. The municipality of Alsbach* by Rudolf Kunz, published in 1970 by the parish council of Alsbach a. d. Bergstrasse.

The following is from a document from the State Constabulary, Bensheim District, Zwingenberg Station, dated 19 March 1936. It lists 32 members of the Jewish community of Alsbach, including Hähnlein and Bickenbach.

Register of Jews according to status and profession

No.	Surname	First name	Date of birth	Place of birth	Profession	Remarks
Municipality of Alsbach						
1.	<i>David</i>	Ludwig	7 April 1902	Alsbach	businessman	
2.	<i>David</i>	Gerda	3 April 1906	Sterbfritz	wife	born Goldschmidt
3.	<i>David</i>	Evi	2 April 1932	Darmstadt	without profession	
4.	<i>David</i>	Ursel	2 April 1932	Darmstadt	without profession	
5.	<i>David</i>	Helene	22 May 1863	Dornheim	without profession	born Schönferber
6.	<i>Frank</i>	David	14 October 1864	König/Odenwald	teacher/retired	
7.	<i>Frank</i>	Betty	23 May 1862	Hähnlein	wife	born Wolf
8.	<i>Frank</i>	Frieda	6 January 1892	Alsbach	without profession	
9.	<i>Horowitz</i>	Wolf	8 December 1904	Worms	watchmaker	
10.	<i>Horowitz</i>	Anna	8 September 1904	Sianky (Poland)	wife	born Teichmann
11.	<i>Horowitz</i>	Edith	2 October 1929	Mannheim	without profession	
12.	<i>Horowitz</i>	Renate	11 November 1933	Biblis	without profession	
13.	<i>Marx</i>	Auguste	16 July 1878	Mümling Grumbach	unknown	born Kahn
14.	<i>Marx</i>	Nathan	11 September 1909	Alsbach	businessman	
15.	<i>Marx</i>	Helmuth	30 December 1911	Alsbach	businessman	
16.	<i>Marx</i>	Elias	11 November 1894	Alsbach	tradesman	
17.	<i>Marx</i>	Sofie	21 January 1894	Oberklingen	wife	born Wolf
18.	<i>Marx</i>	Josef	28 February 1921	Alsbach	without profession	
19.	<i>Sußmann</i>	Settchen	27 June 1864	Hechtshelm	without profession	born Selig
20.	<i>Sußmann</i>	Johanna	11 January 1899	Alsbach	without profession	
Municipality of Hähnlein						
21.	<i>Lehmann</i>	Aron	17 December 1876	Hähnlein	businessman	
22.	<i>Lehmann</i>	Dora	8 March 1878	Gerolzhofen	wife	born Sündermann
23.	<i>Lehmann</i>	Ludwig	11 January 1912	Hähnlein	businessman	
24.	<i>Levi</i>	Heymann	20 November 1883	Hähnlein	pedlar, hawker	
25.	<i>Kuhse</i>	Adolf	24 November 1906	Hähnlein	pedlar, hawker	
Municipality of Bickenbach						
26.	<i>Wolf</i>	Benno	3 November 1890	Bickenbach	livestock dealer	
27.	<i>Wolf</i>	Settchen	18 September 1890	Stockstadt am Rhein	wife	born Gutjahr
28.	<i>Wolf</i>	Ludwig	12 October 1919	Bickenbach	without profession	
29.	<i>Wolf</i>	Ernst	30 December 1921	Bickenbach	without profession	
30.	<i>Wolf</i>	Rosel	28 June 1929	Bickenbach	without profession	
31.	<i>Wolf</i>	Rena	20 July 1916	Bickenbach	without profession	
32.	<i>Wolf</i>	Sara	22 September 1876	Ehrstädt	without profession	born Oestereicher

“The Secret of the Postcard”

To conclude the story about the Jewish school, there is a contribution which gives insight into everyday life in our region 100 years ago.

It was certainly not an earth-shattering matter, but those there at the time, knew why it was done. Afterall, it was about “their school”.

On 27 July 1990, Marion Mayer, daughter of Johanna Hedwig (Hedy) Bentheim, wrote to Bickenbach from the USA saying:

“In the spring of this year my cousin Gordon Styer, from Deerfield, formerly Günther Steiermann, from Reinheim, found a postcard from the year 1892 in his mother Martha’s (sister of my mother of Hedy) documents. It was addressed to: ‘The Highly esteemed Board of Directors of the Community of Alsbach in Bickenbach on the Bergstrasse.’

The postcard must have been in the possession of the Bentheim family since 1892, as Salomon and Leopold Bentheim, both of our great grandfathers and grandfathers were involved in the Alsbach Jewish parish council.”

This letter was originally intended for the chapter on the Bentheim family. But, I think it belongs to here, on the history of the school, especially with the additional comments by Marion Mayer and Hugo Wolf.

The contents of the postcard was described in the *Darmstädter Echo*, 4 April 1991. The story with the following headline, was accompanied by images of the postcard:

The Secret of the Old Postcard!

This mysterious postcard was sent on the 22 April 1892, according to the Frankfurt postmark. The “3-4 N” means after 3-4pm. Inquiries made about the postmark to the German Federal Post, informs us the “(Main) 3” probably refers to the Frankfurt Railway Post Office.



The secret is hidden in the hand-drawn colour image on the back of the card, which is framed by verses.

It is probably a satire and a theft report at the same time. But the initiators (there are two different handwriting styles) wanted to be anonymous.

It seems that because there was a broken or missing furnace, they wanted to poke fun at the school board. The issue seems to have been a problem for a while, and perhaps a business trip provided the opportunity to post the card from Frankfurt.

Hugo Wolf had an inkling that Simon Bentheim could have been involved, as he knew about the stove. Simon lived in Frankfurt, came to visit Bickenbach often, and also supplied the Alsbach teacher, David Frank, with new nigunim (Jewish religious tunes) for singing at the church services.

Marion Mayer at first thought it was an offer about the purchase of a stove. But upon closer inspection of the card we can see that in front of the impressive stove is a filled brazier, a pile of wood, and from behind the stove peeps a policeman or a police attendant.

In three satirical verses, the writer confronts the community Board of Directors, whose were mainly

Bickenbachers, with the problems in the synagogue. The satirical verses say the following:

*The stove arrives quite soon
I pray,
Or else I really cannot stay,
Winter freezes stone and bone,
In the synagogue it's too cold
to atone.
Just think about the biggest
freeze,
All of Alsbach is on its knees,
That would then be very poor,
Why can't you get the coals here?
Marum might implore.³*

The writer and artist obviously knew the internal goings-on of the school to an embarrassing degree, lamenting the new stove and giving a hidden clue, pointing the finger at a coal theft perhaps. Why else would a moustachioed policeman peep from behind the stove, guarding the well-filled coal box? Also, the senders indicated the possible perpetrators or accessories, as they mentioned that Marum apparently knew of the coal theft and may have even been involved. Did they look for a way to admonish their fellow community member and maybe friend, by bringing it out in the open like this? The artist has clearly represented the priorities of the issues through the presentation of the policeman, stove and coal-box and spared the words. But, if he had done so, our interpretation of the situation would not be needed 100 years later.

Eighty-year-old Hugo Wolf remembered the stove in the school. If the oven was new in 1892, it had become



old in his time. However, in 1938 the end came with the destruction of the school.

As a result of Hugo Wolf's mention of nigunim, Marion Mayer sought more information about nigunim from cantor, Elliot Joel Portner, of the Congregation Rodfei Zedek in Chicago.

The work *Ba'al Tefillah, oder der Practische Vorbeter* ('Ba'al Tefillah, or The Practical Preacher') by German cantor Abraham Baer and published in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1877, revealed a collection of sacred songs and recitatives of the Israelites, including Polish, German Ashkenazic, and Portuguese Sephardic tunes, as well as the rituals and customs relating to worship.

In early spring, 1993, after reading the book, *Jews in Seeheim and Jugenheim*, Ludwig Wolf recalled:

"The book contains names that are very familiar to me. Rudolf Mayer often helped the teacher, David Frank, in Alsbach, especially during the high holidays. What particularly reminds me these days was his singing, because he sometimes sang operatic arias instead of the Jewish nigunim. The Alsbach Shul was the only one in the world where you could hear *Rigoletto*, *Troubadour* and *The Force of Destiny* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And Julius Mayer was the man to whom I owe my life to a large extent, because he provided me with the guarantee that I needed to be able to come to America."

3. Marum: a first name for boys.

The editor has used a degree of latitude in getting the translated verse to rhyme. The gist of the original meaning is chiefly retained.

On religion and the Jewish faith

A note from the editors

The following text is not intended to provide any scholarly explanation of the Jewish religion, obviously a topic that is way too large and complex for this book. We believe the author had some familiarity with the subject of Jewish faith but would not have described himself as an expert. We apologise for any inadequate explanation, misplaced emphasis, inaccuracy or generalisation.

When writing about the history of Jews in Bickenbach, it is necessary to contribute some information about the Jewish religion, even if only briefly.

Abraham was the founding father of the relationship between God and the Jewish people, and taught the concept that there was only one God. But most importantly, there was Moses.

Moses was a historical and legendary figure from the tribe of Levi. In the 13th century BC, he took over leadership of the people as a lawmaker and judge. Through him, Jews obtained religious and national self-awareness.

The traditional name of the divine being, “The Holy One, He be Praised” corresponds to “The All-Holy One”, and a direct form of address is unusual. In the Jewish religion the name God is never directly mentioned, but written as Yahweh, or the four Hebrew letters “YHWH”, which is read as “Adonai”.

Faith was crucial in the covenant between Yahweh and his chosen people. He, transcendent and intangible, did not reveal Himself, only His will, the fulfilment of which was made conditional to the continuation of the covenant.

At this point it should be noted that, in addition to the Jewish religion, philosophy and literature form a mutually complementary and fertile union. Jewish philosophy was always closely associated with religion. It was formed mainly by the intrusion of the Greek world into Jewish culture. The first important Jewish philosopher and theologian was Philo of Alexandria (25 BC to 50 CE). Philo tried to deepen Jewish understanding of God through Greek philosophy, especially of Plato, as well as adding mystical ideas

in his comments on Genesis. The concept of the “Logos” as a mediator between God and the world comes from Philo. With his ethics, he was close to the Stoa yet, at the same time, stressed the approach to God as the highest moral duty of the people.

Stoa, which comes from the Greek “Stoa Poikile”, or “painted porch”, specifies the name for the philosophical direction which began in Athens in 300 BC, known as Stoicism, a school of philosophy which continued into the Roman Empire until its decline with the emergence of Christianity.

Jewish literature covers a time span of over three millennia, from ancient copies of the Old Testament, until today. The language of the Old Testament, primarily Hebrew, was the language of the Israelites. As Hebrew disappeared, the texts were translated into Aramaic.

The Old Testament is the story of a people and the history of mankind. It follows the development of a people and a community in a small area of the world as they knew it then. The great nations of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians made the history of mankind, while the Israelites created the history of the human spirit.

The work in its entirety is powerful and universal. It is told that the birth of monotheism – the belief in one God – in the midst of polytheism practised at the time, became the burning mission of a people. One can see how the belief in the concept of a single God occurred, and after it the conclusion that all men were brothers, bringing broad social and ethical implications.

The Bible (known as the book of books), specifically the Old Testament, gives insight into the Jewish faith. Roughly outlined, one needs to differentiate between the written and the oral teachings.

Written teachings in the narrower sense

The “Law” (Hebrew: Torah / Greek: Pentateuch).

Christian scholars refer to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, as the Pentateuch (Greek, meaning five books).¹

The Hebrew word “torah”, also means instruction, guidance or law. So the Torah is referred to as the “Law”. The Torah signifies not only the whole Bible, but all

1. The very first translation of the Hebrew scriptures was into Greek and known as the Septuagint.



Darmstadt Haggadah, 15th century.

its teachings while, at the same time, emphasising the essence of its substantial spiritual wisdom.

Traditionally ascribed to Moses, the Torah is revelatory. It is the deed of the covenant made at Mount Sinai, between God and the people of Israel.

Every synagogue has an ark, or holy place, where its Torah scrolls are kept. The celebration of Simchat Torah is an annual Jewish holiday marking a cycle of public reading of the Torah. The holy Torah scrolls are brought out of the ark and people celebrate around them.

The oral traditions

The Talmud (Hebrew: teach, study) is made up of two parts, the Mishnah and the Gemara.

The Mishnah (Hebrew: study by repetition) is the collection of oral Jewish tradition. First compiled by Rabbi Judah at about the end of 200 CE, it was an edited record of the original oral teachings, collected over centuries, and the work of many rabbis.

The Mishnah consists of six orders which together form 63 treatises. The six orders are:

- Zearim (seeds), regarding prayer, tithe and agriculture laws.
- Moed (festival), regarding Sabbath and festivals.

- Nashim (women), regarding marital and family law.
- Nezikin (damages), regarding civil and criminal law, rules of procedure.
- Kodashim (holy things), regarding sacrificial rites and food laws.
- Tohorot (purity), regarding purity of the dead, purity of food and purity of the body.

The Gemara (Aramaic: study, integration) is the part of the Talmud which contains the rabbinical discussions about the Mishnah from 200–600 CE.

The Halacha is the collective body of Jewish religious laws derived from the written and oral Torah. This is different to the Haggadah, the non-legal or narrative material, which are parables, maxims, or anecdotes

in the Talmud and other rabbinical literature, and serve to illustrate the meaning or purpose of a law, custom, or Biblical passage being discussed, or to introduce a different, unrelated topic. These are not recognised by many scholars but are important for Jewish mysticism, such as the Kabbalah, and the holy book, the Zohar, with its effects on Chassidim.

Halacha and Haggadah are not formally separate, but mutually complement each other and are equally important.

The Talmud is the codified collection of Rabbinic Judaism, developed in the 3rd–4th centuries in Palestine. It is often called the Palestinian Talmud. There is also the Babylonian Talmud which originated in the 3rd–6th centuries in Babylon. This is often mentioned as the main source for the study of Judaism. The language used is Aramaic and Hebrew.

In the 11th century, the Midrash (Hebrew: research) was included in an updated version of the Old Testament. The Midrash consisted of two categories: Halacha for law and religious practice, and Haggadah for biblical interpretation and narrative.

Responsible for much comprehensive Talmudic commentary was Rabbi Shlomo ben Itzhaki, the Rashi

from Worms (the acronym Rashi came from Rabbi SHlomo Itzhak) and Gershom ben Judah, better known to scholars of Judaism as Rabbeinu Gershom (Hebrew: our teacher, Gershom) from Mainz. Also mentioned in this context is Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, known as Maimonides, doctor, philosopher and theologian, b.1135 Spain–d.1204 Egypt.

These men all had an enormous influence on Jewish philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages, especially through the codification of the Talmud.

Mention must also be made of Martin Buber, the Austrian-born Jewish philosopher, as he and his associate, Franz Rosenzweig, worked on a German translation of the Hebrew Bible.

The Old Testament books

First section, or Pentateuch:

Genesis: Beginning or creation.

Exodus: Movement out of Egypt.

Leviticus: Relating to the Levites, with God’s instructions on how to use the Tabernacle.

Numbers: The first census of Israelites and consolidation of a community.

Deuteronomy: “The Second Law”. To lead to obedience and warn against disobedience. There are 613 mitzvot or commandments in the Torah – 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments.

Second section, Historical books:

Book of Major Prophets (Nevi’im):
Joshua, Judges, Samuel I and II, Kings I and II.

Chronicles I and II, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs (or Solomon).

The three Major Prophets:
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

The twelve Minor Prophets:
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Third section:

The remaining scripts are Writings (Ketuvim). They are the third and final section of the old testament: Psalms, Book of Proverbs, Book of Job, Song of Songs, Book of Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Book of Esther, Book of Daniel, Book of Ezra-Book of Nehemiah, Chronicles I and II.

The Jewish cemetery at Alsbach

An entry in the old court records from Alsbach provides the first reference to the Jewish burial grounds on the Bergstrasse: “Anno 1616, on the 17th day Julius (July), the honourable court of Alsbach on instruction of master cellarman, Antonius Sarbruck, cellarman at Zwingenberg, has marked the area of land for the Jews to have their funerals. It is 5 rods and 4 shoes (about 22.7m) wide, and 10 rods and 4 shoes (44.4) long.¹ They are to give 10 albus of old currency annually for hereditary interest to our most benevolent prince (Landgrave Ludwig V of Hesse; 1596–1626) herein.”

The cemetery site at Alsbach, on the main road between Bickenbach and Zwingenberg, was originally barely half an acre in size, and was extended several times (in 1743, 1793 and 1858). Today it is the property of the State Association of Jewish Communities in Hesse and covers an area of 2.26 hectares (5.6 acres).

In 1741, Landgrave Ludwig VIII gave permission to surround the Jewish burial area with a wall. At the entrance on the east side, towards the road, stood the funeral chapel, which was replaced in 1793 by a new semicircular chapel.

In 1853, a new entry building was erected and the prayer block in the west wall was installed. In 1854, a second storey was added, built in the oriental style. Over the front door was the inscription:

“The Lord grants life,
the Lord grants death,
blessed be the eternal,
who inspirit the dead.”

The entrance hall was destroyed by the SA (Sturmabteilung) during Kristallnacht of 9-10 November 1938. The gap in the wall was closed after the end of WWII and access to the cemetery was relocated to the north side.



Alsbach Jewish cemetery.
Photo: Bernd Unger, 1979.

1. A 'rod' (rute) was a German measure for land in the 17th century, it was about 4.3m in length. A 'shoe' (schuh) was about 0.3m in length, possibly representing one foot. There are 15 shoes in a rod.

Throughout the German Reich, state sanctioned violence by the National Socialists allowed the SA and the SS (Schutzstaffel) to destroy, burn and kill. The cemetery desecration in Alsbach was perpetrated by the SA of Alsbach, Auerbach, Jugenheim, Bickenbach, Hähnlein and Zwingenberg. In addition to the destruction of the funeral chapel and the devastation of many tombs, the death registries, which had been kept there for over 300 years were also destroyed.

During the war primary school students and teachers from Alsbach and Bickenbach had access to the building in order to store enemy leaflets which they were tasked with collecting, so that the enemy propaganda would not demoralise the civilian population on the home front. Also at this time, masons and builders took building material from site. Many of the old gravestones in the eastern part of the cemetery were lost through this degrading thievery. The site suffered from this neglect until the invasion by US forces in March 1945. On the command of the American military administration (May-June, 1945), the former NS-PGs (party members) had to re-erect the overturned tombstones and clean the inscriptions on them.

Today, the maintenance of the cemetery is the responsibility of the town of Alsbach-Hähnlein. In about 1979-80, the municipality of Bickenbach encouraged the district of Darmstadt-Dieburg, as well as the state of Hesse, to arrange for the preservation of the tombstones, especially in the old part of the cemetery. The degradation of the inscriptions on the sandstone monuments was advancing rapidly. It was also a cultural and historical responsibility to document the cemetery.

In 1980, a survey was carried out by the municipal administration of Bickenbach and 2,153 tombstones were recorded. About 1987-88, the Hessian State Archives in Wiesbaden reported in a press release that the work on



Double headstone with the two blessing hands, in the Alsbach Jewish cemetery.

this site was completed thanks to the help of the Volkswagen Foundation. After the submission of the written evaluations, it was possible to gain a greater insight into the history of this burial place that had almost been lost.

Jews have always been aware of life in exile. Outside of the Holy Land, only the grave offered them a permanent resting place. The peace of the dead was not to be disturbed. Equality for all in death and before God is visibly demonstrated. No grave is used a second time. The bones of the dead will remain unaffected for all eternity, therefore any horticultural work is frowned upon. One looks in vain for floral decorations or well-tended paths. Thus, it was a US soldier

who visited the grave of his parents here in 1945 that prompted the cessation of repair work being done by the Nazis at the cemetery.

Jewish cemeteries are usually remote from former settlements, and located in places where it was never expected that there would be development in the future. From time immemorial it was seen as a serious outrage to disturb the graves. Therefore, the cemetery had to be expanded several times, as already described. It was not until 12 months after a burial that a gravestone was put in place. Row upon row run from north to south.

The partly sunken and lop-sided gravestones, on which nothing was allowed to be changed, express in poignant simplicity the desire of the dead for undisturbed rest. An inscription was engraved onto the back, so that it could be read without entering the tomb. Since the turn of the century, German text was used as well.

Double headstones, resembling the tablets of Moses, were in use from about 1740. A headstone of this type, excavated in Worms, claimed to have originated in pre-Christian times. In Alsbach, several double headstones date from about 1800.

Gravestones that have two blessing hands in relief

denote that they belong to priests or a male relative of a clerical family (kohen). At Alsbach, members of the priestly lineage are laid to rest together, close to the former entrance. Their families were forbidden to enter the graveyard. Stepping stones were installed in the wall for them, from which they could view the graves.

On the anniversary of a death, relatives would visit the grave of the deceased and, as a sign of their presence, would place a small stone on the grave. Depositing the stone is a very special expression of worship. It is in imitation of the custom of a desert people, building a stone mound over the body to protect it from wild animals.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the assimilation of Jews to modern living habits and the consequent move away from the commandments and traditions of their religion, resulted in the need of a notice at Alsbach cemetery which was written in *Sütterlin* (an old German font), pictured above.

The following souls found rest in Alsbach cemetery:

- Julius Bauer from Bensheim, murdered in a concentration camp, and buried by his niece, Edda Jonas.
- Hermann Kanthal from Worms, and before that, Biblis, died on 12 December 1938.
- Hedwig Bauer from Bensheim, was driven by persecution to commit suicide, and died on 15 February 1939.
- Max Hahn from Gernsheim, died on 12 June 1940.
- Rosa Hahn from Auerbach, died on 31 October 1940.

After WWII, a Polish family, a woman and her two children, who all died in a displaced persons camp in Bensheim, were buried at Alsbach.

The Alsbach Jewish cemetery is one of the largest in southern Hesse and served as a burial location for 30 municipalities: Alsbach, Auerbach, Bensheim, Biblis, Bickenbach, Biebesheim, Bürstadt, Crumstadt, Eberstadt, Elmshausen, Eschollbrücken, Gernsheim, Goddelau, Groß-Hausen, Groß-Rohrheim, Hahn, Hähnlein,

“Who is not from the tribe of Levi,
does not belong in this cemetery!”

Heppenheim, Hofheim, Jugenheim, Kleinhausen, Lorsch, Pfungstadt, Nordheim, Reichenbach, Schönberg, Seeheim, Schwanheim, Stockstadt and Zwingenberg.

At the suggestion of the Bickenbach township, in 1988, fifty years after Kristallnacht in 1938, and 372 years after the first mention of the Alsbach Jewish cemetery, a memorial plaque against the Nazi outrage was erected at the former funeral chapel. Günter Metzger (Lord Mayor of the city

of Darmstadt), Dr. Dietrich Kassmann (Head of the Bergstrasse district authority), Willi Blodt (Head of the Groß-Gerau district authority), Dr. Hans-Joachim Klein (Head of the Darmstadt-Dieburg district authority) and the communities of Bickenbach and Alsbach-Hähnlein ensured that this memorial could be created.

In an effort to save as much as possible for posterity, and to clearly signpost and underline history, we thank the Groß-Zimmern planning office for urban development, Mr. Manfred Klotzsch in Seeheim-Jugenheim, the Geodetic Institute of the Technical University of Darmstadt, as well as Dr. Heinemann, Wiesbaden State Archives, and the Commission for the History of Jews in Hesse, Wiesbaden. Thanks are due for the immediate assistance and collaboration of all participants, measuring and recording the grave locations and details, and thus providing the basis for the grave registry. The survey work, including the preparation of the plan, was carried out by students of the Geodetic Institute at Darmstadt Technical University, and was completed by the end of 1990.

Many men and women who escaped after 1933 and had sworn to never again set foot again on German soil, did return, sometimes with children and grandchildren, to commemorate their deceased family members.

Kurt Landsberg, from Wellfleet in Massachusetts, wrote to Bickenbach at the beginning of 1982 and expressed the following: “I would very much like to visit the cemetery ...”

This has now been done.

Detail from a Situations Chart, recorded by Artillery Lieutenant Haaß at Darmstadt in 1796. The “Jewish churchyard” (kirchhof) is indicated by the dot, which gives rise to the presumption that Artillery Lieutenant Haaß was not aware of the difference between a Jewish cemetery and a churchyard. It is also interesting that older people in our region still use the same expression, “Jewish churchyard”, in reference to the Jewish cemetery.



Hugo Wolf, from Chicago, commented in March 1988: “This photo was probably taken between 1923 and 1932 and shows Mr Frank, the teacher (left), and probably Mr Bentheim. Mr Bentheim was born in Bensheim and emigrated to England between 1910 and 1914. After the outbreak of WWI he was not interned as a German (in the UK), and he emigrated to America.”





The main path from the northern entrance gate was created in 1945. This photo was taken by Adolf Ritz in April 1987.



Impression of the Alsbach Jewish cemetery with castle and Melibokus.
Watercolour by Helmut Werner, Bickenbach, 1988.

Abraham Samuel ben Isaac Bacharach, Rabbi of Worms

Abraham Samuel ben Isaac Bacharach was born c.1575 in Jung-Bunzlau, Bohemia. He worked as a preacher in Prague, and was also a rabbi in Turobin (Poland), Kolín (Bohemia) and Pohrlitz (Moravia). Sometime in 1608, he was called to the Kahal Kadosh Warmaisa – the Holy Community of Worms. This calling was considered an extraordinary honour for the young man, whose scholarship had gained recognition

everywhere. He was a Talmudic authority and an expert in the scientific fields of astronomy and calendar systems.

The social unrest in Worms in 1615, prior to the Thirty Years' War breaking out across Europe, ended with the expulsion of Jews from Worms. As early as 1613, shopkeepers in Worms complained about Jewish profiteering, and the remaining 16 guilds in the city joined in a lawsuit. The city government was prompted to decry the Jews as useless and noxious to the city, but a magistrate ruled in favour of the Jews and opposed the order and loss of imperial privileges and protection. The guilds were told they should accept the interests of the Jews, and allow them to trade.

This action resulted in a raid on Jewish properties by members of the Guild. Jews were chased across the Rhine, but were able to return soon after, following intervention by the Archbishop of Mainz and the Landgraves of Hesse. The mood remained agitated, however, and during Passover in April 1615 (Easter Monday), a second pogrom occurred. Jews were driven across the Rhine once more, and their homes on Judengasse were looted and demolished.

Among those who fled was the family of Rabbi Bacharach. They found shelter in Gernsheim in the electorate of Mainz, but Abraham Samuel ben Isaac



Left: Gravestone of Rabbi Samuel Bacharach at the Alsbach Jewish cemetery. Right: Woodcut from a 1615 pamphlet *Kurtzer unvergreifflicher Bericht*.



Bacharach died on 2 May 1615, soon after arriving in Gernsheim, and he was buried in Alsbach.

His wife Chava (Eve) was the granddaughter of the high Rabbi of Prague, Judah ben Bezalel Löw. She was an admired Talmudist during her lifetime and, after her husband died, she and their children moved to Prague. About 1650, she came back to visit Worms with

her son, Samson, before she died in Sofia, on her way to the Holy Land. Son, Samson Bacharach, and grandson, Jair Hayyim Bacharach, (1638-1702) also became Rabbis of Worms.

The gravestone in Alsbach, is not the original but was erected after 1699. Judging by the shape of the stone and the font used, the stone could be from the 18th, if not the early 19th century. The inscription reads as follows:

Woe!

Since the precious vessel is destroyed, buried and interred here. This is the great Gaon, who praised Samuel, Who was great amongst the Jews, Head of the Courts of Justice and main Universities of the holy communities of Turbin, Kolin, Parlitz and Worms, the fortified city, And he was well versed in all parts of teaching.¹

His spiritual source bubbled far outwards.

From him the expert collections "The Scarlet Thread" are descended,

"He enlightened her lips and lillies". And with his expulsion from Worms he fled to Gernsheim.

There his feet bore him, and there he died.

Samuel was buried at the age of forty years, on the 3rd of the month of Iyyar [5]375 his splendour disappeared and his light was extinguished.²

My his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life!

1. Gaon was an eminent Jewish scholar noted for wisdom and knowledge of the Talmud.

2. 3rd of Iyyar 5375 in the Hebrew calendar equates to 2 May 1615 in the Gregorian calendar.

The graves of Bickenbach Jews in Alsbach, 1734–1934

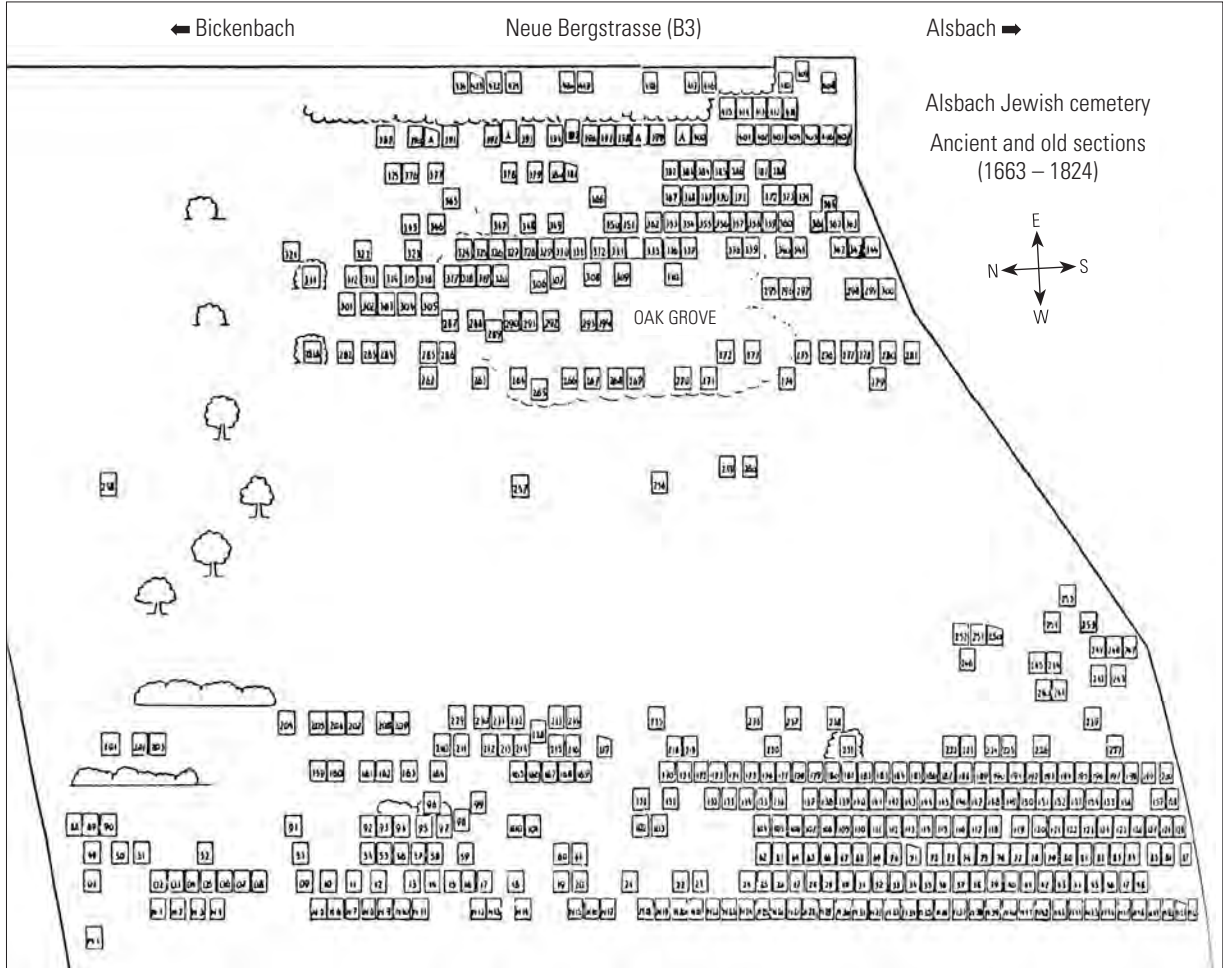
The Commission for the History of Jews in Hesse, Wiesbaden, has kindly provided some information for Bickenbach from the directory of graves at the Alsbach Jewish cemetery.

In total there are 29 entries for Bickenbach from the years 1734–1934. In the older part of the cemetery, in use from 1663–1824, ten graves are from Bickenbach.

In the documenting of the graves, it was found that the builder of the cemetery wall was buried there in the year 1757. Unfortunately, the partly broken and very weathered sandstone headstone no longer allows one to see where Joseph, son of Benjamin came from.

List of existing headstones of Jews from Bickenbach in the Alsbach Jewish cemetery 1987

No.	Date of death	Name
253	13 Oct 1734	Benjamin, son of Joseph
343	12 Sep 1775	Uri Schraga, son of Benjamin
407	(c.1780)	Salman, son of Naftali
361	18 Mar 1797	Wolf, son of Izik
37	12 Nov 1811	Vogel, daughter of Izik Löb
33	18 Mar 1813	Hennel, daughter of Joseph (blessed), wife of Salman (blessed)
N42	24 Feb 1814	Hirsch, son of Hirz (blessed)
364	1 Mar 1818	Henel, wife of Izik
411	9 Dec 1865	Jakob, son of Mordechai Mainzer
	23 Aug 1868	Merla Wolf
	5 Sep 1868	Wolf Wolf
	24 Oct 1869	Isaak Wolf
	28 Jun 1871	Rösele Wolf
	28 Apr 1875	Fradche Wolf
	28 Feb 1881	Karoline Mainzer
	10 Oct 1884	Babette Mainzer
	22 Nov 1884	Max Mainzer
395	3 Dec 1883	Isaak, son of Lazarus Wolf
	26 Dec 1890	Nannchen Bentheim
	2 Jan 1891	Rosa Wolf, first wife of Lazarus Wolf
	12 Nov 1892	Jettche Bentheim
	21 Dec 1897	Goldchen Mainzer
	6 Dec 1899	Hirsch Mainzer
	11 Sep 1906	Meta Wolf, daughter of Lazarus Wolf
	5 Feb 1913	Salomon Bentheim
	6 Aug 1924	Lazarus Wolf, son of Berle Wolf
	27 Oct 1929	Emil Wolf, son of Lazarus Wolf
	1 May 1930	Lina (Karoline) Wolf, second wife of Lazarus Wolf
	20 Nov 1934	Jakob Wolf, son of Berle Wolf





Josel. Here rests an honest and faithful man. His house was open to the poor. He used all his power and strength, to build a perimeter wall for the cemetery. That is Joseph, son of Benjamin, Died on Monday, new moon of Tevet, and buried on Tuesday, [5]518. His soul is bound up in the bond of eternal life! (*12 Dec 1757)*



Here rests Isaak God took him in the bloom of his youth, great was his pain. The noble boy, the son of the honourable Elieser Wolf from Bickenbach, Born on the holy Sabbath, 25th Tevet [5]636, Died on Monday, 4th Kislev [5]644. His soul is bound up in the bond of eternal life! (*3 Dec 1883)*



Here rests an excellent wife, modest and pious as Abigail. Henel, daughter of the hon. Joseph (blessed), Wife of Salman (blessed), from Bickenbach. Died and buried on Thursday, 16th Adar II [5]573. Your soul is bound up in the bond of eternal life! Henel, Bickenbach (*18 Mar 1813)*



Here rests a man whose change in honesty was, and completely his doing. Wolf, son of the honourable Izik (blessed), from Bickenbach, Died on the holy Sabbath, Sunday, 21st Adar I [5]557. His soul is bound up in the bond of eternal life! Wolf, Bickenbach (*18 Mar 1797)*





*Here rests a favourite child,
adorable and lovely,
Jakob,
son of honourable
Mordechai Mainzer
from Bickenbach.
Died on the holy Sabbath,
21st of Kislev [5]626.*
His soul is bound up in the
bond of eternal life!
(*9 Dec 1865)*



*Here rests a pious and
righteous man,
Strong as a lion, nimble as
a gazelle and fast as an
eagle.
Hirsch, son of hon. Herz
(blessed), from Bickenbach.
Died and buried on
Wednesday, 3rd of Adar
[5]574.*
His soul is bound up in the
bond of eternal life!
Hirsch, Bickenbach
(*24 Feb 1814)*



*Here rests and lies buried an
honest and upright man,
Who always went the good
way. His good deeds were
like dew and rain.
He was generous with his
money, and faithful in his
profession.
He was merciful towards
anyone far beyond
measure.
His body may rest in the
earth, but his soul is
graciously received in the
Garden of Eden!
This is Benjamin, son of
Joseph from Bickenbach,
Died on 2nd day of Sukkot
and buried on [...]
[5]495.*
His soul is bound up in
the bond of eternal life,
together with the other
righteous. Amen! Sela!
(*13 Oct 1734)*



Death of a traveller



Bickenbach station about the end of the 19th century. In the background is the goods hall, which was demolished in the mid-1970s.

As life progresses, death may come unexpectedly, perhaps on a business trip or a visit to friends or relatives. On the morning of 2 September 1877, Abraham Jakob, a merchant from the Palatinate, was on his way to Bickenbach railway station when he was struck down in the truest sense of the word.

The Bickenbach death register from 1877 provided information on the event in an order from the county court dated 4 September 1877. According to the medical reports, the deceased had perished from a stroke.

Since no timetables for the Main-Neckar railway from this period are available, it remains unclear whether 69-year-old Jakob arrived on a train coming from Bensheim or from Darmstadt. It also remains unclear what kind of goods or baggage he had with him, and to whom the possessions were eventually handed to.

The man's sudden death occurred somewhere on the 500-metre long path on the village high street. The exact spot where he died is not specified. We can say with certainty that it was on what is now Bahnhofstrasse – then called “Viehweg” (literally “cattle path”, or “cattle

trail”) – because Bickenbach station was built in 1848 and the street connected the town to the station.

This unusual incident, involving a stranger, would have most likely caused some excitement in the village. The body was probably found by a farmer going to the field or on his way home, who would have promptly reported the incident to the mayor.

We have to assume that the identification of the body was not a problem, because there was evidence in the documents that he travelled with appropriate ID papers. The death certificate and invoices provided some insight into the funeral expenses. It should be noted that it has not been ascertained whether the costs of 54.44 marks were charged to somebody by the municipality collector, or if the funeral costs were covered as part of a pauper's burial.

However, the invoice paperwork clearly documents that the deceased was buried as a devout Jew. We understand from the information in the invoices of Salomon Bentheim from Bickenbach and of Zacharias Abr. Mayer of Alsbach, that Salomon Bentheim did not

have a tallith and therefore needed to procure one in Alsbach.¹

Also paid for were two Christian watchmen, Johannes Hofmann and Wilhelm Krämer from Bickenbach, who kept vigil on the nights of 2-3 September 1877.

The grave of Abraham Jakob, from Altleininger Tal near Wattenheim (in the Palatinate), is not listed in the directory of gravestones of Jews from Bickenbach in the Alsbach Jewish cemetery compiled by the Commission of Jews in Hesse, Wiesbaden. It is unknown whether a gravestone was set for Jakob or if it was stolen or damaged during WWII.

Register of deaths in the municipality Bickenbach
No. 30

Bickenbach 15 September 1877

Due to the district court order of 4 September 1877, the following is registered here: according to the medical report, Abraham Jakob, 69 years old, haberdasher and shoemaker, of Jewish denomination, native of Kirchheim an der Ecke near Grünstadt, last resided in Altleininger area near Wattenheim and Karlsberg, parents unknown, died of a stroke in the morning of 2 September 1877 on the journey between Bickenbach Railway station and Bickenbach township.

Civil Registrar
Herpel

Bickenbach den 3. September 1877

RECHNUNG

für die Gemeinde Bickenbach
von Salomon Bendheim daselbst

1877	September 3	13,7 meter Leinwand	1,45	19 78
		1 Gürtel		36
		Arbeitslohn		4 -
		1 Bettuch		2 80
		1 Hemd		4 -
				30,94

Bickenbach, 3 September 1877

Invoice

for the Bickenbach municipality,
Salomon Bendheim thereat

3 September 1877	
13.7m linen @ 1.45 pm	19 78
1 belt/girdle	36
wages	4
1 tallith	2 80
1 shirt	4
	30 94

1. Tallith – a fringed garment traditionally worn by Jewish men at prayer.

H. Hofmann 1877

Rechnung
für
die Großherzogliche Bürgermeisterei Bickenbach
über Wächterlohn

Herr Johann Hofmann	5 -
„ „ Wilhelm Krämer	5 -
Summa	10 -

Bickenbach den 3ten September 1877

Rechnung
für
Die Großherzogliche Bürgermeisterei Bickenbach
über Wächterlohn

Sept. 2 Johannes Hofmann	3, --	Mark / Pf.
„ „ Wilhelm Krämer	5, --	
Summa	10, --	

Bickenbach
für die Bezeichnung der Verstorbene
Israeliten am 23 September 1877 zwischen
der Station Bicken & Bicken an Abrah. [Abraham]
Jakob von —

Bickenbach, 3 September 1877

Invoice

for the Grand Ducal Mayoralty of
Bickenbach concerning watchmen fees

2 September	mark	pf.
Johannes Hofmann	5	-
Wilhelm Krämer	5	-
Total	10	-

Invoice for watchmen fees for the deceased
Israelite on 2-3 September 1877 between
Bickenbach station and Bickenbach
[Abraham Jakob].

L. Rebenich 1877

Rechnung
für die Gemeinde Bickenbach
von Ludwig Rebenich Schreiner

Sept. 3ten Für Lieferung des Holzes*, zu dem Begräbnis des hier verstorben Abraham Jakob aus Engelthal	6
Summa	6

Bickenbach den 6ten September 1877

Rechnung
für die Gemeinde Bickenbach
von Ludwig Rebenich Schreiner

Sept. 3ten Für Lieferung des Holzes*, zu dem Begräbnis des hier verstorben Abraham Jakob aus Engelthal	6	M / Pfg
Summa	6	6 Mark

* Sarg

Bickenbach, 6 September 1877

Invoice

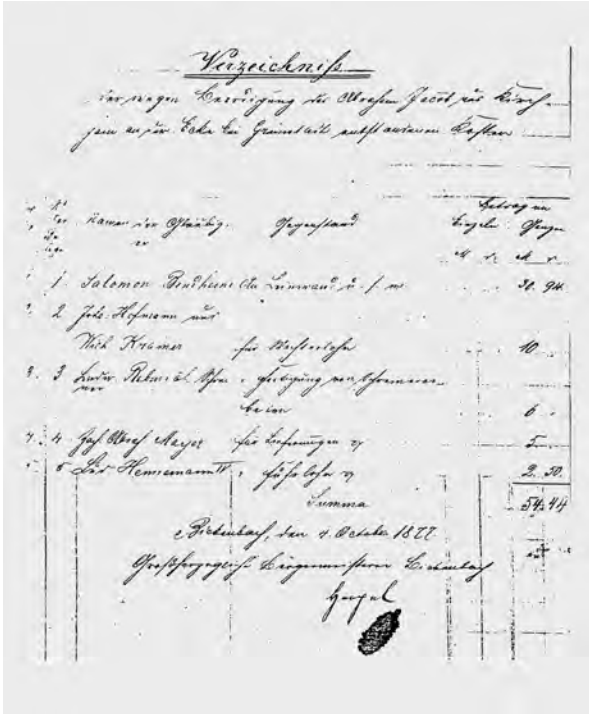
for the Bickenbach municipality
from Ludwig Rebenich, cabinetmaker

3 September

For delivery of timber* for the burial of the
deceased, Abraham Jakob, from Engelthal.

Total: 6 marks

*casket



Inventory

of costs incurred for the funeral of Abraham Jakob from Kirchheim a. d. Ecke near Grünstadt.

No.	Doc. No.	Name of creditor	Object	Amount	
				Single M pfgr	Total M pfgr
1	1	Salomon Bentheim	for canvas [linen] etc.		30,94
2	2	Jakob Hofmann & Wilh. Krämer	for custodial fees		10,-
3	3	Ludwig Rebenich	for joinery services		6,-
4	4	Zach. Abrah. Mayer	for supplies		5,-
5	5	Ludwig Hennemann	for cartage		2,50
				Total	54,44

Bickenbach, 4 October 1877
 Grand Ducal mayoralty of Bickenbach
 Herpel

Fol. _____ Alsbach, den 3^{ten} Septbr 1877

RECHNUNG

für die Gemeinde Bickenbach

von Zach. Abr. Mayer.

Monat	Tag		Mark	Pf.
Septbr	3	für ein Leinwandstück von Engelthal ein (Thalis) wollenes Umhang- tuch geliefert zu	5	—
Sept	3	Zur Beerdigung der Leiche des Abraham Jakob aus Engelthal ein (Thalis) wollenes Umhang- tuch geliefert zu	5	—

Alsbach, 3 September 1877

Invoice

for the Bickenbach municipality
from Zacharias Abraham Mayer

For burial of the body of Abraham Jakob
from Engelthal, a woollen shawl (tallith)
was provided.

No. 5

Bickenbach, den 3^{ten} September 1877

für die Gemeinde Bickenbach

von Ludwig Hennemann III

Septbr 3	für eine Fuhr von der Gemarkung Bickenbach an den israelitischen Friedhof (gefa(h)ren, den verstorbe- nen Israeliten Abraham Jacob von Engelthal für Stroh	2	50
		Sa.	2,50

Bickenbach, 3 September 1877

Invoice

for the Bickenbach municipality
from Ludwig Hennemann III

For a wagon-load of straw driven from the
Bickenbach area to the Israelite cemetery
for the deceased Israelite, Abraham Jakob,
of Engelthal.

Chevra Kadisha – the holy society

In a sense, a Jewish community is not complete without a cemetery, a prayer house and at least one minyan and a mikveh. Often these are in different locations due to the diaspora. The Alsbach cemetery was the last resting place for the dead of 30 cities and municipalities in the local region.

The Alsbach cemetery came into being due to the generosity of the Landgraves. They did not want to grant a separate Jewish resting place in each of the towns and have each under individual local administrations.

The synagogue, ‘the shul’, fulfills many roles, in contrast to Christian churches. It may function as a house of prayer, a house of study, or as a house of assembly. It is also a meeting place of all social classes in the municipality.

While Christians speak of the churchyard and the cemetery as the last resting place, in Judaism the meaning or interpretation of a cemetery is the “house of eternity”, “house of the graves”, or the “good or holy place”.

Customary since ancient times, and in keeping with Jewish tradition, the chevra kadisha, or the “holy society”, took care of burials.¹

God’s highest gift to humans is life. Death is the greatest evil and each living person knows that it will catch up with them sooner or later. A Jewish person who has died will be buried by the chevra kadisha. Each grave is only occupied once, because of the expectation of the coming of the Messiah. When a death occurs, the municipality takes over the required measures. The mourning family members are offered this good deed from the community to unburden them.



The Funeral, by Paul Christian Kirchner, Jewish Ceremonial, Nuremberg 1734. (Historisches Museum, Frankfurt).

Before burial happens, a funeral ceremony takes place – the “approval of (divine) judgment”. The funeral ceremony can be held by any male member of the congregation, but usually a rabbi is ordered to attend. The close relatives of the deceased say a blessing during the ceremony: “The truthful judge is praised”. Then special prayers and psalms are recited for the immortality of the soul and eternal reward for the pious, and the eulogy for the deceased is read. The conclusion of the ceremony is the prayer of petition “El Maleh Rahamim” – “God, who is full of mercy”.

After the burial, seven days of mourning is observed called **shiva**, where the family stays at home and receives guests offering condolences and prayers, followed by the less restricted mourning period over thirty days

1. Chevra kadisha: an organisation of men and women who attends to the ritual cleansing and preparations for the burial of the deceased and oversees the management of the community cemetery.

(including the shiva). One year after a death, a close relative will recite the mourner's kaddish prayer in the synagogue. It is also traditional to set the gravestone a year after the death. With the exception of Israel, the inscriptions on the gravestones are in the respective national language, and in accordance with tradition, the information about the deceased will also be engraved on the gravestone in Hebrew.

On all the gravestones, one finds written in Hebrew "rests here" or "here is buried". Furthermore, the five Hebrew letters – **ו.נ.צ.ב.ה.**, which stand for the phrase "may his soul be bound in the union of (eternal) life". In Judaism the custom of decorating the graves with flowers and wreaths is not used. Coming from age-old tradition, and having its origins in displacement, small stones are laid on the grave. This action is repeated with each attendance of the grave. A new stone is put on the grave plate or the gravestone.

In the past, cremation was not practised in Judaism and was frowned upon as a heathen custom. Traditional orthodox Judaism therefore forbids cremation, while liberal Judaism permits the burying of ashes at a Jewish cemetery.

The following letter was sent from Chicago in April 1991, written by Marion Mayer, the daughter of Johanna Hedwig Bentheim:

More and more material is coming together for you, and today I have a surprise – it was for me too!

Once a month we (my husband Frank, son Ron and I) lead the Friday evening service in the Selfhelp Home for old people, which was started here in the 1930s by German-Jewish refugees. We were there last night, and I brought a picture with a group of men in it to show to Mina Jonas (née Frank), because her father (rabbi David Frank) was in the photo. I asked her when and on which occasion this photo was taken. She said: "Oh, that was the Kippe-Sude!" She explained to me that once a year the men of the Chevra, the funeral organisation, had a feast.

According to Marion Mayer, 'Sude' means without women. 'Kippe' is generally recognised as Yiddish, but the possible origin of the word could be from high German, meaning "on" or "standing at" the peak. Here, throughout

this description, the entire organisation is called "Kippe".

A year later, in April 1992, Hugo Wolf from Chicago recalled more about the event:

The Kippe-Sude was held once a year at Koppel's in Jugenheim; they had good food. When someone died, the Kippe members had to commission the coffin to be made at the carpenter's, and they washed and dressed the corpse. During the week of shiva, the seven days of mourning, minyan was held in the mourning house. Prayers were held in the morning and in the evening, and at least 10 men had to be present. That was one of the jobs of the Kippe.

Jugenheim had a (municipally-owned) hearse for a long time before Bickenbach. The Jewish hearse was different. It had a seat, like a chaise, for the carriage driver. Dracker Louis from Alsbach, then Wilhelm Keil from Jugenheim, drove the hearse with their horses. If it went far into the country, a front seat passenger would be there. Consider that people had to follow the hearse, from Eberstadt, Pfungstadt, Crumstadt, Bensheim and whatever else lay between the towns. At the entrance to the cemetery, where the gate is still located today, the coffin had to be taken out of the hearse and carried. One had to put the coffin down three times, before one could lower it into the grave. At the gate was a shed or hall where the hearse was stored and I assume that Mr. Bauer (from Alsbach) stored his tools there for making the graves. The carriage was closed, had only one door in the back, and was completely black.

Remember also that people sometimes had to walk for three or four hours, from Biblis or Reichenbach until they got to Alsbach. It was long before people had cars! If you did not see these things, you would not believe it.

The last recollection on the Kippe-Sude was given upon request by Moritz Neumann in July 1992:

The auspicious occasion of the feast of the members of the funeral committee, was in remembrance and commemoration of the birth of Moses.

Nobody had thought to ask overseas about the photo, as not much was known apart from a few names. So we would like to thank Mina Jonas, Marion Mayer in particular, and Hugo Wolf, for their contributions to the content of the picture of the Kippe-Sude (see next page).



The “Kippe-Sude” in the courtyard of the Koppel Pension in Jugenheim.

Well-known individuals were identified by Mina Jonas, Marion Mayer and Hugo Wolf, from Chicago, and Peter Hechler from Hähnlein. Photograph c.1910.

From left to right:

Back row: (1) Karl David (1893–1970), Alsbach; (2) Teacher, David Frank, Alsbach; (5) Arthur David (1895–1915), Alsbach (killed in action WWI).

Middle row: (1) Marum Götz, (née Löwenkopp), Alsbach; (2) Moritz Bentheim, mohel, Bickenbach; (4) Sally David (1880–1940), Alsbach, died in Holland; (5) Lippmann Wolf, brother-in-law of David Frank the teacher, Hähnlein; (6) Aaron Lehmann, Hähnlein; (9)? Jeitel, Pfungstadt; (13) Ludwig Kiefer, son of Marum Kiefer, Hähnlein.

Front row: (1) Ludwig David (1902-1965), Alsbach; (2) Lazarus David (1861-1927), Alsbach; (4) Lazarus Wolf, Bickenbach; (5) Gabriel Spieß, Hähnlein; (6) David Koppel, Jugenheim; (7) Marum Kiefer, Hähnlein; (8) Zodik Hahn, Auerbach; (9) Alfred Frank, Alsbach.

Hähnlein

Proof that people settled and lived in the area of today's Hähnlein a long time ago is provided by Roman and other finds. In the year 1650, Hähnlein was separated from the parish of Bickenbach, and thereafter it was annexed to Alsbach. It was not until 1730 that a clergy and teaching position was set up.

From about 1566 to 1570 Hähnlein had a population of 50. By 1641 it was 76; in 1770 it was 300; in 1843 it was 810; in 1858 it reached 1,010; by 1900 it was 1,174; and in 1945 it had reached 1,720. The municipalities of Alsbach and Hähnlein formed the municipality of greater Alsbach-Hähnlein in a regional reorganisation of 1972.

In terms of its structure, Hähnlein remained a farming village for longer than many municipalities on the Bergstrasse and in the Ried areas. The local craftsmen and small trade businesses supplied the population with the essentials of daily life. With continuing industrialisation, day labourers were able to earn income working as factory hands in Darmstadt. This is why in 1905, the Hähnlein stop was set up on the Main to Neckar railway line.

Jewish families had made their homes in Hähnlein as well. In 1774, there were 13 Jewish inhabitants; in 1828 there were 25, and in 1890 there were 27. But in 1900 only 23 Jews lived there, and by 1910 this had fallen to 10. In 1925 there were 15, and in 1933 there were only 7 Jews. By 1939 Hähnlein had no Jewish inhabitants.

The local Jews of Hähnlein were predominantly traders. As already described elsewhere, the Jews of Hähnlein belonged to the Alsbach 'Shul'. In 1861, together with the people of Schwanheim, they tried to establish a new independent Jewish religious community, but the request was not approved by the responsible authorities. At this time six Jewish families lived in Hähnlein, and three families in Schwanheim.

The Jews of Hähnlein, like the Jews of Bickenbach and Jugenheim, belonged to the Alsbach religious community until the destruction of the Shul in 1938.

After 30 January 1933, the bad times started for Jews in Hähnlein. The family of Aron Lehmann left in May 1938 to live in Darmstadt. By 8 December 1938, the last Jewish trader had departed to Frankfurt.

The last Jews living in Hähnlein were Adolf Kuhsel and Heyum Levi, neither equipped with sufficient worldly and spiritual assets. They were hawkers, robbed

From *Research Group on the History of Hähnlein – vol.5–6/1990*, about trade and traditional crafts up to 1920, the following entries about Jewish dealers were listed:

1748	Isaac, David; nails, oil, paper
1766	Jockel
1768	Nagel
1772	Morell
1775	Jockel, David, Berle; they traded together
1784	Bärle, Feist
1788	Herz, Feist
1840	Spieß, Moses; cattle, flour, seeds, fruit, goods per metre
1880	Veith, Abraham; cattle, fruit, seeds, flour, spices, spirits
1890	Lebemann, Herz; clothes, fruit, flour, livestock
1890	Levi, Emanuel; stationery, canvas, haberdashery, eye glasses
1893	Wolf, Liebmann; cattle, fruit, dry goods, shoes, flour
1899	Kappel, Georg; (widower) mineral water
1900	Lehmann, Aron; iron, machines, sewing machines, dresses, materials
1904	Kiefer, Liebmann; cattle, wool, woollen goods, fresh produce
1906	Kuhsel, Hermann; upholsterer without shop; haberdashery, sweets, tobacco, cigars, whistles
1917	Kiefer, Marum; cattle, fruit, seed, salt, flour
1919	Kiefer, Liebmann; (widower) tobacco, cigarettes, cigars

of the possibility of an income, living in hardship and isolation in the town. The only thing known is their journey into uncertainty. In 1940, Kuhsel notified the local administration of Hähnlein from Frankfurt, that he was now called Israel Adolf Kuhsel.

Eventually, Heyum Levi could not look after himself and had to be looked after by the district nurse before his time came to be resettled. Nothing more is known about his life, neither his whereabouts or place of death.

After the war ended, and during the administration by the American military government, a US soldier, Ludwig Aron, visited Hähnlein. He was not concerned with vengeance. Among other things, he visited the house of Peter Flauaus senior, in Gernsheimer Strasse. The meeting was said to have been reserved, yet moving.

Extract from the 1793 accounts book of the Hähnlein municipality. From *Research Group on the History of Hähnlein*, vol.5–6/1990.

fl alb pf (florin, albus, pfennig)

12

Revenue from agistment

from Beisassen and extractors and all should pay 1 gulden for each piece but who cultivates three pieces should pay one gulden for the third.¹

51 — — from each of 51 pieces (of meadow/pasture we (the community of Hähnlein) received one gulden for agistment.

13

Revenue income

from water and pasturage from Jews²

2 15 — The Jew, Jockel Isaac

2 15 — The Jew, Berle Feist

2 — — The Jew, David Isaac

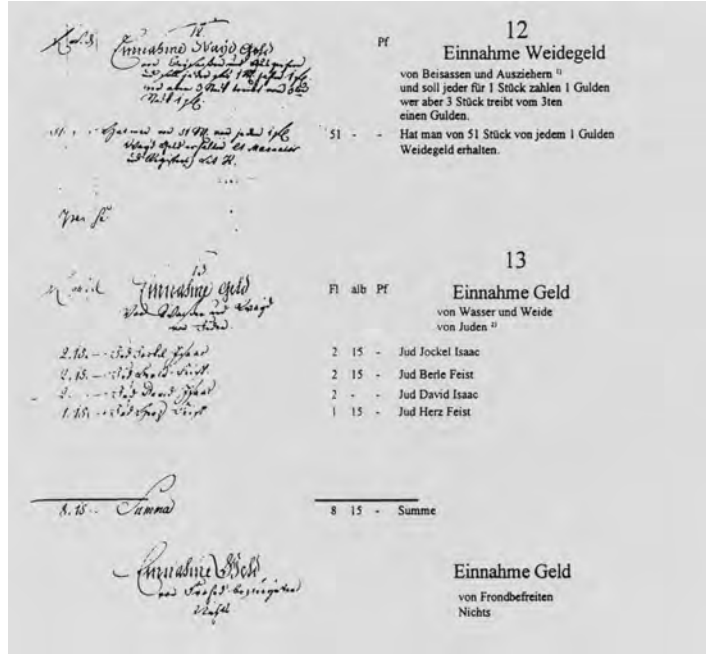
1 15 — The Jew, Herz Feist

8 15 — Total

Revenue income

from Frondbefreiten³

Nothing



1. Beisassen: Newcomers to the area were known as Beisassen – a citizen without full civil rights; perhaps small tenant farmers. Most of them were workmen or craftsmen. They did not have the same privileges as common people – no free yearly wood allotment; no grazing of their cattle on town property; ineligible to stand for elections. For these rights, they had to contribute to the community. In 1820, these class distinctions were eliminated by the new Hessian constitution.
 2. Just like the tenant farmers, Jews had to pay the municipality for use of the pastures. They had no rights in the community.
 3. Frondbefreiten: Possibly to do with the release of prisoners. Fronde: the civil wars that divided France from 1648 to 1653.

	Fl	alb	Pf	
Für versteigertes Gras				
10.15. Konrad Fuchs III vom 1ten Stück im vordersten Bruch.	10	15	-	Konrad Fuchs der 3te vom 1ten Stück im vordersten Bruch.
14.10. Jakob Rützert vom 2ten Stück allda.	14	10	-	Jakob Rützert vom 2ten Stück allda.
15.20. Derselbe vom 3ten Stück allda.	15	20	-	Derselbe vom 3ten Stück allda.
16.20. H. Schultheiß Rechel vom 4ten Stück daselbst.	16	20	-	H. Schultheiß Rechel vom 4ten Stück daselbst.
17.15. Konrad Fuchs vom 5ten Stück daselbst.	17	15	-	Konrad Fuchs vom 5ten Stück daselbst.
16. - Philipp Becht vom 6ten Stück allda.	16	-	-	Philipp Becht vom 6ten Stück allda.
15.10. Nicol Seib vom 7ten Stück.	15	10	-	Nicol Seib vom 7ten Stück.
15. - Adam Nickel vom 8ten Stück.	15	-	-	Adam Nickel vom 8ten Stück.
13.20. Nicol Rothermel vom 9ten Stück.	13	20	-	Nicol Rothermel vom 9ten Stück.
13.5. Peter Götz vom 10ten Stück.	13	5	-	Peter Götz vom 10ten Stück.
13. - Valentin Götz vom 11ten Stück.	13	-	-	Valentin Götz vom 11ten Stück.
13.25. Ludwig Weicker vom 12ten Stück.	13	25	-	Ludwig Weicker vom 12ten Stück.
16.5. Philipp Stein vom 13ten Stück.	16	5	-	Philipp Stein vom 13ten Stück.
190.25. -	190	25	-	-
ferner für Gras				
24. - Peter Götz von den Waldlösem im Ritterbruch.	24	-	-	Peter Götz von den Waldlösem im Ritterbruch.
10.5. Konrad Götz vom Weiher am Mittelgraben.	10	5	-	Konrad Götz vom Weiher am Mittelgraben.
8.15. Ludwig Weicker vom Weiher am Pfarr-Graben.	8	15	-	Ludwig Weicker vom Weiher am Pfarr-Graben.
7.15. Peter Rützert vom 1ten Stück an den hinteren Bruchlösem	7	15	-	Peter Rützert vom 1ten Stück an den hinteren Bruchlösem
8.20. Jacob Götz vom 2ten Stück allda.	8	20	-	Jacob Götz vom 2ten Stück allda.
15. - Jud David aus der Quelllache	15	-	-	Jud David aus der Quelllache
73.25. - Seitensumme	73	25	-	-

fl alb pf (florin, albus, pfennig)

For auctioned grass (presumably hay)

10 15 – Konrad Fuchs III from the first parcel in the foremost fen.

14 10 – Jakob Rützert from the 2nd parcel at the same place.

15 20 – the same from the 3rd parcel at the same place.

16 20 – Mayor Rechel from the fourth parcel in said place.

17 15 – Konrad Fuchs from the fifth parcel in said place.

16 – – Philipp Becht from the sixth parcel at the same place.

15 10 – Nicol Seib from the seventh parcel.

15 – – Adam Nickel from the eighth parcel.

13 20 – Nicol Rothermel from the ninth parcel.

13 5 – Peter Götz from the tenth parcel.

13 – – Valentin Götz from the eleventh parcel.

13 25 – Ludwig Weicker from the twelfth parcel.

16 5 – Philipp Stein from the thirteenth parcel.

190 25 – Total

For additional grass

24 – – Peter Götz from the Waldlösem in Ritterbruch.

10 5 – Konrad Götz from the pond at Mittelgraben.

8 15 – Ludwig Weicker from the pond at Pfarr-Graben.

7 15 – Peter Rützert from the first parcel at the rearmost fen.

8 20 – Jacob Götz from the second parcel at the same place.

15 – – The Jew, David, from the source of the well.

73 25 – Total

Jugenheim

The first record of a Jewish resident in Jugenheim was from 1704. The number of resident Jews did not reach much past 14. Prospects for the Jewish population in Jugenheim were poor and, as a consequence, local Jews were usually poverty-stricken. When Jugenheim became a health resort in the early 19th century, two “Israelite pensions” were in operation for a time.

In the mid-19th century, there were over 50 Jews in Jugenheim and a synagogue was built. Numbers declined in the early 20th century and during WWII, most Jews left Jugenheim, and the few who were left were deported to camps.

In 1933, the local council decided: “In terms of the assigning of work and supplies on the part of the municipality, only national comrades who do not associate with Jews, do not buy from them and are not connected with them will be considered. Permission to take up residence and selling land to Jews is not permitted, i.e. these transactions are not to be realised.”

Former Jugenheim mayor, Philipp Hofmeyer (b.1899), who was sympathetic to the Jews’ plight, wrote this report on 28 August 1933, before he emigrated to Canada:

The first Jewish family in Jugenheim and/or the first registered Jew in Jugenheim was David Koppel. In the old annals of Jugenheim, the Koppel family had a special register kept for them. I still remember their son from my childhood, David Koppel, named after his father. He kept cattle, and as boys we sang:

*“Mit dem Pfeil und Bogen
durch Gebirg und Tal
kommt der Koppel gezogen,
hot die Gas am Sal.”*

*“With the arrow and bow
through mountain and valley
comes Koppel, and he hauls
the cow on his rope”*

He was a heavy smoker and went blind in old age. His children were Heinrich, Amalie and Jette. One of the girls married a man named Seligmann who lived in Switzerland, and the second daughter became Mrs. Moritz Abraham. After he married, Heinrich, the son, lived in the house of Bauer the shoemaker opposite the Gasthaus Anker. He traded shoes, straw hats, etc. He later sold the house and bought the Sandmühle, where he operated a Jewish pension, which was very popular at a certain time, during the heyday of the crown.



Advertisement in the Bergsträsser Fremdenblatt, 1908/10.

“Sandmühle Pension, Jugenheim (Bergstrasse), Heinrich Koppel. Near the station. Newly furnished. Lovely location. Magnificent views. Price by agreement.”

Heinrich Koppel had two sons, Julius and Karl. Julius was a qualified cook and was in charge of the Sandmühle pension. Karl was a dentist and emigrated to America. He was from the 1903–04 vintage. The wife of Heinrich was born Sternfels and originated from Wolfskehlen.

A family named Trier lived in Jugenheim as well (Eisen-Trier in Darmstadt). Their son-in-law was Dr. Brodnitz, a medical advisor. There was also a Dr. Sachse (Jeake David) who lived in Alsbach Way. Koppel moved as a so-called protected Jew from Reichelsheim to Jugenheim. David Koppel lived in the little house beside Loos.

Seeheim

The first reference to Jewish life in Seeheim is in 1699. In the year 1865, the Seeheim Jewish community purchased a property and established a prayer hall, as well as a woman's baths, a classroom and a dwelling for a teacher. In 1867, the Seeheim Jewish community numbered 65 people (15 families). The Grand Duke, the civil municipality, and the Rothschild family took part in the financing of a synagogue. The opening ceremony of the synagogue took place on 14 February 1868.

The first doctor of Seeheim, Dr. Arthur Mayer (1888–1945), whose family had resided in Seeheim since 1714, spoke publicly about his political convictions, first for the democratic party and later for the SPD. For a time, he served on the local council. During WWI Dr. Mayer had served as a naval officer, but knew that the Nazis were monitoring him, as they did others. In October 1933, his wife, Margarete, left Seeheim and went to Metz to be with her parents. In 1934, Dr. Mayer left Seeheim and reunited with his wife in France, and believed that they would be safe there. Sadly, however, the couple were deported and killed in Auschwitz concentration camp. (*Dr. Mayer actually died three days after liberation from Auschwitz.*)

The municipality of Seeheim has erected a memorial stone in the Ober-Beerbach valley in honour of Dr. Arthur Mayer and his wife. The well respected doctor had an excellent reputation with his patients in and around Bickenbach.

More information about Dr Arthur Mayer appeared in an article in the *Darmstädter Echo*, from February 1985, contributed by Robert Bertsch. Bertsch was a teacher from Seeheim, and in 1988, he published one of the first books on local Jewish history titled *Jews in Seeheim and Jugenheim*.

At right is a poster showing a different Mayer, from an exhibition *Jews in Seeheim* held in November 1988, organised by Robert Bertsch. The illustration shows the old Seeheim city hall in the background, with Rudolf Mayer wearing a sign saying he was born on 2 April 1869 in Seeheim.¹ He lived at Darmstädter Strasse 3, was deported on 24 September 1942, and died on 2 January 1943 in Theresienstadt concentration camp. As per the resolution of Bensheim District Court from 9 February 1954, he was declared dead on 31 December 1945.



The former synagogue in Seeheim.



Jews in Seeheim

Documents, Images, Reports from three centuries

Exhibition from 6–10 November 1988

Conference Hall of Sport and Culture

Open 2pm–6pm & by arrangement

1. The Seeheim-Jugenheim website has Rudolf Mayer's birthdate as 4 May 1868.

FROM THE DARMSTÄDTER ECHO NEWSPAPER, 28 FEBRUARY 1985

The first doctor of Seeheim died in a concentration camp

Arthur Mayer: ■ Died forty years ago ■ Merited for his work in the community ■ Escaped to France ■ Deportation

Seeheim-Jugenheim (Germany)

We mark the 40th anniversary of the death of Dr. Arthur Mayer. This opportunity is taken to commemorate him, and to tell the younger generation who Arthur Mayer was, what he did for Seeheim and why he had to leave his homeland. He was persecuted, seized, arrested and treated like a criminal. He finally died of exhaustion and starvation, after the murder of his wife in Auschwitz concentration camp. Robert Bertsch of Seeheim has written the following:

The older Seeheimers can remember Dr. Arthur Mayer (born 1888). He came from a Jewish family whose lineage is traceable in Seeheim from 1714. The house of his grandparents Raphael Mayer and his wife Hannchen, née Frank, was at Ober-Beerbacher Strasse 11. In 1905, his parents, Solomon and Treidchen (Gertrud) Mayer, built a house at Darmstädter Strasse 9. There, Arthur spent his childhood and youth with his brothers, Milton and Robert. Milton remained in the animal feed business, Robert became a lawyer in Frankfurt, and Arthur became a doctor. In WWI he served from 1914 to 1918 as a ship's surgeon in the Imperial Navy. He married Margarete Benetik from Alsace-Lorraine. Her parents owned a shoe shop.

The first in the village

In 1919, Dr. Arthur Mayer settled in Seeheim as a doctor. He was the first doctor in the history of the village. At first his practice was at his parents' home, then at Lindenstrasse 12 (Lindenstrasse – Ernst-Ludwig Strasse – Ernst Thälmann Strasse – Albert Schweitzer Strasse), and most recently in his own house at Lindenstrasse 8.

The Mayer family were wealthy and highly respected. Even today, the old people of Seeheim report: "I was a maid at the Mayers. They were all decent individuals. My mother did their washing. Treidche was a good woman. When she lay dying, she gave me a present."

Dr. Mayer was an outstanding physician. He was well-liked. He helped many people and took no payment for it. "My parents did not have money. When I came into the world, the midwife was at another birth. Dr. Mayer was called to help, and to bring me into the world. He said: 'It won't cost [you] money, let the others pay.' He supported and treated the unemployed for free. Once when the municipality ran out of money to cover the unemployment benefit and when even the bank could not help, Dr. Arthur Mayer stepped in and provided the money."

Always helpful

"At Christmas he distributed packages to the poor. Even some war veterans (who were early members of the NSDAP) accepted the gifts. In the mid-1920s when the 'Schlackenhausen' housing estate was built in Eberstädter Strasse (Wilhelm Leuschner Strasse) largely with private funds, my parents came into financial difficulties. Dr. Mayer used his influence to support loans which had not been forthcoming.

He warned the citizens of Seeheim not to get together to celebrate the parish fair in 1920, because there was dysentery in the village, but they would not listen. On the contrary [they said]: "The bad Jew wants to spoil our fair." (For the local pastor the illness was a judgment of God, a punishment for the mocking of his person and the Holy Scripture by the local louts). Arthur Mayer also supported local sports. He particularly liked the gym and the wrestlers, he was often a spectator during practice sessions.

Nocturnal phone call

Arthur Mayer stood up publicly for his political convictions, first for the democratic, afterwards for the social-democratic party. He helped the SPD in the early 1920s when they had difficulties with their personnel, much to the annoyance of parts of the conservative-

church members, who saw in it a danger for the “moral-religious recovery” in the municipality. For a while he was a local councillor.

The National Socialists soon won more and more followers everywhere, as well as in Seeheim. This appeared first with debates at the local tavern, then with demonstrative meetings and marches, and of course later in the election results.

A direct warning sign for Arthur Mayer was a nocturnal call (there were only very few telephones) asking that he come to the assistance of an ill patient at a certain place. The designated place did not exist. Arthur Mayer and his wife became scared. He tried to give himself courage: “They cannot do anything to me. I am a good German, I was an officer and served the emperor and the German Reich.” But it did spark the thought of emigration to a country of liberty – the USA or Canada. The money to do it was certainly there. But thoughts of his parents-in-law in Metz, who depended strongly on their only daughter, prevented this. An emigration overseas almost always meant to part forever.

As National Socialist terror against the Jews became worse and worse, Jews were removed from national positions and the SA (the Brownshirts) began boycotting Jewish businesses. The brown gangs (SA and Hitler youth) shouted in the streets and sang “Germany wake up – Judah kick the bucket”, “One day the day of revenge will come ...”. So Dr. Arthur Mayer decided to leave the old homeland, Seeheim and Germany. His wife notified authorities at Metz police station [of her presence at Metz] on 10 October 1933, and Arthur followed her there on 6 April 1934. Both found accommodation with her parents, and they believed themselves to be safe from persecution under the protection of the militarily strong French republic.

The Germans came

They had been mistaken. On one hand there were – as in other countries of Europe – increasing indications of anti-Semitism in France. On the other hand, how could they suspect that Germany would ever dare to attack France again? On 10 May the German armed forces attacked France and forced it to surrender after

a few weeks of fighting. Arthur Mayer fled with his wife, probably to Lyon, an area that was yet to be occupied by the Germans, after Vichy France.

The public enemies Dr. Arthur Mayer and Margarete Mayer (née Benetik) were stripped of their German citizenship on 5 December 1940. In 1942 they, like all Jews, got additional new names – he the name Israel, she the name Sara, to identify them as Jews. In the same way Erna Neu (née Mayer) from Seeheim, newly emigrated to the USA in 1938, became Erna Sara Neu after the German law of 1942).

Deportation

On 11 November 1942, the German armed forces occupied southern (Vichy) France and as a result, the merciless hunt for Jews began there as well, partly with the help of the French police. Dr. Mayer had tried to get into neutral Switzerland. In 1943, Dr. Mayer, his wife, and his mother-in-law were caught up in a raid for Jews, and taken to Montlachon prison in Lyon. At the time, the situation was of complete lawlessness, humiliation, degradation, dishonour and physical destruction. In the course of the “final solution”, decided at the Wannsee Conference on 10 January 1942, the deportation of Dr. Arthur Mayer with his wife and mother-in-law to Auschwitz concentration camp followed. They were separated from each other, and the women were killed, but he was assigned to work as a doctor. He died of exhaustion, the consequences of hunger, and of emotional distress on 28 February 1945, 40 years ago.

By the resolution of Bensheim District Court from 20 December 1949, file no. 3 II 86 and 114/49, Dr. Mayer was declared dead. The exact circumstances still need to be clarified.

■ *The International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, the German Federal Archives in Koblenz, and Raphael Buber in Jerusalem helped with this article.*

Bensheim

The spread of the Great Plague or Black Death across Europe (1347–1350) came east to Germany about 1349. It was used as a reason to almost completely eradicate the Jewish population in the Rhineland areas. It appears the previous relatively good legal standing of Jews was removed. This legal standing had existed since the *Sachsenspiegel* (Survey of Saxon law), the oldest and most important law book of the German middle ages (about 1220–1235) compiled by Eike von Repgow, a medieval administrator.

The catalogue of martyrs in the Nuremberg *Memorbuch* also records:¹

“The martyrdom sites of the black death ...”
 “Bensheim 1349, R(abbi) Eisek burned with the other martyrs.”

It's thought that after 1306, Jewish settlement had increased in Bensheim. This assumption suggests that Jews who fled at the beginning of the 14th century due to war and conflict, found refuge on the Bergstrasse, in the territory of the Archbishop of Mainz. The first mention, documented in 1337, provides evidence that Jews lived in Weinheim, Heppenheim and Bensheim. The history of Jews in Bensheim, just as they had become established, was affected regularly by conflict.

In 1469, the Elector Friedrich cancelled safe passage for the Jews. Then, in the course of the 16th century, a temporary relaxation occurred. At first the Reformation seemed to bring a wave of tolerance for Jews.

In 1523, Martin Luther campaigned for them. However, as Luther saw it, after 20 years the Jews had made no move at all to be baptised and to become followers of his interpretation of the old Testament. So, in 1543, and with Teutonic anger, Luther wrote his 65,000-word anti-semitic treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies*. For Luther, the persistence of the Jews to remain true to their ancestral faith was continued blasphemy.

He therefore recommended:

“... that one makes their synagogue or Shul kindled



Martin Luther memorial stamps from the former East Germany.

with fire ... that one also breaks and destroys their houses ... that one takes all the prayer books and talmudists away from them ... that one totally forbids Jews to walk the streets ... that one forbids their profiteering, usury and take all their silver and gold ... that the young louts and Jewesses get axe, mattock, spade, rock, spindle in hand and let them earn their bread with the sweat of their noses ...

This was Luther's answer to the question of the Jews in 1543. For Luther this was a theological question; the economic did not interest him, let alone the racial.

“A conversation with Jews is as if you preach the Gospel to a sow.”

Luther continued to gain followers in Protestant areas. In Bensheim, the Lutheran doctrine had been in place since 1530, then Calvinism was introduced to the area in 1566.

By the time Bensheim became part of the electoral Palatinate pledge in 1641, almost all Jews had left.

In 1656, two Jews lived in the Hundevierviertel (literally: dog's quarter) of the city. In 1750, there were two protected Jews living in the city.

In 1821, the Grand Duchy of Hesse decided Jews were allowed to become local citizens, although by 1838 even Jews of considerable means had not succeeded in becoming local citizens of Bensheim.

In 1829, “Bensheim” was recorded as a Jewish surname. In 1900, the Jewish community of Bensheim amounted to 180 people.

A synagogue was first mentioned in 1345. By 1891, a new, larger synagogue was built. However, it was destroyed during *Kristallnacht* of 1938, along with the Jewish community. For some, emigration was still a possibility, but suicide, concentration camps and deportations were the sufferings affected on many of Bensheim's Jews by the Nazi terror.

On 1 February 1945, Erich Isaac Salomon, who came from Worms, was admitted to hospital in Bensheim.

1. *Memorbuch* – a memorial book to record the deaths of community members. It is an old Jewish tradition and the books also contained collections of prayers.

He was sent from the SD prison, in the former Institute for the Deaf and Mute in Darmstädter Strasse. He had become unable to work due to a problem with his hands, so the Gestapo sent him to the hospital a few weeks before the war ended. Notes from his medical record show that he was born on 20 August 1889, and stated his job as ‘worker’, but he was in fact a professional dental technician.

On Saturday, 24 March 1945, Salomon was liquidated – shot in the back of the head – along with 11 other men and women: Germans, Jews, Frenchmen and a Dutchman, on the Kirchberg (a low hill near Bensheim). They were murdered by SD villains. It was only three days before what would have been their certain freedom – on 27 March 1945, WWII ended for Bensheim.

*The greatest fault of man
are not the sins he commits –
the temptation is powerful
and his ability to resist small!
The greatest fault of man is,
that at any moment
he can repent but does not.*

– ATTRIBUTED TO RABBI SIMCHA BUNIM BONHART (1765–1827)
AND PASSED ON BY MARTIN BUBER.



Never Again! by Dr Fritz Kiltbau.

Bensheim anti-fascist signposts 1933–1945.

Publisher: Bensheim "Unionists against Fascism" Research Group, and the Victims of the Nazi Regime – Association of Anti-Fascists – Bergstrasse district, November 1992.

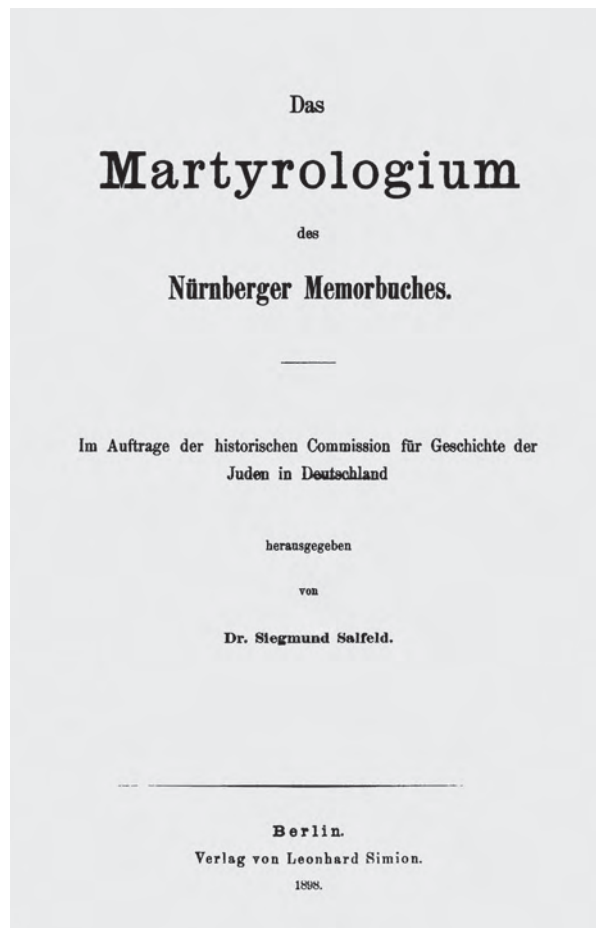
Captions – from top: Bensheim resident Anna Mix, from Wilhelmstrasse, in upper Hauptstrasse during the American invasion in March 1945.

Bensheim in ruins (upper Hauptstrasse and Klostergasse with the Lord's fountain.)



Title: Sources for history of Jews in Germany

Edited by the Historical Commission for Jewish History in Germany.
Third volume: Martyrdom of the Nuremberg Memorbuch.
Berlin. Published by Leonhard Simion, 1898.



Title: Catalogue of Martyrs of the Nuremberg Memorbuch

On behalf of the Historical Commission for Jewish History in Germany. Edited by Dr Siegmund Salfeld.
Berlin. Published by Leonhard Simion, 1898.

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קרנאן, בירוש וישוולט, הלבלוב, הושטרא, נוישטט, נוימרטן.
 9. מרבורך, ברכנא, נירדינגא, איכשטאט, אינגולשטט, קילדום, אמבורק, ולצבך, הרעברנא, אילכך, וירשויסן, קיינגאן, איפיוון, בולקא, נירולטרוין, הוברט, 10. ריינישבורק, וירצבורג, קרלשטאט, האנבורק, המלבורק, מולרכשטאט, נוישטט, מינגנא, רומחלע, שמלכר, וזנא, שויטורא, אושטורט, אווא, אופטרויס, אנולצבך, וו[נ]רשכך, וישנבורך, הרדא, אוטנא, והמאן[ק].
 11. רופנבורג, אנולצבך, נירלונגא, וולשטין, שפילא, קולשים, וולדבורך, נירנאט, מוכך, הלפרטא, נרא, נירך, ונשהיים, ויטרויס, לוצרדך, רוקניחן, אלעיא, עלא, לענא, לוצרא, אומלבוך, קרוננא, לורכא, קובלנא, בכרכא, וויזלא, בופרט, מונשטר, מיטולטא, בוכמא, קוברן, ברוקשטאל, 12. טריירא, לענפך, בייקנא, ציטנין, גילטחוין, אורכא, שאלצבורק, וולדא, כאלא, בישופשויס, ריניקא, נמירא, לרא, ווירשהיים, מירנשהיים, וויקישויס, שטין, רוטנא, בורנא, לובנא, שינא, ויירט, ווישטרוין, העלא, ברשילא, טרורא, גולדברך, ולצבורק, וילכא, אושנבורך, מרפויק, מונבא, לירשהואס, פראנא:
 13. צרפט, 14. אינגו ופייטא וברטינגא, 15. אוי דום ואנגליטרא, 16. אלזאשא ואשטריכא וזרם וקרנאט ואין ון ובל קרשי ישראל הקרובים והרחוקים שטרנו ושפרו על קדש הקדוש בריך הוא וזכרם ויפקרם וכו'.

1) Neub. קרבא 2) So Berliner; Neubauer setzt noch in Klammern ביסט
 3) Halberstam liest: נירדן
 4) Berl. und Neub. ארכאטא
 5) Berl. und Neub. קיינינגא
 6) Berl. אסחון
 7) Die La. mit 2 nach brieflicher Mitteilung Halberstams. Die beiden Abdrucke mit 2
 8) Berl. und Neub. בירלשטאט
 9) Berl. אילכך
 10) Berl. und Neub. לטטער אונטער נאך דער דער
 11) Berl. und Neub. וויכין
 12) Berl. und Neub. וויכין
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 99) Berl. und Neub. וויכין
 100) Berl. und Neub. וויכין

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V.
Die Marterstätten zur Zeit des schwarzen Todes.
 [Von neuem ediert nach dem alten Deutzer Memorbuch, Blatt 70–74a, und berichtigt nach dem Gedenkbuch der Gemeinde Bergheim a. d. Erf. Siehe Einleitung.]

שנת ה'ס"ג לאלף השני החלל הרשע מן המים הודנים במדינת עלזשין ושמועו שטרנו ארבע עשר מדינת בעה"ל והיו בדם שמים קרלוח וזאה ומשום ישובם ומשם נתפשט הרשע עם חילוחיו וזא לארץ אשננו הרג בעה"ל גם שם והרבו קרלוח וישובים הנזכרים שמה למשה: לכן חיובים כל בית ישראל לחיובם בין פסח לשבעות בשבת המסך לשבעות . . . גם פעם שנית בשבת שבין שבעה עשר בתמוז לח'ב"ל המסך לב' באב הגקרא שבת שזור . . . יקיים בנו מקרא שכתוב וכו' ציון גלו ושמוח בה' אל-רובם כי נתן לכם את המורה לערקה ויוד לכם גם מורה ומלקוש בראשון:
 הזכרה הקהלות הקדושים טחולין כאו.
 זכור אלהים הרני שרופי קהלות ששראסבורג ולמדיה ויובטח. מרר' יעקב הלפן, הר"ר מקנש בר רות, הר"ר ארין, מנא רובך. היינגא, ווישנבורג, צייכרא עם נשמת אברום יצחק יעקב שרה רבקה רחל ולאח ועם שאר עדיקים ועדיניות שבנו עין אמן:
 זכור . . . קהלות ולמדיה ויובטח לווינ[ש]טין, גר[מ]ש[ה]ים, סברוסין, לוסר, ניקשאל, קוולא, לטרא, נוישאט, וואגנרט, אורקום, דישטש, וינשהיים, וצענדלך, עפנינג, ברויסל עם נשמת . . .
 זכור . . . קהלות ווירמישא ולמדיה ויובטח מרר' שמואל הלוי, ליעקב, העפניוים, בינשהיים, לוישנבורג, אלצא, אורטום, הידלבורג, ווייטש, שרישויים, עמברך, ערף, מאוכך עם נשמת . . . זכור . . . קהלות מענץ ולמדיה [ווישביה], מרר' יוסף גא, אופטרויס, בינגלא, קרייצנך, זוברטום, קירן, מושיל, ברענרט, רוקניחן, עלשולד עם נשמת . . .

1) Dieses Wort enthält den Zahlenwert 102, d. l. 100 Vier jüdischen, 1828 der christlichen Zeitrechnung.
 2) Birsch (Geschichte der Juden in Köln, welcher in den „Urkunden“ S. 91 einige Zeilen dieses Anfangs mitteilt, liest: BRABANT = Brabant.
 3) Josi S. 98.
 4) Beide Personen werden bei J., welcher das P. übersehen hat, zu einer.
 5) Bergheim.
 6) Bergheim.
 7) Bergheim.
 8) Deutz.
 9) Deutz.
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Title: Martyrdom sites at the time of the Black Death

Edited from the original *Deutz Memorbuch*.² Pages 70-74a, and adjusted according to the Gedenkbuch from the municipality of Bergheim.³ See preface.

2. The Deutz Memorbuch for the years 1581–1784 recorded the prevention of anti-Jewish riots instigated by Cologne students in 1665. Deutz was a former town, now a suburb of Cologne, Germany. Jews were first mentioned in Deutz as victims of the Black Death persecutions.
 3. Gedenkbuch: Memorial books listing the victims of the Holocaust who originated from Germany.

Zwingenberg

In 1312, Kaiser Heinrich VII allowed Count Dieter von Katzenelnbogen to settle 12 Jews in the town of Zwingenberg.

In an invoice belonging to the Count from 1401, concerning Jewish payment, a Jew from Zwingenberg named Schonmann was mentioned. Schonmann had come from Worms in 1400.

In 1570, Jews had to give two gulden to the community in payment for water and field use.

By 1637, a mayor's account confirmed that "This year there is no Jew in the city". Over the years there were returns and expulsions in 1641 and 1663, but from 1680, Jews lived in Zwingenberg again.

In 1749, the following was recorded in the files: "David senior, old and destitute"; "David junior, 'giebet das Salz aus'."¹

In 1812, there were four Jewish families, and by 1829, eight families were residing in the town. The Jews of Zwingenberg belonged to the Alsbach Shul, just like the Jews of Hähnlein, Bickenbach, Jugenheim and Seeheim.

It was not until 1841 that a Jewish teacher was called to Zwingenberg. The children must have previously been taught at home.

On 25 November 1858, an Israelite Community Board was elected and a synagogue, with a teacher's apartment, opened in August 1861 in the house at "Am grossen Berg 2". Forty-two years later, on 11 September 1903, the new synagogue on Wiesenstrasse was opened. On 10 November 1938, on the occasion of ruthless acts of violence against Zwingenberg Jews (Kristallnacht) the synagogue was left undamaged, probably because there was a dead body (presumably with watchmen) in the building at the time.

In 1933, there were 40 Jewish inhabitants in Zwingenberg, but in 1939 just two were left. Some had committed suicide and, according to the available evidence, seven people were killed in Nazi extermination camps.



A memorial plaque at the Zwingenberg town hall.

1933–1945

The citizens of Zwingenberg commemorate the persecution of their Jewish citizens and those who were discriminated against, persecuted, and murdered during the National Socialist tyranny.

1. Giebet das Salz aus – This phrase, "pass the salt", could have alluded to spiritually important customs in the Jewish faith; sprinkling salt on every part of life. The covenant between God and His people were sealed with salt or "sal", origin of the word "salvation".

Pfungstadt and the Israelite teaching and education institute

Landgrave George I of Hesse-Darmstadt received 9 florins and 4 albus as protection money. This initial reference to Jews in Pfungstadt dates back to 1571. Several other documents also proved that Jews were living in Pfungstadt – the court book from 1684, an invoice by the lord mayor from 1720, and account books detailing cattle trade for the years 1796–1801, 1803–1831 and 1860–1870. In 1871, there were 4,087 Protestants, 87 Catholics and 236 Jews registered as living in Pfungstadt.

In the 43 years from 1828 to 1871, the Jewish population doubled, which may have been caused in part by industrialisation. However, it is assumed that one decisive factor for this considerable population growth was the founding of the Jewish teaching and education institute in 1857. From 1820 onwards the Israelite community in Pfungstadt owned a synagogue, a school, and a women's public baths.

Many Jews derived their family name from their place of origin. Accordingly, the Jewish surname 'Pfungst' was derived from Pfungstadt.

The founding of the Israelite teaching and education institute in 1857 placed the town of Pfungstadt more centrally on the world stage. By the 1890s, the school had reached its peak. Jewish children from Russia, France and England were taught there, but in 1907 the institute closed its doors.

Chaim Weizmann, the first President of the State of Israel attended and roomed at the institute. In his memoirs *Trial and Error*, in the chapter 'I'm Heading West', Weizmann recounted the time he spent in Pfungstadt.

It was characteristic for my own life as well as for the lives of so many other Russian Jews that time after time we were confronted with having to make crucial and fateful decisions. Apart from minor incidences, most other people back then led relatively normal and predetermined lives.



Chaim Weizmann.

For us the situation was different; after each chapter of life, we arrived at another crossroads.

I found myself in such a situation when, at the age of 18, I passed my certificate at the Pinsker Realgymnasium (secondary school). I wondered what my next step would be. One thing was certain: I would go to university. But where? In Russia? Would it make any sense to attempt and pass the admission restrictions of the *numerus clausus* in order to be matriculated at the University of Kiev – or in [St] Petersburg – just as my brothers were going to a few years later. I would undoubtedly succeed. Such a journey would, however, be accompanied by never-ending harassment, disappointments

and humiliation. And what if I passed the strict entry examination, which included harsher conditions for Jews, but was denied a residence permit? Then I had no other choice but to play the usual role: to get my registration as a craftsman and pursue a pretend profession in one of the forbidden towns.

That would have meant years of bribing and living with constant uncertainty, or the danger of being picked up by the police and regularly changing your home. I found the thought of such dishonesty and disguise repugnant. I also loathed Russia – not the country itself but the Russia of the Tsars. I was drawn to the West where thousands of Russian-Jewish students had fled to seek some kind of educational refuge. Thus I chose to go West, but in the end it was chance that determined the actual university.

A son of family friends attended a Jewish boarding school in Pfungstadt, a small town close to Darmstadt. When his father learned that the school was looking for a young teacher to teach Hebrew and Russian, he recommended me and I was offered the position. I couldn't foresee what was expected in Pfungstadt which was probably just as well. All I cared about was that I would receive meals, lodgings and 300 marks a year in return for two hours of teaching per day. I also valued that I barely

needed half an hour by train to travel between Pfungstadt and Darmstadt, the latter of which had a university. With the stipend in Pfungstadt and a little support from home I would be able to attend this university and cover course and other fees as well as books. I had no plans after that.

Perhaps I would return to Russia and endure life there and wait for the arrival of better days despite the bleak prospects under the Tsarist rule. Perhaps I would go to Palestine or remain in Western Europe.

At least I would not be forced to swindle my way through my university studies.

My departure from Russia was hazardous and very significant. In Russia, every person had to have an internal passport or an identity card. This identification was necessary for all domestic travels. To travel internationally, a foreign passport was required which was fairly expensive. I had just about enough money to travel in 4th class to Pfungstadt and get by during my first months there. This meant a foreign passport was out of reach for me. Consequently, I became a labourer on a raft and as such was authorised to join the journey on the river to Gdansk without a foreign passport. Toruń (at the time known as Thorn in Germany) was our first stop on German territory where I grabbed my belongings and absconded.

It was a wonderful new world, one I entered with a pounding heart. It was also a clean, tidy and neat place that confused me for two reasons. Firstly, because of its sheer contrast to my home of a different faith. Secondly, because I soon found out that the Germans were unable to understand my Pinsker-style Yiddish. This vexed and surprised me because, as most Russian Jews, I had believed this type of Yiddish to be High German.

In Pfungstadt I learned about one of the most peculiar chapters in German history: the efforts of assimilation. They were at their peak in Germany at the time, and gave Jews an illusionary sense of security that filled them with pride. This deserves to be discussed in more detail because my early experiences gained symbolic significance later on. I was a young man of 19 years of age, naive, unaware and easily impressed. I didn't know that Germany was going through its era of post Bismarck expansion putting all its might into becoming a world power. Neither did I know that German Jews desperately tried to obscure their own identity to be accepted as a German among Germans.

For me, humans weren't categorised and my thinking did not yet take historical circumstances into account. The way I reacted was inevitable and personal.

I noticed and accepted that all humans were different and hence I also responded to each person individually. It was this intuitive response that guided me through the unfamiliar world around me. The small town of Pfungstadt was known all over Germany for its brewery and, among German Jews, also for its Jewish boarding school. The school's principal was a Dr Barneß. In some way this man made me feel more alienated than ordinary Germans did. He was extraordinarily pious and as such strictly abided by the rigid and formulaic rituals of Frankfurt's Orthodox Judaism.

The school conformed to the kosher lifestyle, and a Mashgiach (a "supervisor" who oversees the kashrut status of a kosher establishment) was always on site to oversee the ritual purity of all dishes. There were no classes on Sabbath when writing was also not permitted. Prayers took place three times daily – in the morning, at noon and in the evening. However, people weren't devout in the same way as I fondly remembered it from home. The faith I encountered here was musty and artificial rather than grounded. It lacked warmth, serenity, colour and intimacy. The faith failed to permeate the lives of teachers and students and was more or less an external and aloof religious practice.

Dr Barneß was fully Germanised and considered himself a 'German with Mosaic beliefs.' He was convinced he was Jewish only with regards to his faith. Apart from that he saw himself as a German marked by the same culture, emotional background and makeup as the descendants of the Cherusci. Year in and year out he preached this conviction at every opportunity within the school and beyond, and especially during congregations where he took his stand against anti-Semitism. By then anti-Semitism was deeply rooted in the minds of the Germans. This anti-Semitism was cumbersome, thorough and pedantic. In the long-term it presented a danger that was bigger than the occasional anti-Semitic surges by the Russian mob and the cynical exploitation by Russian politicians and priests. German anti-Semitism slowly but surely asserted itself within the national consciousness. Even Dr Barneß was unable to deny the hatred toward Jews actually existed. However, for him this purely rested on a minor misunderstanding. In his eyes some Germans



The former Israelite teaching and education institute in Pfungstadt.

were anti-Semitic because they hadn't experienced the great characteristics of the Jewish people as represented by Dr Barneß and others of his ilk. It was simply a matter of educating Germans about what it meant to be Jewish. A little bit of elucidation, carefully administered, and all this anti-Semitism would be as good as gone.

Darmstadt was a pretty city, although initially I didn't get to see much of it. On weekdays I got up at 5am to catch the train to Darmstadt which arrived there at 6.30am. University opened at 7.30am which is why I was forced to wander the streets for an hour. At 4.30 in the afternoon I arrived back in Pfungstadt where I gave classes in Russian and Hebrew until 6.30pm. I had no money to buy a warm lunch. Instead I took along a bread roll and a piece of sausage or cheese. That had to last till dinner and even though it was a pitiful sustenance, I solemnly and extensively said grace before and after each meal.

I studied until late at night to learn German and expand my specific and also more general knowledge. This was necessary to get up to speed with the level of knowledge required at German tertiary institutions. It was a dreary time.

I felt overworked, undernourished and terribly lonely. After two semesters I was close to a breakdown. My time in Pfungstadt damaged my health for life. Nearly 50 years later my doctor put a lung haemorrhage down to the effects experienced during my first eight months in Germany.

I left Pfungstadt without regret but didn't take any fond memories with me. I didn't form any lasting friendships during my stay there – utterly unusual for me. Many years later when the school wasn't doing well I came across an ad in a German-Jewish magazine which read: 'Dr Chaim Weizmann taught at our school'. Obviously it failed to have the desired effect as shortly thereafter the school closed down. Not long prior, Dr Barneß's son had written to me and asked if I could make recommendations for his school. Yet I was unable to do so because in my

experience the school had been a horrible place.

Thus in the summer of 1895 I moved back West. The difference between Berlin and Darmstadt was huge not only in terms of the university's ranking. Darmstadt was a small town without foreign students. My early decision to study there, like it or not, was based on my being able to earn an income in nearby Pfungstadt. In contrast Berlin was a cosmopolitan city – a first for me. Berlin was a place where all intellectual movements of the time crossed paths. Above all, Berlin had a large Russian-Jewish student community. This was going to play an important role in my life and shaped me just as much as the university. In short: My life in Berlin was vastly different from the world I had inhabited in Pfungstadt and Darmstadt. Here I outgrew the Zionist views of my younger years and reached maturity. When I relocated from Berlin to Switzerland in 1898, at the age of 24, my adolescent development was complete. Although I continued to learn new things over the years, my basic character would no longer change. My political views and Zionist ideals, my scientific tendencies and life's plans had been shaped.

Synagogue Regulations [from 1833]

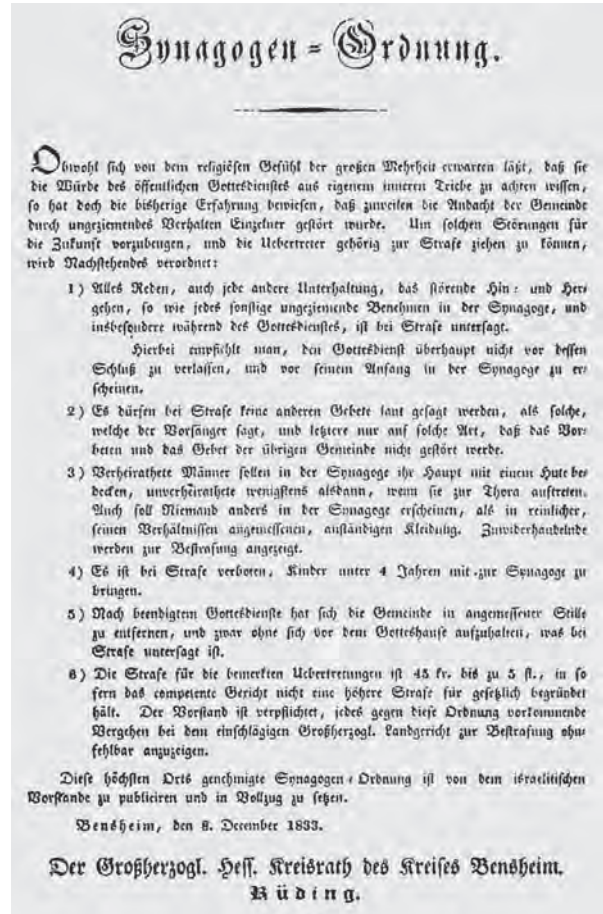
Although the religious feeling of the great majority can be expected to respect the dignity of public worship from their own inner impulses, experience has shown that sometimes the devotion of the church is disturbed by the untreatable behaviour of individuals. In order to prevent such disturbances in the future, and to bring the transgressors to punishment, the following is decreed:

- 1) All talking, including any other conversation, toing-and-froing, as well as any other unseemly behaviour in the synagogue, especially during worship, is forbidden. It is advisable not to leave the service before its conclusion, and to be in the synagogue before the service begins.
- 2) In punishment, no other prayers may be pronounced aloud other than those said by the priest, and the latter only in such a way that the preaching and prayer of the rest of the congregation is not disturbed.
- 3) In the synagogue, married men are to cover their heads with a hat; unmarried men, at least that, if they appear before the Torah. Moreover, no one should appear at the synagogue except in clean, decent attire, appropriate to his circumstances. Any offenders reported are to be punished.
- 4) It is forbidden to bring children aged under four years into the synagogue.
- 5) After the service has ended, the congregation must leave in reasonable silence, in fact without causing hindrance in the house of God, which is forbidden with punishment.
- 6) The punishment for the observed transgressions is 45 kroner, and up to 5 florins, insofar as the competent court does not consider a higher penalty to be legally justified. The Executive Board is obligated to give notice of any breach of these regulations to the relevant Grand Ducal District Court for the appropriately indicated punishment.

This supreme Synagogue Order is to be publicised and put into execution by the Israelite Governor.

Bensheim, 8 December 1833

The Hessian Grand Ducal District Council of the area of Bensheim.
Rüding.



Jews in Speyer am Rhein

Chronology

1070/80

First references of Jewish activity in the area.

1090

Jews in Speyer given protective privileges by Kaiser Heinrich IV (1056–1105).

1104

Establishment and inauguration of the synagogue in old Speyer.

1156

At a formal meeting of rabbis in Troyes, the three Jewish communities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz had their judicial office concerning German Jewish communities transferred.

1298

On 22 June, King Adolf pledged the taxes payable by the Jews of Speyer to the city of Speyer as a substitute for the damage done by his soldiers on their march through the city from Alsace.

1338

On 8 September, Bishop Gerhard from Speyer confirmed the Jewish council, Jewish judges and Jewish bishop in Speyer.

1349

The plague broke out in Marseilles in 1348. The following year saw Speyer as one of the first cities in Germany where Jews experienced terrible persecution, as the plague was blamed on the Jews.



1401

King Ruprecht I (1400–1410) ordered a Jewish privilege. The so-called “goldene Opferpfennig” was introduced for certain rights granted, and was payable to the king at Christmas by every Jew in the kingdom who was over 12 years old.¹

1468/69

The bishop of Speyer, Matthias von Rammung, called for conversion of Jews as a result of alleged blasphemy over dishonouring the Virgin Mary. The following requirements were introduced: from five years of age, male Jews were to wear a yellow ring

1. The Goldene Opferpfennig was a tax imposed on the Jews. The general principle governing the treatment of Jews in Germany from the earliest times was that they were crown property, and therefore all taxes paid by them went to the kaiser or king.

on their chest, and females two blue stripes on their veils.

1534

With the introduction of the Reformation in the city, Jews were expelled again.

1622

47 Jews were living in the city. The newly arrived families were from Egelsbach, Goslar, Miltenberg, Giessen, Frankfurt and Friedberg.

1657

The goldsmiths guild complained about food tampering by Jews.

1688

The City Council rejected all Jews because of usury and fraud.

1689

Destruction of the city by the French.

1797

Speyer was incorporated, with the left-bank areas, into the French Republic. A Jewish community was re-established.

1808

Napoleon issued a decree which repealed the free movement of Jews in French territory and made pursuit of trade, and commercial use of a patent, conditional.

1816

The Palatinate became Bavarian and Speyer was a seat of government in the Rhine district.

1833

30 Jewish families were living in Speyer, with 42 school-age children.

1861 and 1869

Bavarian laws finally made Jews equal to other citizens.

1890

535 Jews were living in Speyer.

1914–1918

40 Jews from Speyer took part in WWI; of this group, 12 were killed in action.

1919

The local chapter of the Reich Federation of Jewish Veterans was established.

1925

Speyer's total population was 25,293 people, including 335 Jews.

1931

In city council elections, Jews were no longer nominated by the parties; as a result, they could no longer be candidates.

1933

In April there was a boycott of Jewish businesses. In front of the shops stood storm troopers, whom customers could photograph. There were 269 Jews living in the city.

1937

The synagogue had its 100th anniversary on 24 November.

1938

During the night or early morning hours of 9–10 November, Jewish men were taken into protective custody. They were forced to sign a notarial declaration transferring all fiduciary management of their assets to the economic adviser of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) even after their deaths.

After these nights of terror it was understandable that emigration of Jews from Speyer increased.

1939

73 Jews were still in Speyer, but they were banned from air-raid shelters.

1940

About the 20 October, 825 Jews from the Gau Westmark, including 51 Jews from Speyer, were deported to Gurs in southwestern France.² Some could still emigrate legally from Gurs. All other Jews were sent to Auschwitz.

“The most adventurous survival was that of a lad who was a volunteer in the French Legion and was wounded by the Waffen-SS, taken into American captivity, then released and lived in Speyer from 1945 to 1950, and finally emigrated to the United States.”

1941

Obligatory identification of Jews.

1942

The last Jews were deported from Speyer. Few survived the Nazi inferno.

2. A Gau was a de facto administrative sub-divisions of Nazi Germany. Gau Westmark was an administrative division of Nazi Germany from 1933–1945.

The holy community of Warmaisa (Worms in Hebrew)

Chronology

960

Reference of the first Jewish person living in Worms.

1034

Salic Synagogue.¹

1096

Beginning of the Crusades. Worms had about 7,000 inhabitants, including approximately 400 Jews. In May 1096, many were burned by the Teutonic hordes.

1146

Second Crusade; damage to the synagogue.

1174-75

Construction of a new synagogue took place, which remained essentially untouched until its destruction on 10 November 1938 by Nazi incendiaries.

1201

Jews had the right to bear arms and defend the city walls.

1220

Rabbi Meir ben Baruch of Rothenburg, a notable scholar and Talmudist, was born in Worms. He lived in the imperial city of Rothenburg and because of this he was named after the city. He was also known as the “Maharam of Rothenburg” and was considered a great Jewish leader. He died in 1307.

1272

The *Worms Machzor*, a two-volume handwritten Hebrew prayer book was produced.² Particularly interesting were two lines written in Jewish-German, the oldest written evidence of Yiddish. The precious machzor was acquired by the town in 1578. It is now in the library of the University of Jerusalem.

1349

On 30 January the synagogue district and the Jewish quarter was set on fire and about 400 Jews were killed. The immediate reason for this was the plague (Black Death) sweeping through the country. It was a new disease, and any rational justification for it did not seem possible. Jews were accused of poisoning the wells, and the resulting pogrom took its dreadful course.

1355

Jews returned to the city again.

1431

A peasant uprising in the surrounding area against Jews in the city of Worms.

1498-1499

The Worms city council had a city law reformation codified and printed which gave valid rights to all personnel in the city. It was for all “citizens and residents” thus also for Jews, admittedly with the exception that they were not allowed as legal representatives (procurators), they could not institute legal proceedings, and possessed no civil rights.

1505

A Jewish constitution, signed by King Maximilian I, required the city council to appoint a committee of 13 Jewish community members.

1521

Kaiser Karl V appointed Rabbi Samuel from the Reichstag of Worms as “Supreme Rabbi of the Jewish Community in the Sacred Reich”, based in Worms.

1584

Regulation for Jews: foreign Jews were to wear pointed hats instead of the synagogue cap.

1600

Regulations were created against Jews in the wine trade.

1615

Expulsion of Jews from Worms.

1666-67

The total population was decimated to about 3,000 people as a result of a significant plague; about 500 Jews were also killed by the disease.

1688

The city of Worms capitulated to the French. After commensurate cash payments, Jews were granted a letter of protection by the occupiers against encroachments by the soldiers.

1735

Worms was occupied again by the French.

1744

The Worms Jewish community totalled 146 families.

1. Salic – a term for the Salians, a Frankish tribe living near the River Ijssel.

2. In Hebrew, machzor means “cycle” and is a prayer book for the annual festivals such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

1789

Outbreak of revolution in Paris.

1792

In October, French Revolutionary troops occupied Worms.

1797

With the Treaty of Campo Formio (a peace settlement between France and Austria) on 17 October, the left bank of the Rhine, and thus the city of Worms, fell.

1803

On 25 February, a Principal Decree of the Imperial Deputation passed a resolution that destroyed the political and legal foundations of the old empire.

1806

Kaiser Franz II resigned the crown of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation.

1807

On 17 March, by decree, Napoleon created a restrictive Consistorial Constitution which also governed Jewish affairs.

1816

After the decline of Napoleon's rule, Worms became, along with Rhein-Hesse, part of the Grand Duchy of Hesse under Ludwig I. About 6,000 Jews were living in the province.

The changes enacted:

- efforts for legal emancipation
- incorporation of Jews into citizenship
- the end of the holy community of Worms.

1933

On 1 January 1933, 1,100 Jews were living in Worms.



Kahal Kadosh Warmaisa: 18th century view of the city of Worms on a mural in the Mogilev synagogue, Belarus. Warmaisa is a society in Worms for the promotion and preservation of Jewish culture.

1939

On 1 January 1939, 363 Jews were living in Worms.

1941

The "Final Solution" began.

On 19 March 1942, the last 75 surviving Jews in Worms were sent east to their deaths.

Jews in Magenza (Mainz in Hebrew)

Chronology

c.900

Regino of Prüm announced the decision of the Synod of Mainz that anyone “who kills a Jew or a Gentile out of hatred or lust, must suffer as a murderer of Christians”.

960–1028

The famous scholar Rabbi Gershom ben Judah, called “The Light of the Exile”.

Prior to the time of Charles the Great, a school existed in Narbonne, the scholarly centre of Jewish teaching in the South of France.

Two of the outstanding scholars at the school were Rabbi Natan ha-Baerli and his student Juda ben Meir Leontin. A student of the latter, Rabbi Gershom ben Judah, became known as ‘The Light of the Exile’.

Born in Metz he relocated to Mainz where he became a Rabbi. The school he established there attracted many students from Germany, France, Italy and the Slavic countries. One of his students was the later teacher of the famous scholar ‘Rasch’ Rabbi Salomo Jitzchaki (Troyes/Worms 1050–1105). Rabbi Gershom ben Judah compiled Talmud commentaries and works on the Masorah and Biblical criticism. His instructions and rules were first endorsed by communities in Speyer, Worms and Mainz and later by all Jewish communities in Europe thus defining Jewish society on the continent throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

The rules included a ban on renting a house from any Christian who had previously expelled a Jewish



“Electoral decree, which would lead to the prevention and complete eradication of Jewish usury, which, should be closely observed, that up to now had been removed from the whole electorate of Mainz.”

Printed in Mainz electorate, chartered book printers of Sti Rochi Hospital, 1753.

person from the same house. He also banned the violation of professional confidentiality.

The bans further included the prohibition of polygamy and divorcing a woman against her will. To violate these laws resulted in being precluded from the community.

God did not create woman from man’s head,
that he should command her;
nor from his feet,
that she should be his slave;
but rather from his side,
that she should be near his heart.

— HEBREW PROVERB
FOUND IN THE TALMUD

1096–1103 and 1146–1187
The Crusades.

1236

Jews in the Reich ushered in the royal (protective) designation “royal chamber servants”.

1349

Plague pogrom on 24 August. Jews blamed for the Black Death pandemic.

1470/71

Jews leave the archbishopric and the city of Mainz; thus, the last Jewish community of the Middle Ages ceased to exist.

1583

Wolfgang von Dalberg the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz, agreed to the establishment of a new community.

1662

The infamous order of the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz, Johann Philipp von Schönborn limited the number of Jewish families in Mainz to twenty.

1673

Inauguration of the new synagogue.

1693

Establishment of an Israelite Medical Association.

1724

Jewish taxes: New Year’s contribution, Martin-Gäns funds, bell tax, donations to the cathedral chapter, funds for the Franciscan and Capuchin orders.

1763–1814

Age of enlightenment and liberation.

1782

The majority of the Jews in the city were poor and without means.

1790

The Jewish community numbered 543 people.

1790/92

French occupation.

1797

Mainz was recaptured by French revolutionary troops.

1798

The municipal administration requested the demolition of the gates of the Judengasse (literally 'Jews' lane' but really a ghetto). Napoleon undertook developments for the city of Mainz to bring the city out of its medieval confines. (Documents from 1813 confirm the partial transformation of the Jewish quarter.)

1800

1,156 Jewish citizens were living in the city.

1814

When the French left the city, they left behind a thoroughly altered community. They brought liberation from old burdens and plagues for the Jewish community. They were free pursue the goal of becoming German citizens of Jewish faith, though it was not until 1866 that Jews received general recognition and equality as citizens.

1814–1933

A time of emancipation and equality.



Program for the church service for the celebration of Peace on Sunday, 18 June 1871 in the main synagogue at Mainz.

1816

Mainz – like Worms – became, along with Rheinhessen, part of the Grand Duchy of Hesse.

1822

Breaking from the life of traditional faith shocked many German Jews. In Mainz, orthodox and liberal groups were formed.

1846

2,134 Jews lived in Mainz.

1848/49

One of the results of the March Revolution was freedom of the press. The government of Heinrich von Gagern, in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, did not ultimately meet the expectations of the Jews regarding equality. At the approach of the revolution in Mainz, the injustice became unacceptable.

1853

Establishment of the Orthodox community.

1856

Construction of the Orthodox synagogue.

1871

18 June brought peace and thanksgiving for the final victory over the French, with imperial unity and the proclamation of the King of Prussia, Wilhelm I, Emperor of Germany on 18 January 1871 in Versailles.

1892

In March, Jews in Mainz mourned the death of Ludwig IV, Grand Duke of Hesse.

1893

Reichstag elections – anti-Semitic slogans were present.

1900

Writer, Anna Seghers (née Reiling) was born in Mainz on 19 November.

1912

Inauguration of the main synagogue, which had more than 1,000 seats.



Leaflet: "New synagogue of Mainz, Sunday, 9 August 1914, 10am. Rogation Service."

1914

On Sunday, 9 August, a rogation service (rogation days are usually days of prayer and fasting in Christianity) was held in the new synagogue after the outbreak of WWI.

1923

Occupation of the Rhineland by the French and the formation of a bridgehead on the right bank of the Rhine to Griesheim.

Reference: *Grenze: Besetztes Gebiet, Ballade eines Landes* by Elisabeth Langgässer, pub. 1932.

1930

Withdrawal of occupying troops.

1933–1945

Destruction – extermination.

In Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, pub. 1925:

"So I believe today that I act in the sense of the Almighty Creator, if I resist the Jews I am doing the Lord's work."

1933

Nazis seize power. 2,609 Jews were living in Mainz.

1939

There were 1,453 Jews living in the city.

1941–1943

The "Final Solution" takes its deadly course with deportations. In February 1943, the traditional Mainz Jewish community – Magenza – was extinguished.

1945

About 20 Jews were living in Mainz.

On 17 October 1945, the French occupation forces allowed the "formation of a Jewish community in Mainz".



Leaflet: "Religious Ceremony, in the main synagogue of Mainz, on the occasion of the liberation of our homeland from long-standing occupation, on 1 July 1930 at 11am."

Jews in Frankfurt

Chronology

794

The first mention of Frankfurt was in 794, in a deed of donation for the Regensburg monastery of St Emmeram, dated 22 February 794. The place of issue was “Franconsford” (ford of the Franks). Charlemagne, then “King of the Franks and Lombards, protector of the Romans and defender of the Church” came to Frankfurt in 794 after victory against the Avars (originally nomads from central and eastern Europe) and held a church council and national assembly.

1090

An official deed from Henry IV allowed Jews to travel freely and in peace within the empire, to do business, to trade, to buy and sell, and no one was to raise public or private levies from them.

1241

The first written evidence of Jews in the town was news about Jewish persecution.

1328

The Frankfurter Bürgerbuch (record of citizens) listed numerous Jews, with the law of land ownership applicable to all citizens.

1348–1349

In Frankfurt, as in other parts of the kingdom, there was persecution of Jews because they were blamed for the plague or Black Death.

1351

When the plague subsided at last, 210 Jewish communities in Germany were destroyed, their people killed, synagogues devastated, graves desecrated and Torah scrolls burned.

1460–1462

“We have heard, not without astonishment, that Jews in Frankfurt still live at St. Bartholomew. This leads to religious persecution.

That is why one has to sequester a special place in the city.”

The City Council applied the orders of the Emperor and the reasoning of the Pope, and placed the 100 members of the Jewish community in a special residential alley in front of the city walls. This ghetto was established at the expense of the city: eleven houses, a dance hall, a hospital, two public houses, a community centre, a cold baths and a synagogue.

1480–1508

Jews were granted “citizenship” by the Council; however they were not allowed to be called citizens, only “wards of the venerable council”.

From 1508, citizenship was only granted from year to year.

1494

Frankfurt Jews refused to pay 1,000 florins to the city on the occasion of the coronation celebrations.

The council incarcerated Jews until payment was made.

1525

Defeat of a revolt by peasants and the guilds.

1535

Frankfurt formally joined the Lutheran Confessions.

1612–1616

A revolutionary uprising, known as the Fettmilch Rebellion, was named after its leader, Vincenz Fettmilch. He sought the fracture of the general power of the patricians. The Jewish issue was not the primary cause, but the corrupt conduct of the city council. Fettmilch led the uprising of guilds to get rid of foreigners (mainly Jews) in the city, whom they viewed as competition and usurers. On 22 August 1614, he led a mob that stormed the Judengasse and plundered the homes of the city’s 1,380 Jews, forcing them to leave until the emperor personally intervened. On 28 February 1616, Fettmilch and six others were executed in Rossmarkt square. On the same day the exiled Jews were led back into Frankfurt by imperial soldiers.

1711

On 14 January, a blaze caused by carelessness with an open fire burnt through the Judengasse.

1796

During a siege by the French, the ghetto of Frankfurt was set on fire. Jews still believed that their deliverance was near.

1811–1813

The unqualified equality Jews acquired under French occupation was only gained for a fee of 440,000 guilders. Their freedom ended with the retreat of Napoleon.

1815–1816

The Congress of Vienna reorganised Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. Jews were forced back to their old status. The question of Jewish emancipation was controversial amongst the bourgeoisie.

1819

The cry “Hep-Hep” was the rallying call during the anti-Jewish riots which affected Jewish communities in many Bavarian towns and villages.

1848

For a second time, the Revolution proclaimed equality for Jews.

1860

Construction of a new synagogue.

1869

A Reich law definitively allocated equal rights for Jews.

1882

Construction of a synagogue for the conservative Jewish community (the Judenmarkt was renamed Börneplatz).

1894

Jews in Frankfurt finally acquired full legal equality. The Judengasse was to be demolished after more than 350 years. Its removal took over 20 years to complete. The remnants of the last house that was demolished, the “Stone House”, was uncovered in 1987 while digging foundations for a new building.

Before 1914

Establishment of synagogues on the Friedberger site and the West End.



Attack on the Jewish quarter on 10 August 1819. (Historisches Museum, Frankfurt)

1920

The first program of the Society for Jewish Folk education is put into practice. The mayor of Frankfurt, Georg Voigt, accepted election to the board of the association for the defense of anti-Semitism.

1925

There were 29,385 Jewish residents in the city of Frankfurt.

1933

On 29 March, at the direction of the district leadership of the NSDAP, the SS and SA organised boycotts of Jewish businesses, theaters, cinemas, doctors, lawyers and newspapers. On 4 December, the Frankfurt city treasurer brought attention to the consequences of the boycott sanctions had for the city. There was severe downturn in tax revenue and decrease in export trade.

1940

There were only 11,500 Jewish citizens still living in the city.

1942

The final dissolution of the Frankfurt Jewish community.

1943

Records showed that 572 Jews were living in the city on 31 March.

The Rothschild family

Mayer Amschel's ancestors had long been merchants in the Jewish ghetto of Frankfurt. Among his many siblings he was the most gifted child and was expected to become a rabbi. To that end, his parents sent him to Fürth to attend a Yeshiva. After the early death of his parents he returned to the ghetto. His exceptional story began in his brother's house, named 'Zur Hinterpfann'.

Originally, his family resided in the Rothschild house at the top end of Judengasse among the more well-to-do. At the time, Jews weren't 'privileged' enough to use family names. Accordingly, they marked their abodes with signs and objects. Poverty in the Jewish quarter was wide-spread. A decree by the imperial city kept the Jewish community below 500 persons and allowed a mere 12 marriages per year.

Mayer Amschel wanted to get married and start a family. To achieve the economic requirements to fulfil his wish, he set up an exchange office at 'Zur Hinterpfann' toiling tirelessly for years and thus gaining access to the courts from where his unstoppable rise began.

Mayer Amschel Rothschild, b. 23 Feb 1744 –d. 19 Sep 1812, married Gudula Schnapper, b. 23 Aug 1753–d. 7 May 1849.

Through his connections he continued to gain recognition and, on 21 September 1769, the young bearded man attached a special plaque outside 'Zur Hinterpfann'. Below the coat of arms of the house of 'Hesse-Hanau', in resplendent golden letters was written: "M. A. Rothschild. Royal Hesse-Hanau Court Jew."

His wife blessed him with many children. Their five sons – Amschel Mayer Rothschild (Frankfurt), James [Jakob] Mayer Rothschild (Paris), Nathan Mayer Rothschild (London), Salomon Mayer Rothschild (Vienna), Carl [Calmann] Mayer Rothschild (Naples) – expanded the family empire throughout Europe.

Landgrave Ernst Ludwig (1688–1739) of Hesse-Darmstadt ordered the construction of the Bickenbach Hunting Chateau (1720) and was the most ruthless



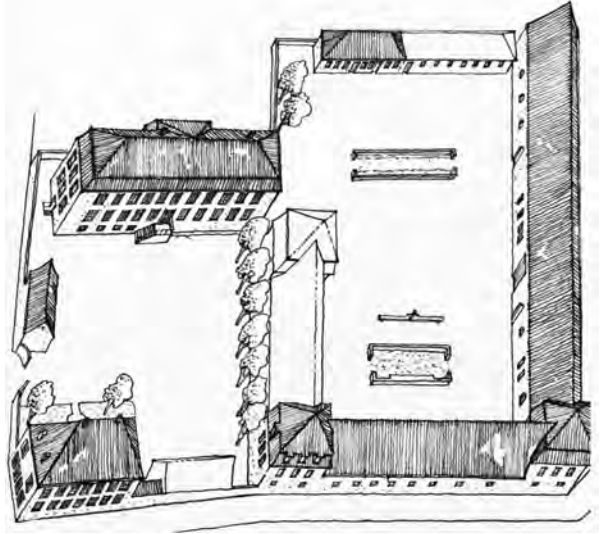
The Rothschild's head office in Frankfurt, original photo by Carl Friedrich Mylius, 1869. (Historisches Museum, Frankfurt)

of all Counts in running up debts and exploiting the common people of the day. Like many others of his class, he sought to emulate the Sun King, Louis XIV, thereby running further into debt. To cover these deficits, he resorted to the debasement of coinage. At the same time, the Landgraves of Hesse-Kassel became known for their infamous practice of supplying German servicemen to the British military to fight in the American Revolutionary War. The proceeds, totalling more than 10 million thalers, went into the private hands of the Landgraves not the state coffers.

Since 1803, Mayer Amschel Rothschild was the main agent for Landgraves of Hesse, he saved the money which came from Napoleon. At the end of the 18th century, Frankfurt had become one of Europe's leading banking centres with the help of Mayer Amschel Rothschild.

However, these types of institutions disappeared by the end of the 19th century. With the onset of industrialisation, they were no longer required for financing the state's credit, and banks were established according to the law on stock corporations. In 1901, the parent finance company in Frankfurt closed down.

Between 1938 and 1945, the Rothschilds in Vienna and Paris suffered under the Nazi regime. But the name of Rothschild has become well known and emanates fascination to this day.



Drawing of Bickenbach Hunting Chateau, built in 1720 by Count Ernst Ludwig of Hesse-Darmstadt (1688–1739).



Caricature of the Rothschild banking empire, Frankfurt, 1848. (Historisches Museum, Frankfurt)

Jews in Darmstadt

Chronology

1312–1330

Kaiser Heinrich VII (c.1275–1313) and Ludwig the Bavarian (1282–1347) settled in Darmstadt after the city was founded by the counts of Katzenelnbogen, Diether and Wilhelm I. They transferred their rights and the city became a secondary residence for the counts.

1418

The Katzenelnbogen Jews had to pay a significant crown tax as neighbouring dominions.

1420–30

The Darmstadt Haggadah was written on parchment by Israel ben Meir of Heidelberg. They were liturgical texts and illustrations of Seder guides created for Passover.

1524

Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse, decreed that Jews were no longer to be tolerated. The order of expulsion lasted almost two centuries.

1529

First evidence of Jews in Darmstadt.

1619

There were 26 Jewish families living in the county. In 1621, 30 Jewish families were allowed to live there.

1629

Landgrave regulations affecting Jews came into force.

c.1690

Only the family of a court Jew, David, lived in the city.



Great synagogue in Friedrichstrasse, Darmstadt c.1875–78.

1699

Landgrave, Ernst Ludwig, freed Jews in the county from paying “Leibzoll” (a toll that Jews had to pay in many European states) provided that they kept their trade within official boundaries.

1707

The list of Jewish families showed that an intact community existed in Darmstadt.

1722

On 20 June at the Giessen State Diet a submission was handled by the Privy Council which stated: ... Jews in the city and the country are now so powerful and well established that soon the

Christians will either be their servants, or they will have the same licence and freedoms.

1729

In September, after nine months of religious training in a Darmstadt orphanage, 33-year-old Feibisch Isaac from Königsberg was baptised with the name Ernst Christian Darmstadt.

1737

First evidence of a Darmstadt Synagogue.

1784–85

Hebrew bookkeeping was prohibited. The newly applied levy for the Landjudenschaft and the community were to be recorded in German.¹

1. Landjudenschaft: Self-governing Jewish community institutions, largely concerned with taxation and administration, and a body that helped to create the necessary organisational framework for the exercise of Jewish life.

The language act, issued on 29 October 1785, allowed the continuation of Hebrew worship, but stipulated the use of the Christian calendar, and the use of German for all the records beyond religious scope, and for all legal and administrative transactions. Whoever could not write German had to have his signature certified by two witnesses or at a government office.

1798

Foundation of a provident society that could help sick and needy members of the Jewish community.

1801

When Levi Aron Heilbronn from Hanover, an authorised private English teacher, wanted to become a teacher at the Darmstadt Pädagogium, the otherwise quite modernist rector, Helfrich Bernhard Wenck, explained rigorously:

... the learning of the English language is not needed for the German state, nor can it be publicly supported, and therefore necessary provisions at country schools cannot be met. Besides, the students are overloaded, and it appears in many a sensitive youth, when one can expect to receive little philosophical tolerance, that it is unwise to hire a Jew as a public teacher.

1806

The Landgraviate of Hesse-Darmstadt was under the Napoleon Grand Duchy and a member of the Confederation of the Rhine.^{2 3}

1808

To improve the integration of Jews, a regulation was issued regarding the governance of German family names.

1814

With the introduction of the Landwehr (Prussian and German reserve forces) and the final defeat of Napoleon, the previously conscripted Jews were obliged to accede.

1820

On 17 December, the Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Hesse brought only vague improvements for supporters of the Jewish faith.

1823

Reorganisation of the elementary school system also brought compulsory education for Jewish children.

1847

82 Jews were recorded as having local civil rights.

1865–1873

The merchant, B. J. Trier, a member of the German Progress Party, was elected to the Darmstadt council.

c.1880

Formation of two Jewish communities in the city – a devout religious society and a liberal religious community; this was in connection to the construction of new synagogues.

1890

In Giessen on 3 May, the local anti-Semites association, and the Central German Farmers Association, united to form a governing body which maintained bases in Ried and Odenwald.

1914–1918

During WWI the Darmstadt Rabbi, Dr Bruno Italianer, was conscripted as Field Rabbi of the High Command of the 7th Army on the Western Front.

After 1920

With events at Thuringia, there was repeated anti-Semitic conflict in Darmstadt.

1925

According to the official census 1,646 Jews were living in the city.

1927

In the state election, the NSDAP in Darmstadt obtained less than 2.5% of the vote.

1930

In the Reichstag elections, almost a quarter of Darmstadt, namely 13,341 voters, chose Hitler and his Nazi party.

2. The Landgraviate of Hesse-Darmstadt was a State of the Holy Roman Empire, and ruled by a younger branch of the House of Hesse. It was formed in 1567 following the division of the Landgraviate of Hesse between the four sons of Landgrave Philip I.

3. The Confederation of the Rhine was a confederation of the states of the First French Empire. It was formed initially from 16 German states by Napoleon after he defeated Austria and Russia in the Battle of Austerlitz.

1931

At the national and state elections on 15 November, the state of Hesse voted 37% for Hitler's party. The state capital of Darmstadt had an even higher vote of 45%.

1933

In the general election on 5 March, 50% of voters in Darmstadt voted for the NSDAP. There were 1,427 Jews living in Darmstadt.

1933–1936

During this time, the Darmstadt branch of the Palestine Office helped almost 200 mostly young people, to emigrate.⁴

1934

On April 15, the first private Jewish school in Darmstadt was established with government approval.

Up to 1936

Creation of associations and groups: Jewish Youth Association, Zionist Federation, Youth Association, Darmstadt Jewish Youth/Brith Hajaiv, Jewish Cultural Association. Keren Hayesod (the United Israel Appeal) held a rally in a hall in 1936. To that end, the State Police in Darmstadt, in its monthly report for June 1936 said:

“What is conspicuous is the strong increase in the activities of Jewish associations and organisations. There have even been attempts at public events, such as hiking and boat trips, but in any case this was prohibited in the interests of public order and security.”



Eberstadt synagogue, built c.1914, destroyed Kristallnacht, 1938.

1938

At the end of July there were signs attached to public buildings: “Jews are forbidden to enter”. On 4 September, the Reich Association of Jewish Veterans held a public memorial service at the Jewish cenotaph for fallen soldiers. On 27–28 October, there was an attempt to deport families from Poland. On 9–10 November, synagogues were burned.

1939

In October, the religious congregation and the religious association resolved to merge.

1940

Deportations to concentration camps were initiated; some people succeeded in emigrating.

1941

A despatch list recorded the migration of four cultural associations to the USA.

4. The Palestine Office was a Zionist institution that, in the 1920s and 1930s, distributed the immigration “certificates” issued by government. The institution dealt with hakhsharah (intellectual, agricultural and physical training for settlement in Israel), provided information to prospective immigrants and prepared the necessary travel documents. The Office served as a link to the British consulates and the authorities of the country concerned.

1942

The first deportation was from the freight depot. About 1,000 Jews, from the former provinces of Starkenburg and Rheinhessen in the State of Hesse, had been gathered over several days and kept in the Liebig Oberrealschule in Lagerhausstrasse. On 20 March they were transported to Poland. 'Resettlement for labour' was the publicised reason. There were further large transports to follow.

1943

On 10 February there was a so-called change of residence for people living at the Jewish home for the elderly at 4½ Eschollbrücker Strasse. A total of 53 people were transported to Theresienstadt, including two who were from Bickenbach:

- Simon Mainzer, son of the merchant Löb Mainzer, was born in Bickenbach in 1871.
 - Malchen Schiff (née Oppenheimer) was a widow. She was born in Bickenbach on 2 Feb 1860. She died at Theresienstadt on 12 May 1943.
- Persecution of Jews of mixed marriages and privileged Jews gained momentum. The Judenreferat (the Jewish Department, also known as the Eichmann Unit) had done its job and was disbanded in June. In 1944, the community was destroyed.

1946

The Jewish community of Darmstadt adopted a new beginning. Their meeting house stood in Osmanstrasse and in November 1988 – 50 years after Kristallnacht – provision was passed for a new synagogue.



Neubau orthodox synagogue, and the community schoolhouse, c.1905.



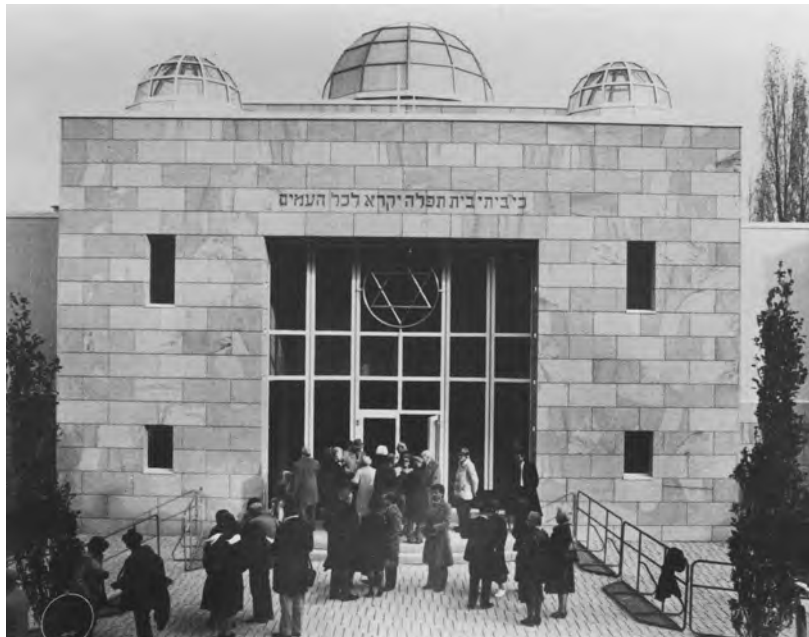
A page from the Darmstadt Haggadah (1420)

'This is the bread of misery
our fathers ate in Egypt.
May the hungry come and eat!
May the needy come and celebrate
Passover with us!
This year – here;
in future years – in Israel!
This year – still slaves;
in coming years – free men!'

This section of the Haggadah was not written in Hebrew but in Aramaic, the language commonly spoken by Jews in Palestine after they returned from Babylonian exile.



The "old synagogue" of the religious community, c.1905. (Part of the old city.)



Inauguration of the new Darmstadt synagogue, 9 November 1988.

The official charter, the original of which was enclosed in the foundation [of the new synagogue].

Certification

They burned your sanctuary to the ground;
 they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.
 They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!"
 They burned every place where God was worshipped in the land.

From Psalm 74:7 and 8

This certification bears witness to the laying of the foundation stone for the new synagogue of the Jewish Community of Darmstadt on 12 August 1987, the 17 Av 5747, in the 42nd year since the re-establishment of the Darmstadt Jewish Community since the catastrophe that led to the extinction of Jewish life in Germany.

Our hope is linked to 9 November 1988, the fiftieth anniversary of the tragic date on which the synagogues were burning all over Germany, and the three Jewish houses of God were destroyed in this city as well. Because on this day, the house, whose cornerstone we lay today, will be consecrated and will be a sign of a new and better time.

The Darmstadt community that once counted 3,500 [Jewish] people today has only 130 members. It is their wish and assurance that the synagogue, which once stood at this place, may develop into a religious centre for the whole of southern Hesse.

Therefore, the city of Darmstadt, whose city council has unanimously passed the decision to build the synagogue, has laid this foundation.

May all our joint efforts bring us closer to our goal of accepting Jewish life in this city as normal, and a new synagogue be the foundation for this understanding.

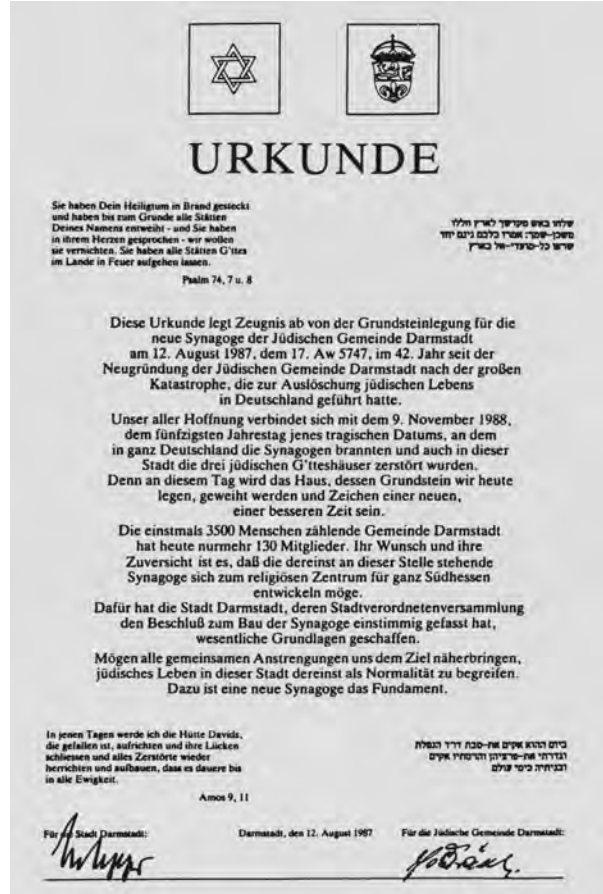
"In that day I will restore David's fallen shelter. I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins, and will rebuild it as it used to be."

From Amos 9:11

Darmstadt, 12 August 1987

For the City of Darmstadt: (signature)

For the Jewish Community of Darmstadt: (signature)



Fränkisch-Crumbach in Odenwald

To date, not much is known about the Jewish people of Fränkisch-Crumbach. To learn more about their history is important because little can be found about the congregation prior to 1800. Luckily, a comprehensive set of documents has been preserved in the archives of Baron von Gemmingenschen, but these will take some time to study and interpret.

So far, it can be determined that the first Jewish person settled in the region about 1697. In 1705, two Jewish families lived there, and in 1719, three Jewish families. By 1730, there were six, and in 1761, seven families. In addition, there was a Jewish schoolmaster.

During the combined reigns of Barons von Gemmingen and von Pretlack, immigration was hindered, and even Jews born in the region were discouraged from settling in order to maintain food supplies for residents. High rates of protection money were also required from Jews so that they would not be a burden on the local rulers or the community.

Seven to eight Jewish families lived in the area until the early part of the 19th century. A synagogue was commissioned to be built in 1873 and inaugurated in 1874. After 1933, the synagogue was converted into a cinema.

Testament of 'protected Jew' Zadoch Baruch of Fränkisch-Crumbach (1748)

In 1748, the 'Schutzjude' Zadoch Baruch in Fränkisch-Crumbach notified a local official named Seippel about his wish to make a Will.¹ As Baruch was bedridden, he requested the official to come to his home and set out a notarial record.

On 15 November, Seippel visited Baruch at his home. He was accompanied by five respected local residents who were to act as witnesses. The original written record with seals still exists today and is an extremely rare historic document, which is why we deem it necessary to publish it here. The text is presented word-for-word but uses contemporary spelling. The text reads as follows:

"I, named hereafter Baron von Gemmingischer and local official (Baron von Gemmingischer Amtskeller), hereby

testify, that the local 'protected Jew' Zadoch and his wife Frommet sent for me, so as to officially have their last will recorded. When I appeared at their home along with the signed witnesses below, between 5pm and 6pm, both were in the sitting room, Zadoch sickly in bed, and her, Frommet, healthy in an armchair next to him. Both, and especially Zadoch, were cognisant and explained their situation with clear words.

Due to their old age and Zadoch himself being bedridden, and in order to avoid disputes and disagreements between their two sons and grandson following their death, the former of whom have been fighting about their estate, Zadoch and his wife have entirely of their own free will decided to have their estate recorded in a testament.

As such it was ordered that after their death, sons Isaac and Moses shall respect, receive and keep their house, which is located next to the house of Philipp Hübner and Michael Reinheimer, including all movables whatever they may be and all outstanding debts, silver, gold and other jewels. In addition, they shall receive 1500 guilders but only if they are to keep 500 each and forward 500 guilders to the grandson Benedict of Auerbach, whose mother Bule, their own deceased daughter, had already received in cash at the time of marriage.

Whatever else will emerge to be left over after their death and after all debts are paid shall be divided and bequeathed in even parts between their sons Isaac and Moses and their grandson Benedict of Auerbach. As such the aforementioned sons and grandson shall be appointed as the proper and constant principal heirs.

Moreover, the testator and testatrix enacted that their grandson Benedict shall not be entrusted with his inheritance until he is of age or gets married beforehand. Until such day the inheritance shall be managed by local guardians or custodians in charge of a commendable duty they would have requested. They diligently requested that their last will and enactment, or however else it is to be called and valid by law, is accepted, confirmed and accordingly set out in a deed and applied dutifully after their death. However, they explicitly reserved the right to change, reduce, increase and entirely withdraw their last will.

1. Schutzjude (German for "Protected Jew") was a status granted by the imperial, princely or royal courts for German Jews.

The testator and testatrix have insisted on their order so steadfastly that I could not refuse and therefore accepted by way of my official authority in the presence of the witnesses to confirm the deed and read it out to the testator and testatrix. I applied the official seal alongside the witnesses' signatures and seals.

As happened in Fränkisch-Crumbach on 15 November 1748."

Fr. Seippel, incumbent.

Johann Leonhard Hübner, requested drafter.

Philippus Kroh,

requested witness.

Johann Henrich Vetter,

requested witness.

Johann Georg Oldendorp,

requested witness.

Johann Georg Krell,

requested witness.

Additional Comments

1. The Jew Zadoch ben Baruch was a reputable man and a spokesperson for the local Jewish community. For several years, when local Jews could not visit the synagogue in Reichelsheim, on the Sabbath they prayed at Zadoch's home. Zadoch tried to attain permission from the local authorities to build a synagogue.

Zadoch was wealthy, if not necessarily rich. He paid 7½ guilders per year in protection money. Three other Jews who were almost without possessions paid 2 guilders while two others who were destitute couldn't pay any protection money at all (1730).

2. The witnesses appeared to have been part of the local court jury. Hübner was the court major. They all had their own seal, and their prints are well preserved on the document. These are considered to be some of the earliest records of Fränkisch-Crumbach family crests.

3. It seems the heirs fought fiercely over the inheritance despite the Will. The envelope that contained the Will had a later note added to it: 'Opened after recorded settlement on 6 April 1769'.

Writ of protection for the Jew, Moses Löw from 1802

The following is from a writ of settlement and protection from 1802, for Moses Löw, the third son of the local Jew Mordochai (Mordchen) Löw. It gives insight into the conditions under which a Jew was granted to move or settle into a territory. In 1798, Moses Löw had married Hanne, the daughter of Baruch Benedikt of Groß-Zimmern, and taken up residence in Wembach in the Hesse-Darmstadt area. After having lived there for three years, he submitted the following request to Baron Freiherr von Gemmingen:

"To the noble lord and chamberlain, gracious chamberlain and major!

I would have never dared to beseech Your Grace most humbly for a most important favour if you didn't exhibit the same human kindness as God himself, the most gracious being, and thus prove that you yourself are a philanthrope which you take very seriously. To make humans happy where possible, not fulfilling me with hope, to lay my humble request at your feet, to find help with unwavering trust, where it was obtained by so many others to their inexpressible consolation.

Albeit I was born in Crumbach and my two brothers (Mordge and Koppel Loeb) are residents there under the protection of Your Noble Lord, I have been, however, accepted to be protected by the administration of Hesse-Darmstadt and reside in Wembach. I have a good livelihood there but believe that my two children and those God may yet grant me with, require a place of residence with a Jewish schoolmaster to receive the necessary teachings.

As such I take the submissive liberty to request most humbly that Your Grace take on myself and my family to provide us with your invaluable gracious protection and give me permission to relocate to Crumbach and reside there. I take comfort in and look forward to your merciful consent. I understand that the number of Jews accepted into the protection of Crumbach due to the death of Mayer (Mayer Moses) was reduced but my brothers shall be liable for me and my family as necessary and the residents of Crumbach are well disposed towards me. In my ambitious expectation and deepest submissiveness to Your Noble Lord and Gracious Chamberlain and Major, Your most obedient Moses Loeb."

The request was accompanied by a certificate of conduct from the Mayor of Rohrbach-Wembach-Hahn as follows:

“It is herewith by way of a seal attested that during his three-year residence at Wembach under the authority of Lichtenberg, the ‘protected Jew Moses Loeb’ with his wife has conducted himself as a righteous, honest man and paid his dues for house and general items without complaint.”
Wembach, 14 July 1802,
Daniel Rambaud, Mayor

Writ of protection

Following a resolution by the Lords, protection under the local authority and district is granted to the Jew Moses Löw, born here as the third son of the Jew Mordchen – himself born in the Lichtenberg authority of Darmstadt – and his wife Hanne, daughter of the Jew Baruch Benedikt of Groß-Zimmern, and his three children Löw Moses (4 years old), Jüdel (11 and a half) and Sara (14 years old). The following conditions apply:

1. that he, along with his wife, unmarried children, domestic servants and belongings, shall enjoy the protection by the local seigneurial district and thus be represented against unlawful violence. He may carry out his trade and profession in a fair and unhindered manner and at the same time safeguard other residents and protected relatives and treat them lawfully in all cases;

2. that he shall promote the best for himself and his family and provide maximum benefit for the gracious reign to the best of his knowledge and ability, whilst avoiding damages and disadvantages for the above and report to the administrative office without delay all cases that could become detrimental if concealed;

3. that he and his family shall lead a respectable, honest life and abide by all seigneurial and general regulations and laws in place here, and thoroughly adhere to the new Jewish regulations confirmed by the authorities;

4. that on no account shall he engage in a lawsuit against himself or his family by a foreign magistracy or accept a sentence by such an unauthorised judge, without prior notification or obtained consent by his local reign or representative;

5. that he shall refrain from all profiteering or deceitful actions altogether, in particular with regards to all local subjects and;

6. that he shall not lend to any of the residents or subjects more than 5 guilders of money or cash value without advising the magistracy, with or without dead pledges, which would result in the loss of the right of action and adequate seigneurial punishment, and that he shall least of all accept from one of the locals more than 6 guilders for one hundred of annual taxes, or be punished with the confiscation of his demands;

7. that, in order to avoid a severe penalty, he shall neither trade with women without their husbands’ knowledge nor with unmarried people without their parents’ or their employers’ knowledge, as such an acquisition of natural products or fruits would be an unfaithful act against their parents, family or employer;

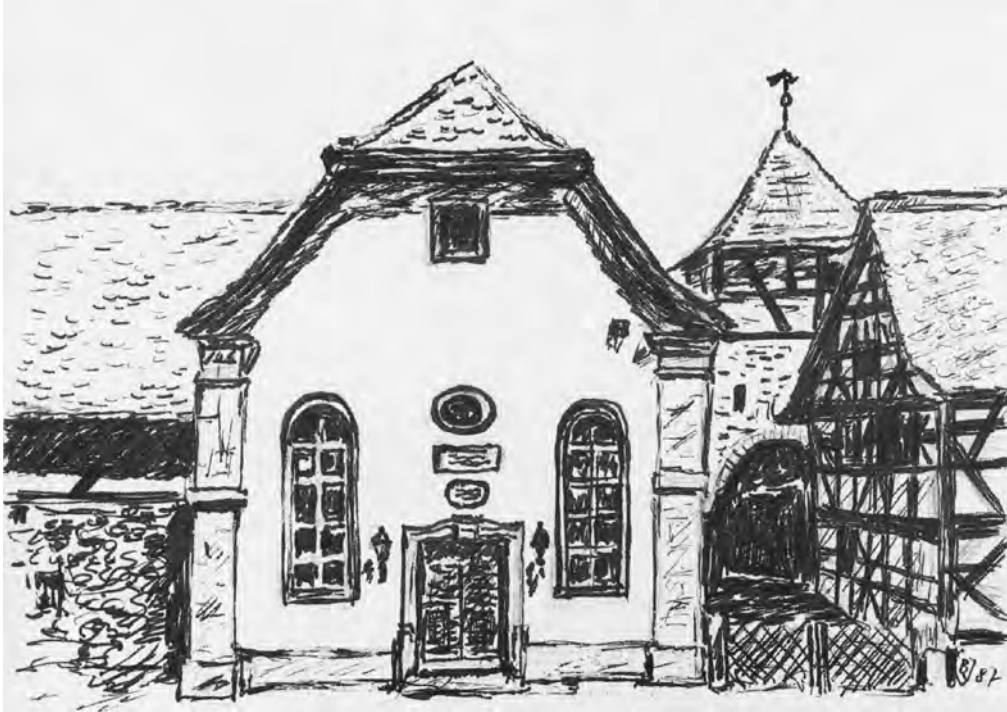
8. that he shall not grant any stranger, whether poor or travelling, without prior informing the authorities, the permission to spend the night at his home which also applies to other persons from the outside including relatives; least of all shall he accommodate persons known to be suspicious or pursued by judicial authorities or instantly forego his protection. Neither shall he purchase goods known to be stolen but rather advise the magistracy if he suspects anything in the slightest and thus help to retain the thief or buyer of stolen goods in order to return these goods to their owner;

9. Finally, that for his protection he shall pay an annual fee of 15 guilders to the magistracy on the day he moves in and thereafter every year on the day of Martini, and if he repeatedly fails to pay the fees or fails to satisfy the above prescribed conditions, he shall lose further protection. Should in such a case the noble rulers at any time decide to cease the protection granted indefinitely, he shall after prior notification leave the local district within a fixed period of time for good.

Crumbach, 10 November 1802

AUTHOR: RUDOLF KUNZ, JUGENHEIM, 1985.

The Rabbi of miracles from Michelstadt in the Odenwald



The Michelstadt synagogue.
Drawing by Barbara Jungclaus, 1987.

The town of Michelstadt, in the Hesse district of Odenwald, is world-famous for its town hall, a late-Gothic half-timbered building which was built c.1484. In 1658, two Jewish families lived in Michelstadt and by 1860, 192 Jews were registered in the area. By 1938, the number had declined to 132, and in 1943 only one Jewish resident remained. They were all deported, with only a few surviving the ordeal.

A regulation regarding Jews made by Landgrave Georg of Hesse from 1629 gave rights and obligations to Jewish people. Further regulations were added by the local sovereigns, the Counts of Erbach, in the form of the land law, the 'Landrecht der Grafschaft Erbach' (Common Law of Erbach Countship) from 1790 and 1799 which also referred to the prior regulations of 1732 and 1739.

In 1804, a further law was considered necessary to regulate disputes and misunderstandings relating to contracts between Christians and Jews within the Countship of Erbach. In court, Jewish witnesses had to

make a Jewish oath, known as the Juden-Eid:

“After having made my oath
on the eternal God,
who created Heaven and Earth,
and on the Bible that was received
on Mount Sinai:
that’s how it was.
And if it wasn’t so,
I shall receive all punishments
written within the
five books of Moses.”

Over the centuries, Jews had no other choice than to make a living from trading cattle and lending money. The law of the Christian Church forbade Christians to charge interest on money they lent. This made it easy for Jewish money lenders to find their customers. In addition to farmers and townspeople, it was also the aristocratic noblemen and the city treasuries who borrowed considerable amounts of money against high interest.

The Counts of Erbach had their own Jews at court who were responsible for financial matters and liquidity. In 1714, Hesekeil Baruch was appointed Court Jew.

In 1767, Seckel Loeb Wormser was born to the poor Jew Mathis and his wife after they had lost six young sons. Seckel was to become the famous Rabbi of miracles. From 1783 to 1789, he studied at the then renowned Talmud school in Frankfurt.

Seckel Loeb Wormser didn't just study the Talmud and the Bible but was also concerned with the particular study of the Kabbalah tradition, which had mystical traits and strived to experience God directly within one's own soul. The tradition believed in the miracles of sacred sayings and names as well as magical ideas. It was certainly a counter weight to the rational religious philosophy of the Talmud.

During his time in Frankfurt he also decided to become a strict vegetarian, and although he continued this way of life until his death he was said to have been an unusually strong man. It can't be denied that he always believed in cabbalistic ideas to some extent. His nature, too, was said to have had a mysterious side, which some ordinary people took as traits that later made him the Rabbi of miracles.

On the other hand, he must also have had good farming skills as he attended to the rearing, breeding and cross-breeding of plants. In the Odenwald district you can still buy a variety of pear cultivated by him, the 'Wormser Birne', which his descendants brought to the USA where it is known as the 'Wormser pear'.

At the age of 22, Seckel Loeb returned to Michelstadt with a young wife from a well-to-do Frankfurt family. He established a Talmud school which soon had 70 students. He set up a library which stocked the standard Hebrew works as well as books by German philosophers and works on natural sciences.

In 1791, he built a small synagogue. He had more students than the Jewish community in Michelstadt had members. Also, his house was soon full of his own children. To provide for and feed all of these people soon became a major challenge for him, especially as the local community lacked understanding for the young Rabbi's grand ambitions. Only a few members of the Jewish community assisted him and his wife to feed and provide

for the students. Furthermore, they also looked after the poor passing through the area.

To get hold of money, he sent emissaries to communities in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Poland and all the way to Russia. During WWII, soldiers from Michelstadt came across his picture in the town of Molodechna near Vilnius, within the houses of Jewish people who had been deported by the SS.

In 1809, his wife and mother of his many children died. He was widely known among Jews as a scholar and benefactor, as a helper and advisor. As such, just one day after the death of his wife, he was called to Mannheim to help a mentally unstable woman. Under his watch the woman got better. Back then such an act was considered a miracle. In Mannheim, he met his second wife who became his loyal helper and a good mother to his children.

In 1825, Michelstadt was hit by a fire. The Rabbi's house with the precious library was taken by the flames. Only gradually, with the help of donations by benefactors, could the library be replaced.

Finally, in 1847 at 80 years of age, Michelstadt's Rabbi of miracles, Seckel Loeb Wormser, died in his hometown and was mourned by his family, students, admirers and beyond.

As a descendent from a long line of religious families whose genealogy dated back to the scholar Gerson of Endingen, who was burned at the stake in 1484 due to his beliefs, Seckel Loeb must have had an unusual charisma of kindness and wisdom. The synagogue in Michelstadt was only restored in more recent times. At the local museum in Odenwald we can find a lot of information on Jewish people of the Erbach district. Rabbi Seckel Loeb Wormser's former house has a stone tablet installed with the following inscription:

"In this house the philanthrope S. L. Wormser lived from 1826 until his death in 1847. Dedicated in 1910 by his hometown of Michelstadt."

The stone tablet may have survived the years of 1933 to 1945 but not so the Jewish people of Michelstadt. They were deported and murdered. Survivors are dispersed all around the world.

Jewish life, Jewish humour, poems and anecdotes

In recent years much has appeared in the book market on the topic of Jewish wit. The following examples of Jewish humour are from around the Bergstrasse and, until now, had been only passed on verbally.

A merchant named Mainzer from Zwingenberg was visiting the Schemel premises, a small butcher's shop in Chausseegasse. He suddenly turned to the lady of the house, Marie Schemel, and said:

"Marie, may I make a contribution free of charge?"

Mr Mainzer had to follow the call of nature and thus would leave a 'free contribution' to the house.



The 'Jew of Worms' made comments on ways of life and customs – private and commercial – which could be taken in either a positive or a negative way. In the past, there seems to have been much said about the 'Jew of Worms' in proverbs, anecdotes and funny tales.

The 'Jew of Worms' was having hard times in and around town. Business was going poorly so he decided to try the Ried region and the Bergstrasse across the Rhine. Perhaps he would be favoured by fortune there. Hardship was great and he even attended to his businesses on Fridays. When he finally arrived home late at night whistling, with Shabbos well underway, his wife was furious yet asked him how business had gone across the Rhine to which he cheerfully replied:

"Well, I exchanged an old five-mark piece for a new one!"



The 'Jew of Worms' apparently provided some matchmaking services across the Rhine. When he was asked some time later how the 'young couple' was doing, he briefly replied:

"Well, I received 20 marks for the time until they got together. Today, God willing, I would receive 200 marks, if they were apart again!"



During cash check one evening, the 'Jew of Worms' noted:

"Righteous God, seven are not eight!" (referring to marks)



Somewhere in southern Hesse a couple decided:

"Our boy will do better than us – we'll send him to high school!"

It's no sooner said and done, and the boy went off to high school in Bensheim or another town. But it wasn't quite working out for the boy at school. A well-meaning neighbour then asked:

"Why torment the boy, nothing will come of it! In the end he will learn neither one thing or another!"

The offended father responded emphatically:

"You really think my boy won't learn anything? The boy will learn how to travel by train, that's something".



The goatskin merchant, Elias of Alsbach, was visiting a newlywed couple in Bickenbach:

"May I have a look at your bedroom?"

The couple replied:

"If it's absolutely necessary. But only because we're well acquainted."

"Only a quick glance", said Elias.

After he's had a look, Elias said laconically:

"Wow, that's a nice bed, you've got there!"



On kosher food:

Passing through Bickenbach, the aforementioned goatskin merchant, Elias, father of many children and struggling daily with poverty, visited a butcher's sausage kitchen. He greeted the butcher, Philipp, then tested the waters. Driven by gnawing hunger and an empty stomach he snatched a chunk of cooked meat with the speed of a weasel and noisily devoured it with haste.

"Oh dear Elias, that's pork you've just eaten – Since when are you eating pig meat!?", the astonished butcher exclaimed.

"Philipp, believe it or not, I can actually tolerate anything other than hobnails", Elias replied placidly while wiping his greasy mouth on his kittel.

On praying:

It was a late Friday afternoon in Hähnlein. Aunt Lina from Darmstadt was picked up from the railway station at Hähnlein-Alsbach by horse and cart and unpacked her suitcase. She was quite looking forward to the fair! Lost in thought about good food and meeting up with old friends in town, she suddenly heard someone whimper and weep seemingly without end from the neighbour's house, which sounded bloodcurdling. Aunt Lina called out to her brother Konrad:

"Can't you hear Marum wail? I think he has a terrible tooth ache!"

"Are you crazy", Konrad said, "Marum is praying, it's the Sabbath after all!"



This is what Itzig of Reichebach thought of the Lord Mayor:

"Our Lord Mayor, on my honour, would be quite a good man, if only he would be a better donor!"



On 'Juremer Dadscher':¹

Mrs Koppel says to her neighbour, Lieschen Lehrman:

"Lieschen, I tell you, when I make Dadscher I have the most tender hands!"

The cap (Die Kapp)

David was meant to become a merchant, which he didn't want to do; his tyrant father said, however:

*"You will become a merchant!
It's not up to you!"*

*"I know that being a doctor
is what you'd prefer as employ;
I'd rather you change your plans
Aren't enough people dying already,
you stubborn young boy?"*

An impure overcoat

*"Alas, Aron, listen if you care;
Can you fit me out
Lend me your trousers and your overcoat!
I will bring them back to your house."*

*"What does that mean?", Aron asked with a strong gaze,
"You must me crazy, indeed, insane.
How can you come up with such mad idea,
That I should help you relieve your pain?"*

*"But just take a single look at me;
How can I meet anyone like this face to face!
I thought you might like to help.
Because in court I will help with your case."*

Aron begins to understand; he goes and produces his Shabbos robe from his cabinet. It's almost new and made of excellent material, without a single stain on it.

*"My Schmidtche, you must take an oath on it now,
because it is made of cow –"*

He then buys liverwurst from the butcher for him along with a mischievous grin.

FROM: NUFFZUSSISCH UN RUNNERZUSSISCH IM ERBACHER LAND
(ORAL POEMS IN REAL LORBSERDEITSCH DIALECT),
BY GRETA BICKELHAUPT.

1. Juremer Dadscher: Jurem refers to the town of Jugenheim; Dadscher (or Datscher) is baked pastry or bread – likely refers to Challah, bread eaten on the Jewish Sabbath.

He cannot

Gedallje was known to freeload,
 where good things were to be had, he would go.
 It bothered Nathan that Gedallje had such a paunch,
 and yet he told him:

"If you're able, come for lunch tomorrow."

For the meal Gedallje would prepare himself well,
 But the door was closed. Gedallje rang the bell;
 He rang the bell, pulled, tore and plucked, drummed
 as if in a parade and knocked on the door like a storm.
 Lo and behold, the window opened and Nathan looked
 down, And he called:

*"Who's that drumming, ringing and making so much noise
 at my door?"*

And Gedallje replied: *"Mr Nathan, but it's me,
 Mr Nathan, me!"*

"Well, what it is, Mr Gedallje?", Nathan said without
 delight.

*"What is it? How can I know? I hope it's something good,
 since you invited me but can I come in, I think I should.
 Come for dinner, you said, if I was able to,
 Now that I'm here, you leave me outside without a clue."*

And Nathan called down: *"Is the door locked?
 It is indeed locked, my friend Gedallje – that's right –
 But who's to blame for this feat?
 Yes, I invited you, but what words did I choose?
 Come for dinner if you were able. – And can you?
 No! – You cannot!"*

FROM: DIE SCHÖNSTEN DICHTUNGEN IN FRANKFURTER MUNDART
 (THE BEST POEMS IN FRANKFURT DIALECT),
 BY FRIEDRICH STOLZE.



"He cannot."

Jewish language and disappearing dialects

The word 'dialect' comes from the Greek and means discourse. Contrary to trans-regional standards or written language, a dialect is a locally bound vernacular, and some are slowly disappearing from everyday use.

Nowadays, even in rural areas, people speak High German with their children. Parents fear that speaking a dialect will cause language 'mistakes' and disadvantage their children later in life. People who speak in a dialect are often seen as uneducated and are ridiculed. However, people do accept some exotics and exceptions, and would use certain words for self-representation, thanks to the linguistic accuracy of such words in describing a situation.

Lately, it has become quite acceptable to integrate English words and sayings, as well as some French, into our informal language. It is meant to attest to a certain level of education. It is clear that throughout the centuries, written and spoken English has evolved differently from German. Many of its meanings and expressions are more concise and generally clearer. Abbreviated computer language, resembling mere scraps of words, also dominates our daily language. Are these our new dialects?

People will have to judge whether such developments enrich or impoverish our everyday language as, little by little, traditional dialects are left behind.

Our Bickenbach dialect, and dialects in general, are out of fashion and are slowly disappearing because they are no longer spoken. Salcia Landmann, a Jewish writer from St. Gallen, writes in one of her books regarding the use of Yiddish within German-speaking countries that such a loss is irreversible because the people speaking the language are gone, with some dispersed throughout the world.

In the past, it was mostly livestock traders, butchers and farmers who spoke 'Jirrisch' (Yiddish), usually using common terms and expressions in their commercial and private dealings with Jewish folk. Farmers and butchers had the closest connections with Jewish livestock and fruit traders. They knew and spoke the language at various degrees so as not to be disadvantaged when bartering.

In Israel, and perhaps to some extent even here, Yiddish can still be heard and experienced. It may come as a surprise when in the early 1980s it became popular among some people to spice up everyday language with

Yiddish or 'Mame-loschen' (Mother tongue).

Jewish people had their own language and if they did speak Mame-loschen, were they even aware this word meant mother tongue?

Marion Mayer from Chicago, daughter of Johanna Bentheim who was originally from Bickenbach, has become an important resource for many questions about Jewish life. Her research and knowledge of the Yiddish language have been made available to us since July 1991. Some of her findings are listed below:

Whether the expression 'Mame-loschen' was used in Hesse, I didn't want to answer myself. Consequently, I rang and interviewed a range of people, all originally from Hesse, and received the following answers:

1. Hugo Wolf, born in Bickenbach, heard the term for the first time in France (1933) but much more frequently in the USA and never in Germany.
2. Bertha Jesselson came across it only in the USA.
3. Heinz Mosbacher, born in Darmstadt, only heard it used in the USA.
4. Alice Mosbacher, born in Ober-Ramstadt, heard it only in the USA.
5. Walter Strauss, born in Darmstadt, also heard it exclusively in the USA.
6. Marion Mayer, born in Darmstadt, only heard it used in the USA.
7. Mina Jonas, born in Alsbach, left Germany in the 1920s, remembers the expression from her youth. It could have been used by her father, the teacher David Frank, however, she is unsure. All of us knew the expression 'Loschenkodesch' from our parents, meaning sacred speech or 'Loschen-Hakodesch' (Hebrew), but that's quite different of course.
8. Frank Mayer, the husband of Marion Mayer, was from Pfalz (Palatinate region). He, too, heard the term for the first time in America but never as a child or young man in Germany.

As a child I used to hear the butcher Philipp Götz from Hähnlein, also known as 'Brücken-Metzger' (the butcher from the bridge), speak Yiddish Welsche-style with my grandmother, Marie Schemel. Welsche was a disparaging term for Italians and French people. 'Welschen' meant speaking in a foreign language, and as such incomprehensible.

In the 18th century, the cooper's apprentice, Georg Herpel from Bickenbach, who was later called 'Scholz', was known to have travelled to the French and Rhaeto-Romanic lands of Switzerland, known as the Welschlande.

To this day Yiddish is often mistaken for 'Rotwelsch'.¹ Rotwelsch was the secret language of German vagrants. As early as the 11th century, beggars were seen in Germany as a dangerous nuisance. Large gangs roamed around, and the police could not stand up to them. They organised themselves in groups and spoke a secret language. Regular meetings took place where words were compared, revised and expanded. It was believed this artificial language came from the imperial court of Rottweil. The city was known for a particular bad form of 'officialise' used by its legal system that no-one could properly understand.

Another assumption was that Rotwelsch was a sub-language of Yiddish. Rotwelsch is comprised of 'rot' (red) and 'welsch'. As mentioned previously, Welsche defines the Romance languages as foreign languages.² 'Rot' (red) related to the beggars' custom of covering themselves with blood-like paint to feign injuries.

In 1528, Martin Luther published a book titled *On the False Knavery of Beggars*. He wanted to inform the public about the secrets of Rotwelsch, and wrote in his preface:

"It is obvious that such rotwelsch language originates from the Jews. It contains many Hebrew words and it is understood by those who speak Hebrew."

Luther, once a friend of the Jews, had become an anti-Semite.

But let's return to 'Mame-loschen', the Yiddish word for mother tongue. The Jewish people spoke Semitic languages, among them Yiddish. They are descendants of the Israelite Tribe of Judah. Since the Middle Ages, a distinction has been made between two main groups: The Western Jews called Sephardim and the Eastern Jews called Ashkenazim. Ashkenazim are those Jews who migrated from Germany to Eastern Europe. This was

due to the persecution and expulsion resulting from the crusades. In the High Middle Ages, the Iberian Peninsula saw the inquisition with all its terrible consequences.

A large part of the Jewish population went to Poland, Galicia and Lithuania. There, they had to endure pogroms, and later, the Holocaust, which destroyed many lives. But today, the Yiddish language still survives, and is described as follows:

"The language evolved from Middle High German since the 13th century and was spoken by the European Jewish people, particularly common in Eastern Europe and since 1880 also in America and other countries. It contains 20 per cent of Slavic and Hebrew vocabulary and is written in Hebrew."

From the 13th to the 19th century Yiddish literature consisted exclusively of religious writings. From the 19th century onward it entered the world of fiction. Famous authors include Scholem Aleichem, Perez, Sforim, Asch and Isaak B. Singer.

The visiting families of Hugo and Ludwig Wolf, Marion Mayer and Henry Mosbacher, as well as the Korr family, demonstrated that the Hessian mother tongue had not been forgotten, even after almost 60 years. Lore and Martin Levi, now from Tel Aviv, but former inhabitants of Crumstadt, also showed their affection towards the Hessian language in 1991:

"... rest assured, at home my wife and myself speak in the real Hessian dialect that we learned from our mother!"

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, conversations were organised with the men and women at the senior citizen centre in Bickenbach. The aim was to find old words and Jewish sayings that might still exist. Some of the findings were as follows:

Women who worked as housekeepers in Jewish households told about the terms used in the kosher dietary laws for separating Milchdings (dairy) from Fleischdings (meat). The best-known words were 'kosher' and 'trefah' (not kosher).

1. Rotwelsch was a secret language developed in the 13th century, used by thieves or vagrants in areas of southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Its vocabulary was borrowed in part from Hebrew and applies new meanings to existing words.

2. Romance languages derive from Vulgar Latin, a spoken form of non-classical Latin used around the Mediterranean region about the time of the Roman Empire. Languages of the Romance family include French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian.

“*Redd doch koan Koubl*” literally means “stop speaking cabbage” in German (local dialect). Although cabbage or ‘kohl’ in this sense had nothing to do with the vegetable. “All that cabbage talk is nonsense”, our everyday language is to blame. In Hebrew, the word ‘quol’ is for ‘voice’, ‘sound’, or ‘rumour’, and means that if a person is not to talk “cabbage” or “quol”, they are not to spread rumours.

“*Mach maa koan Schmus*” or “*babbl koan Schduß*” more or less mean “don’t sweet-talk” or “don’t talk any nonsense”.

In 1991, Marion Mayer told how through ‘Schmusen’ (charm, flattery; ‘shmooze’ in English) with friends revealed that acquaintances of her great-grandparents came from Bickenbach. ‘Schmusen’ is what old women used to do in winter; it was also known as ‘Strickstunde’ (knitting hour). These old women discussed everything under the sun during their evening small talk, which was mostly about so-called good friends, relatives and neighbours. The winter evenings were long, so there was plenty time for ‘Schmusen’.

Who remembers such sayings today? Such words were borrowed from the Yiddish and part of our everyday language. But they are mostly forgotten.

As mentioned previously, livestock traders, butchers and farmers needed to know some Yiddish in order to transact business with Jewish people. A book called the *Hebrew-German Interpreter* was a well-known publication in the Baden region of Hesse in the 18th century and also in parts of Rhine-Hesse. It contained the commercial language of livestock traders, German markets, private businesses and stables. A copy exists at the historical society in Hemsbach on the Bergstrasse in Baden.

On the next few pages are some “Jirrisches” (Yiddish) from the Bickenbach vocabulary.
(Extracted from the *Hebrew-German Interpreter*.)



Hebrew-German Interpreter.

A collection of the most common trading expressions used by Israelite tradespeople from cattle markets and in private commerce. Germanisation of the numbers 1–10,000 and conversion of karolin (gold coins) into German Marks. Seventh edition. Publisher, Leo Schwarzbeck's bookshop, Gunzenhausen. Reproduction prohibited: will be prosecuted.

Image: courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Survivors and Victims Resource Centre

WORD	MEANING	WORD	MEANING
achele	eat	doflemonisch	catholic, papist
Acheler	devour	Doflemonem	Catholics
achiehle	eat greedily, devour	Doukes	butt, arse, rump, posterior
Babe	father	Dubsches mache	bad design, do something illegal, to rake in illegal money, fast (money), do profitable business
Bachel	rude fellow, filth	Ehme	anxiety, fear
bachele	pass water, urinate	Eidze	advice, counsel
baddisch	pregnant, with child	embern	comment, notice
Bäjle, Beele	filthy wench	Emmes	truth, understanding
Bajes	house	Fleischdings	(see <i>Küche</i>)
baldouwern,		fummele	do something dishonest, brandish/wave about, do something underhand
ausbaldouwern	sound out, concoct, scout	Fummeler	womaniser, two-timer
besäwwele	hack at, stain, make dirty, cheat, defraud	Gallach	priest, vicar (<i>gen.</i>); actually a catholic priest because of a shaved tonsure
Behem, Behemes	cow, cattle	Gallachsen	pastor's wife (<i>evang.</i>); parrish cook (<i>catholic</i>)
Bereiner	meat inspector (<i>prob. slang</i>)	Ganef/ Ganfer	thief, crook, scoundrel, swindler
beschdußd	crazy, barmy, slightly potty, slightly crazy	ganfen	steal, swipe, pilfer
beschummele	cheat, swindle	Gei	region, area
Beschummeler	merchant (<i>referring to Jews</i>)	Gediwwer	gossip, chatter
betucht	rich, wealthy	Geseire	foolish chatter
Bonem	face, expression	Gimmel	number, number 3, third letter of the hebrew alphabet
Boare, Boarle	cow	Goi, Goijem	Christ, Christians, generally applicable to all non-Jews
Booser	penny (<i>"koan booser wert": "not worth a penny"?</i>)	Goije	old woman, dirty woman (broad), old head of cattle, cow; common: Gentile, non-Jewish, Christian
Bouser	beef or cow meat from the forequarter	Grusch	old stuff, trinkets, waste
Brouscher	braggart, show-off	Ische	woman, girl, untidy woman, evil bitch; "Moi Ische" (my Ische) is also a declaration of love to your wife
bus; bus-bukom	meat from a sick piece of beef; lung disease(?)	Issi	a pedantic Jew; white Jew (<i>a pejorative term</i>) in the sense of a wicked Christ
chochem	cunning, shrewd, sly, wickedly crafty, cunning		
Chochem	shrewd, sly, man, crafty, shrewd, cunning (farmer)		
Daajes	worries, to suffer onerous need or want		
Dadscher	baked pastries, small flat cakes; challah		
Dalles	ruin, downfall, poverty, bankruptcy (broke and hard up), illness		
diwwern	to be excited, unsettled, wriggle back and forth and thereby talk in a whisper		

WORD	MEANING	WORD	MEANING
Itzig	Jewish Christian name for Isaac, pig-headed person, imminent abuse for Jews	Macke haben	have a slight impact, not be quite kosher; crazy, scar (in the sense of) mental harm, damage; beating; sickness (in the sense of) conceited
joker	sellable, precious; valuable (zu joker: too expensive), (ned joker: not quite right)	Macker	show-off, beau, friend; girls have a "Macker" (<i>bloke</i>)
Juch	scatterbrain	Majum	water
Kaff	municipality, village, place	Mame	mother
Kafrus	cheeky rascal, stupid, impudent fellow, loafer	Maschores	ringleader, wheeler-dealer
Kafrusem	wrong company or society; (included the whole family)	Massematte mache	make business
Kahn	prison, bed	Massel	luck
Kalljes	spat, strife	Massel un	
Kalljesmacher	rowdy type, troublemaker	Bochorum	curse, misfortune
kappores	smashed, shattered; broke/skint, physically at the end, dead	Massik	fiend, rude fellow; also used for horses
Kappore	broke, skint, penniless	mauschele	engage in dishonest dealings
Kazzoff	butcher	Mazze	unleavened bread (Passover)
Kies	money	Megges mache	boast, provoke trouble
Kinem	lice, vermin	Mengenges	much fuss, bother
Kippe	gang, nasty or unsavoury club	meschugge	crazy, stupid
Klepper	nag, horse	Mesume	money
Kluft	clothes, uniform	mies	evil, bad, unpleasant
Kores	kin, tribe, family, association (but in a bad sense)	Mischbarem,	
koscher	according to Jewish ritual regulations, kosher slaughter; hence clean, pure, palatable; good, decent meat; in merchant language: good	Mischpoche	family, clan, society, association, also relationship; (dictionary meaning: extended family)
Küche	separation of meat and milk areas: preparation of dishes by special ritual, taking into account special use of crockery	mogele	deceive, conceal
Lefgoije	old woman, old cow	Moos	money
Lewaje	burial, funeral	Mores	dread, fear, respect, regard
machulle	done, poor, sick	orn	pray, from Latin 'orare'
Machulle	bankrupt, broke	orschele, oschele	sound out
		Orschel	grubby, slovenly woman, gossip
		Penunse	cash, money
		Perzente	percent
		Pleite	insolvency, bankrupt
		Rabbiner	rabbi, teacher
		Ralle, Reff	nagging, slovenly wife/broad, old cow
		Rewwach	winnings
		Rosch	head; (" <i>iewwer Rosch kaafe</i> ": <i>poss. "don't buy [the cattle] by weight"?</i>) common with the cattle trade

WORD	MEANING
Rougus	rage, anger
Säwelbajes	abortion
schächde	slaughter (according to kosher or halal rites)
Schacher	trade, commerce, do dirty business
schachern	work day and night, gather together, deal, trade
Schacherer	merchant, wheeler-dealer
schaskele	drink
Schaskeler	silent drinker
Schawwes	sabbath
Schawwesdeckel	top hat
Schawwesfraa	a Christian woman who, on the Sabbath, performs work in Jewish homes
Schduss	baloney, nonsense, silly talk
Schiewes mache	knock off work; start a task and not quit; delude or deceive someone
Schiks	girl, woman, prostitute, whore, wanton females
Schlamassl	confusion, mishap, bad luck
Schlemiehl	shifty, lazy person; slacker
Schlomel	incompetant fellow, lazy chap, ruffian, loafer
Schloimer	bad egg, subservient type
Schoude	fool, crazy, irascible fellow
Schmonzens	silly talk, idle boasting
Schmu	fraud, false intentions
Schmu dreiwe	deal in improper transactions
Schmugeld	secret profit, silent money, dishonestly acquired money
Schmumacher	fraudsters, counterfeiters
Schmus	gossip, chatter talk, tittle-tattle, chitchat
schmusen	chat, talk, gossip, caress
Schorr	ox, steer
schoufel	bad, foul, unreliable, wicked
Schuck	a German Mark
schucke	pay, also cost
Schul	synagogue, temple
Schum	amount, sum of money

WORD	MEANING
schummele	dishonest, to do something in a clandestine way, cheat
stickim/schdiggin	tranquil, quiet, secretive
Sus	horse, nag, foal
trewer	unclean, impure, not kosher; (<i>see Koscher</i>)
Uz	mockery, joke
uzen	ridicule, fool
vajuggele	squander, waste
vakassemaduggele	deem stupid, make bad, break a business
vasäwele	pollute, soil, cheat
viwerach	run away, disappear, secretly edge away
Weißer Jud	inferior Christian, crook, swindler (<i>used as a pejorative term</i>)
Zaster	money, capital
Ziggl	mature goat, nanny goat
Zores	noise, squabble, bad bunch

In the local history, *Bickenbach uffm Sand*, published in 1973, Christian Kaltwasser documented aspects of the Bickenbach dialect. The origins of the following Hebrew and Yiddish words, which appeared in the book, cannot be fully explained here due to a lack of further research. Accordingly, your understanding is asked for.

However, in 1991, Marion Mayer was able to provide additional commentary on some Hebrew-Jewish expressions with the help of Hugo Wolf and Rabbi Ralph Simon from the Congregation Rodfei Zedik in Chicago.

Bajes

(Hebrew *'Bajis'*): home, building, estate.

Beele

A woman who does not think much of cleanliness; wench.

Er macht de Bruljes

The root of the word is unknown, probably French, the expression: "*Er macht Bruljes*"; "*Er macht sich groß*" – "He's a stubborn so-and-so".

Dreckbeele

(Yiddish *'Bella'*): a woman who does not think much of cleanliness.

dodevor hadd ich Ehme

(Hebrew *'Ehmob'* – fear): "Before that I was afraid".

Er hodd Rougus

(Hebrew *'Roges'* – anger): "He has a temper".

Ische (chick, bird, bit of skirt)

(Hebrew *'Frau'*): a woman with an idiosyncrasy or peculiarity.

Itzik

(Hebrew *'Jitschak', 'Isaak'*): a cheeky and impertinent boy.

Juddeknoche

Small bones in the elbow joint. Named possibly because "Ellenbogen" [elbow] and "Katzenelnbogen" are known Jewish family names, or possibly because a shock to this bone is especially painful.

Klafte

(Hebrew/Yiddish *'Kelefté'*): a woman who is impolite, unseemly, sometimes coarse.

Klouwe

(Hebrew *'Kelev'*): a dog; someone who is impolite, unseemly, sometimes coarse. (Not necessarily derogatory in modern Hebrew; 'dude' or 'dog'.)

de Kobb vollohrn

(Yiddish/German, from Latin *'orare'* to pray): perpetually reciting the same thing.

Koochem

(Hebrew *'Chochom'*): a wise man, one that you cannot quite trust.

Kores

(Hebrew *'Kores'*): not worthy of belonging to the community; rabble.

die Leffide lese

Possibly from the third book of Moses: Leviticus, which has many instructions, for example how one should live with his neighbour, etc; someone who makes serious rules.

Er ist machulle

(Hebrew *'Mochel'*): he is made worthless; he is bankrupt.

Massik

(Hebrew *'Masik'*): one who does harm, one who cannot integrate and wants his or her own way.

Er ist Mousche owe

(Hebrew *'Mousché'* – Moses): he has much to say; he is the boss. He speaks well (because he's doing well).

Jetzt hammer de Schlamassel

(German *'Schlimm'* – bad; Hebrew *'Massef'* – luck): when put together – bad luck. i.e. "Now we shall have difficulties [bad luck]".

Schliach

(Hebrew *'Scheliach'*): in the past, devout, bearded men dressed in black were sent from Palestine to Europe and other countries to collect money for schools – yeshivas. Such a man was a Scheliach, a disorderly, unreliable man. (English *'shaliach'*: a member of the Chabad Hasidic movement who is sent out to promulgate Judaism and Hasidism around the world.)

Schloimer

(Hebrew/Yiddish, '*Schlomo*'; from '*Schloime the Wise*' stories): one who is insincere, and seeks advantage behind the backs of others.

Schnorrer

(from German '*Schnorrer*' – scrounger): in Yiddish it has come to mean 'beggar'. The root of the word is 'schnarchen', to snore; or 'winseln', to whine. A schnorrer is one who often has things bestowed on him from others. (He knows only two ways to obtain a cigar or cigarette – "gifted" or "cadged".)

Schoude

(Hebrew '*Schoteh*' – idiot): a fool, one who always plays pranks and takes nothing seriously.

Schoufel

(Hebrew '*Schofel*'): menial (with low ideals); insincere.

In his research on the Bickenbach dialect, Christian Kaltwasser found that there were local variations on the spelling of some words. For example, people from Bickenbach generally use 'Jurre' instead of 'Judde' for the word 'Jews'. 'Jud' for the singular. These are dialect nuances.

During research done a number of years ago, several words came up whose exact meaning was not known. One such word was 'Kinem'. When I asked my mother, she didn't know at first. She had been bedridden for more than ten years and spent much of her time reflecting on things. Weeks later she told us that grandmother Schemel used to say in response to Mrs Whatsername leaving the shop carrying her weekly shopping of liver, blood sausage and a substantial piece of boiling meat: "She has more lice on her head than hair." ("Die hoad meer Kinem uffm Kobb wiej Hoarn."). The use, and meaning, of the word in old Bickenbach parlance was thus confirmed.

The residents of the town of Eschollbrücken, now a suburb of Pfungstadt, proudly refer to themselves as "Die Chochemer". "Die Chochemer" denotes the local carnival community and their carnival club. Perhaps the term "Firma Eschelbrigge" is also derived from this which hitherto only got a mention in my family, it seems. "Firma Eschollbrücken" refers to people who don't have the best of reputations, but always know what they want.

By no means do I wish to associate the Circus Lorch of Eschollbrücken with my previous comments. The Circus was an internationally renowned business with a century-old tradition, but was forced to cease operations in the 1930s.

Market and trade language

From the cattle dealers in German markets, private shops and stables

NUMBERS

1	Oleph	41	Mem Oleph	81	Schmunem Oleph	400	Doleth Mees
2	Bes	42	Mem Bes	82	Schmunem Bes	500	He Mees
3	Gimmel	43	Mem Gimmel	83	Schmunem Gimmel	600	Fof Mees
4	Doleth	44	Mem Doleth	84	Schmunem Doleth	700	Sojene Mees
5	He	45	Mem He	85	Schmunem He	800	Gesa Mees
6	Fof	46	Mem Fof	86	Schmunem Fof	900	Tes Mees
7	Sojen	47	Mem Sojen	87	Schmunem Sojen	1000	Olepha Luffin
8	Ges	48	Mem Ges	88	Schmunem Ges	2000	Besa Luffin
9	Tes	49	Mem Tes	89	Schmunem Tes	3000	Gimmela Luffin
10	Jus	50	Nun	90	Tischem (Tattick)	4000	Doletha Luffin
11	Jus Oleph	51	Nun Oleph	91	Tischem Oleph	5000	Hea Luffin
12	Jus Bes	52	Nun Bes	92	Tischem Bes	10000	Jusa Luffin
13	Jus Gimmel	53	Nun Gimmel	93	Tischem Gimmel		
14	Jus Doleth	54	Nun Doleth	94	Tischem Doleth		
15	Jus He	55	Nun He	95	Tischem He		
16	Jus Fof	56	Nun Fof	96	Tischem Fof		
17	Jus Sojen	57	Nun Sojen	97	Tischem Sojen		
18	Jus Ges	58	Nun Ges	98	Tischem Ges		
19	Jus Tes	59	Nun Tes	99	Tischem Tes		
20	Kaff	60	Sammach	100	Mees		
21	Kaff Oleph	61	Sammach Oleph	101	Mees Oleph		
22	Kaff Bes	62	Sammach Bes	102	Mees Bes		
23	Kaff Gimmel	63	Sammach Gimmel	103	Mees Gimmel		
24	Kaff Doleth	64	Sammach Doleth	104	Mees Doleth		
25	Kaff He	65	Sammach He	105	Mees He		
26	Kaff Fof	66	Sammach Fof	106	Mees Fof		
27	Kaff Sojen	67	Sammach Sojen	107	Mees Sojen		
28	Kaff Ges	68	Sammach Ges	108	Mees Ges		
29	Kaff Tes	69	Sammach Tes	109	Mees Tes		
30	Lamed	70	Schiffen	110	Mees Jus		
31	Lamed Oleph	71	Schiffen Oleph	120	Mees Kaff		
32	Lamed Bes	72	Schiffen Bes	130	Mees Lamed		
33	Lamed Gimmel	73	Schiffen Gimmel	140	Mees Mem		
34	Lamed Doleth	74	Schiffen Doleth	150	Mees Run		
35	Lamed He	75	Schiffen He	160	Mees Gammach		
36	Lamed Fof	76	Schiffen Fof	170	Mees Schiffen		
37	Lamed Sojen	77	Schiffen Sojen	180	Mees Schmunem		
38	Lamed Ges	78	Schiffen Ges	190	Mees Tischem		
39	Lamed Tes	79	Schiffen Tes	200	Bes Mees		
40	Mem	80	Schmunem	300	Gimmel Mees		

GERMAN	TRADE LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GERMAN	TRADE LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
Der Knecht	<i>Maschores</i>	servant	Der Bräutigam	<i>Der Kufen</i>	fiancé, groom
Der Bauer	<i>Kafrigem</i>	farmer	Die Braut	<i>Die Kalle</i>	bride
reich	<i>betug</i>	rich	Der Pfarrer	<i>Gallach</i>	pastor
Der Preis	<i>Grach</i>	price	Der Lehrer	<i>Mallnmeter</i>	teacher
rechnen	<i>käsperna</i>	count	heiraten	<i>schittige</i>	marry
Das Pfund	<i>Littere</i>	pound	Garantie	<i>Dreff</i>	guarantee
Die Mark	<i>Schuck</i>	mark	trinken	<i>schaftskana</i>	drink
es wiegt	<i>mischkele</i>	it weighs	essen	<i>achle</i>	eat
billig	<i>mezzia</i>	cheap	Der Fehler	<i>Kaforem</i>	mistake
hergeben	<i>nossen</i>	give	verraten	<i>mattabre</i>	reveal
fortgehen	<i>frifrach</i>	leave	Er ist ein Trinker	<i>Er is a Schaskenisch</i>	he's a drinker
ruhig	<i>stickem</i>	quiet	Der Soldat	<i>Balmagom</i>	soldier
horchen	<i>roin</i>	listen, eavesdrop	Der Provit	<i>Rebach</i>	profit
Der Streit	<i>Gferas</i>	dispute	teuer	<i>jocker</i>	expensive
Der Nachbar	<i>Schocher</i>	neighbour	verteuern	<i>verjockern</i>	raise the price
Das Fleisch	<i>Buffer</i>	meat	Schön	<i>Toff</i>	beautiful
Der Knochen	<i>Zumes</i>	bone	Nicht schön	<i>Lotoff</i>	not beautiful
Das Unschlitt	<i>Kälef</i>	tallow	Schmus	<i>Safseres</i>	blarney, nonsense
Die Haut	<i>Dres</i>	skin	Betrogen	<i>Marama</i>	cheated
Etwas Neues	<i>Kittisch</i>	something new	Schwer Gewicht	<i>Doff Mischkel</i>	heavyweight
Der Hopfen	<i>Dinf</i>	hops	Leicht Gewicht	<i>Laff Mischkel</i>	lightweight
Freundschaft und Verwandschaft	<i>Maschbuge</i>	friendship and relationship	Bankrott	<i>Machulla</i>	bankrupt
Das Geld	<i>Massummen</i>	money	Nicht bankrott	<i>Laff Machulla</i>	not bankrupt
Die Arbeit	<i>Maloge</i>	work	Arm	<i>Dalles</i>	poor
Das Bier	<i>Schäacher</i>	beer	Vermögen	<i>Krzen</i>	assets
Das Haus	<i>Bajes</i>	house	Ich bin Bürge	<i>Lif mamen ja</i>	I am guarantor
Das Wirtshaus	<i>Juschpesbajes</i>	inn	Gut reden	<i>Laff häffig</i>	good talk
bezahlen	<i>maschulme</i>	pay	Kronentaler	<i>Guttilrad</i>	silver coin
stehen	<i>ganfen</i>	stand	Preußentaler	<i>Melachrad</i>	Prussian coin
Der Mann	<i>Isch</i>	man	Pfennig	<i>Pschidem</i>	penny
Die Frau	<i>Ischa</i>	woman	Karolin	<i>Inser</i>	German coin

GERMAN PHRASE	TRADE LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
Die Kalbe ist gesund	<i>Die Etel ist koscher</i>	The calf is healthy
Die Kalbe ist krank	<i>Die Etel ist kuble</i>	The calf is sick
Die Kalbe geht gäll	<i>Die Etel pattischt net</i>	(translation for this remains elusive; it may refer to a calf being alright, or a calf that sounds shrill)
Die Kalbe ist zu teuer	<i>Die Etel ist zu joker</i>	The calf is too expensive
Die Kalbe ist billig	<i>Die Etel S'is a Mäzia</i>	The calf is cheap
Gieb ihm 12 Karolin	<i>Jus bes jufer</i>	Give him 12 Karolin
Biet ihm 14 Karolin	<i>Jus dollet jufer</i>	Offer him 14 Karolin
Der Mann ist hart im Handel	<i>An den Mann is ka proge</i>	The man is a tough trader (a hard bargainer?)
Der Mann läßt mit sich reden	<i>Der Mann ist net unbekufet</i>	The man will listen to reason
Die Kuh ist alt	<i>Des is an alte Bora</i>	The cow is old
Die Kuh gibt wenig Milch	<i>Die Bora gibt net Gulef</i>	The cow gives little milk
Die Kuh gibt viel Milch	<i>Die Bora gibt viel Gulef</i>	The cow gives much milk
Die Kuh ist gewöhnt im Zug	<i>Die Bora, garantier dir ich, as gewöhnt is</i>	The cow is accustomed to the train
Die Kuh ist trächtig	<i>Die Bora pattischt</i>	The cow is pregnant
Die Kuh ist nicht trächtig	<i>Die Bora pattischt net</i>	The cow is not pregnant
Die Ochsen sind mager	<i>Die Okel sind laff schummen</i>	The oxen are lean
Kauf die Ochsen um jeden Preis	<i>Kaff die Okel um jeden Grach</i>	Buy oxen at any price
Der Ochse ist fett	<i>Die Okel ist schummen</i>	The ox is fat
Ich gewähr Alles	<i>Ich bin dir oraf für Alles</i>	I guarantee everything
Ich gewähr nichts	<i>Oraf bin dir ich für Kir</i>	I guarantee nothing
Ich werde dich verklagen	<i>Ich bin dir oraf, daß ich dich verkofe</i>	I'll sue you
Er verdirbt mir den Handel	<i>Er ist mir makatrig geweest</i>	He spoiled my trading
Ich rede dir gut im Handel	<i>Ich schmus dir gut</i>	I can deal with you
Er ist ein Lump	<i>Er is ä Gaschtbündel</i>	He is a scoundrel
Er ist ein braver Mann	<i>Er is ä bekufeter Mann</i>	He is an good/honest man
Gieb sie her	<i>Nonsensen</i>	Give it/them here

GERMAN PHRASE	TRADE LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
Er macht mir krumm	<i>Er ist mir makattri</i>	He makes me crooked (he's swindled me?)
Die Kuh mit dem Kalb	<i>Die Bora hat an Etele</i>	A cow with calf
Die Kuh ohne Kalb	<i>Die Bora hat kan Etele</i>	A cow without calf
Die Kuh ist wert: 200 Mark	<i>Die Bora ist wert: Bes Mees Schuck</i>	The cow is worth 200 Marks
Die Pferde sind eingefahren	<i>Die Suß sind gewöhnt</i>	The horses are coming in
Die Pferde gehen einspännig	<i>Die Suß gehn einspännig, garantier dir ich</i>	The horses are to be used individually
Das Pferd knappt	<i>Suß hat schlechte Jakleiemehr</i>	The horse is lame
Das Pferd ist blind	<i>Suß reunt net</i>	The horse is blind
Das Pferd ist scheu und schlägt	<i>Die Suß is ä Stußer und ist makeiert</i>	The horse is skittish and kicks
Das Pferd ist geduldig	<i>Die Suß is fromm</i>	The horse is patient
Das Pferd ist ein Kopper	<i>Die Suß is ä Kopper</i>	The horse is a cribber (abnormal, compulsive behaviour seen in some horses)
Das Pferd ist trächtig	<i>Die Suß ist pattisch</i>	The horse is pregnant
Das Pferd war beim Militär	<i>Die Suß war bei die Balmagumes</i>	The horse was in the military
Die Stiere sind jung	<i>Die Etel sin jung</i>	The bulls are young
Die Stiere sind rüdig	<i>Die Etel sin rüutig</i>	The bulls are mangy
Die Stiere sind laufig	<i>Die Etel häbe Kinnem</i>	The bulls are in heat
Dein Pferd ist auf einem Auge blind	<i>Die Suß reunt af an Aag nix</i>	Your horse is blind in one eye
Ich gieb dir 37 1/12 Karolin	<i>Ich gieb dir Lammet sofen chuzen Jufer</i>	I'll give you 37 1/12 karolin

Miscellaneous literature, proverbs, slurs

The following is a collection of writing that involves Jews or Jewish life, and provides some insight into how they lived and how others saw them.

The bright sun brings it to light

By THE BROTHERS GRIMM,
FAIRY TALE NUMBER 115

A tailor's apprentice was travelling about the world in search of work, and at one time he could find none, and his poverty was so great that he had not a farthing to live on.

Presently he met a Jew on the road, and as he thought he would have a great deal of money about him, the tailor thrust God out of his heart, fell on the Jew and said, "Give me thy money, or I will strike thee dead." Then said the Jew, "Grant me my life, I have no money but eight farthings." But the tailor said, "Money thou hast; and it shall be produced," and used violence and beat him until he was near death. And when the Jew was dying, the last words he said were:

"The bright sun will bring it to light," and thereupon he died.

The tailor's apprentice felt in his pockets and sought for money, but he found nothing but eight farthings, as the Jew had said. Then he took him up and carried him behind a clump of trees, and went onwards to seek work.

After he had travelled about a long while, he got work in a town with a master who had a pretty daughter, with whom he fell in love, and he married her, and lived in good and happy wedlock.

After a long time when he and his wife had two children, the wife's father and mother died, and the young people kept house alone. One morning, when the husband was sitting on the table before the window, his wife brought him his coffee, and when he had poured it out into the saucer, and was just going to drink, the sun shone on it and the reflection gleamed hither and thither on the wall above, and made circles on it.



Drawing: Barbara Jungclaus.

Then the tailor looked up and said, "Yes, it would like very much to bring it to light, and cannot!" The woman said, "Oh, dear husband, and what is that, then?" What dost thou mean by that?" He answered, "I must not tell thee." But she said, "If thou lovest me, thou must tell me," and used her most affectionate words, and said that no one should ever know it, and left him no rest.

Then he told her how years ago, when he was travelling about seeking work and quite worn out and penniless, he had killed a Jew, and that in the last agonies of death, the Jew had spoken the words:

"The bright sun will bring it to light."

And now, the sun had just wanted to bring it to light, and had gleamed and made circles on the wall, but had not been able to do it. After this, he again told her especially never to tell this to anyone, or he would lose his life, and she did promise.

When however, he had sat down to work again, she went to her great friend and confided the story to her, but she was never to repeat it to any human being, but before two days were over, the whole town knew it, and the tailor was brought to trial, and condemned.

And thus, after all, the bright sun did bring it to light.

In der Fremde

BY HEINRICH HEINE

Ich hatte einst ein schönes Vaterland.
Der Eichenbaum
Wuchs dort so hoch, die Veilchen nickten sanft.
Es war ein Traum.

Das küsste mich auf deutsch, und sprach auf deutsch
(Man glaubt es kaum,
Wie gut es klang) das Wort: "Ich liebe dich!"
Es war ein Traum.

In a foreign land

*I had a beautiful fatherland long ago.
The oak trees did seem
so tall there, and the violets blew so sweet.
It was a dream.*

*It kissed me in German, and spoke in German
(You'd hardly believe,
How good it sounded) the words: "I love you!"
It was a dream.*



Nachtgedanken (first stanza)

BY HEINRICH HEINE

Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht,
Dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht,
Ich kann nicht mehr die Augen schliessen,
Und meine heissen Tränen fliessen.

Night thoughts

*Thinking of Germany at night,
Puts all thought of sleep to flight,
My eyes I can no longer close,
And my hot tears flow.*

Proverbs from *Der Datterich*

BY ERNST ELIAS NIEBERGALL

"If you hit my Jew, I will do likewise with yours!"
meaning "Tit-for-tat".

The earliest reference for the use of this proverb dates back to the Hessian vernacular poet Ernst Elias Niebergall who used it in his dialect-infused Darmstadt parody called *Der Datterich*. The burlesque was first performed in 1841.

The Datterich has the shakes but these are not due to old age or bad health, heaven forbid. Like all routine drinkers he starts to tremble in the morning. Only once the first sip of booze enters his body will he become calm.

The Datterich, a suspended chancery assistant going by the name Friedrich Hauser, spends almost the entire day at the tavern looking for people who might buy him half a pint of wine. The young assistant woodturner from Bessungen, at the time one of the independent towns outside the reign of the residential city of Darmstadt, was more than welcoming in this respect. In good faith, he trusts the cunning Datterich to help him become a master turner and settle in the town where he would marry Marie, the daughter of the wealthy master turner Dummbach.

However, soon enough the trusting person recognised that the Datterich's advice on how to reach one's goal was nothing but loudmouthed empty promises. He condemned the former chancery assistant. In response the latter challenged the woodturner to a duel. The encounter ends in a so-called "Hornberger Schiessen", meaning much ado about nothing and no result. Despite these events, Schmidt does get his Marie after all. The Datterich will definitely not be invited to their wedding and ends up being thrown out of town.

From the sixth act, scene one – at the tavern:

(Datterich, Spirwes, Lisette)

Spirwes: "I wouldn't do that." Those who threaten me will be threatened in return: "If you hit my Jew, I will hit yours in retaliation."

Terms with Yiddish-Hebrew roots used by Niebergall:

Lawerhitte: Sukkah festivity

auszukkele: to suck dry

Mages: money, though the actual meaning is water

meschikke: crazy

Bohnenmche: face, small face; (*Hebrew:* bonem)

Zelem: (*Hebrew*) blows; thumps

Juddeknechelche: ‘little Jewish bone’, the funny bone on the elbow

Ehem: (*Hebrew*) horror, fear



From the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 18 September 1925, article titled *Darmstädter Nationalgesichter* (*National Faces of Darmstadt*) by Karl Wolfskehl.

Promptly, and resembling only himself, the Darmstädter enters the heroic stage of the German spirit “as if out of nowhere”.

What a line-up of figures who have made their mark! We haven’t been able to name them in their entirety or to note how and to what extent Darmstadt has influenced its sons and thus what it means to be German. What is owed to the achievements of Lichtenberg, Merck and Stürz during the 18th century, and what to Büchner and Niebergall, Liebig, Gervinus, Max Rieger, the audacious Wilhelm von Plönies and so many others during the 19th century? It raises the question, what do these minds have in common? Is there a clandestine fraternity between them, i.e. are they genuine to Darmstadt?

Getting closer to explore the pace of their nature, we will find the same resilient primary countenance in all of these many faces sculpted from wisdom and scepticism, from warmth and dryness, from mockery and a good heart, internal freedom and conservatism, zeal and dreaminess – we find a superior déclassée, the Datterich, the monumental image of self-irony Darmstadt-style. Through the figure of the Datterich, the Darmstädter positions himself modestly yet confidently next to the grand poetic types of the European world – Don Quichote, Falstaff, and the German jester, who ‘no longer and not yet’ twice illuminate the children of a culture and period currently in the process of bidding farewell – snug laughter to contemporaries, shocking truth to descendants – and who

will continue to exist throughout the centuries.

Niebergall, the creator of the Datterich figure, has bestowed the Darmstadt peculiarities such as countenance, format, manner of speaking, drinking and being thrown out, on the ordinary man common the world over. The type of man who always prevails internally and gets confronted on all levels by the orderly inadequate reality without bleeding to death while getting oppressed, hounded or pushed aside throughout his life.

Since Niebergall it can no longer be determined whether the Darmstadt character has shaped the Datterich or whether the Datterich has shaped the Darmstadt character. The same applies to the language. How much of Darmstadt embodied in this figure, can be felt in another play that is quite the opposite, namely Büchner’s Woyzeck. Essentially, Woyzeck is very similar and of the same character, natural and fresh, as well as helpless in the face of the outside world, internally honest, even sovereign. Yet he regards everything negatively and is depressively strained and inhibited! Grinding and hopeless, without joy, he moves in the same landscape but with a different sort of soul. Woyzeck is the ordinary man who cops it from others and represents a time that is about to break loose. The Datterich on the other hand is a maverick who enjoys himself. In a primal way he represents a space which simply exists no matter what happens to humanity. A humanity that might not position its cause but certainly positions itself outside of everything it finds, everything that already exists.

No doubt the famous people of Darmstadt generally had a good life and did well in their world (except within the small town itself and with regards to their married fellow countrymen). However, and this is crucial, all of them cling to a certain internal outsiderdom, Datterich-style. An inability or unwillingness to adjust one’s character, opinions and propensities so that they might become useful. An internal freedom and self-sufficiency also seen in Liebig, Lichtenberg and Büchner and often maturing into genuine human greatness. Yet under no circumstances will they accept to be challenged and ludicrously seek to maintain their own style.

Finally, a note to interested readers: From a government pamphlet we learn that the chancery assistant, Friedrich Hauser, known as the Datterich, eventually overcomes alcoholism and in 1843 gets reaccepted to the public service.

More on colloquial language within literature

Given the linguistic geography and proximity to the local dialect, it makes sense to cross the Rhine and look at Carl Zuckmayer's play, *Der fröhliche Weinberg* (The Merry Vineyard).

Writer and playwright, Carl Zuckmayer, was born in December 1896 in Nackenheim on the Rhine, close to the town of Mainz. His father ran a small factory there producing wine bottle caps. Around the turn of the century the family relocated to Mainz. At the start of the WWI he volunteered to go to war and, like many other soldiers, he became familiar with the so-called 'Griesheimer Sand', the local grounds for military exercises and manoeuvres of the Darmstadt garrison. He experienced, and survived, the fury of war.

His wife was Austrian and Zuckmayer was drawn to the Salzburg Alps. He lived there with his family from 1926 to 1938. In 1938, they fled to Switzerland and then emigrated to the United States. In America he settled in Vermont as a farmer and followed his vocation as a writer. After WWII, he returned to Europe in 1958 and lived in Switzerland until his death in 1977.

1917 (ein Gedicht: Fronterleben)

BY CARL ZUCKMAYER

Ich habe sieben Tage nicht gegessen
Und einem Manne in die Stirn geknallt.
Mein Schienbein ist vom Läusebiß zerfressen,
Bald werd ich einundzwanzig Jahre alt.

Bin ich besoffen, hau ich in die Fressen
Den Bleichgesichtern. Mein Gesang ist Wut
Wo ich mich kratze, springt ein grelles Blut.
Es sproßt mein Bart wie junge Gartenkressen.

So nehm ich meinen Samen in die Hände:
Europas Zukunft, schwarz gekörnter Laich –
Ein Gott ersäuft im schlammigen Krötenteich!!
und Scheiße mein Vermächtnis an die Wände.

1917 (*A poem: Life at the Front*)

*I haven't eaten for seven days
And I smashed a man in the face.
Lice and fleas feast on my shins.
I'll soon be turning twenty-one.*

*When I'm drunk, I'll plant my fist
In those pasty faces. Rage is my hymn.
Bright blood runs where I scratch,
My stubble sprouts like garden cress.*

*And so I take my seed in my hand
Europe's future, black-grained spawn –
A god drowns in a muddy toad pond!
And I shit my legacy on the walls.*

By November 1918, the guns from WWI had become silent and peace was on its way.

Wiegenlied (an der Bergstrasse) 1920

BY CARL ZUCKMAYER

Tropf tropf Tau
das Reh muß weinen
die schwarze Sau
frißt ihre Kleinen.

Klopf klopf Specht
die Wipfel schauern
viel Eulen lauern
im Baumgeflecht.

Tropf tropf Tau
Nachtfalter fliegen
die Abendfrau
will Träume wiegen.

Lullaby (on the Bergstrasse) 1920

*Drip drip dew
the deer sheds tears
the black sow
devours her young.*

*Knock knock woodpecker
treetops full of fright
many owls lie in wait
among the trees' branchy web.*

*Drip drip dew
moths fly
the woman of the night
wants to be lulled by dreams.*

After the so-called reclamation of Austria into the German Reich in 1938, Zuckmayer described his experiences in France and England as follows:

“In Paris pissoirs, the walls had swastikas painted on them, just like in the May of the NS. In chalk was written in bold letters: ‘Death to the Jews! – One felt almost at home there.’ And in England a distinguished man and member of the Lower House stated: ‘This man Hitler, why, isn’t he quite a good chap? I think we need him, all of us, as a bulwark against Communism.’”

And then the world took its course and the inevitable happened. Zuckmayer’s friend and member of the literati, social democrat Carlo Mierendorff, from Darmstadt, died in 1943 in Leipzig after being hit by an aircraft bomb. He had been persecuted by the Nazis for many years. In March 1944, in New York, Zuckmayer remembered Mierendorff:

“If a man like Carlo Mierendorff once lived in Germany, helped shape German people and remained true to them even during bad times – then these people are not lost, but are worthy of living and will go on living!”

Regarding his play, *The Devil’s General* it was noted in 1943 he dedicated the first draft to ‘The Unknown Soldier’. In July 1945 in Barnard, Vermont, he wrote: “I shall now dedicate it to the memory of my friends – Theodor Haubach, Wilhelm Leuschner, Count Helmuth von Moltke, hanged by the German executioners.”



Let’s return to *Der fröhliche Weinberg* which premiered in Berlin in 1925 and immediately got Zuckmayer the Kleist award. Some of his contemporaries were offended by this play. The way people’s lives, actions, journeys and love were depicted in this Rhenish, vinous, rowdy and cheerful comedy, was considered more than unflattering. Undoubtedly, the vitality of the language certainly helped the play to achieve a breakthrough, off the cuff as it were.

The play is set in 1921 in a small town in Rhine-Hesse during the grape harvest. Involved are two Jewish wine salesmen named Hahnesand and Løbche Bär. Carl Zuckmayer listened to what the crowds had to say and, reading the play 70 years later, the themes are familiar. Due to the language conventions of the play, it is mainly the two wine salesmen who are quoted:

First Act – On the occasion of the grape harvest, Hahnesand notes:

“I should like to have a thaler for each ripe grape.”

And when a noble lady joyously announces:

“How beautiful the Rhine is in full flow,”

he replies: *“How true, he can’t help it!”*

While inspecting a winery, Hahnesand addresses Löbche Bär and says:

"This is our area of expertise."

Knowing all about the matter of wine auctions and associated wine tastings, the latter utters:

"Pay attention to the quality of the sandwiches! If they are filled with salmon and anchovies, he made an effort and we can bargain. If there's nothing but cheese, he's a crook!"

While talking about the surcharge on a unit of wine, Löbche Bär quickly and quietly says to Hahnesand: *"For my business it's too expensive. Bargaining is dead. Especially given those shabby cheese rolls."*

Hahnesand replies:

"I won't give anything away as a business person, as I'm envious of your business. But as a Jew to another Jew, my advice is: Go ahead and buy it!"

A Christian wine trader, overhearing this dialogue, comments as follows:

"The Jews are standing there and scheming."

The merry crowd is then joined by war veterans. These are no ordinary world war veterans but of higher rank. As former soldiers they served the emperor in China and Africa and in German southwest Africa. The veterans marched up and their chants mock any description:

*"We had blueberries galore,
If their prices hadn't soared,
And so terribly small, small, small!
Just look at officer Schmidt,
Don't trip and break your neck,
With such crooked legs!
But look at little Kohn
Next to the telephone,
Which he's unable to reach!"*

"Little Kohn" was a fictitious happy-go-lucky Jew, and a song existed about him with many verses:

*"Haven't you seen little Kohn,
Among the people he was crowded ..."*

At the conclusion of a business deal

Hahnesand: *"How much commission, do you think?"*

Löbche Bär: *"Jew or Christian, Schambes cheats all of us!"*

Hahnesand responds: *"God may forgive him."*

Second Act – The veterans' patriotic loyalty.

Hahnesand: *"Now, let's sing a song:*

*When everything is rare and dear,
we eat more runny cheese.*

*When shoes and socks are worn out
we drive along in a chaise⁽¹⁾*

*A goat must nobly die,
Cheerio, with blueberries.*

A goat must nobly die.

Cheerio!"

Löbche Bär says (about the veterans, the so-called 'Schoppenhauers'): *"They can only drink where they don't have to pay anything."*

Official: *"But for this they have defended our Fatherland."*

Hahnesand: *"In the field kitchen in Buxtehude."⁽²⁾*

Löbche Bär: *"With the stupid Chinese Club in Africa."⁽³⁾*

Probationary teacher: *"As a person of foreign race, you are not in a position to judge this."*

Löbche Bär: *"Such bludgers ..."*

Probationary teacher: *"Nobody asked your opinion."*

Löbche Bär: *"I wouldn't have answered you, anyway."*

Probationary teacher: *"You better be off to Zion, shameless man!"*

Official: *"What a brave man!"*

Löbche Bär: *"As a public officer you should leave such agitation well alone!"*

Official: *"The way you treat others is how others will treat you. Rudeness should be answered with rudeness."*

Continued gossip that leads to insulting the official.

Some explanations:

(1) In Bickenbach, there is a well-known saying:

"First we travel in a buggy, then in a chaise!"

i.e. "First we eat the potato, then the dumplings!"

(2) "Field kitchen in Buxtehude" was meant to indicate a base behind enemy lines. Buxtehude is a town near Hamburg, i.e. somewhere far away. During WWI, two Bickenbach "stage stallions" (stage soldiers) were awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class, for special bravery when facing the enemy. One of them, a butcher, got his for making blood sausage ("Blunz"); the second, a blacksmith, had re-shod horses during an attack on the French.

In Bickenbach in those days people often exchanged "Buxtehude" with "Kadzeglabbrich", so the saying goes:

“In Kadzeglabbrieh wou die Hunn mit de Oarschlecher belle!” (“*In Katzenklapperich, where dogs are barking through their arseholes.*”).

Trade apprentices (journeymen) and soldiers got to know the big wide world earlier than most. When telling of their experiences on their return home, they often exaggerated and embellished a little.

(3) Schinnöserverein: Chinese Club.

Here, people say “Schinneese”. It can be assumed that in bigger towns, such as Mainz, Wiesbaden and Frankfurt, people used the more sophisticated ‘ö’ instead of ‘ee’. The words, “Schinnöös” in the singular or “Schinnööser” in the plural, in local context are derogatory, and mean rough or unkempt women. Originally the words described worthless animals that were due for the knacker’s yard.

At a party or dance

Hahnesand is dancing with the daughter of a wine merchant, sweating with an open collar; he sings: *“Jump, Charlie, jump, Charlie, tomorrow is St Joseph’s Day ...”*

The young lady: *“Mr. Hahnesand, is Joseph your first name?”*

Hahnesand: *“Me? My name is Jacob, Joseph will need to be made first!”*

The young lady: *“What do you mean, Mr. Hahnesand?”*

Hahnesand: *“Like the priest in the church says: Be fruitful, grow, and multiply!”*

The young lady: *“Oh, I’m blushing!”*

Hahnesand: *“We are sweating already, nobody will notice.”*

When drinking and boozing:

Hahnesand asks: *“Now let’s count the rounds! Who is in?”*

Probationary teacher: *“Of course, of course!”*

Hahnesand: *“I’m counting! Attention: eeny, meeny miny, moe, the devil is a ... The kite is rising, the cord is too short! – It’s your turn now!”*

Hahnesand continues, commenting that other drinkers are lying: *“I want to tell you something about the old war veterans, how they sit together and peel potatoes! – It’s your turn now!”*

Whereupon Löbchen says: *“You pay, you pay!”*

The aspiring teacher stresses: *“The Hebrews are cleaning me out!”*

Löbche Bär says about the war veterans: *“When they hear the sound of a glass chiming, they join together to attack.”* “*That’s their attack signal,*” confirms Hahnesand.

And Löbche Bär mimics the signal: *“Free cider, free cider, all day long!”* Hahnesand continues along the same lines: *“Pour me a cherry brandy at once, or I’ll scream!”*

Löbche Bär adds: *“Stick your nose, stick your nose, stick your nose into the glass!”*

The veterans’ counter attack: *“Watch out, Jews, I’ll sing a song for you! – Go after the Jews!”*

“A Yid comes riding along,

Dressed in ‘Zizz’ (chintz), fine cotton and lace,

Oh dear, poor Jew, cholera has arrived in this country!

Therefore, let’s rejoice,

Booze is good against cholera,

Let’s rejoice, there are no more Jews!”

Another one:

“The Yid Bär takes a fun boat ride on the Rhine with Sara. Sara moves her behind too far over the edge and falls in the water.

Oh, dear Lord, the Yid calls out cheerfully,

Cheerio, cheerio, cheerio,

A real Jew does not drown,

Cheerio, cheerio, cheerio!”

A drunken master cooper adds another joke to this blatant teasing of Jews and bales out:

“In Frankfurt in the Jew’s Lane,

There lives a baker, Beck.

He bares his arse to folk

And says it was a loaf!”

After this highlight, Schambes puts an end to this to prevent any further mutual offence: *“Stop! Enough! Leave the Jews alone! They may be circumcised, but are otherwise human just like us!”*

A wine merchant’s wife responds: *“I cannot suffer the Jews, they seem so beastly!”*

Upon which a young lady comments: *“However, there are also some spirited men amongst them!”*

Soon the inevitable happens; Hahnesand asks the young lady for a dance, but not without asking Löbche Bär first.

Hahnesand: *"Do you think I can take the risk again?"*

Löbche Bär: *"That's on your head! I want to be left in peace."*

Hahnesand: *"It won't cost my head!"* and asks the lady.

During the dance an altercation and brawl starts with the veterans. They view the wine growers, wine merchants and Jews as one group, and call them war profiteers, capitalists and leeches. The two Jews seek protection behind the bar and Löbche Bär asks Hahnesand: *"What do you say to this?"*, who responds: *"Fun for Non-Jews."*

Third Act – Jealousies

After the fight in the hall the wine salesmen meet in the yard of the pub: *"Mr. Bär! Every time I turn my back, you approach the young lady! This is poor manners and a scandal! And you are looking at me in such a cheeky way! I am capable of ... of ..."*

Löbche Bär: *"Well?"*

Hahnesand: *"... I'll never talk to you again!"*

Löbche Bär: *"You'll never manage to do that. You'll be broke within three days!"*

Hahnesand: *"You don't have any feelings or education, remember that!"*

Löbche Bär: *"If that's all you are worried about!"*

Jewish-Christian courting:

Hahnesand says to the young lady: *"That's not a reason to cry!"*

The young lady: *"Oh my God, oh my God ..."*

Hahnesand: *"Everything Bär has told you are lies! I don't have a bride in Weisenau! I am still free! I have honest intentions!"*

The young lady: *"Oh my God, oh my God ..."*

Hahnesand: *"Julia! Don't cry!"*

The young lady: *"Oh, everything is so devastating! My love."*

Hahnesand: *"As long as I live! I love you!"*

The young lady: *"Jakob!"*

(A drunk on a dung heap, burps in his sleep and groans.)

The young lady: *"Oh dear! Ghosts! Murderers!"*

Hahnesand: *"That was only the ox in the barn, nothing else."*

The young lady: *"Boohoo! I am afraid! I am shaking!"*

Hahnesand: *"Come! I'll cover you with my body!"*

The young lady: *"Protect me!"*

Hahnesand: *"There, the barn door is open, we'll be safe in there!"*

The young lady: *"Oh no, how terrible, how imprudent! I will die!"*

Hahnesand: *"Inside, in the barn, in the hay."*

The young lady: *"Say, it's for love! Only for love! Say it!"*

Hahnesand: *"For love, but quickly!"*

The young lady: *"Oh, Jakob, Jakob ..."*

(Both disappear into the barn – and then there is cheering, but immediately thereafter the young lady, crying, and Hahnesand, grumbling, burst out of the barn again. The farm maids had disturbed the lovers.)

Maid: *"If you want to hide in the hay, you need to crawl in deeper, so that your boots can't be seen!"*

(The young lady runs into the house, crying.)

Hahnesand: *"What do you want? Nothing happened! Keep your nasty mouths shut! Insulting decent girls, that's not on! You dirty farmers!"*

Official: *"Sir, calm down! If you hurt the moral feelings of our unspoiled people, you yourself are responsible for the consequences!"*

Landlord: *"There aren't any gentlemen left today! If you had asked me and winked with your eye, as is expected, then I would have given you a discrete room."*

Hahnesand: *"I thought, I was in a respectable hotel, I didn't know you rent rooms by the hour!"*

Landlord: *"Would you give me cheek? I'll sue you for sexual misconduct in public!"*

Hahnesand: *"You can't do that! I have honest intentions! The young lady is a respectable girl!"*

Official: *"This makes your conduct even more reprehensible. Be glad that we don't inform the father!"*

Landlord to the farm maids: *"Off you go! Don't gawk!"*

"Have you never seen a disgraced Jew before? Off to work!"

The farm maids go off laughing; immediately afterwards you can hear them singing in the barn:

"I have never kissed a Jew before,

But you did, you did, you did!

I have never peed into the grass,

But you did, you did, you did!

Yeah, yeah, kissed a Jew, peed in the grass,

Had to see a doctor,

Yeah, yeah, kissed a Jew, done at the back,

Done at the front, gone!"

Hahnesand: *“Let us keep silent about the incident, I will show my appreciation!”*

Landlord: *“That won’t make any of us rich!”*

Official (businesslike): *“Here is the list of charities for civil servants.”*

Hahnesand: *“Give it to me!”* (Signing something with a disgruntled expression.) *“For you, I’ve doubled the sum!”*

Official: *“Count on my discretion, Sir!”*

Hahnesand: *“This can happen to anybody. We would usually keep quiet about this sort of thing! People around here don’t have any shame.”*

Official: *“As you make your bed, you must lie on it.”*

At the end:

Love, happiness and joy, harmony and wedding prospects. Hahnesand is trying to gain Julia’s hand and runs towards her father: *“Next year, I’ll receive power of attorney at work! I have honest intentions!”*

Official: *“That’s brave!”*

Father: *“I have brought up my daughter according to the principles of humanity. If you get power of attorney, it’s her free choice. You won’t need to change your denomination.”*

Hahnesand: *“Agreed.”*

And the Official comments: *“So let’s leave this place in the inspiring consciousness that there are still ideals in our country, still inner treasures, honour and conscience, purity and noble customs.”*

During the final scene which follows, Löbchen Bär stands at the front of the stage and begins to sing:

*“Today, we won’t ever, won’t ever, won’t ever, today,
we won’t ever, won’t ever, won’t ever go home!
Not until father swallows his false teeth,
not until mother spits into her headscarf,
Today, we won’t ever, won’t ever go home.”*

Well-known in Bickenbach:

*Bis die Aold Kräbbel oder Poannekuche backt und koa
schäbb Maul oder Schnud mehr macht.*

*(Not until the old start crawling, or start baking pancakes
and no longer show a miserable face.)*

Die Judentochter

AUS: “DES KNABEN WUNDERHORN:
ALTE DEUTSCHE LIEDER”

Es war eine schöne Jüdin,
Ein wunderschönes Weib,
Sie hatt’ eine schöne Tochter,
Ihr Haar war schön geflochten,
Zum Tanz war sie bereit.

“Ach, liebste, liebste Mutter!
Was tut mir mein Herz so weh!
Ach, lasst mich eine Weile
Spazieren auf grüner Heide,
Bis dass mir’s besser wird”

Die Mutter wandt den Rücken,
Die Tochter sprang in Gaß,
Wo alle Schreiber sassen:
“Ach liebster, liebster Schreiber!
Was tut mir mein Herz so weh.”

“Wenn du dich lässest taufen,
Luisa sollst du heissen,
Mein Weibchen sollst du sein.”
“Eh ich mich lasse taufen,
Lieber will ich mich versaufen
Ins tiefe, tiefe Meer.

“Gut Nacht, mein Vater und Mutter,
Wie auch mein stolzer Bruder,
Ihr seht mich nimmermehr!
Die Sonne ist untergegangen
Im tiefen, tiefen Meer.”

The Jewish daughter

FROM "THE BOY'S MAGIC HORN:
OLD GERMAN SONGS"

*There once was a beautiful Jewish girl,
a wonderfully beautiful woman,
who had a beautiful daughter,
whose hair was braided,
as if ready for a dance.*

*"Oh dear, dear mother,
my heart is so heavy!
let me go out for a little while
to walk on the green heath,
so that I'll feel better."*

*The mother turned her back,
the daughter sprang into the lane,
where all the scribes sat:*

*"Oh, dear, dear scribes,
my heart is so heavy."*

*"If you allow yourself to be baptised,
you shall be named Luisa,
and you shall be my wife."*

*"Before I'd be baptised,
I'd rather drown myself
in the deep, deep sea."*

*"Goodnight to my father and mother,
the same to my proud brother,
you'll see me no more!*

*The sun has set
in the deep, deep sea."*

Slurs and dishonourable items

■ *A Jew lies buried here!*

If someone stumbles over a stone or a root, people say: *"A Jew lies buried here!"*, implying underhandedness.

■ *An eternal Jew*

To be like the eternal wandering Jew, meaning to never have peace; this refers to one of Pontius Pilate's gatekeepers, a Jew, who had supposedly taunted the cross-bearing Jesus on the way to the Crucifixion.

■ *Not even a Jew can understand this*

Meaning it is stupid, incoherent gossip.

■ *He lets his head hang like an old Jewish horse!*

Meaning a tired, worn-out, or sick man.

■ *This (food) tastes like a dead Jew*

Refers to an inedible meal.

■ *Jew-Farts*

Small firecrackers, which are set alight on New Year's Eve. This expression probably originated due to people thinking that Jews favoured onions and garlic in their food. These days, particularly Turks living in Germany are subject to similar comparisons.

■ *On the green meadow sits a Jew and poops, cleans his bum with stinging nettle – ouch, ouch, that must itch!*

This is not only used for Jews.

■ *You are a second Judas!*

Relates back to Judas' kiss, Judas Iscariot's blood money; refers to Jesus' tale of suffering; meaning a false, treacherous person.

■ *He looks just like a small Jewish boy!*

Meaning a lanky-looking boy.

■ *Rabbi Zusha used to bless each Jewish boy who he met with the words: Be healthy and strong just like a Goy*

Rabbi Zusha of Hanipol's blessing.
From *The Chassidim Narrations* by Martin Buber.

Süßkind, the minstrel of Trimberg

The Trimburg castle is situated in the market town of Elfershausen in Bavaria. From Bickenbach, you travel to Elfershausen via the town of Gemünden am Main, along the Franconian Saale, via Hammelburg.

There are three parts to the castle, built at different times; the main castle dates back to the 12th century and the lineage of the castle's lords can be traced back to the 11th century.

The Trimburg castle has been noted in medieval literature. One of the earliest was by Hugo von Trimberg (c.1230–1313) who composed more than 24,000 verses of the didactic poem *Der Renner* (The Runner). In it he critically examined the customs and social strata of his time. The poem mentioned the character “Süßkind, the Jew of Trimberg” who was born in the town of Trimberg, in the Elfershausen municipality.

Süßkind appeared among the 137 portraits of poets or Minnesingers in the Codex Manesse.¹² His poems, or sung verse, though not strictly speaking Minnesangs, were written in a particular style of Middle High German. There is not much information about Süßkind other than that his work appeared in the early 13th century. A Jewish doctor named Süßkind worked at the Bietrich hospital in Würzburg from 1218 to 1225, but there is no proof that this person was the poet.

Süßkind was supposedly a travelling minstrel who sought to retreat from society because the lords had ceased to respect and reward him. He wanted to live “like an old Jew”, by growing a beard, wearing a long coat and hiding under his “Judenhut”, the pointed yellow hat that all Jews were required to wear at the time.

In the frontispiece to the section with Süßkind's work in the Codex, the illustration shows Süßkind in a fur-lined robe with a broad fur collar and dressed as graciously as the bishop who sat opposite him, enthroned in his official seat. He could be recognised as a church dignitary by his golden crosier though he is not wearing a mitre. The banner or “Fleder”, raised above the bishop, shows what could be the flag of Constance, a black cross



on white background which was depicted in silver in the illustration and over time has oxidised and turned grey.

It seems likely that the artist who created this frontispiece borrowed the bishop figure, along with his gestures, throne and banner, from another frontispiece in the Codex which was for “Herr Konrad, der Schenk von Landeck” (Konrad, the innkeeper of Landeck).

In the illustration, there appears to be a dispute between the main figures, with the two companions of the bishop gesticulating in a lively discussion. It seems

1. Minnesingers performed Minnesangs (love songs), a tradition of lyric and songwriting that flourished in the Middle High German period.

2. The Codex Manesse is a collection of work from about 135 Minnesängers in the mid-12th to early 14th century. Entries in the Codex are approximately in order of social status of the poets, starting with the Holy Roman Emperor, down to commoners. It is a comprehensive source of Middle High German Minnesang poetry and was produced in Zürich for the Manesse family.

reasonable to assume that both pictures – the Süßkind version, and the one it was modelled on – are referring to an official meeting in the presence of the bishop.

In 1972, Austrian writer, Friedrich Torberg (1908–1979), wrote *Süßkind von Trimberg* a fictitious biography of the medieval minstrel who was considered to be the first Jewish poet working in German. (Friedrich Torberg was a pen-name of Friedrich Kantor).

The novel does not claim to be a scholarly record of the zeitgeist of the period. The fellow survives a pogrom his parents fell victim to, becomes a wandering monk and enters many services; there is also an apprenticeship with a travelling singer. The book is full of adventures and successes until the tragic end. Süßkind doesn't fit any stereotypes – while the nobility protects him, he experiences prestige and fame, and the Jewish community is frequently proud of him.

Triggered by some acrimonious experiences, Süßkind writes a song in which he turns against the capricious nobility. The song quickly gets around, upon which the lords withdraw their favours and the Jews, dreading new calamities, also move away from him. Thus, in the end he stands alone like a castaway without a home but well aware: “I am a Hebrew” (Ivri anochi).

Friedrich Torberg translated 12 of Süßkind's poems from Middle High German to standard German. He used the original text from Friedrich von der Hagen's four-volume, five-part publication of the *Minnesinger* (Leipzig, 1838–1856) in which he documented poems from the Codex Manesse. In the Codex, six poems were attributed to Süßkind. It is to be noted that there is no information provided in the Codex regarding the date of origin of the poems.

Torberg included this satirical verse by Süßkind:

Ich bin der Ritter Süßkind,
Von Trimberg komm ich her.
Ich singe deutsche Lieder,
Als ob ich wär, als ob ich wär
Ein Goj, ein Goj, ein Goj.

Ich bin ein deutscher Säng'er
Und hab nur eins im Sinn:
Die Gojim soll'n nicht merken,
Dass ich doch bin, dass ich doch bin
Ein Jud, ein Jud, ein Jud.

*I am the knight Süßkind,
I am from Trimberg.
I sing German songs,
As if I were, as if I were
A Goy, a Goy, a Goy.*

*I am a German singer
And am driven by just one thing:
The Goyim are not to notice,
That after all I am, that after all I am
A Jew, a Jew, a Jew.*

From the Codex Manesse – By Süßkind of Trimberg

(ORIGINAL MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN)

Gedenke nieman kan erwern den toren, noch den wisen,
dar ümbe sint gedenke wie uff aller hande sache;
herz' unt sin dur gemach dem menschen sint gegeben,
Gedenke slüffen dur den stein, dur stahel und durch isen;
gedank klein ahte, wie diu hat diz unde daz gemache;
swie man gedenke nie gesach,
sie doch horte streben,
Gedank ist sneller über welt,
den der blick eines ougen;
gedank glust bringet nach der minne gelt,
nach der gesichte tougen,
gedank kan wol ob allen an hoch in dien lüften sweben.

(GERMAN TEXT)

Gedanken bleiben unverwehrt dem Toren wie
dem Weisen.
Sie zielen, wenn sie auch gelten, frei dahin.
Nichts hält sie auf, nicht Stein noch Stahl noch Eisen.
Gedanken sind des Menschen Eigentum, wie Herz
und Sinn.
Gleichviel, ob sie hernach zur Tat auch reifen –
man merkt sie wohl, doch kann man sie nicht sehen
noch greifen.
Sie gleiten schneller über Land
Als deiner Augen Blick,
sie holen dir der Minne Pfand,
dein Traumgesicht vom Glück,
und können höher als der Aar durch alle Lüfte streifen.

*Thoughts can't be refused, neither to the fool nor to the
wise man.
They drift along freely, no matter how valid they are.
Nothing can stop them, not stone nor steel nor iron.
Thoughts are a person's property, like the spirit and
the heart.
Regardless of whether they turn into action –
They are well noticed but cannot be seen nor grasped.
They glide across the land
With your eyes' gaze,
They get you your love's pledge,
Your dream face of happiness,
And can roam through the skies higher than the eagle.*

(ORIGINAL MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN)

ich var uf der toren vart
mit miner künst z'ware,
daz mir die herren niht weint geben,
daz ich ir hof wil vliehen,
Unt wil mir einen langen bart
lan wahsen griser hare,
ich wil in alter Juden leben
mich hinan vür wert ziehen,
Min mantel der sol wesen lank,
tief under einem huote,
demueteklich sol sin min gank,
unt selten me gesingen hovelichen sank,
sit mich die herren scheident von ir guote.

(GERMAN TEXT)

Da bin ich als ein rechter Tor
Mit meiner Kunst durchs Land gezogen,
Und niemand rettet mich davor,
Dass mir die Herren nicht gewogen.
Ich will mir einen langen Bart
Lassen wachsen mit grauen Haaren,
Ich will nach alter Judenart
Fortan des Lebens Strasse fahren.
Der Mantel wallt mir schwarz und lang
Tief unter meinem Hute,
Demiltiglich soll sein mein Gang,
Nie wieder sing ich höfischen Gesang.
Ich bin geschieden von den Herrn und ihrem Gute.

*Here I am a right fool
I roamed the country with my art,
And no one knows what to do,
That the Lords do not favour my part.
I wish to grow a long beard
That's full of grey hair,
In old Jewish tradition I fear
I will take life's journey there.
With my robe flowing black and long
Hiding deep underneath my hat,
My gait is to be humble,
Never again will I sing courtly songs.
I have parted from the Lord and his estate.*

Martin Buber

Mordecai Martin Buber was born in Vienna on 8 February 1878. Following his parents' separation he grew up in Lemberg in what was then Poland (now Lviv, Ukraine), with his grandfather, the scholar Salomon Buber. He studied in Vienna, Berlin and Zurich.

In 1898, Buber joined a local Zionist group, and the association of Jewish students in Berlin. In the summer of 1899, Buber was a delegate at the Zionist congress in Basel, and in 1901 he was a speaker at the 5th congress. With the death of Theodor Herzl in 1904, Buber ceased working for the Zionist party to focus on writing.

Buber's mystical period lasted from 1904 to 1912 which was preceded by an in-depth exploration of the Jewish tradition. His great work, *Ich und Du*, meaning *I and Thou* was released in 1923 and with it his mystical period ended. Through his writings Buber tried to impart Hasidism on Judaism and made the human encounter a central theme. Encounters stem from the human ability to "forge relations" as a counter-movement to the primal sense of distance. Buber developed this thought further with regards to religious and social life as well as education.

In the summer of 1918, a conference on the renewal of the education system took place in Heppenheim, which was Buber's hometown before he and his family emigrated to Palestine in March 1938. At the conference, Buber delivered the concept and method for an adult education centre. His idea won the support of the Frankfurt association, the "Frankfurter Bund".

In autumn 1919, the Free Jewish Training Centre was founded in Frankfurt am Main. From 1925–1929, initiated by publisher Lambert Schneider, Buber worked with Franz Rosenzweig to translate the Hebrew Bible into German. *Die Schrift* was first published in 1937, in 15 individual volumes.

Then came 30 January 1933, and with it years of terror and ruin descended on all of Judaism. Buber



gave up his professorship when the Nazis officially withdrew his *venia legendi* (habilitation, or 'permission to read') and in February 1935 the Nazi regime banned him from undertaking any public activity.

In 1933, in the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the weekly journal [of the Zionist Federation in Germany] Buber wrote:

"What this trial means for the German Jew is that he needs a new hierarchy of personal existential values which will enable him to endure this situation and its vicissitudes ...

– if we protect our true self no one can expropriate us.

– if we remain faithful to our calling, no one can deprive us of our rights.

– if we stay in touch with where we're from and where we're headed, nothing can uproot us. No power in the world can oppress those who have acquired true spiritual freedom through honest subservience."

With this appeal Buber made it clear to his fellow believers that what counted wasn't how much injustice and terror they suffered, but how they reacted to it. This reminder coincided with the pastoral message that provided some solace and strength before the downfall eventually irrupted, forcing countless Jews into extermination camps. After his expulsion from Germany in 1938, Buber made Jerusalem his home. He took on a professorship for Social Philosophy at Hebrew University which was followed by numerous works and publications in the Hebrew language.

In 1947, when the United Nations suggested to divide Palestine to create a Jewish and an Arabic state, Buber advocated for the coexistence of Arabs and Israelis. On 15 May 1948, the British mandate over Palestine ceased, and with the declaration of the State of Israel came the Arab-Israeli War. To this day 'the human problem', as portrayed by Buber, still exists.

In the following years, Buber visited Europe and America and received a number of awards for his work.

In 1953, he was awarded the Peace Prize by the German Book Trade at the Paulskirche (St. Paul's church) in Frankfurt.

In 1963, Buber received the Netherlands Erasmus Prize [for contributions to European culture], and in 1964 he was presented with an honorary doctorate of philosophy at Heidelberg University.

Martin Buber died on 13 June 1965 in Jerusalem at the age of 87.

Max Brod, author of *Streitbares Leben* (A Pugnacious Life), 1960, wrote, "You could always trust Buber even if you didn't agree with him in every detail."

In 1962, Robert Weltsch, in an epilogue to Hans Kohn's publication *Martin Buber, Sein Werk und Seine Zeit* (Martin Buber, his Work and his Time) noted that, "Buber acted wherever and whenever he was needed. He didn't proclaim any doctrine of salvation or any doctrine at all but he offered his hand to those trying to find their way on a narrow ridge."

Martin Buber House in Heppenheim

From March 1916 until March 1938 Martin Buber lived at 2 Werlestrasse in Heppenheim. From 1920, he was the owner of the house. When he migrated to Palestine in 1938, he had left his house furnished and part of his library intact in case he ever returned to work in Germany. The events in November 1938 put an end to such possibilities. At the beginning of WWII, the house was used by the authorities, and it was acquired by the Bergstrasse municipality in 1941.

In the 1970s, to make room for additions to the district administration building, the house, including its garden and the surrounding dwellings, was to be demolished. However, a number of Heppenheim citizens deemed this unacceptable and actions and developments ensued to save the house.

It was recognised that Martin Buber and his house in Heppenheim were significant to the German and



Martin Buber House in Heppenheim.

Jewish intellectual history of the 20th century. Suggestions were made on how the house could be used in Buber's interest. They alluded to what was at stake for Germany's reputation around the world if the remaining tangible traces of the Jewish researcher and scholar were irretrievably destroyed.

In July 1975, the Minister for the Arts in Hesse, Hans Krollmann, arranged for the house to be added to the catalogue of memorials to be

protected, and yet the house was to give way to a new building for the administration. A dedicated "Buber group" fought for the building to be preserved and in the spring of 1976, with the help of the Hessian Minister for the Arts, the building complex became officially heritage-listed "due to its great importance to the German intellectual history". Despite this, the house was still under threat.

In September 1976, the wind changed with district administrator, Dr Lothar Bergmann, after Buber's son Rafael visited Heppenheim and noted that, despite years of bureaucratic use, the rooms had basically remained unchanged. Rafael recognised that he was not entitled to any claims whatsoever, but that it would be an appropriate tribute to his father, Martin Buber, and also a benefit to Israel, Europe and the world, if the house was preserved and used in a positive way.

The State Rabbi of Baden-Württemberg, Dr Peter Levisohn (Levinson) advised in January 1978 that he had managed to convince the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) to move its headquarters from London to Heppenheim and to take up residence in the Buber house. Political ramifications may have swayed the district and borough officials towards approving such a decision. On 8 April 1979, a ceremony was held to hand over the use of the house to the General Secretary of the ICCJ, Dr Franz von Hammerstein.

(Buber house is still headquarters of the ICCJ, and the local council in the Bergstrasse maintains the property.)

Else Ury

Author of *Nesthäkchen* (*The Nestling*).



Else Ury was an author of books for children and young adults. She was born on 1 November 1877 in Berlin and deported to Auschwitz on 13 January 1943 where she was murdered.

Like many other assimilated people of Jewish origin, she was not widely known to the public but her main work, *Nesthäkchen*, survives her to this day.

Following her schoolgirl stories such as *Studierte Mädel* (1906) and *Was das Sonntagskind erlauscht* (1905), her big success came after WWI with the *Nesthäkchen* series. This series included: *Nesthäkchen und ihre Puppen* (*Nesthäkchen and her dolls*), *Nesthäkchens Backfischzeit* (*Nesthäkchen's teenage years*), *Nesthäkchen und ihre Küken* (*Nesthäkchen and her chicks*), *Nesthäkchens Jüngstes* (*Nesthäkchen's youngest*) and *Nesthäkchen und ihre Enkel* (*Nesthäkchen and her grandchildren*). In 1925, the 10-book series was completed with *Nesthäkchen im weißen Haar* (*Nesthäkchen with white hair*). The fourth book in the series, titled *Nesthäkchen und der Weltkrieg* (*Nesthäkchen and the World War*), with its patriotic rants, is now forgotten as no child of today could be expected to read it.

Her last publication was *Jugend voraus* (1933), a tale for boys and girls. In the final chapter of the book the Nazi's seizure of power was welcomed as an "early spring

for Germany's government". The author depicted the occasion of the National Labour Day celebrations in Berlin on 1 May 1933 and spoke of youths' obligation to help establish a national socialist Germany.

Despite the fact that she followed the German national philosophy of the time, being Jewish, the Reichsschrifttumskammer (Reich Chamber of Literature) rejected Else Ury. She could have emigrated but, in 1943, found herself at the mercy of the catastrophe happening around her.

In the 1980s, marked by an emerging desire by the public for nostalgia, a TV series was made by the national broadcaster ZDF based on the first three *Nesthäkchen* books. Viewers appreciated and recognised Ury's portrayal of society at the time.

Elisabeth Langgässer

Elisabeth Langgässer was born on 23 February 1899. Her parents were from Mainz. Her father was a Jew, originally a broker by trade, and he became a building surveyor for the Grand Duchy of Hesse.

After her father's death in 1909, Elisabeth relocated with her mother and her brother Heinrich (b.1901) to Darmstadt. Following her higher school certificate and university studies, she arrived in Griesheim, via Seligenstadt, where she worked from 1922 to 1928. Her first poems had already been published prior to that.

Griesheim, just outside Darmstadt, had been occupied by the French since December 1918. Her works *Der Gang durch das Ried*, (The Path through the Marsh, 1936) and *Grenze: Besetztes Gebiet, Ballade eines Landes* (Border: Occupied Area, Ballad of a Country, 1932) in conjunction with the large military camp in the area known as Griesheimer Sand, illustrated the time of occupation, inflation and general life in that region of post-war Germany in the 1920s.

In the late 1920s Langgässer had a daughter after an affair with Herman Heller, a Jewish political scientist. Their daughter, Cordelia, (b.1929) was classified as three-quarters Jewish and in 1944 was taken to Auschwitz, via Theresienstadt. However, she miraculously survived. Not till early 1946 did Langgässer learn of her daughter's survival. She wrote and dedicated her poem *Frühjahr 1946* (Springtime 1946) to Cordelia.

Langgässer herself had been deemed half-Jewish by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and was therefore prohibited from publishing until after the war.

Langgässer suffered from multiple sclerosis in her adult life. The family left Berlin in 1947, and on 25 July 1950, Elisabeth Langgässer died in Karlsruhe and was laid to rest in the old cemetery in Darmstadt.

In 1950, she was posthumously awarded the Georg Büchner Prize, a prestigious literary award established in honour of Büchner, a noted dramatist from the area.



Karl Wolfskehl

In early April of 1944, Karl Wolfskehl, the great Jewish Germanist and poet from Darmstadt, completed his poem *An die Deutschen* (To the Germans) in the faraway New Zealand town of Auckland. Like thousands of others, Wolfskehl had to emigrate, and he went into exile after Hitler's seizure of power in 1933.

Wolfskehl's work, which contained the verse "Eure Kaiser sind auch meine" (Your emperors are also mine), was essentially an autobiographical song. He started work on the poem in 1933 as he left Germany for Switzerland then he travelled on to Rome in 1934. In December 1934 the piece existed in its short version, and then in 1935 without the added swan song. Over the years the poem had further changes and additions, before the final version was completed in New Zealand in 1944.

Wolfskehl was born in Darmstadt on 17 September 1869, his father was a banker and lawyer. Wolfskehl sought asylum in New Zealand in 1938 and died a citizen of the country on 30 June 1948.



An die Deutschen

KARL WOLFSKEHL

Euer Wandel war der Meine
Eins mit Euch auf Hieb und Stich.
Unverbrüchlich was uns eine,
Eins der Große, eins das Kleine:
Ich war Deutsch und Ich war ich.
Deutscher Gau hat mich geboren,
Deutsches Brot speiste mich gar,
Deutsches Rheines Reben goren
Mir im Blut im Tausendjahr.
Stürz bach und Stürme rauschten,
Um mich unser Wälder Grund,
Frauen schauten, Knaben lauschten,
Auf mein Schreiten, meinen Mund.
Zu mir traten eure Besten,
Zu mir, den die Flamme heisst –
Ob im Osten, ob im Westen:
Wo ich bin ist Deutscher Geist

To the Germans

*Your way of life was also mine.
At one with you in cut and thrust.
Unbreakable what makes us one,
One in great and one in small:
I was German, I was I.
German shires brought me forth,
German bread did nourish me,
Grapes of the German Rhine
fermented
In my blood a thousand years.
Tumbling streams and storms
resounded,
About me forest loam surrounded,
Women watched, lads did listen
Where I strode and where I spoke.
To me came the best of you.
To me whom the flame commands –
In the East, or in the West:
German spirit is where I am.*

Wolfskehl on the Holocaust and reincarnation

Herr! Ich will zurück

KARL WOLFSKEHL

Herr! Ich will zurück zu Deinem Wort.
Herr! Ich will ausschütten meinen Wein.
Herr! Ich will zu Dir –
ich will fort.
Herr! Ich weiß nicht aus und nicht ein!
Ich bin allein.

Allein in leerer, atemleerer Luft
Allein im Herzen –
vor mir selber scheu.
Alle meine bunten Bälle sind verpufft.
All meine Weisheit ward Dunst und
Spreu.
Ich bin arm – Gott! Neu.

Neig Dich her wie den Vätern –
Oder triff mich mit Deinem Strahl:
Auch den ärgsten Tätern
Warst Du nah einmal.

Zeig Dich – Gewölk oder Feuer –
Hol uns zur Wüstenfahrt –
Herr – sind wir Dir nicht teuer:
Warum hast Du uns aufgespart?

Ist der falsche Tag nun verstrichen?
Brach die Nacht hinter uns entzwei?
Alle Sterne sind blind –
sind verblichen:
Ruf uns – wir rufen Dich herbei –
Noch vorm Hahnenschrei
Kommen Deine Boten geschlichen –
Ohne Laut geschlichen.

Lord! I want to return

*Lord! I want to return to Your word.
Lord! I want to pour out my wine.
Lord! I want to be with You –
I want to get away.
Lord! I don't know what to do!
I am on my own.*

*Alone in empty, breathfree air
Alone in my heart –
timid before my own.
All my colourful spheres have
vanished.
All my wisdom has become haze
and chaff.
I am poor – Lord! New.*

*Lean toward me as You did to the
fathers –
Or hit me with Your beam:
Once You were even close
To the worst offenders.*

*Show up – clouds or fire –
Take us through the wasteland –
Lord – are we not dear to You:
Why did You save us?*

*Has the wrong day gone by?
Has the night that's behind us been
torn in two?
All stars are blind –
are faded:
Call us – we call for You –
Even before the cock crows
Your envoys come tiptoeing –
Without a sound.*

Anti-Semitism and Racism



The 1944 edition of the *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia*, published in Leipzig, gave the following definitions:

Anti-Semite: *a Jewish enemy*

Anti-Semitism: *combating Jews*

Anti-Semitic: *(during Bismarck)*

Most modern reference books no longer list the word 'anti-Semite' but it does exist! Wilhelm Marr (German agitator and publicist) coined the term about 1879. Since the late 19th century, the term anti-Semitism has been used to describe negative mindsets and the efforts made against Jews living as minorities in different states.

The ramifications of anti-Semitism were the persecution of Jews, discrimination enabled by law, lack of equality, expulsion, pogroms and the physical destruction of Jews. This final form of anti-Semitism was first carried out in its most atrocious manner in Nazi Germany where several million Jews were murdered.

What has been interpreted as one of the prerequisites for anti-Semitism to take shape in Europe was the dispersal of Jews, beginning in pre-Christian times,

followed by the diaspora. Christian teachings differed from many beliefs of the earlier Jewish religion. Many of these so-called idiosyncrasies such as Sabbath healing, dietary and purity laws, circumcision, and so forth, led to the social segregation of Jews in their respective host countries.

For centuries the State and Religion (i.e. the Church) were one entity. However, Jews were not part of this entity which claimed the only right to give blessings. Thus Jews were treated as minorities and were also politically and legally discriminated against.

Hatred towards Jews developed throughout history and manifested itself clearly in the Middle Ages. The most important factors were religious reasons, lack of free choice of employment, superstitions, and economic restrictions, all of which led to isolation and, after a short period of emancipation, to the racial Semitism of the 19th century. From those developments, National Socialism emerged as a radical transformation from theory into political reality which used genocide to put this reality into practice down to the last detail.

Bickenbach gardener and pomologist (one who studies and cultivates fruit), Georg Knoos, was a strong advocate of the ideas of ‘Turnvater Jahn’ and also expressed his thoughts as a poet:¹

ANTI-SEMITIC

Da unten geht ein Mühlenrad
gar lustig seine Bahn.
An jeder Schaufel “wollte ich”
da häng ein Jude dran!

*Down there a mill wheel
is happily spinning away.
“I want” to see hanging
A Jew on every vane!*

SEMITIC

Da unten geht ein Mühlenrad
gar lustig seine Bahn,
an jeder Schaufel “glaube ich”
da hängt ein Jude dran!

*Down there a mill wheel
is happily spinning away.
“I think” I see hanging
A Jew on every vane!*

APRIL 1892

Today, exactly 100 years later, we can no longer find answers as to why Knoos wrote this poem. It needs to be asked whether he was at odds with local Jews, sought quiet revenge, or was simply of the national disposition.

Among many publications, the following were both precursors and executors of racism alike: *Rassenkunde des jüdischen Volkes* (Racial Science of the Jewish People); *Vom Deutschen Ahnen für Deutsche Enkel* (German ancestors for German grandchildren); *Frau als Hausärztin* (A Woman as Family Practitioner).

Their aim was the final solution to the Jewish question. From racial science to racial hatred, to the destruction of unworthy life, was the commonly used language in Germany under Hitler. The killing of ‘German citizens of Jewish faith’ was carried out by order of the state. The following ‘10 Commandments on Nazi Racial Policies’ taken from *A Woman as Family Practitioner* sadly show where public enlightenment was headed at the time.



Darmstädter Echo – 28 September 1992

“In Oranienburg, the memorial at the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp has been badly damaged by a fire over the weekend. The Jewish barracks, which Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had recently visited, and another house, were partially burned down. On Sunday police ruled out the possibility that a technical fault was the cause of the fire. There were no initial signs of arson.”

1. The German word “Turner” translates as gymnast. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn was a German gymnastics educator and nationalist. He studied theology and philology and believed the practice of gymnastics would help develop physical as well as moral power. His admirers knew him as ‘Turnvater Jahn’, roughly meaning Jahn “father of gymnastics”.

Wehe dem deutschen Volke, wenn der Jude, der schlau ist wie die Schlange und mild sein kann wie die Taube, dereinst wieder zu Macht käme!

Und dies kann und wird verhindert werden, wenn jeder Deutsche nachfolgende 10 Gebote nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik zu seinem geistigen und inneren Besitztum macht und dieselben zur Richtschnur seines täglichen Lebens und Handelns nimmt:

1. Du sollst immer eingedenk sein, daß Du deutschen Blutes bist, und stolz sein auf Deine Abstammung aus deutschem Blut und Boden!
2. Du sollst immer daran denken, daß das gigantische Aufbaunwerk Deines Führers Adolf Hitler wieder verfallen muß, wenn Dein deutsches Volk verfinstert!
3. Du sollst nie vergessen, daß Dein Volk verfinstert, wenn es den vom Juden gemiesenen Weg des biologischen Todes nicht sofort und für immer verläßt!
4. Du sollst deshalb Deine gottgemollte Lebensaufgabe und Deinen höchsten Lebenszweck darin erblicken, daß Du Deine Ahnenfette nicht abreißen lassen darfst, und demgemäß mit heiligem Verantwortungsgefühl und Pflichtbewußtsein handelst!
5. Du sollst nur einen zeugungs- bzw. gebärfähigen, kinderfreundigen Partner ehelichen und mit ihm so viele Kinder Deinem Volke schenken, um dadurch wenigstens seinen zahlenmäßigen Bestand zu sichern!
6. Du sollst nur einen erdgefunden Partner ehelichen, um durch erdgefunde Kinder die geistige, seelische und charakterliche Leistungs- und Abwehrkraft Deines Volkes zu erhöhen!
7. Du sollst nur einen Partner deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes, also keinen Juden oder jüdischen Mischling, ehelichen oder mit ihm in sexuelle Beziehungen treten, um Dein Volk vor Blutsverfälschung und rassistischer Verfestung als der Hauptursache völkischen Niedergangs zu schützen!
8. Du sollst Dir immer bewußt sein, daß die Juden die Todfeinde aller ehrlich Schaffenden, schöpferischen und aufbauenden Menschen und Völker sind und unserem deutschen Volk nicht nur das Blut, sondern auch Geist und Seele zu vergiften trachten!
9. Du sollst deshalb Dich und Deine Sippe durch Aufklärung und dauernde Mahnung und Warnung immun machen gegenüber dieser jüdischen Weltpest, die mit der Lüge gefeigt hat und mit der Wahrheit stirbt!
10. Du sollst unerschütterlich hart und fest an Dein deutsches Volk und seine Ewigkeitsendung glauben, um daraus die Kraft für seine völkische Wiedergeburt und rassistische Erhaltung zu schöpfen!

„Deutschland, bleibe wach!“

The German racial problem and its solution

Woe to the German people if the Jew, who is cunning as a serpent and can be mild as a dove, one day comes back into force!

This can and will be prevented, if every German makes it his mental and internal desire to take the same guiding principles in his daily life and actions as the following 10 commandments of Nazi racial policy:

1. Thou shalt always be mindful that you are of German blood, and should be proud of your ancestry of German blood and soil!
2. Thou shalt always remember that the huge reconstruction done by your leader, Adolf Hitler, can founder again if the German people also founder!
3. Thou shalt never forget that your people will sink if they do not immediately and forever leave the path of biological death assigned by the Jews!
4. Thou shalt therefore behold that your Godly mission in life and your highest purpose in life is that you do not destroy your ancestral lineage, and thus act with a holy sense of responsibility and a sense of duty!
5. Thou shalt only marry a generative or childbearing and child-friendly partner, and give your people many children, thereby at least numerically securing a fine stock.
6. Thou shalt only marry a genetically healthy partner, and thereby have genetically healthy children to increase the spiritual, mental and character traits, and to increase the power of resistance of your people!
7. Thou shalt have only one partner with German or kindred blood, therefore you may not marry a Jew or Jewish half-breed, or enter into any sexual relations with them in order to protect your people from blood contamination and racial breakdown, the main cause of racial decline!
8. Thou shalt be always aware that Jews are the mortal enemies of honest, creative, constructive and uplifting people, and other nations seek to poison the German people not only in blood, but also in body and soul!
9. Thou shalt therefore, by providing information and a permanent reminder and warning, make yourself and your family immune to this Jewish world plague, which has triumphed with a lie and dies with the truth!
10. You shall steadfastly believe strongly and firmly in the German people and its eternal mission to draw strength for the preservation of its ethnic and racial rebirth!

“Germany, stay awake!”

Anti-Semitism of the National Socialists

The anti-Semitism of the Nazis followed in the tradition of 19th century anti-Semitism which derived from racial speculation. The theory that human races were unequal came from Frenchman Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882). With his theory he sought to ‘prove’ the complete superiority of the ‘white race’ which in its essence helped to keep the ‘Aryan race’ pure.

He borrowed the term ‘Aryan’ from linguistic sciences at the time where the term was used to describe a language group comprising Romanic, Slavic and Germanic languages. Gobineau simply extrapolated from language relations to biological racial relations in order to explain the entire world history by means of racial aspects. This is where the Germanic cult took one of its main roots.

Richard Wagner’s son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), was born in England but a German by choice. He continued the above theory which led him to equate ‘Aryan’ to ‘Germanic’ to ‘German’. Combined with Chamberlain’s other theory, which said the Aryan race alone was also culturally the most significant, we got the chain of ideas which led Hitler to write *Mein Kampf*.

Anti-Semitism borrowed the claim that Jewish people were responsible for the deficiencies and inequalities of the economic system during the second half of the 19th century. After 1919, the demagogues among the National Socialists turned the Jews’ debt into the guilty Jew. Jews were overall held responsible for the German defeat in WWI, as well as other crises and grievances. The traditionally held concept that all things Jewish were bad was turned upside down: Now all bad things were defamed as Jewish.

The Nazi Party’s (NSDAP) election poster in the lead up to the Reichstag election of 1932 portrayed the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as a naked uncultured proletarian. Hammer and sickle marked him as a Bolshevik. Bolshevism equalled Marxism. The Jew holding the labourer’s hand symbolised Capitalism. They were on the same path. The poster blamed the Social Democrats for the worker’s plight. The Social Democrats were Marxist. Marxism was Jewish. Capitalism was also Jewish. Marxism and Capitalism



“Marxism is the guardian angel of capitalism. Vote 1, National Socialists.”

belonged together – they joined forces to plot the ‘enslavement of the workers’.

The fact that Hitler took nearly six years to ‘cleanse’ the German economy after he seized power in 1933 showed that Jews were not in fact capitalist parasites who could simply be removed from the national economic system overnight. Just like their Aryan counterparts, Jewish capitalists were integrated into the capitalist system. The Aryanisation of the German economy had no major impact on the actual nature of the system. Confiscation, dispossession, and the breaking down of Jewish competitors, led to the formation of monopolies



"He is to blame for the war!"

whereby Aryan businesses and entrepreneurs took over trades, workshops and factories without any regard for consequences. On 18 November 1938, the Reich Minister for Economics decreed that Jews were to be excluded as entrepreneurs from retail, trade and monetary markets. The decree was to be irrevocable.

With the start of WWII in 1939 and its ensuing terror, it was important to motivate the German population to 'persevere'. The NS propaganda repeated its slogans and indoctrinated people with the idea that



"Behind the enemy powers: the Jew."

there was a Jewish world conspiracy against Germany, a claim that was supposedly repeatedly confirmed, thus calling for WWII and the associated domestic terror campaign by the ruthless regime.

With the idea that Jews epitomised capitalism and were the main enemy, the illusion was created that WWII was necessary in order to defend one's own interests. The aim was to direct discontent and hatred towards the Jewish people and thus distract attention from the actual causes.

National Socialism and the NSDAP

National Socialism developed as a political movement in Germany after WWI and its intellectual and ideological origins date back to the German National movement (Deutschnationale Bewegung) during the 19th century.

National Socialism was marked by:

- a vague notion of a nation during the Romantic period;
- Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's racial theory;
- exaggerated nationalism;
- the resulting imperialism;
- a German sense of mission;
- anti-Semitism;
- a hatred of Marxism;
- Christianity strongly linked to the Church;
- any kind of internationalism.

In January 1919, a small anti-Semitic German national group in Munich founded the German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, DAP) which Hitler approached in September 1919. Having been shaped politically and ideologically in pre-war Vienna, Hitler soon became the party's actual driver. He became member no. 7 on the committee for advertising and propaganda and the party's overall member no. 555. In 1920, the party was renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party – NSDAP – with Hitler as the party's leader from July 1921. The party's program, declared in 1920 and later implemented to the full, called for the following:

- the peace treaties of Versailles and St Germain to be suspended;
- all Germans to be consolidated in a Greater Germany;
- former colonies to be returned;
- a strong centralised power in the hands of the Reich;
- citizens to be pure-blooded;
- a break from the servitude of interest charges;
- the middle class to be supported;
- land reforms;
- one German law;
- Judaism to be eliminated from the media, radio, film and public life.

The young 'front generation' of WWI was embittered

about the military collapse and the loss of a promising future. Alongside the 'stab-in-the-back' myth (Dolchstoßlegende), the impoverishment of large parts of society caused by inflation, as well as the negative opinion held by senior officials, church dignitaries and officers on the young 'republic' created fertile grounds for Hitler's propaganda.¹

On 8–9 November 1923, in an attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic, Hitler staged the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, a failed takeover of the government in Bavaria. It was foiled by the Reichswehr and the police. The NSDAP was disbanded and Hitler was sentenced to five years at Landsberg prison. During his sentence, he wrote *Mein Kampf* and, as such, the program and ideology that underlie National Socialism.

Hitler no longer sought to obtain power with a coup, but in fighting for parliamentary majority. His early release in December 1924 and the re-founding of the NSDAP in February 1925 ensued, with the party winning ever-increasingly more support. The NSDAP's paramilitary wing, the SA (Sturmabteilung), and later the SS (Schutzstaffel), used brutal violence to impede any counter movements. In Thuringia and Braunschweig, the NSDAP became part of the government in 1930. In the face of the Great Depression, the party won 107 Reichstag mandates, coming second after the SPD.

In October 1931, the NSDAP joined forces with the Stahlhelm organisation, Hugenberg's German National People's Party, and other small groups and formations to establish the so-called Harzburg Front.

During the German presidential elections in March/April 1932, Hitler ran as a candidate against Paul von Hindenburg, but without success. However, in the Prussian state election of April 1932 and the Reichstag election in July 1932, the NSDAP asserted itself as the strongest party with 230 mandates but then lost 34 mandates in the Reichstag election of November 1932.

Hitler demanded to be appointed Reich Chancellor. On 15 January 1933, following the National Socialist's election win in Lippe-Detmold, and Kurt von Schleicher's

1. Dolchstoßlegende – The 'stab-in-the-back' myths were the conspiracies developed by German citizens believing that the German Army did not lose WWI on the battlefield but was instead betrayed by civilians on the home front, especially the republicans who overthrew the monarchy in the German Revolution of 1918–19. Advocates denounced the German government leaders who signed the Armistice on 11 November 1918 as the 'November Criminals'.

resignation as Reich Chancellor, Hitler was finally appointed Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933 by von Hindenburg after a game of intrigue involving Franz von Papen.

Re-elections for the Reichstag were enforced and on 5 March 1933, the NSDAP received 44% of all votes.

On 24 March 1933, the German Reichstag passed the so-called Enabling Act – its formal name was the ‘Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich’ (Decree: Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, No. 25) – which granted Hitler everything he needed to enforce his regime. Little by little he managed to bring all public life – legal deactivation of the Reich constitution, judiciary, economy and culture – under the control of the state which was basically equated with the NSDAP.

Through the Nazification process termed ‘Gleichschaltung’, the local state’s independence was eradicated. Apart from the NSDAP, all parties, including unions, were disbanded, clubs broken up, and new formations prohibited. Germany was now ruled by the Fuehrer principle with democracy shattered – after only 13 years in place.

According to the Fuehrer principle at the top of the polycratically structured NSDAP (state party) stood:

- the Fuehrer as the Reich Leader of the party;
- the Fuehrer’s representative;
- Reich leaders;
- Chief of organisation and staff;
- Chief of staff of the SA;
- Reich Leader of the SS; and
- the Leader of the Reich Youth.

The party was subdivided into districts which were further separated into counties, local groups, booths and



Above: The victors in Potsdam, 1945. Seated from left: Clement Attlee, Harry S. Truman and Joseph Stalin. Standing: Ernest Bevin, James F. Byrnes and Vyacheslav Molotov, foreign ministers of England, USA and USSR.

In July and August 1945, the “Big Three” met in Potsdam to discuss the post-war order. They succeeded merely in creating a provisional peace settlement, as the winners only agreed on the denazification and disarmament of Germany, wanting to leave more detailed issues for a later peace conference.

National Socialism was able to win over many of those who initially saw themselves as marginalised.

The 1935 Nuremberg Laws, the Fuehrer’s unlimited right to rule, the unscrupulous elimination of political opponents and inconvenient people from their own ranks, and the Night of the Long Knives, made a mockery of all constitutional ideas. Initial isolated cases of resistance were brutally destroyed by the system. It was only when the Protestant Church was pronounced to be made a National Church by the German Christians movement, and when the concordat with the Catholic Church, signed in 1933, was openly and repeatedly breached, that the confessing Churches began to revolt.

The destruction of Czechoslovakia, the systematic extermination of Jews, the obliteration of ‘unworthy’ life (euthanasia) and the politics of annexation, oppression and destruction during WWII were the main stages the Nazi terror regime carried out with increasing might. Not until the total collapse of Germany and the outcome of WWII did the National Socialist system end.

blocks, each with appointed Fuehrers. By means of structuring the NSDAP and through the setting up of associated organisations it was attempted to politically imbue all levels of the population – SA, SS, HJ, BDM, NS student association, NS women’s league, RAD, NSFK, NSKK, NSV, NS professional association of doctors and legal practitioners, and the DAF.

In 1920, the *Völkischer Beobachter* newspaper became the central press medium. The enforced conformity of media, film and radio occurred quickly. By eliminating unemployment with the help of war armament, and re-establishing national splendour and international reputation through the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin,

Adolf Hitler!
Dir sind wir allein verbunden! Wir wollen in
dieser Stunde das Gelöbnis erneuern:

Wir glauben
auf dieser Erde allein an Adolf Hitler.

Wir glauben,
daß der Nationalsozialismus der allein selig-
machende Glaube für unser Volk ist.

Wir glauben,
daß es einen Herrgott im Himmel gibt, der uns
geschaffen hat, der uns führt, der uns lenkt
und der uns sichtbarlich segnet.

Und wir glauben,
daß dieser Herrgott uns Adolf Hitler gesandt
hat, damit Deutschland für alle Ewigkeit ein
fundament werde.

Reichsleiter Dr. Robert Ley am 10. Februar 1937

From training notes of the NSDAP, Volume IV, series 4, 1937.

Adolf Hitler!

You and we are solely connected! In this hour we want to renew the vow:

On this earth we believe solely in Adolph Hitler.

We believe that Nazism is the only saving faith for our people.

We believe, that there is a God in heaven who created us, directs us, guides us and visibly blesses us.

And we believe that this God has sent us Adolf Hitler, so that Germany may forever have a foundation."

Reichsleiter, Dr. Robert Ley, 10 February 1937.²

2. Reichsleiter – Reich leader or National leader, was the second highest political rank in the NSDAP. He reported directly to Hitler.

War Veterans and Frontline Soldier associations

Reich Federation of Jewish War Veterans (RJF)



Stahlhelm (Steel Helmet) troops: Alsbach, Bickenbach and Jugenheim (1933/34).

Right and opposite page:
WWI Jewish soldiers' gravestones
at Alsbach cemetery.
Photos by Adolf Ritz, 1987.



After the victory against the French in the Franco-German war in 1870-71, veterans and military associations became popular within the empire, and experienced an increase during the Wilhelmine Period.

After WWI was lost, the purpose of associations such as the Kyffhäuserverein (German soldier association), the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (a paramilitary organisation strongly associated with the Social Democratic Party), and the Roter Frontkämpferbund Stahlhelm (a paramilitary group associated with the German Communist Party) was not only to strengthen honour, military training and maintenance of tradition, but also the social duty of its members to support the injured and help the family of those soldiers killed in action to claim such things as maintenance and pensions from a nation that had been bled dry.

After Hitler's regime seized power in 1933, the reintroduction of compulsory conscription, as well as the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, meant that by 1938 Jewish German soldiers had lost their fight for any chance of recognition and dignity.

Although their situation was considerably worse, Jewish soldiers founded their own soldiers' association, the Reich Federation of Jewish War Veterans (RJF), in Berlin on 8 February 1919, a mere three months after the end of WWI. Objectives and roles of the Reich Federation were outlined as follows:

"The association's purpose is to unite Jewish German front-line soldiers to maintain common interests, especially in fending off all attacks aimed at diminishing its patriotic actions in war."

In his memoirs *In guten und schlechten Tagen (In Good*



Open air mass for Jewish soldiers in the Franco-German War, 1870-71.

and Bad Days) published in 1980, former secretary of state and lord mayor of Darmstadt, Ludwig Metzger, quotes terms from Nazi jargon of the 1920s and 1930s. These include 'Novemberebrecher' (November criminals) and 'Judenrepublik' (Jewish republic). The term refers to the men and women who took it upon themselves to rebuild the republic after WWI was lost. Both were negative references.

Like many others, Benno Wolf from Bickenbach was a Jewish War Veteran, however, his contribution was acknowledged by the nation by being transported to an extermination camp in Minsk in 1941. He had served in the 115th Life-Guard Infantry Regiment.¹

1. The 115th Regiment was the oldest regiment in the German army, dating back to 1621. In 1914, the regiment was garrisoned at Darmstadt as part of the 25th Hessian Division of the XVIII Army Corps. They served with the Hessian Division on the Western Front, seeing action at Marne, Verdun and the Somme.

Was will der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten?

Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten
 will die maßlosen Drohungen deutschvölkischer Gegner gegen Leben und Eigentum jüdischer Mitbürger nicht zur Tat werden lassen! Er wird alles aufbieten um zu verhindern, daß rüchlose Gesellen sich an jüdischem Leben vergreifen.

Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten
 will die lebende Statistik der jüdischen Frontkämpfer sein. Jeden Angriff auf die Leistungen der jüdischen Kämpfer im Weltkrieg weist er in jeder tunlichen Form zurück. Durch Flugblätter und wissenschaftliche Werke, in Versammlungen und in der Presse stellt er fest, daß die deutschen Juden im Kriege ihren christlichen Kameraden in nichts an Opfermut und Lebenshingabe nachstanden.

Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten
 tritt mit Wort und Tat dafür ein, daß Schlichtheit und Takt in Kleidung und Auftreten von jedem Juden zu wahren sind. Persönliches Eingreifen und Flugschriften haben bereits vielerorts erzieherisch gewirkt. Selbstzucht ist die Forderung des Reichsbundes jüdischer Frontsoldaten.

Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten
 ist ein Freund der körperlichen Erziehung. Er arbeitet darauf hin, daß alle deutschen Juden, vor allem die Jugend, durch sportliche Tätigkeit Körper und Geist stählen. Er steht in enger Verbindung mit Sport- und Turnvereinigungen. Er gehört zur Jugend und sie zu ihm.

Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten
 hat satzungsgemäß in seinem Kreise jede Auseinandersetzung über parteipolitische und innerjüdische Streitfragen verboten. Seine Arbeit und deren Ziele sind so gestellt, daß sie die Tätigkeit keiner anderen jüdischen Organisation stören. Mit allen verbindet ihn ein freundliches Verhältnis.

Du jüdischer Kamerad

von ranst kommen zu uns! Denk an die 12000 jüdischen Heldengräber auf allen Kriegsschauplätzen der Welt. Du hast die heilige Pflicht dafür zuzustehen, daß keiner Deiner Kameraden als Deutschvölkischer geschmäht wird. Reibe Dich dem Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten an und zu verbieten, daß keiner israelischen Juden seines Judentums wegen ein Haar gekümmert wird.

Säume nicht, komme sogleich zu uns!

Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten E. V.
 Octogruppe Eisenach

What does the Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers want?

The Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers

wants the intemperate threats of German Nationalist opponents against the lives and property of Jewish citizens to stop! They will do everything to prevent these nefarious knaves from laying their hands on Jewish lives.

The Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers

wants to be the living statistics of Jewish combatants. Every attack on the achievements of Jewish combatants in the World War are rejected in every feasible way. Through leaflets and scientific works, in meetings and in the press, they note that compared to their Christian comrades during the war, German Jews were second to none in self-sacrifice and devotion to life.

The Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers

advocates with word and deed that modesty and discretion in attire must be respected by every Jew. Personal intervention and pamphlets have already worked instructionally in many places. Self-discipline is the demand of the Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers.

The Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers

is a friend of physical fitness. They are working to ensure that all German Jews, especially its youth, toughens their body and mind through sporting activities.

The Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers

has statutorily forbidden in its sphere any dispute over party politics and internal Jewish issues. Their work and goals are set up so they do not interfere with the activity of any other Jewish organisation. All is combined for a friendly relationship.

You, Jewish comrade

of the past, return to us! Think of the 12,000 Jewish hero's graves in all the theatres of war around the world. You must stand up for the sacred duty, so that none of your comrades may be reviled as a malingerer. Line up with the Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers in order to prevent any German Jew his Judaism because a hair is out of place.

Don't delay, come to us immediately!

Reich Federation of Jewish Frontline Soldiers
 Eisenach group



Leaflet of RJF to refute anti-semitic attacks, circa 1920.

Speaking the truth!

“Jews were all malingerers”

say the fanatical haters of Jews, although at the very least the following is clear:

8,000 German Jewish soldiers fell in battle.

17,000 German Jewish soldiers attained the Iron Cross, 2nd Class.

900 German Jewish soldiers attained the Iron Cross, 1st Class.

“Jews contributed nothing in the war.”

announce the haters of Jews. But the generally known facts are:

Jewish professors [Adolph] Frank and [Nikodem] Caro developed the process of extracting calcium cyanamide for the good of agriculture.

Jewish professor [Carl Alexander] Neuberg invented a substitute for glycerine for the war contribution, and for medicinal purposes.

Jewish professor [August Paul von] Wassermann did outstanding work to combat tetanus and epidemics.

Jewish businessman [Leopold] Koppel founded the Kaiser Wilhelm house for disabled war veterans.

Jewish businessmen [Walther] Rathenau and [Albert] Ballin showed great sacrifice with supply of raw materials during the war.



Anti-Semitism was a central theme of the ideological training.

Der Schulungsbrief was the Nazi Party's political education monthly. It attempted to present Nazi ideology in a way understandable to the masses.

Title page of training notes of the NSDAP.

Der Schulungsbrief No.7 1939

The central monthly journal of the NSDAP and DRF (main training office of the NSDAP and training office of the DRF), edited by the Reichsorganisationsleiter (National Organisational Leader).

To strengthen his political position he tries to tear down the racial and civil barriers which for a time continue to restrain him at every step. To this end he fights with all the tenacity innate in him for religious tolerance – and in Freemasonry, which has succumbed to him completely, he has an excellent instrument with which to fight for his aims and put them across. The governing circles and the higher strata of the political and economic bourgeoisie are brought into his nets by the strings of Freemasonry, and never need to suspect what is happening.

Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*, page 345.

The SS State



Within two years – from 1933 to 1935 – Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler succeeded in melding the entire German police force under his supervision, factually and personally, with the SS (Schutzstaffel – Protection Squad). In a very short time this unusual tie between party and police became the epitome of the Nazis’ exercise and abuse of power, as well as their terror. Not being bound by any constitution or law, they saw their legal principle in the Fuehrer’s arbitrariness which was the SS State.

Its goal was the total surveillance and penetration of all public, social, and private life, and to prosecute actual and suspected enemies, and thus any appointed opponent or rival. It practised reckless and brutal extermination without regard for person or reason.

The SS’s intelligence agency, the SD, managed

surveillance, while the security police carried out prosecution and the SS’s job was to exterminate.

The intelligence agency of the SS, the SD (Sicherheitsdienst – Security Service), was founded in 1931. It controlled Germany and, after the war commenced, also operated in occupied countries, with an impenetrable system of spies, agents, informers, ombudsmen, feeders and accomplices.

The security police was the denatured successor of the traditional police force and it was relieved from more conventional duties. On the one hand it was the intelligence agency’s executor, and on the other hand it was the supplier for the torturous and destructive will of the SS.

The SS also provided the administrators, guards and murderers for the concentration camps.

Where does the swastika come from?



Banknote of the Kerensky government, Russia, 1917.

Today the swastika is mainly known as the symbol of National Socialism. However, the symbol is thousands of years old. It existed in many cultures, including Europe and India, and also Northern and Middle America as well as Polynesia and Africa.

The swastika has been found in Upper Mesopotamia at the archaeological site Tell Halaf, dating back to the second half of the 4th century BC. Another discovery of swastikas was from Troy and dates back to 2,300 BC. Other early findings were also made in India, the Indus Valley Civilisation of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, dating back to about 2,500–1,500 BC.

For the three largest religions of India – Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism – the symbol holds very specific significance. The right-facing swastika, called 'Svastika' in Sanskrit, indicates the path to salvation and is a symbol of good luck, while the left-facing swastika means demise and death. The symbolism also entered Chinese and Japanese cultures via Buddhism.

In Europe, the swastika appeared in band ware ceramics, during 5500–4500 BC. It was found in the Greek and Roman cultures as well as in Germanic settlements. In Germany this symbol becomes more significant during the 19th century when Germanic prehistory was being explored, and archaeological findings containing ornamental swastikas became more frequent. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the swastika was reinterpreted by the National Socialist organisations into the symbol for Aryans. Outside Germany, it became a symbol of revolutionary movements such as in Finland and Latvia. And in 1917 it decorated the banknotes of the Kerensky government in Russia.

In 1920, the NSDAP started to use the swastika as its party emblem. In 1933, the swastika flag was introduced as one of the German sovereign flags and in 1935, became the sole national and merchant flag of the Third Reich.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the use of the swastika as a political symbol is prohibited.

National Socialists in Bickenbach

With the introduction of electorates, the municipality of Bickenbach became part of the Odenwald electorate (Bensheim/ Erbach/Odenwald). Electorates formed even during election preparations for the constituent National Assembly at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt. Meetings were held from 18 May 1848 to 31 May 1849. The outcome is well known.

Until 1890 the Odenwald electorate was exclusively the domain of the National Liberal Party. The Social Democrats (SPD) appeared in the public domain for the first time in 1890, which was impossible beforehand due to Bismarck's anti-Socialist Laws. The 1893 elections caused a political landslide. Anti-Semites conquered the electorate!

The growing Social Democracy movement strengthened over time with the middle-class parties. The conservatives among the progressives and the National Liberals, along with their farmers' organisations, partnered up in 1907. The generally dwindling votes for middle-class parties pointed to the change of 1912. In this political climate, for the first time an SPD man, the ivory carver Ludwig Hasenzahl from the Odenwald town of Erbach, managed to get to the top of the electorate. This also reflected the economic and social change in the political power structure, a transition from an agrarian to an industrial nation. The Social Democrats managed to hold on to their lead of 1912, all the way until the crisis-ridden years of the Weimar Republic.

The results of the Reichstag elections between 1874 and 1912 are an indication of social political development and the emergence of the working class in Bickenbach. The increase in population are in line with these developments. Bickenbach's growing population resulted from the advancing industrialisation. It is worth noting that compared to Protestants, Israelites and Catholics were minorities in Bickenbach.

In 1912, Konrad Blaum was the first labourer to take a post on the municipal council. In 1911, the SPD founded a local association under the influence of the

Bickenbach population figures:

1843	870
1880	1066
1900	1254
1910	1533
1925	1801
1933	1980

Thuringian woodworkers who lived here with their families and were known to locals as the 'Eisenacher'. The potential influence of the local cigar-makers, factory workers and increasing numbers of railway and postal workers also played a role in this political union.

With the outcome of WWI, the Wilhelmine society came to an end.

While the world war had no bearing

on the emerging changes of the social structure in the town, its consequences put a strain on the community that lasted until the mid-1920s. More and more people were without employment, which burdened the community to a point that was almost too much to bear.

Communal emergency programs were put in place in an attempt to relieve unemployment and stress. These work programs provided minimal wages and helped secure the livelihood of many of the town's inhabitants and their families. Many rural tracks and fields in the vicinity were leased to provide for the keeping of domestic animals, goats and rabbits, a practice that grew dramatically. Poaching was on the increase. Municipal farmland was parcelled out and assigned as allotment gardens to help those who did not own any land to grow potatoes and other vegetables. Economic hardship could be alleviated somewhat even if only on a small scale.

Then the radicalisation of political life set in properly. The following fragments of a battle song by the Communist Party (KPD) directed at the Hessian Interior Minister, Wilhelm Leuschner (SPD), were recalled by Philipp Baumunk in 1992. (The performance was accompanied by a shawm, a medieval and Renaissance period woodwind instrument):

*"Leuschner's policemen
are teaching us plebs ... ? ...
politics with a baton
We march, we march
with a steadfast pace,
the red flag blowing in front of us!
Plebs, plebs march with us
and join our ranks!"*

KPD campaign rally in the town square in 1932. The image was kindly provided by Hella Klein in 1992.



In 1929, Bickenbach became a communist stronghold. The National Socialists arrived in 1930-31 but remained in the background. As a reaction to Germany's overall development, a Unified Front (Einheitsfront) formed in opposition to the Nazis in 1932. It was made up of the Revolutionary Union, the Social Democrats Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD). This Unified Front, along with its subdivisions and paramilitary organisations to fend off the advance of fascism, remained the strongest political power within the district until mid-1933.

Following the Reichstag elections on 5 March 1933, which won the NSDAP 425 votes – the SPD got 379 votes and the KPD 335 votes – the National Socialists seized power at the local town hall. The lord mayor, Martin Becker (SPD), was expelled from office and Christoph Rau took over. Just as elsewhere, the absolute Fuehrer principle took hold here with all its implications. Political parties were banned, and associations and unions dissolved or were integrated into the new system. The last party to be prohibited was the SPD, on 22 June 1933.

In 1974, the VVN (association of political prisoners and persecutees of the Nazi regime) presented the



Konrad Blaum, aged 90, with his great grandchildren, Joachim Blaum and Manfred Kaltwasser. In 1912, Konrad Blaum was the first labourer to be a member of the Bickenbach Council.



Relief work on the sports field, 1932.



VVN Commemorative Medal.

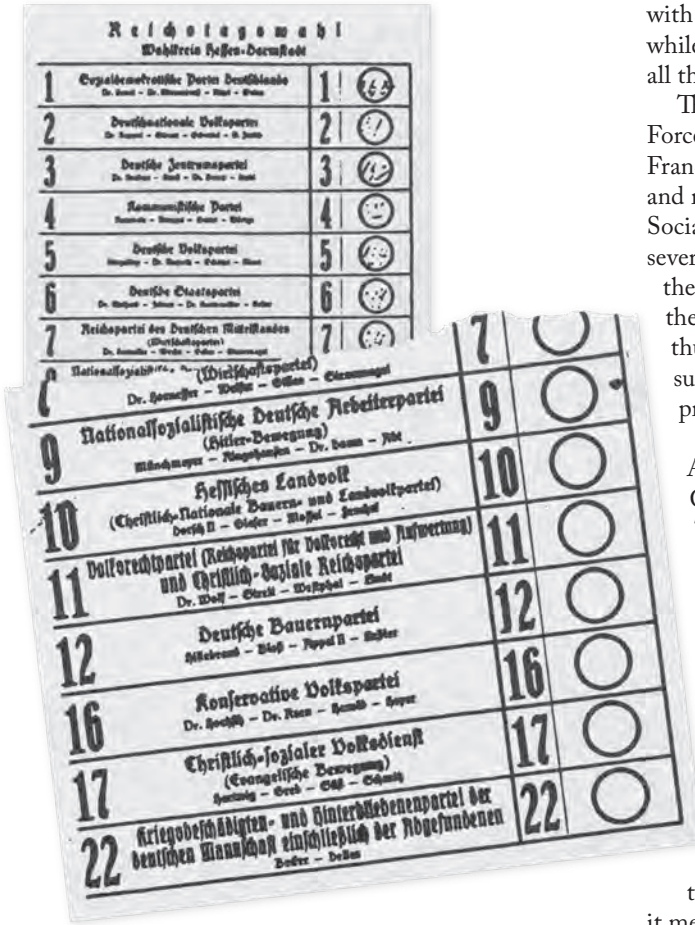
“Municipality of Bickenbach, for appreciation of resistance against fascism and war, 1933-1945.”

Verband der Verfolgten des Nazi-Regimes
(Association of Victims of the Nazi regime)
Reported in the municipality of Bickenbach, 1974.

Bickenbach community with a medal of recognition. The association saw the town’s local history document from 1973, *Bickenbach uffm Sand*, as an important effort in coming to terms with the past. The previously insufficient knowledge of the NSDAP’s impact on Bickenbach will hopefully be further discussed by future generations.

According to records, 203 Bickenbach locals, including 23 women, had been members of the Nazi party between 1931 and 1945. Although little material survived, it can be determined that none of those who joined the party in 1931 were labourers. There was one business person, and several farmers and academics. From 1932, things started to change. After the Nazis seized power on 30 January 1933, their supporters mainly included teachers and civil servants in the postal and railway services. Public servants showed their loyalty to the new men in charge. They were eager to keep their jobs and established rights, and joined ranks with the first wave of supporters.

The second wave came in 1937. Now even some former SPD members, one man and his wife from the KPD, youths, and in particular, those working in the public service, joined the party. Assimilation quietly took place



A fragment of the general election ballot, 1932/33 for the constituency of Hesse-Darmstadt. It was discovered in 1988 in the manual for registrars: Rules on the certification of civil status and marriage, Berlin, 1899.

with or without pressure. The movement asserted itself while the ‘others’ were persecuted, detained and expelled all the way to the terrible end.

The third wave occurred after the German Armed Forces – the Wehrmacht – triumphed over its nemesis, France, in 1940. Records show that not many workmen and retail business people were part of the early National Socialists cadre. In what might be seen as an allegation, several people of the aforementioned groups joined after the start of the war in 1939. Fearing for their own life, they joined to make themselves indispensable and thus did not have to go to war. Such party comrades supported the home front and gave new life to the proverb: “Whose bread I eat, their song I sing!”

After the war ended in 1945 and the victorious Allied powers imposed the denazification of Germany, ordinary people were hit the hardest. The journalist Ralph Giordano blamed Germans two-fold. He saw them as guilty for the period between 1933 and 1945, and guilty for nowadays, for the emerging neo-fascism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

Further information on how the NSDAP was structured locally was not at hand. What records there are were reconstructed after the US army invaded Germany on 24 March 1945 as most of the Nazi party’s original records were destroyed. With regards to SA memberships, 77 names were listed. Since most of the men, and with them the SA members, were on military service, it meant that from 1941, for public marches and other party events, this division – the paramilitary wing of the NSDAP – was made up mainly of elders.

Two things seem worth mentioning regarding members of the National Socialists Women’s League. Firstly, not all female NSDAP members were also registered in these Women’s organisations which is not surprising. Secondly, wives of former Social Democrats and Communists in parts had also joined. Financial reasons such as multiple contribution payments seem to have played an important role for the first group, whereas the second group appears to have shown its loyalty to the National Socialist system in order to avoid repressive measures.

The SA also marches in Bickenbach

Towards the end of the 1920s, Hitler's ideology also found sympathisers in Bickenbach. They appear to have been well hidden but they were ready. In 1929, 12 members needed to be elected to the local council for the first time, which led to the following seat allocation:

Social Democrats (SPD)	6 seats
Communist Party (KPD)	2 seats
Civic Association	4 seats

At the time, this association of voters was also a gathering place for National Socialists (NS) who only came to the fore in March 1933.

Founded in 1928, the local committee of the KPD pretty much won two seats straight away and thus moved into the local council. The Civic Party (Bürgerliche Vereinigung) had won three seats at the local council elections in 1925 and from 1929, with four seats, had become the second strongest political power in Bickenbach.

As a result of external influences such as unemployment, the start of the Great Depression (which began on Black Thursday, 24 October 1929 with the New York stock exchange crash) and emergency work programs, political life became radicalised and Bickenbach was no exception.

Unionists from the Bergstrasse's northern districts joined up to form the Revolutionary Union Opposition, the RGO. An assembly permit from the district office of Bensheim dated 30 June 1931 mentioned councillors Adam Hechler from Seeheim, and Peter Schmidt from Bickenbach, as speakers. Both speakers gave talks at the RGO congress in Offenbach. The towns of Seeheim, Bickenbach, Alsbach, Hähnlein and Jugenheim were mentioned. In Bickenbach, the RGO assembly took place on Wednesday, 1 July 1931 at 8pm at Lang, a local venue.

Pursuant to a decree dated 30 September 1930, passed by the Bensheim district office, a public assembly by the NSDAP's District Committee in Bensheim was approved for 13 September 1931, at 3.30pm outside Bickenbach town hall. Fritz Eitel from Mainz-Ginsheim spoke of "Bolshevism at Germany's gates". On 9 October 1931 the same authority mandated the following:

"The Reichsbanner Schwartz-Rot-Gold (Black, Red, Gold) of the Eberstadt district is granted a demonstration permit and subsequent announcement to be held on 11 October 1931 at 2pm in the Bickenbach town square."

In 1932, approximately 200 Bickenbach citizens, together with unemployed individuals from all around Hesse, marched into Darmstadt. The protest march became known as the hunger march. For one of the participating groups marching from Worms via Bürstadt, Biblis and Bensheim through Bickenbach, accommodation and provision was set up. The Iron Front, supported by the Social Democratic Party, together with the Communist Party, including all of its sub-groups, formed the Bickenbach anti-fascist movement called 'Antifaschistisches Kampfkomitee Bickenbach'.

When the anti-fascist fighting committee held a central assembly in March 1932 with 250 visitors, the paramilitary groups of the SA and SS tried to invade Bickenbach. However, town exit and entry points to Darmstadt and Jugenheim were barricaded which was why the NS groups tried to march in from the town of Alsbach via the Beuneweg route. Near the secondary train station in Alsbach, a bitter confrontation occurred. It was broken up by the Hessian police who, as a sign of things to come, were beating up the workers.

On 2 June 1932, the Hessian district office of Bensheim granted permission for the Social Democrats to hold assemblies in the towns of Fehlheim, Biblis, Zwingenberg, Lorsch, Hähnlein and Bickenbach. In Fehlheim, a farmer, Hugo Baum, gave a lecture on the topic "What do farmers know about the NSDAP?" On 5 June 1932 at 8pm, Dr. Carlo Mierendorff gave a talk on "The fight for Hesse" at the Gasthaus Hirsch in Bickenbach.

On 14 July 1932, the same authority issued a ban for an open air assembly that was planned for 17 July 1932 by the anti-fascist committee. It was issued for the attention of Mr. Jakob Aßmus, of Sandstrasse, Bickenbach, on the grounds that it posed an immediate risk to public safety. It also stated that for the same time the National Socialists had already booked a march and, given the situation in Bickenbach, it did not permit two organisations to hold a demonstration concurrently.

Bickenbach SA,
Steingasse
schoolyard,
1937-38.



On 14 July 1932, the SA major of the NSDAP, Sturmbannführer Eichel in Bensheim, received a permit for marches issued by the Bensheim district office. Based on today's knowledge, this suggested that the SA was mobile, yet not strong or big enough in numbers:

1. We thus confirm the registration of a march leaving from the town of Hähnlein on 26 July 1932 at 7pm headed for Rodau, Fehlheim and Schwanheim. Moreover, we confirm that military unit groups from Bickenbach, Jugenheim, Zwingenberg, Auerbach, Heppenheim, Lorsch and Lampertheim will participate in the incoming and outgoing march along district roads, also aboard trucks.

2. In addition we confirm the registration of a further march to leave Bensheim on 29 July 1932 at 7.40pm via Schönberg, Wilmshausen and Elmshausen toward Reichenbach using district roads and the so-called Eck zu Reichenbach. We further confirm that military unit groups in Bensheim as well as Bickenbach, Jugenheim, Zwingenberg, Auerbach, Bensheim, Lorsch, Lampertheim and Heppenheim will participate.

After the Nazis' rise to power on 30 January 1933, the Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933, and the ensuing ban of the Communist Party, some of the SA elites in Bickenbach also began to treat its purported enemies in rigorous ways. Tyranny enjoyed free reign! Communist party members, Social Democrats and in some instances also Stahlhelm members were arrested and then tormented at the Nazis' military offices known as the Sturmlokal.

Originally the SA's meeting place was a station bar, far out of town. After 30 January 1933, they set up their local military office at the fire engine house on Jugenheimer Strasse.

Adam Hennemann, the leader of battalion unit 5/221 as part of the NSDAP's SA in Bickenbach had a special way of creating discipline and order. He and other henchmen sent Bickenbach citizens to prison and to the Osthofen concentration camp in Rheinisch Hesse. On 8 July 1933, the Jugenheim police station no. 1303 reported to the Hessian district office in Bensheim on the political situation in Hesse as follows:



This postcard is a revealing example of the methods that totalitarian regimes use to make themselves ubiquitous, and try to imprint themselves into the consciousness of the population at every opportunity. It shows the symbols of the Nazi movement – the swastika and Hitler’s image – adroitly placed in a striking view (Darmstädter Strasse) of the old Bickenbach. The caption reads: “Hale greetings from Bickenbach on the Bergstrasse.”

With reference to the above, the Hessian district office in Bensheim is informed that within the local service district of station no. 1303 and within the municipalities of the police districts of Zwingenberg, Alsbach and Bickenbach, the following occurred between 2-8 July 1933:

By order of the state commissioner for Hessian police, on 6 July 1933, an initiative, together with the assisting police squadron no.1 (i.e. the SA), took place against leaders of the Stahlhelm military unit within the municipalities of Alsbach, Bickenbach, Jugenheim and Seeheim. During the searches undertaken at the homes of six suspected individuals, a variety of weapons and munitions were found. The items were confiscated and secured. Five persons were taken into preventative custody and incarcerated at the local court prison in Zwingenberg before they were released at the end of the same day. Individual reports on the seized items of each of the five persons were sent to the Hessian police department in Bensheim, under protective custody. The list of times along with the report is attached with this letter.

– (Herr) Falter, Constable and head of station

The list mentioned in the report no longer exists. Thus, the names of the arrested persons are also missing. It had been passed on that the paramilitary Stahlhelm member from Bickenbach, Philipp Baumunk, while on his way home from work in Darmstadt on the 5pm train, was arrested by Hennemann and Glock at the military office and handed over to the police. The local Stahlhelm military troupe had its own self-built Holz machine gun.

Gradually, and for different reasons, others had to join the NS associations, and they sang during the marches:

“On this day here we are, as reserves for the SA ...”

And it continued:

“For today Germany belongs to us and tomorrow the whole world shall, when everything falls apart.”

On 8 May 1945, the end did indeed come and brought death, misery and ruin.

Formation of municipal self-administrative bodies

Bickenbach municipal council (1933)

On 10 April 1933, the election commissioner, Lord Mayor Martin Becker, of the Social Democratic Party, announced the following by public notice:

Regulation on the restructuring of the municipal self-administration

Based on article 18 of the preliminary Gleichschaltung Act the enforced synchronisation of all states within the Reich, dated 31 March 1933 (Reich Law Gazette Part 1, page 153) as well as article 1 of the Enabling Act dated 13 March 1933 (Reich Law Gazette Part 1, page 27) in combination with the ministerial district decree dated 7 April 1933, it is determined that provincial, district, city and municipal councils are to be newly established.¹

The content of the aforementioned bills and decrees requires that nine municipal councils are to be ordered for the municipality of Bickenbach. The new establishment of the municipal councils complies with the numbers of votes that were cast in the municipality of Bickenbach at the Reichstag election on 5 March 1933 while communist votes are disregarded.

Groups of voters are entitled to submit nominations to the election commissioner and are thus encouraged to lodge nominations at the Town Hall before 18 April 1933. All bills and decrees are accessible for viewing at the Town Hall.

It took from 5 March until 24 April 1933 before the election commission, chaired by the election commissioner, Lord Mayor Martin Becker, was able to convene.

The National Socialists' 'gleichschaltung' was in full swing and there was no rush! The Communist Party had already been banned.

The members of the election commission were:

Chairman: Lord Mayor Martin Becker (SPD)

Deputy Chairman: Joint Secretary Adam Herpel (SPD)

Committee Members:

Councillor Brunner (SPD), Councillor Rau III (NSDAP), Councillor Glock III (NSDAP), Councillor Pühler (SPD), Councillor Hill (NSDAP)

Clerk: Ludwig Ahl *Teacher*

Due to the election results, the following nominations for the new establishment of the Municipal Council were approved:

1. National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP)
2. Social Democratic Party (SPD)

List of persons for nomination no. 1 – NSDAP:

1. Stiep, Adam – *Tax officer*
 2. Hennemann, Peter XIII – *Farmer*
 3. Anders, Philipp – *Clerk*
 4. Roß, Philipp August – *Wagon master*
 5. Herpel, Christian IV – *Farmer*
-

List of persons for nomination no. 2 – SPD:

1. Rabrich, Friedrich – *Labourer*
 2. Flemmisch, Philipp II – *Chief points operator*
 3. Weidner, Peter VI – *Locksmith*
 4. Dickler, Wilhelm – *Carpenter*
-

1. The Reich Law Gazette (Reichsgesetzblatt) was the Reich's official legal publication in which laws, decrees and so forth were published. It was presented in two parts – Part 1 was for more general information, and Part 2 was reserved for special topics such as international treaties, budget laws, internal Reichstag issues and other matters.

The seat distribution for the new municipal council was determined based on the method of the highest average – accordingly, five seats were calculated for the NSDAP and four seats for the SPD. The population was informed on 26 April 1933 by public notice. On 25 April 1933, the NSDAP replaced Peter Roß II with Jakob Hennemann, a railway worker. The election commission took note of this and gave their consent.

Few records exist from the municipal archives. SPD documents were destroyed in 1933 and barely any rulings made by the municipal council (1933–1945) survived. In addition, remaining NSDAP documents were allegedly brought to Darmstadt for safeguarding and analysis before the Americans invaded and have also since been lost. Consequently, any surviving material is precious and needs to be closely analysed. After all, this chapter gives an insight into the beginning of the end of democratic life in our country.

Looking at election nomination no. 1 in support of the NSDAP, it must be noted that for Bickenbach, a maximum of 20 names can be made out, one man purportedly had been a Communist Party member until 30 January (the day of the takeover). On 5 March 1933, the ‘movement’ received 425 votes. There seemed to have been personal and family related disputes as well as differences within the party, because Adam Stiep waived his mandate as early as 18 May 1933.

On 23 May 1933 the endorsing citizens and members of the NSDAP declared their willingness to accept a mandate for the Bickenbach municipal council:

-
1. Rau, Christoph
 2. Engelhard, Christoph
 3. Hennemann, Jakob
 4. Linder, Adam II
 5. Pieler, Peter III
 6. Grosser, Eberhard
 7. Koppert, Willi

Nation and party, now an entity, appear to have been dissatisfied with the approach by party comrades – they called for a new line-up. The following letter contained neither date nor signature:

Subject: Additional council members for the Bickenbach community in replacement of resigned SPD municipal councillors.

*Hessian Ministry of the Interior (Staff Department)
At the Reich elections on 5 March 1933 the NSDAP's list received 425 votes, the SPD's list 337 votes. We were allocated 5 mandates, the SPD was allocated 4 mandates. With regards to our nine suggested council members close family ties became apparent which is why we were forced to draw up a reserve list.*

We have now drawn from both lists those persons who are not related. Thereby we have a sound list with members made up of the following persons:

1. Friedrich Bindel – Reich railway official
2. Peter Anders – Reich railway official
3. Philipp August Roß – Master wainwright
4. Peter Hennemann XIII – Farmer
5. Johann Martin Müller – Building contractor
6. Peter Roß II – Cutter
7. Philipp Keller – Master car mechanic
8. Jakob Hennemann – Unskilled worker
9. Adam Linder II – Railway official in reserve
10. Christoph Engelhard – Disabled veteran
11. Peter Pieler III – Railway official
12. Eberhard Grosser – Tenant farmer
13. Willi Koppert – Farmer

Looking at election nomination no. 2 for the SPD, dated 12 April 1933, it can be noted that Jakob Aßmus II of Sandstrasse 5 was the ombudsman. The suggested list:

1. Friedrich Rabich, Hintergasse – Labourer
2. Philipp Flemmisch, Wilhelmstrasse – Chief points operator
3. Peter Weidner, Bachgasse 10 – Locksmith
4. Wilhelm Dickler, Sandstrasse 15 – Carpenter
5. Paul Bettermann, Hartenauer Strasse – Stoker
6. Adam Engelhard II, Hintergasse 26 – Shoe maker
7. Jakob Aßmus II, Sandstrasse 5 – Cigar maker
8. Georg Blum, Hügelstrasse 30 – Locksmith

Only those who have experienced it themselves know what a totalitarian regime is capable of and how it can dishonour a person.

‘The compulsory mission’

Statement:

Given the political developments I am no longer in agreement with the SPD's way of thinking which is why I am resigning my mandate as a member of the municipal council.

– Bickenbach, 27 April 1933

(Signature)



Bickenbach, 27 April 1933

To the Mayor's office!

To the aforementioned office I hereby declare that I resign my reserve mandate.

– (Signature)



To the Town Council of the Bickenbach municipality

The signatory announces his resignation as a member from the municipal council.

Reason: I have neither belonged to any party nor been politically active since 1927.

My efforts and achievements as field guard and Samaritan have benefitted the entire population and spared the community many doctor's bills. I declare my joining the NSBO (Nationalsozialistische Betriebsorganisation – National Socialist Business Organisation).



Statement:

Given the economic and political developments we hereby resign our mandates in the municipal council.

– Bickenbach, 5 May 1933

(2 signatures)



To the Mayor

Bickenbach

I hereby inform that due to political developments I am resigning my mandate in the municipal council.

– Bickenbach, 12 May 1933



To the Mayor's office

Bickenbach, 12 May

Note that I resign my municipal council mandate for the following reasons:

1. I have never been part of a political movement.

2. I welcome Germany's movement to become a new single nation.

– Yours faithfully

(Signature)

The reasons why Mayor Martin Becker had to leave his post at the town hall at the end of May or early June 1933 are now lost, but he was replaced by Christoph Rau who remained in office until 24 March 1945.

Following Germany's occupation, the Americans appointed Karl Dieter (Communist Party) from Bickenbach as acting Mayor and he remained in office until the first open local elections were held on 26 January 1946.

Karl Schreiber of Bickenbach, was chairman of the anti-fascist youth campaign in the district of Darmstadt-Odenwald and a member of the Hesse district management of the Communist youth association.

Karl Schreiber also chaired the Camp Community of former inmates at the Osthofen concentration camp, as well as the Darmstadt district association for the VVN federation of anti-fascists. He described how the Nazi's defeat in Bickenbach came about.

The result of the Reichstag election was clear: Bickenbach voted anti-fascist despite the Nazis' terror. The Social Democrats (SPD) got 379 votes, the Communist party (KPD) got 335 votes. The Nazis, who could not yet risk to publicly appear in Bickenbach, owed their 425 votes to voters for the parties and organisations belonging to the Harzburg Front.

It's no coincidence that the majority of Bickenbach's citizens voted against fascism. It was a result of a collaboration between communists and social democrats in fending off the fascist threat that had been developing since 1932. During many conversations and discussions with social democrats we had become increasingly closer. Initially, there were still many differences between us. This went so far that we saw our main enemy in every social democrat who themselves took us for the henchmen of a strange power. We were painted as the bogeyman of the Bolsheviks who would rob the small man in the country of his house and the farmer of his last pig. If such self-destruction continued in this way the only thing to happen was for the fascists to win. There would only be one answer against hunger, hardship, emergency decrees and the Nazis who were becoming ever stronger: A united front of all working people will bring a change in Germany. This wasn't an easy journey. First we had to get rid of our own ambiguities towards our class comrades from the SPD. This wasn't easy either. The term 'Social Fascist' carried too much weight.

Karl Schreiber published a situation report from 1932-1933 in *Die Tat*, no. 9, 4 March 1983, page 13.

On 5 March Bickenbach voted against Hitler

How communists and social democrats worked together in 1932-1933.

In the wake of the Reichstag election on 5 March 1933, the Nazi party emerged by far as the strongest party with 43.9 per cent of all votes. Despite the Nazis' election scare, the state of emergency and factual KPD ban imposed on 28 February, there were still 30.6 per cent of voters who opted for the KPD and the SPD. Numerous cities and towns that belonged to workers remained true to their tradition, i.e. they remained strongholds of the workers' parties. The same applied to Bickenbach near Darmstadt.

Firstly, we conducted group training for all party and youth officials. The central theme was: 'How to create an anti-fascist Campaign?' This soon proved to be successful. A better relationship was established with the Social Democrats who initially were averse to the party's leadership. Social Democrats started to come to our informational evenings.

In particular comrades Peter Schmidt and Jakob Assmus provided great services in the endeavour for a unified campaign. For this they paid dearly and had spent many years of their lives at one of the concentration camps, either Osthofen or Buchenwald (Peter Schmidt), in prison or at the punishment battalion 999 (Jakob Assmus).

Paul Zöller, Philipp Rebenich and Erwin Ahl worked tirelessly towards the creation of the anti-fascist Youth Campaign. They also ended up at Osthofen concentration camp. After they were fired they continued working together underground until they were conscripted into the Wehrmacht where they met their death.

To teach the anti-fascists in Bickenbach a lesson, in 1932 Nazis from many parts of Hesse came to town. Just outside town they held their assembly. Yet, these foreign Nazis remained among themselves. None of their clandestine supporters in town dared to join the assembly. Upon their departure they had to pass a line of workers. "No Nazis in Bickenbach!", the Social Democrats, Communists and independent anti-fascists called. This call remained an important link for Bickenbach's anti-fascists. The Nazi march in April was Bickenbach's first and last Nazi assembly until Hitler's party seized power in Hesse.

On 26 May 1932, when the KPD's Central Committee called for an anti-fascist campaign, we felt fresh impetus for our work in Bickenbach. On 12 June 1932, the first congress for an anti-fascist campaign took place in Darmstadt. Delegates from the SPD and KPD participated, as well as members from youth groups and unemployed groups. Congress took place within an open, frank and equal setting. Delegates felt a new era of unity had started.

Barricades blocked the Nazis

From now on all assemblies by the Workers' Party also enjoyed the protection of the anti-fascist campaigns. The assemblies no longer focused on the differences but were marked by a path to unity. They also helped to push aside those leaders of the worker's movement who were hostile against the unity.

The anti-fascist campaign proved strong once again when, on 17 July 1932, Nazis from southern Hesse wanted to embark on a punitive expedition to Bickenbach. All town entries were barricaded, forcing the Nazis to change course.

Joint announcement by the KPD and SPD

However, a short time later Hesse's police attacked and separated the town's defenders with batons. Demonstrators gathered and protested against the police attack. Twenty Bickenbachers were sentenced to a total of 336 days in prison due to their participation in the demonstrations.

From the time Hitler seized power, until the burning of the Reichstag, the KPD convened 17 times in Bickenbach and the local districts alone. The assemblies were in part linked to demonstrations. Their topic: 'A unified front against Fascism and the Reichstag election'. In Bickenbach itself there were two assemblies and demonstrations with about 150 to 180 participants. A third event, including a performance by a Balalaika orchestra of Soviet students studying in Leipzig, was attended by 300 people. Many more were unable to attend because the hall was full.

Three days prior to the Reichstag election, the KPD



Peter Schmidt, photo 13 February 1968. He was severely beaten by Nazi thugs and was a prisoner in Osthofen, Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps until he was liberated in 1945.

and the SPD organised a rally in the town square.

As elsewhere, anti-fascists in Bickenbach continued their fight against the Nazi regime illegally. In Bickenbach's local history Bickenbach uffm Sand it was reported that the KPD had "actively carried out resistance work underground during the entire time of the Third Reich". Thanks to its position in the southern Hesse district, the Bickenbach group was an important exchange point for information, goods and briefings. Until 1935 it circulated self-published literature underground.

The illegal anti-fascist fight demanded many victims, also in Bickenbach. In 1943 three members of the group were remanded in custody. Herr Fröba, the city councillor of Darmstadt took the blame thereby

exonerating his comrades. He was sentenced to death and beheaded in 1944.

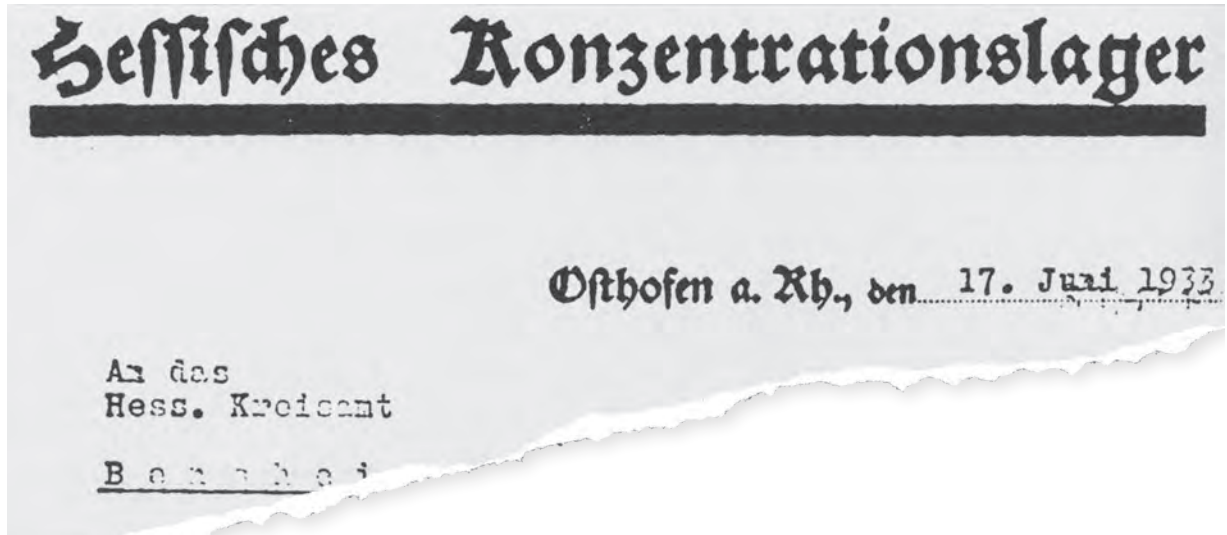
Bickenbach's anti-fascists had to endure a total of seven years at Buchenwald concentration camp and seven years in prison, a further two years and six months in custody without sentence, as well as 15 months in protective custody, 81 weeks at Osthofen concentration camp, and six years at the punishment battalion 999. Others were under police supervision.

The Gestapo thugs got off scot-free

Peter Schmidt, Jakob Assmus, Erwin Abl and myself suffered great abuse. In particular the fascist, Gehrend, from Heppenheim, and Gestapo figure, Adam Hennemann, from Bickenbach, excelled at the abuse. During the war in France and Denmark, Hennemann became the assistant to SS Brigade officer Dr Best in his fight against resistance, and he was wanted by the police for having killed a Danish policeman. Consequently, he hid under the name of Ludwig Schreiber in northern Germany and Hesse for 35 years.

On 1 March 1982, the media reported that the case against Hennemann, alias Schreiber had been closed because "it could no longer be verified who had fired the gun in 1944".

Osthofen concentration camp, Hesse



Aerial view of the former Osthofen concentration camp (photo taken in the 1950s). From 1872 it was a paper mill; in 1908 it was extended; between 1933–1935 it was a concentration camp; from 1936–1976 it was a furniture factory; since 1978 it has been a cultural memorial.



Peter Stein, a former prisoner in Osthofen concentration camp, pictured there in 1991.

*Hesse concentration camp,
Osthofen on the Rhine,
17 June 1933*

*To the Hesse District Office
Bensheim*

Subject:

The decreed implementation dated 1 May 1933 as ordered by the state commissioner for the Hesse police department, Darmstadt, pertaining to the enactment of the regulation by the Reich president on the protection of the people and the state, dated 28 February 1933;

Herein: "Setting up a concentration camp in Osthofen"

This regulation legalised what had already begun.

It was decreed:

1. A concentration camp will be set up for the state of Hesse where all persons arrested for political reasons are to be sent if they have been under arrest for more than one week or whose sentence is to be extended beyond one week. Any other form of detention (shorter detention at the concentration camp or longer detention at another location) requires my approval.

2. The Hesse concentration camp is to be set up on the premises of the paper mill in Osthofen in the Worms district.

3. The Worms police department is responsible for the administration of the Hesse concentration camp.

4. The SS Sturmbannführer Karl d'Angelo in Osthofen is proclaimed as the honorary head of the Hesse concentration camp. He reports to the supervisors at the Worms police department. Camp services are to be carried out by assisting police officers who are summoned by the Worms police department and report to myself.

5. The Worms police department is required to prepare camp regulations and present them to myself for approval.

6. Only the following persons are entitled to order a detention extension:

i. On my behalf, the central police department;

ii. District offices and police departments in Darmstadt, Mainz, Giessen, Offenbach and Worms. (refer no. 2 of my decree on the implementation of the regulation by the Reich president on the protection of the people and the state, dated 28 February 1933) (Reich Law Gazette Part 1, page 83, dated 14 March 1933) (No. M.d.J. 3004).

7. The transfer of a prisoner to the concentration camp is carried out in writing and as per template 1 addressed to the camp administration in Osthofen. Ordinarily, the letter is to be carried by the official who handles the transfer of the detainee to the camp. A copy of each transferral letter is to be sent to the Worms police station and then presented to myself.

8. The police department in Worms submits reports to myself listing the number of occupants based on each Monday (template 2) starting on Monday, 8 May 1933.

9. In terms of food for the prisoners, the publicly announced stipulations dated 30 September 1930, no. M.d.J. 10868, dated 30 September 1930 and no. M.d.J. 11913, dated 17 November 1932 apply respectively, regulating the food supply for the persons preliminarily held in police custody.

Proof of food supply is required as per template 3. All economic costs are to be instructed and accounted for by the Worms police department and covered by the loan taken out for the administration of the concentration camp.

With regards to checking and confirming receipts for instructed expenditure, the relevant government regulations apply. With the exception of food any acquisitions require my prior approval.

Dr. Best / Seip

Under reference no. M.d.J 6007 this decree was directed to district offices, national police departments, and the central police station.

Attachments: examples 1–3

No. M.d.J 6007/33 – Example 1

Dated the 1933.

Hereby

(Name)

(Birth date and Place of Birth)

(Nationality)

is transferred to the Osthofen concentration camp to serve a police sentence.

We request that the aforementioned person – provided conduct was satisfactory

on

is released from custody +)

We request that the aforementioned person will remain in detention until further notice. +)

Incarceration was ordered because

the person has been found due for detention +)

it is yet to be ascertained whether detention is to take place. +)

District office

Police department

Central Police station

To

the management of the concentration camp

Osthofen

District of Worms

A transcript

a) was sent to the Worms Police Department

b) was presented to the Hesse State Police Commissioner, Darmstadt.

+) Cross out as appropriate

No. M.d.J 6007/33 – Example 2

Weekly report on the occupancy at Osthofen concentration camp as at

Monday the 1933.

The following individuals currently at the camp

from district of..... detainees

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

“ “ “ “

in total: detainees

By the end of the week there were

Admissions “

Dismissals “

compared with previous weekadditional detainees

compared with previous weekfewer detainees

Worms Police Department

To

The Hesse State Police Commissioner, Darmstadt.

Example 3

Certificate
Worms Police Office catering expenses
for Osthofen Concentration Camp
for the month of _____ 1933.

Admin. No.	Surname	Prisoners Name	Residence	Date of entry	Date of discharge	Food provided on:					
						1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th-31st
1933											
1	Rubinstein	Salomon	Worms	4 May		-	-	-	c	1	1
2	Grünebaum	Moses	Osthofen	5 May		-	-	-	-	b	1
etc.											

Together:

a) All day food and catering (1)										27	52
b) Only lunch & evening board											1
c) Only evening board										1	
d) Only morning board											

In accordance with this the following is available:

.....	Portion of provisions for a)	1.10 RM =	RM
.....	"	"	"
.....	b)	0.90 RM =	RM
.....	"	"	"
.....	c)	0.40 RM =	RM
.....	"	"	"
.....	d)	0.20 RM =	RM
2684.50 RM			

Statement of cost:

Receipt	1	Master butcher, Johann Winter, Osthofen	685.20 RM
"	2	Gardener, Wilhelm Schneider, Worms	184.50 "
"	3	Master baker, Georg Müller, Osthofen	370.80 "
etc.			
2642.60 RM			

Accuracy certified
Worms, 31 May 1933
Worms Police Department:

Director of Police

The following letters and instructions clearly demonstrate the way the National Socialists apparatus of state carried out its administration.

*The State Minister.
Darmstadt, 10 October 1933*

*Staff Department
Regarding No. P.A. VI. 5948.
Re: Concentration camp in Osthofen*

The camp management repeatedly raises concerns that at the time of admission detainees' transferral documents did not satisfy the stipulated regulations. In particular, they were said to be lacking information on the expected period of detention and dismissal date.

I have instructed camp management to henceforth refuse admittance to any persons with incomplete transferral documents and report such cases to myself accordingly. The superintendent of the transferring authority or his representative who arranged for the transferral will be held responsible by myself for any additional costs as well as for any other further consequences.

In addition, camp management has criticised the vastly different assessment periods for each person's detainment apparently amounting up to four weeks.

As such you are also required to carefully examine each individual case.

If detainment is to be extended, camp management is to provide relevant notice.

Finally, it should be noted that persons can be transferred to a concentration camp for political reasons only. All general offences including infringement of forest and farmland laws are the responsibility of judicial authorities.

On behalf: (Signature)

*To all District Offices
Police Directorate in Darmstadt,
Mainz, Giessen, Offenbach and Worms
as well as the State Police Department.*

*Hesse State Police Department
Darmstadt, 12 December 1933*

Re: Setting up a State Police Office at Osthofen concentration camp

*To the Police Directorate (State Police Offices),
District Offices and Police Departments.*

A State Police Office was set up within the headquarters of the Osthofen concentration camp.

Detainees in protective custody are supervised by the station official in political and police terms. It is the official's task to check whether admission orders by the Police Directorate and the District Offices are formally correct and if necessary, arrange for required alternatives. Furthermore, he is to grant any requests by the authorities wanting to interrogate detainees in protective custody. Records kept for each camp detainee must be sent by the Police Directorate to the Hesse State Police Department, Darmstadt, once the detainee is released. Personal records on all those admitted to the concentration camp are held here.

To avoid unnecessary documentation an amendment is added to the State Commissioner's decree No. M.d.J. 6007 dated 1.V.1933. on the creation of a concentration camp in Osthofen, whereby it is prescribed that from now on all decrees on the admission of detainees as per example 1 must be sent only to the camp management in Osthofen along with a transcript to the Hesse State Ministry – Staff Department.

(Signature)

*Hesse State Police Department
Darmstadt, 15 December 1933*

*Re: Protective custody and transferral to the
concentration camp*

To the Police Directorates, St. P. St. – District Offices

*The State Minister informs that leading officials (state
and municipal level) as well as managers of large plants
and companies are not to be taken into protective custody
or committed to the Osthofen concentration camp without
his approval. Exceptions are possible where immediate
intervention appears crucial.*

*Relevant officers are also to notify their superior
departments about any intended arrests without delay.*

*Just to give an example, it won't do, to take the director
of the municipal gas works into protective custody without
immediately advising the responsible Lord Mayor or his
representative of the intended arrest before it is carried out.*

It is requested that these instructions are complied with.

(Signature)

*Darmstadt Secret State Police Department
Darmstadt, 27 May 1935*

Re: The arrest of NSDAP officials and their subgroups

*To the State Police Offices, District Offices and
Police Departments*

*Due to several isolated cases it needs to be pointed out again
that police and protective penalties against members and
officials of the NSDAP and their subgroups (SA, SS, HJ,
NSKK etc.) may only be imposed with the permission of
the relevant superior department. With regards to party
members and political officials this is the Gauleiter, with
regards to all other groups the responsible Brigade (SA),
Standard (SS), Area leadership (HJ), Motor Brigade
(NSKK).*

*Any applications to these offices are to be made via the
Secret State Police Office in Darmstadt unless particular
urgency is required.*

*Arrests on the ground of articles 127ff StrPrO are not
affected provided they are actual crimes with the risk of
imminent danger or in the case of suspected escape.*

(Signature)

In Bickenbach, Hitler sympathisers appeared to have remained in the background until 30 January 1933, simply because the numbers were still low. Until their base at the Spritzenhaus restaurant (demolished in 1968) on the Kirchbuckel was set up, they used the railway station tavern for their meetings.

Adam Hennemann, the head of the SA squad 5/221 of the NSDAP in Bickenbach, together with just a few SA elite members, treated so-called enemies in town with quick and fierce rigour. Tyranny ran wild. The first Bickenbach person they took hold of was Peter Schmidt (KPD), an assistant locksmith employed at the Reichsbahn, the German National Railway. Regarding the KPD, on 16 March 1933 the State Criminal Police in Darmstadt instructed the district office Bensheim as follows:

“As instructed by the State Commissioner for policing in Hesse, we faithfully request, to take all communists listed for Reich and State elections into protective custody. We request to be informed about all such arrests.”

Bensheim District: KPD

Nominations for state elections:

Bauer, Heinrich II, *leather worker*, Hofheim

Nominations for Reich elections:

Schmidt, Peter, *assistant locksmith*, Bickenbach

Bauer, Heinrich II, *leather worker*, Hofheim

On 17 March 1933 the Bensheim district gendarmerie reported to the local district office that Peter Schmidt was held by the police in Bensheim, and Heinrich Bauer by the police in Bürstadt.

“Should detention cease, we kindly request to be advised accordingly.”

On 26 June 1933, Schmidt was arrested a second time. He was taken from his home at night by SA squad leader Hennemann and assistants Hoßfeld, Glock and a man called Dörr, from Alsbach, who abused him in the laundry before transferring him on 27 June 1933 to the Gestapo prison in Darmstadt on Hängelstrasse.

Following his time at Osthofen concentration camp, Peter Schmidt managed to escape to the independent

state of Saarland. He was captured again and survived the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau until liberation in 1945.

In 1933, a total of nine men were brought to the Osthofen concentration camp, eight of them KPD members, and one an SPD man. Jakob Aßmus (KPD) was taken directly to Butzbach prison where he remained until 1938 and was also subjected to road-building labour in the Bavarian Forest region.

It has been passed down orally that the youngster Erwin Ahl of the Communist Youth association was arrested by NS thugs, taken into the forest, hung upside down from a tree and beaten up before he was taken away. After his release from Osthofen he stayed with relatives in Berlin and died in WWII as a Luftwaffen soldier for the Führer, people and fatherland.

Philipp Rebenich (1911–1941) didn't fare much better. Philipp and the brothers Paul and Albert Zöller were incarcerated in Osthofen from early February until mid-March of 1934.

Other villagers were reported for trivialities and were harassed and terrorised. It has been verified that willingly and unwillingly even some close relatives made accusations against those in their own family. What happened to master butcher, Friedrich Stein (Kolbsches House), who emigrated with his family to Brazil in 1937, proved how many people were affected by the system.

Local NSDAP group leader (Ortsgruppenleiter) Hoene of Alsbach, got the ball rolling on 2 November 1933 with his letter submitted to the NSDAP Bensheim district committee:

“On Tuesday, 31 October 1933, butchers of the local village group assembled at the Gasthaus Zur Linde. At the end of the rally, people began to sing the Nazi Party's anthem, the Horst Wessel song, upon which a Bickenbach butcher named Stein ostentatiously and hastily left the inn before the others could stop him. The same incident about the same man from Bickenbach was recently reported to me which is why I believe there is reason enough to face up to such recalcitrant behaviour and put a stop to it.”

A decree, handwritten by constable Herweck from the Zwingenberg constabulary station, dated 11 November 1933, was issued:



Friedrich Stein's family emigrated to Brazil in 1937. From left to right: Fritz Stein (son), Friedrich Stein, Ella Stein (daughter) and Mrs Stein (née Kolb).

“The attached document by the district committee was sent to the district office on the interrogation of Stein. Stein has long been a ... member of the international Bible scholar group (Jehovah's witnesses) which was dissolved just a few days ago. A large amount of books were found and seized at his home. If Stein had felt so thoroughly compelled to be excused he had plenty of time and opportunity to do so before the Horst Wessel song was sung. However, given NSDAP group leader Hoene's report that he knew of other similar incidents about Stein, it must be assumed that Stein's urgent departure had only been a means to an end.”

It now becomes clear why master butcher Friedrich Stein and his family emigrated to Brazil.

(Record of interrogation) Occurrence: Zwingenberg, 11 November 1933:

Master butcher Friedrich Stein, born 1 August 1887, of Bickenbach appeared and explained the following:

I was one of the persons present at the butchers assembly on 31 October 1933 at the Gasthaus Zur Linde. Entering from the street I was seated in the middle right next to the separating wall.

For some time before the assembly ended I had the need to be excused. However, as the room was rather crowded I was unable to leave. After the assembly concluded and several butchers had already left the inn, I was at last able to depart. While I was somewhere in the centre of the room and there was a general atmosphere of departure among other members, one of the colleagues present suggested to sing the Horst Wessel song. By that time I desperately had to go and thus left the room. I had no intention at all to act against any rules. I had the sole urgent need to be excused.

F. St.

To be verified by:

Herweck

Master Constabulary

On 20 November 1933, the Hesse district office in Bensheim advised the Bensheim constabulary office as follows:

“It needs to be determined what happened in Bickenbach. Based on current findings no evidence can be produced against Stein that suggests he left the inn in response to the Horst Wessel song.”

On 27 November 1933 the Zwingenberg station reported:

“In response to the aforementioned decree I refer to group leader Hoene of Alsbach declaring that Stein supposedly didn’t fly the flag at his house on 1 May and 1 October and also refrained from decorating his house otherwise. Stein himself states to have flown the flag on trades day (1 May). Judging by these incidents a more malicious intent seems likely.”

A decree dated 30 November 1933 from the Bensheim district office exists, written in pencil, it is barely legible:

I. To the Bensheim constabulary office:

... that master butcher Stein of Bickenbach left the Gasthaus Zur Linde in Alsbach during an assembly when he heard the Horst Wessel song in his aversion against the present government and not due his own reasons stated, he had to be excused ... he will not be admitted to Osthofen. Earlier reports are neither sufficient to admit him to Osthofen. Reason: Stein maintains he flew the flag on trades day. The local NSDAP group leader (Herpel) of Bickenbach is to be informed accordingly that means Stein has been ...

II. To master butcher Stein, Bickenbach

A report against you was made because you are said to have hastily left the premises of the Gasthaus Zur Linde during an assembly when the Horst Wessel song was sung, ... You maintain yourself that you left the rooms because of an urgent need to be excused. As it cannot be proven that you did not simply follow a human need, we have refrained from admitting you to the Osthofen concentration camp. By means of this letter you are: 1. explicitly informed, and: 2. should the National Socialist Government be forced to take action against you, we will invariably imprison you at Osthofen.

(Signature)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in 1937 Friedrich Stein emigrated to Brazil together with his wife, son Fritz, and daughter Ella. Mrs Ella Rühle and her husband visited their relatives from Bickenbach in 1980. One of Fritz Stein’s daughters now lives in West Berlin.

Transcript

*Darmstadt Secret State Police Department
1 October 1935*

Diary No. I.A.35.

Re: Implemented sentence on behalf of article 1 of the Reich presidential decree for political reasons on the protection of people and state dated 28 February 1933.

*To the State Police Offices,
District Offices and Police Departments.*

*As an addendum to the circulars dated 5 September
and 26 September 1935, the following is ordered:*

*The form ordering protective custody is to be worded
as follows:*

*Office the
Order of protective custody.*

Hereby

(Name and profession)

(Date and place of birth)

(Address)

(Citizenship)

*is informed that based on article 1 of the Reich presidential
decree on the protection of people and state dated
28 February 1933, he will be taken into preliminary
protective custody, because he:*

Signature of chief officer

*Following the Hesse administration's confirmation and
a relevant report from the Darmstadt Secret State Police
the protective detainee is to be supplied with the following
document:*

The Reich Governor of Hesse

Transcript

*State Government Dept. II (Police)
Bensheim, 10 September 1937*

No. II/20141

Re: Protective custody expenses

*The Reichsführer SS and the Head of the German Police at
the Reich Ministry for the Interior has put into place new
regulations for the requirements and refund of expenses for
political protective detainees.*

*Protective custody expenses are such arising from
detaining political protective detainees in prisons
administered by state police, state police offices, the Reich
administration of Justice, communal police administrations
and the Youth Training Centre at Moringen. Protective
custody expenses include costs associated with the detention
at the mentioned prisons for accommodation, cleaning,
furnacing and lighting, food, hospital and medical
treatment as well as case-by-case clothing and also for small
unavoidable needs of protective detainees such as shaving,
cutting hair, delousing etc. Also included are necessary
expenses for the examination of female detainees by female
staff as well as expenses for photos of detainees provided
these haven't already been taken at the State Police offices.
Hospital costs and costs for dental treatment will be covered
if recommended by a doctor as being necessary as a result of
or during custody.*

*Costs for other police prisoners arrested based on criminal
procedures are not considered protective custody expenses.
Neither are those for detainees for deportation and female
professional criminals.*

*Persons who on the basis of the Reich presidential
decree on the protection of the German people dated from
4 February 1933 to ...*

Transcripts

*Local military administrator
17 July 1941
Field hospital*

Field post no. 19801

*Mrs Katharina Rebenich
Bickenbach 12 Darmstädter Strasse*

It is my sad duty to inform you that your husband, the lance corporal Philipp Rebenich, who was admitted to the military hospital on 15 April 1941 with shrapnel wounds to his left arm, passed away on 16 July 1941 on the field of honour. I offer my sincere condolences for this heavy loss.

*The funeral took place in Zvyahel (Russia).
His assets will be posted to you.*

*Signed Dr. Baumeister
Staff surgeon and supervising physician*

*Wehrmacht inquiry office for war related losses and prisoners of war at the Wehrmacht High Command
Berlin W 30
47/48 Hohenstaufenstrasse
3 July 1942*

*AzRef I. 12-12864/42
(To be quoted at all times for inquiries)*

*Mrs Katharina Rebenich
Bickenbach*

The responsible Wehrmacht unit will have by now passed on the bitter news on the passing of your husband, Oberschütze (Private First Class) Philipp Rebenich. In addition the Wehrmacht inquiry office informs you that the death certificate has been requested from the Bickenbach registry office.

You may request to take delivery of the death certificate shortly at the aforementioned registry office.

On behalf: (Signature)



Philipp Rebenich.

*Wehrmacht inquiry office for war related losses and prisoners of war at the Wehrmacht High Command
Berlin W 30
47/48 Hohenstaufenstrasse,
9 June 1943*

*Ref. IV No. 414/22.4
C-R 71147/43*

*Mrs Katharina Rebenich
Bickenbach 12 Darmstädter Strasse*

*Re: Transfer of remains of Gefreiter (lance corporal)
Philipp Rebenich*

In order to secure and maintain the gravesite of your late husband, his remains had to be transferred. The grave is a single grave and is located at the war cemetery Zvyahel, about 79km north-west of Zhytomyr, Ukraine.

The fallen soldier rests in his own coffin; a sign has been erected at the gravesite. The Wehrmacht High Command has taken on the care for graves of fallen soldiers and will grant you with appropriate arrangement and maintenance.

On behalf: (Signature)

The majority of [the following] details rely on existing files from the former municipality of Bensheim and are stored at the administration office of the Bergstrasse municipality in Heppenheim. The remaining files are not complete.

Three of the 19 Bickenbach citizens who were imprisoned at Osthofen concentration camp are still alive today [1993]. During enquiries it became apparent that children and grandchildren were not interested in having their family names mentioned, so only the aforementioned names are referred to.

In addition to the people mentioned, several men were bullied and ill-treated in the town of Bickenbach. When the commander Adam Hennemann left Bickenbach in 1934, peace returned to the town. Hennemann, later a member of the Gestapo, went into hiding in 1945 under the name of Schreiber and re-emerged in the town in 1982. Some of the old Bickenbachers were deceased by then. Others, after 50 years, no longer harboured thoughts of revenge against the irredeemable Hennemann, who died in 1987.

Anna Seghers (1900–1983) was the pseudonym which Netty Reiling wrote under. She later became Netty Radványi when she married László Radványi. She came from a Jewish family in Mainz. As a member of the communist party she was forced to emigrate to France in 1933 and then Mexico in 1941 before she returned to East Berlin in 1947 where she died in 1983.

Her novel *Das Siebte Kreuz* (*The Seventh Cross*) was written just before WWII, and first appeared in English in 1942 in New York, and then in German in 1943 in Mexico. It made her world famous. The book dealt with Germany under Hitler in 1933 and featured the Osthofen concentration camp, which was referred to as Westhofen in the novel. Seven truncated plane trees on the camp's parade grounds known as 'the dance floor', were fitted with crossbeams to serve as crucifixes for the torture of seven escaped prisoners. Six of those seven escapees paid with their lives. Only one man managed to escape the executioners. After seven days on the run the man found freedom and the cross at the concentration camp remained empty.

People incarcerated at Osthofen included communists, Social Democrats, members of the

Centre Party (Zentrum) and the Young Men's Association (Jungmännerbund), unionists, members of the democratic Reichsbanner organisation, and Jews. In 1972 the community of former camp inmates installed a memorial stone which said: "*From 1933–1935 Osthofen concentration camp of Hesse was located here. Never again!*"

Though it had taken a long time and overcome endless hurdles to recall suppressed memories, the Förderverein Projekt Osthofen (a non-profit association based at the Osthofen memorial centre) had finally managed to arrange for a symposium titled *Osthofen – Stones of Remembrance* to take place from 8–10 November 1991.

Prior to this, in 1986, a book on the history of this first concentration camp in Hesse was published under the title *Osthofen – Memory and Recollection*.

The founding of a community of former camp inmates in 1972, supported by the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime/Federation of Anti-fascists (VVN/BdA), which the late Karl Schreiber from Bickenbach was a member of, has finally started to heal the wounds of the past concerning the camp's history.

On 22–23 April 1933, the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* newspaper reported the following:

Education and correction centre in Osthofen

At the Osthofen concentration camp wild Marxists are being educated to become decent humans!

Although reports by the aligned press claimed otherwise, prisoners were abused at the camp. On behalf of the many who suffered, Wilhelm Leuschner, a social democrat member of state parliament and spokesperson for the Hesse interior minister, and Dr. Carlo Mierendorff from Darmstadt, deserve to be mentioned.

It was Jews who suffered particular cruelty and harassment at this camp. At Osthofen they had a barbed wire cage called 'the arena' where Jews often had to walk in circles simply to amuse the guards. Jews also had to clean the latrines with their bare hands.

Peter Stein was, temporarily, one of the few inmates at Osthofen who was able to move around. With help from others, he managed to have a letter from Dr. Carlo Mierendorff addressed to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, leave the camp unchecked. Even if the letter ever arrived in Switzerland, it didn't do much good as the world stood patiently in the face of

Hitler's Germany. The people affected had to endure their ordeal.

Private records owned by the former first adjunct, Günter Großklaß, contained the following document which was found in 1990:

*Darmstadt Spruchkammer (denazification trial court)
Public assembly 18 June 1946*

Thanks to the laws brought in on 5 March 1946 dealing with the liberation from national socialism and militarism, the public assembly by the Darmstadt Spruchkammer on 18 June 1946 at the Darmstadt district court saw the proceedings against farmer Karl Klink from Erzhausen, the shunter Jakob Horn from Ober Modau and Adam Dörr from Alsbach a.d.B. end up before the courts.

Dörr had been a member of the Storm Detachment (SA) since 1 March 1933 and of the NSDAP since 1937. In his role as assisting policeman, Dörr was involved in the brutal abuse of Bickenbach citizens during the time the Nazis seized power. He, too, was classified as a class II activist and sentenced as follows:

The warrant is upheld. According to Article 16 clause I he will be admitted to a labour camp for the duration of three years. Clause II stipulates Dörr pays the sum of 3,000 Reichsmark in compensation. Measures as listed in clauses IV to X will also be enforced, either fully or in parts.

*Darmstadt, 21 June 1946
Darmstadt Spruchkammer
Chairman, Lorenz
Director, Goebel*

The Osthofen concentration camp was closed in 1935 with all inmates being transferred to other camps. The facility was originally built in 1872 to house a paper factory and was extended in 1908 before it served as a concentration camp from 1933 to 1935. From 1936 to 1976 it was occupied by a furniture manufacturer. In 1978 it became a cultural monument.

This chapter closes with an excerpt from a letter by the Hesse State Police Department in Darmstadt, dated 9 February 1934, addressed to police commissioners, state police departments and district offices.

"Investigations by the State Police Office carried out at the Osthofen concentration camp together with the camp command have revealed that there are still a large number of people being admitted to the camp for minor reasons or without having the accusations against them sufficiently verified. There are a substantial number of cases in which former or alleged current opponents were reported to the relevant authorities simply for personal, trivial and vengeful reasons leading to their admission to Osthofen.

It is hereby expressly stated that it must be clearly proved without a doubt that the accused has committed a serious offence against the nation and its institutions. Cases from some time ago and anonymous reports must be investigated with particular diligence.

As such, most cases can be closed with a simple warning provided the accused has not behaved in a way that would confirm his spiteful rejection of the current government. Such a warning is to be attached to each person's personal file or kept in a special loose sheet folder.

Not only will such a process save the government extra costs but the concentration camp will remain effective as a superb means of deterrent. It is also to be noted that protective custody at the concentration camp on political grounds must never replace judicial remand. If political criminal law is breached, at the end of his remand the accused must be brought before a judge so he may issue a warrant rather than just transferring the accused to Osthofen. If a case is unclear, a decision is to be sought from the State Police Department of Hesse."

MITTEILUNGSBLATT

des Regierungspräsidenten Darmstadt
Mit Genehmigung der Militär-Regierung

Preis RM —,15

Darmstadt, den 2. Juli 1946

2. Jahrg., Nr. 26

Spruchkammer Darmstadt-Land

Öffentliche Sitzung am 18. Juni 1946

In der ersten öffentlichen Sitzung der Spruchkammer Darmstadt-Land am 18. Juni 1946 beim Amtsgericht Darmstadt kam das Verfahren auf Grund des Gesetzes zur Befreiung von Nationalsozialismus und Militarismus vom 3. März 1946 gegen den Landwirt Karl Klink, Erzhäuser, den Rangierer Jakob Horn, Oster-Modau und Adam Dörr, Alsbach a. d. B. zur Verhandlung.

Klink war Mitglied der NSDAP seit 1. März 1933, Mitglied der SA-Reserve und Ortsbauernführer. Er war beschuldigt, in seiner Eigenschaft als Ortsbauernführer andere gemeine Bauern beschuldigt und sie für den Kriegsdienst freigestellt zu haben. Außerdem wurde ihm eine aktivistische Haltung zur Last gelegt. Die Beweisaufnahme rechtfertigt folgenden Urteil: Nach Artikel 7 des Gesetzes wird Klink als Aktivist in Klasse II eingestuft und mit folgenden Sühnemaßnahmen belegt: Gemäß Artikel 16 Ziffer I wird er zu Sonderarbeiten für die Allgemeinheit herangezogen. Die Arbeitsleistung erstreckt sich auf 5 Jahre und zwar wöchentlich an mindestens 2 Tagen. Die Heranziehung erfolgt durch das Arbeitsamt. Nach Ziffer III muß Klink zur Wiedergutmachung einen Betrag von RM 10.000.— zahlen. Ferner wird Klink für tausend unläufig erklärt, ein öffentliches Amt zu bekleiden. Er verliert seine Rechtsansprüche auf eine an öffentlichen Mitteln zahlbare Pension oder Rente. Er verliert das Wahlrecht, die Wählbarkeit und das Recht, sich irgendwie politisch zu betätigen und einer politischen Partei als Mitglied anzugehören. Er darf weder Mitglied einer Gewerkschaft noch einer wirtschaftlichen oder beruflichen Vereinigung sein. Er unterliegt Wohnungs- und Aufenthaltbeschränkungen. Er verliert alle ihm erteilten Approbationen, Konzessionen und Berechtigungen sowie das Recht, einen Kraftwagen zu halten. Horn war Mitglied der Allgemeinen SS und der NSDAP seit 1932. Als Angehöriger der Allgemeinen SS war er als Aktivist in Klasse II einzustufen und wurde wie folgt verurteilt: Nach Artikel 16 Ziffer II ist er zu Sonderarbeiten für die Allgemeinheit auf die Dauer von 5 Jahren heranzuziehen. Der Einsatz geschieht durch das Arbeitsamt. Nach Ziffer III ist von ihm ein Betrag von RM 5000.— zur Wiedergutmachung zu zahlen. Außerdem wurden ihm wie im Angeklagten Klink die in den Ziffern IV bis X enthaltenen Maßnahmen ganz oder teilweise auferlegt.

Dörr war Mitglied der SA seit 1. März 1933 und der NSDAP seit 1931. In der Eigenschaft als Hilfspolizist hat sich Dörr in Zeit der Machtübernahme in Bickenbach an Mißhandlungen brutaler Art an verschiedenen Einwohnern beteiligt. Auch er mußte als Aktivist in Klasse II eingestuft werden und wurde wie folgt verurteilt: Der Haftbefehl wird aufrechterhalten. Gemäß Artikel 16 Ziffer I erfolgt Einweisung für die Dauer von 3 Jahren in ein Arbeitslager, nach Ziffer II hat Dörr einen Betrag von RM 3000.— zur Wiedergutmachung zu zahlen. Auch ihm werden die in den Ziffern IV bis X enthaltenen Maßnahmen ganz oder teilweise auferlegt.

Darmstadt, den 21. Juni 1946.

Spruchkammer Darmstadt-Land
Lorenz, Vorsitzender Goebel, Geschäftsführer

Burlaubungen im Anschluß an die Ferien

Nr. V/111 46023

Es liegt Veranlassung vor, darauf hinzuweisen, daß den Schülern die Erlaubnis schon vor dem Beginn der Ferien abzugeben oder erst nach dem Wiederanfang des Unterrichts zurückzukehren, nur in dringenden Fällen erteilt werden darf und immer beim Direktor nachzusuchen ist. Wenn Krankheit oder andere unvorhergesehene Fälle einem Schüler an der pünktlichen Rückkehr verhindern, ist dem Direktor hiervon sofort Anzeige zu machen.

Darmstadt, den 24. Juni 1946.

Regierungspräsident Darmstadt
Abt. V, Erziehungswesen
i. A. Dr. Kammer

Bekanntmachung

Einführung von Beschäftigungsnachweisen

Gemäß Erlass des Großherzoglichen Staatsministeriums vom 8. April 1946 sind die Behörden, Verwaltungen, Arbeitgeber usw. verpflichtet, die Arbeitsbehörde bei der Einführung der durch den Kontrollratsbefehl Nr. 3 vom 17. Januar 1946 und die Ausführungsbestimmungen des Amtes der Militärregierung für Deutschland (US-Zoel) vom 18. März 1946 vorgeschriebenen Erlassungsnachweise (Beschäftigungsnachweise) zu unterstützen.

Diejenigen Arbeitgeber, welche ihre Arbeitseiner nach nicht listenmäßig dem Arbeitsamt gemeldet haben, werden gebeten, sofort eine Liste ihrer sämtlichen Arbeitnehmer für Selbständige von der zuständigen staatlich anerkannten Wirtschafts-, Fach- oder Berufsorganisation, Industrie- und Handwerkskammer, Ärztekammer, Apothekerkammer, Rechtsanwaltskammer usw.) alphabetisch geordnet dem Arbeitsamt Darmstadt einzureichen.

Diese Liste muß enthalten: Lid. Nr., Zuname, Vorname, Geburtsort, Wohnort, Straße, Haus-Nr., Berufsgruppe; Bemerkungen.

Darmstadt, den 19. Juni 1946.

Arbeitsamt Darmstadt

Aufgebot

Die Frau Emma Leithäuser, geb. Franz aus Ulla hat beantragt, den verstorbenen Richard Leithäuser zuletzt wohnhaft in Ulla für tot zu erklären. Der bezeichnete Verstorlene wird aufgefordert, sich spätestens in dem auf

Montag, den 5. August, 8 Uhr

vor dem obengenannten Gericht, Zimmer 8 abzurufen Aufgebotsstermine zu melden, widrigenfalls die Todeserklärungen erfolgen wird. An alle, welche Auskunft über Leben oder Tod des Verstorlenen zu erteilen vermögen, ergoht die Anforderung, spätestens im Aufgebotsstermine dem Gericht Anzeige zu machen.

Nidda, den 6. Juni 1946.

Amtsgericht

Todeserklärung

4117/46

Wilhelm Corvers, geboren am 14. 5. 1913, ist durch Beschluß des Amtsgerichts Offenbach a. M. vom 25. 5. 1946 für tot erklärt worden. Zeitpunkt des Todes: Anfang Sept. 1945. Offenbach a. M., den 15. Juni 1946.

Amtsgericht

From *Mitteilungsblatt*, 2 July 1946.

Official gazette of the district president of Darmstadt.

With the Military Government's authorisation.

Dörr was a member of the SA from 1 March 1933, and the NSDAP since 1937. In his capacity as an auxiliary policeman, Dörr at various times took part in abuses of a brutal nature during the seizure of power in Bickenbach. He also had to be classified as a Class II activist and was condemned as follows: the detention order was to be maintained. In accordance with article 16 (I), transfer to a camp for a period of three years, and according to clause II, Dörr had to pay an amount of RM3,000 for reparation. The measures set out in points IV to X shall also be imposed on him in whole or in part.

Darmstadt, 21 June 1946.

Spruchkammer [denazification trial court] State of Darmstadt

Lorenz, Chairman Goebel, Director

Die Moorsoldaten (The Peat Bog Soldiers)

Written in 1933 at the Börgermoor concentration camp

Die Moorsoldaten

Wohin auch das Auge blicket,
Moor und Heide nur ringsum.
Vogelsang uns nicht erquicket,
Eichen stehen kahl und krumm.
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten
und ziehen mit dem Spaten
ins Moor.

Hier in dieser öden Heide
ist das Lager aufgebaut,
wo wir fern von jeder Freude
hinter Stacheldraht verstaubt.
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten ...

Morgens ziehen die Kolonnen
in das Moor zur Arbeit hin.
Graben bei dem Brand der Sonne,
doch zur Heimat steht ihr Sinn.
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten ...

Heimwärts, heimwärts jeder sehnet,
nach den Eltern, Weib und Kind.
Manche Brust ein Seufzer dehnet,
weil wir hier gefangen sind.
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten ...

Auf und nieder geh'n die Posten,
keiner, keiner kann hindurch.
Flucht wird nur das Leben kosten,
vierfach ist umzäunt die Burg.
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten ...

Doch für uns gibt es kein Klagen,
ewig kann's nicht Winter sein.
Einmal werden froh wir sagen:
Heimat, du bist wieder mein.
Dann zieh'n die Moorsoldaten
nicht mehr mit dem Spaten
ins Moor!
Gedenken der Kinder.

The Peat Bog Soldiers

*Far and wide as the eye can wander,
Moor and heath are everywhere.
Not a bird sings out to cheer us.
Oaks are standing gnarled and bare.
We are the peat bog soldiers
Marching with our spades
into the moor!*

*Here in this barren heath
The camp is built dire,
We're kept from any joy
Hidden away behind barbed wire.
We are the peat bog soldiers ...*

*Every morning the columns march
Towards the moor to work.
Digging under the burning sun,
But our thoughts yearn for home.
We are the peat bog soldiers ...*

*Homeward, homeward, each of us longs
For our parents, wife, and child.
A sigh opens up many a heart,
Because here we are caught.
We are the peat bog soldiers ...*

*Up and down the guards march,
Nobody, nobody can get through.
Flight would mean certain death,
Four fences secure the stronghold.
We are the peat bog soldiers ...*

*But for us there is no complaining,
Winter will in time be past.
Someday we will happily say.
Homeland, you are mine at last.
Then the peat bog soldiers
Will no longer march with our spades
into the moor!
Remember the children.*



Die Moorsoldaten, existing in many European languages, is now a famous song of protest and a symbol of resistance. It was written in 1933 by prisoners in Börgermoor concentration camp.

The Diary of a Young Girl

Anne Frank, diary notes 12 June 1942 – 1 August 1944*

Annelies Marie Frank, known as Anne, was born on 12 June 1929, in Frankfurt am Main, the second child to German Jewish parents, Edith and Otto Frank. In 1933, Anne emigrated with her parents and her sister Margot, three years her senior, to Amsterdam in Holland. Following the Reichskristallnacht, Edith's mother came to live with them in 1939, but she died in 1942.



The family lived peacefully in the Netherlands until German troops invaded in May 1940. When persecutions started, the idea of going into hiding became stronger and they chose the Achterhuis (Dutch for secret annex) at the rear of 263 Prinsengracht.

They hid there until 4 August 1944 when the Gestapo and the 'Green Police' invaded the rear building, arrested the family and their Dutch supporters and friends, and took them to German and Dutch concentration camps respectively.

Anne Frank died in March 1945 at Bergen-Belsen extermination camp. She died for the same reason as Rosel Wolf from Bickenbach – both born in June 1929 – simply because she was Jewish. Of the family, only Anne's father, Otto, survived the Nazi's inferno.

Anne Frank's diary began on 12 June 1942, Anne's 13th birthday:

"I hope that I can confide in you like never before, and I hope that you will be a supportive friend to me."

It was written in Dutch and the notes and letters were addressed to Anne's imaginary pen pal Kitty. In the diary, Anne struggled with hope, trepidation, fear and love, and what she knew about betrayal and death. Her last entry was dated 1 August 1944. The annex was looted by the Gestapo. However, Anne's Dutch friends found her diary among the old books, magazines and newspapers which were carelessly left behind.

The Anne Frank Foundation, set up by Otto Frank and Johannes Kleiman on 3 May 1957, maintains 263 and 265 Prinsengracht as a writer's house and museum.



* Published in 1947 under the title *Het Achterhuis*. *Dagboekbrieven 14 Juni 1942 – 1 Augustus 1944* (*The Annex: Diary Notes 14 June 1942 – 1 August 1944*).

Anti-Semitism in books for children and adolescents

Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud bei seinem Eid!

Ein Bilderbuch für Groß und Klein von Elvira Bauer.

TRANSLATION

Trust no fox on his greensward and no Jew on his given word!

A picture book for young and old by Elvira Bauer.

Stürmer Publishing
Nuremberg, 1936.



The title of the work was based on a quote by Martin Luther: "Trau keinem Wolf auf wilder Heiden / Auch keinem Juden auf seine Eiden."

Don't trust a wolf on the wild greensward / Nor any Jews on their given word.

This was a picture book for the denigration of Jews, and was intended as propaganda material, so to speak, for the nation's youngest. The original book was written in Sütterlin script.¹ Over the 42 pages of the book, each spread contained a text page with a large, colourful illustration opposite. Jews were described and depicted as ugly, dirty, repulsive and lazy.

The book was indeed particularly infamous because it appealed to children of an age group – pre-schoolers for reading aloud! – who did not have their own experience with which to oppose its ideology. Jews were shown, and negatively portrayed, in traditionally Jewish professions: A cattle trader was 'money-grubbing'; a department store owner was 'heartless'; a butcher was 'dirty'; a lawyer was 'full of tricks'; a Jewish woman was 'lazy'; and a doctor was 'unreliable' or even 'dangerous'.

The negative theme appeared repeatedly throughout the text and thereby sticks permanently in one's mind. Two of the illustrations contained signs which read: "Jews are not welcome here" and "One-way street", with the addition "Step on it, step on it! The Jews are our misfortune".

On the backcover was an illustration with a Star of David containing a frightening face and the caption underneath: "Without a solution to the Jewish Question – there can be no redemption of humanity".



1. Sütterlin script was based on old German handwriting which was mainly used by government officials. It was created by Berlin graphic artist Ludwig Sütterlin (1865-1917). The script was taught in German schools from 1915 to 1941, though some schools were still teaching it in the 1970s. In 1935, the Sütterlin style was officially the only script taught in German schools.



Dies ist der Jüd, der sieht man gleich,
 Der größte Schuft im ganzen Reich!
 Er meint, daß er der Schönste sei
 Und ist so häßlich doch dabei!

Der Deutsche ist
 ein stolzer Mann
 der arbeiten
 und kämpfen kann
 Weil er so schön ist
 und voll Mut,
 Haßt ihn von jeher
 schon der Jüd!

Der Deutsche ist ein stolzer Mann,
 der arbeiten und kämpfen kann.
 Weil er so schön ist und voll Mut,
 haßt ihn von jeher schon der Jüd!

Dies ist der Jud, das sieht man gleich,
 der größte Schuft im ganzen Reich!
 Er meint, dass er der Schönste sei
 und ist so häßlich doch dabei!

*The German is a proud man,
 Able to work and able to fight.
 Because he is handsome and courageous,
 The Jew has always hated him!*

*Here is the Jew for all to see,
 The greatest villain in our country!
 He thinks he's handsome,
 Yet he's the ugliest around!*



Der Führer Jugend!

Die Jugend die echt deutsch sich nennt,
 zur Hitlerjugend sich bekennt.
 Dem Führer will sie leben,
 Der Zukunft gilt ihr Streben.
 Ist sie einst groß und stärker dann
 Tritt sie das deutsche Erbe an.

Das große heilige Vaterland,
 das stehenbleibt, weil's immer stand.
 Auf diesem Bilde könnt Ihr sehn
 Die Hitlerjugend stolz und schön.
 Vom größten bis zum kleinsten Mann
 Sind's lauter Kerle fest und stramm!

Den Deutschen Führer lieben sie.
 Den Gott im Himmel fürchten sie.
 Die Juden, die verachten sie.
 Die sind nicht ihresgleichen.
 Drum müssen sie auch weichen.

Des Führers Jugend

Die Jugend, die echt deutsch sich nennt,
 zur Hitlerjugend sich bekennt.
 Dem Führer will sie leben,
 Der Zukunft gilt ihr Streben.
 Ist sie einst groß und stärker dann
 Tritt sie das deutsche Erbe an.

Das große heilige Vaterland,
 das stehenbleibt, weil's immer stand.
 Auf diesem Bilde könnt Ihr sehn
 Die Hitlerjugend stolz und schön.
 Vom größten bis zum kleinsten Mann
 Sind's lauter Kerle fest und stramm!

Den Deutschen Führer lieben sie.
 Den Gott im Himmel fürchten sie.
 Die Juden, die verachten sie.
 Die sind nicht ihresgleichen.
 Drum müssen sie auch weichen.

The Führer's Youth

*Boys who have German bloodline long,
 All to Hitler's Youth do belong.
 For their leader they want to thrive
 And for future aspirations strive
 Bigger and stronger they are now
 Their German heritage they avow.*

*The great and sacred fatherland
 Gloriously does forever stand.
 When this picture one does review,
 The Hitler Youth stands proud and true.
 From the largest to the smallest son
 Their strength and courage cannot be outdone.*

*They love their leader with all their heart
 And have feared God from the very start
 The Jews they must repulse
 They are not at all the same
 So they should go back from whence they came!*

The Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls

On the first day of the Nuremberg Party Conference in August 1927, 30,000 SA members were expected to march past Hitler. The number of party members rose from 17,000 in 1926 to 40,000 in 1927 and 60,000 at the end of 1928. Already in existence, the Hitler Youth organisation was associated with the National Socialist Schoolchildren's League and the National Socialist German Students' League. There was also the National Socialist Women's League, the National Socialist Teachers League, the National Socialist Legal Association, and the National Socialist German Medical Association.

The Hitler Youth educated the 14 to 18-year-olds, who were classified as "German Youngsters" from the age of 10. The same rule applied to the girls organisation, the League of German Girls.

In 1934, according to Joseph Goebbels, National Socialism could not be defined, as it was a movement that was understood as being still nascent. That included integrating the children and youth well into the system, whereby military education played an important role.

The intake generally took place on 20 April, Hitler's birthday, and the recruits swore to be: "... hard as Krupp steel and swift as a greyhound".

In the so-called "Ordensburgen" (training schools) such as Sonthofen or Allgäu, National Socialist Schools were established in order to train future party cadres.

Up until it became a statutory regulation across the Reich in December 1936, belonging to the Hitler Youth or one of its subdivisions was a voluntary "must" unless you wanted to attract negative attention at school, vocational training workplace (back then still called an apprenticeship) or any other place of study. The system, that is to say the Party, had an indirect influence, but nevertheless a direct impact on parents or guardians through the children and young people.

The application of this in practice was evidenced by the warning (at right) from Troop leader, Anton Schmitt to Hitler Youth member Karl Kaltwasser regarding his suspension in March 1936.

Furthermore, a letter to the municipal council from July 1937 (on the following page) showed the extent and the manner in which the all-powerful Party was ruling the land by then. The Nazi Party's propaganda



Unit 18/249

2nd Regiment

To: Hitler Youth member Karl Kaltwasser

Bickenbach

Since you have already been expelled three times for lacking discipline in your duties, and because nothing else will work, you will be suspended by me from 16 March to 30 March 1936. I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that your suspension will be put up all over the Jugendheim Unit area. In addition you are required to be present at the next extra duty session, which I will announce. Should the suspension be repeated, I will have to expel you from the Hitler Youth. For in the HJ we only need comrades who maintain discipline in their duties.

Bickenbach, 15 March 1936

Leader of Troop 11/18/249

Anton Schmitt

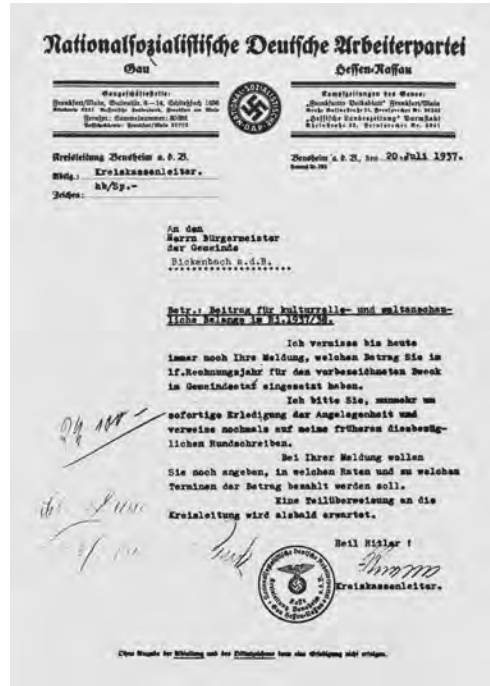
material, which they called a “contribution to cultural and ideological affairs”, was financed by the municipal budgets.

From the few municipal documents that still exist, a letter from the Bensheim County Office dated 15 October 1937 concerning the “Involvement of the municipalities in the repatriation of the Hitler Youth” should be mentioned. Mayor Christoph Rau made a note on 23 October 1937: “Done”.

A home for the Hitler Youth or League of German Girls was not built in Bickenbach, undoubtedly because of a lack of funds. The Party Office for the NSV (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt – National Socialist People’s Welfare) was located in a former teacher’s flat at the school house in Steingasse. Regular planned meetings, generally referred to as “service” took place in various classrooms. Major events were generally held in the dance hall of the Gasthaus Hirsch.

It seems necessary at this point to mention that as part of the municipal restructuring of 1938, along with the municipalities directly beside it, the municipality of Bickenbach was assigned to the district of Darmstadt. Two ordinances were announced in the *Reich Law Gazette (RGBl.)* Part 1, number 66 on 6 April 1938, which stated that from then until the bitter end, they would be bluntly enforced.

Generally speaking, it was useful to have the information published. It enabled us to see the two ordinances in their entirety, and to show exactly how much power the National Socialist Party had to intervene in matters. The importance to the ruling state apparatus in the observance of its ordinances, and their general enforcement, was reflected in a directive dated 15 August 1940, from the Head of the District of Darmstadt to the mayors of the municipalities in the district titled: “Compulsory Youth Service in the Hitler Youth”.



National Socialist German Workers' Party
Hesse-Nassau Region
District Leader Bensheim, 20 July 1937
Leader of the County Treasury
Telephone no. 292

To: Mayor of Bickenbach Municipality
Re: Contribution to cultural and ideological affairs in 1937/38

I still have not received notification from you regarding the amount that you have set aside for the aforementioned purpose in the municipal budget for this financial year. I ask you to please deal with this matter immediately. I refer again to my previous circulars regarding this matter. Please indicate the instalments and schedule for the payments when you send the notification.

A partial transfer to the County Leader is expected at once.

Heil Hitler.

(Signature)

County Treasury Manager

With the issuance of IJ 2160 of 26 March 1940 (Official Newsletter no. 3/1940) the Youth Leader of the German Reich has ordered the following:

Irrespective of the actions, which are yet to be taken for the collection and drafting of youths who do not yet belong to the Hitler Youth, I would like to point out that all of the boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 18 who already belong to the Hitler Youth are liable for compulsory youth service, and the provisions of the Law on the Hitler Youth of 1 December 1936 (RGBl. p1, page 993) as well as the First and Second by-laws of 25 March 1939 (RGBl. p1, page 709 and 710 ff) are applicable to them.

The same rules apply to youth who have been accepted into the Hitler Youth because they have voluntarily registered to complete their compulsory youth service. To that it is additionally ordered that: the compulsory youth service for the aforementioned youth came into effect on 1 September 1940. Violations will be punishable according to paragraph 12, sections 2 and 4 of the Second by-law to the Law on the Hitler Youth (Hitler Youth Compulsory Service Order).

According to paragraph 12, section 2 of the Second by-law to the Law on the Hitler Youth (Hitler Youth Compulsory Service Order), either imprisonment or a fine will be imposed on anyone who wilfully prevents or tries to prevent a youth from serving in the Hitler Youth. According to paragraph 12, section 4 of the Second by-law to the Law on the Hitler Youth (Hitler Youth Compulsory Service Order), youth may be stopped by the relevant local police authorities and forced to comply with the duties, which have been imposed upon them because of their membership in the Hitler Youth.

The Reich Governor in the Hesse State Government.

Instructions were for the directive to be issued in the municipality in the customary manner. Special references in newspapers to the announcement were not desired.

Found in the private papers of Alsbach citizen, Kurt Dentler, was a second request made on 20 June 1943, outlining his failure to attend a “social evening” and a “marching and shooting training exercise”. Dentler was required to arrive punctually at the next compulsory training session on 23 June 1943 in order to avoid police sanctions.



Hitler Youth Company / Girls Group 24
No. C 95383 Alsbach, 20 June 1943

2. Summons

To Kurt Dentler (address)

Without sufficient excuse you have missed the service on 20 December 1942 and on 20 June 1943.

I urge you to attend the next service on 23 June 1943.

Place of service: Sports Ground 8.30pm.

Appear punctually to avoid coercive police measures.

Unit Leader:

Female Leader of Girls Group:

(Signature) Otto Bolin

Long forgotten, out of sight and out of mind, the name Christian Crößmann recently attracted my attention again when some old documents came to light. They helped me recall a book from the third and fourth elementary school classes, about “heroes of the movement” from an event in Pfungstadt in 1933.

From 1988, when the documents appeared, until early 1992, my inquiries did not produce conclusive findings. If the court documents survived, they could be found. Apparently there were no Hessian publications in any library in Germany, or rather, no one would tell anyone that there was such a book because of possible spreading of Nazi ideas, although neo-Nazis are still active. If you think about the purpose of citing it here, there is an especially latent situation.

I can objectively state that there were possibly accessible documents in the city of Lindenfels im Odenwald that have not been requested due to time constraints. Christian Crößmann died on 26 February 1933 in Lindenfels, and for that reason the Hitler Youth Unit 249 carried his name.

The archivist for the city of Pfungstadt, Valentin Liebig, has made relevant contributions to the *Pfungstadt Gazette* available. At the same time the *Bensheim Bergsträßer Gazette* reported on the incident and the court proceedings as well.

When reading the reports it is important to note that after 30 January 1933, the day that Hitler seized power, so-called freedom of the press came to an end.

Honorary Bickenbach Alderman, Peter Stein, who died in 1993, remembered that the arrested men were sent to the judicial authorities and spent some time in Osthofen concentration camp near Worms, locked up in the so-called “cage”. Peter Stein himself had been sent to Osthofen by the Nazis for re-education in 1933.

Pfungstadt Gazette, the official journal of the mayors and the local courts of Pfungstadt, Hahn, Eich and Eschollbrücken.

A local account

Pfungstadt, 27 February 1933.

• Great Labour Day for elections. Yesterday was Sunday. The day was appropriated by various political parties to serve the elections, also in Hesse. National Socialists as well as the Iron Front and Communists all ran propaganda rallies, election assemblies and similar events. The police force was on alert. The police sports club of Darmstadt couldn't hold their upcoming lawn game activities.

• The family of painter and etcher Georg Crößmann, resident at Seeheimerstrasse, was met with the sad news from Lindenfels im Odenwald yesterday that their son, 18-year-old Christian, was stabbed to death during a confrontation between National Socialists and their opponents. The family had already suffered some bad fortune when their other son was taken from them during a sports training session. The incidents at Lindenfels are described as follows:

Around lunch time some National Socialists from out of town ran a rally. The person that was later stabbed was a member of the Hitler Youth who participated in the rally. The rally was protected by police and took place peacefully. Police reported that after the National Socialists had their lunch, a group of them went into a workers' neighbourhood. That was where events erupted into a bloody fight with supporters of the Iron Front and Communists.

During the brawl, stones were thrown and 18-year-old Christian Crößmann was stabbed to death. A 17-year-old floor polisher from Darmstadt received several stab wounds one of which injured his lung. He was also a member of the Hitler Youth. 42-year-old Adam Maurer, married, from Lindenfels, a member of the Iron Front, took a shot from a gas pistol and sustained serious injuries to his eyes that may cause blindness.

By evening, police officers from the investigative department in Darmstadt had arrested ten persons who were involved in the incident. The suspected knifeman got away. When 300 SU individuals marched through Griesheim near Darmstadt, a rally accompanied by police, two SU persons sustained stab wounds inflicted by an opponent on a street corner. Accompanying police immediately intervened and prevented a more severe incidence. However, they were unable to arrest the offender who disappeared within a large group of opponents gathered on the footpath. The search of a house the offender was said to have fled to, was also unsuccessful.





Reich Law Gazette

993

Part 1

Issued in Berlin, 3 December 1936. No. 113

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Law on the Hitler Youth

From 1 December 1936

The future of the German Nation depends upon its youth, and German youth shall have to be prepared for its future duties.

Therefore the Government of the Reich has prepared the following law which is being published herewith:

Article 1

All of the German youth in the Reich is organised within the Hitler Youth.

Article 2

The German youth besides being reared within the family and school, shall be educated physically, intellectually, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism to serve the people and community, through the Hitler Youth.

Article 3

The task of educating the German youth through the Hitler Youth is being entrusted to the Reich Leader of German Youth in the NSDAP. He is the "Youth Leader of the German Reich". The position of his office is that of a higher governmental Agency with its seat in Berlin, and is directly responsible to the Fuehrer and the Chancellor of the Reich.

Article 4

All regulations necessary for the execution and completion of this law will be issued by the Führer Chancellor of the Reich.

Berlin, 1 December 1936.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Adolf Hitler

The Secretary of State and Chief of the Reich Chancellery

Dr. Lammers

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Part 1

Issued in Berlin, 6 April 1939. No. 66

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First Executive order for the Law on the Hitler Youth (General Provisions)

From 25 March 1939

On the basis of Article 4 for the Hitler Youth of 1 December 1936 (Reich Law Gazette, Part 1, page 993)
I order:

Article 1

1. The youth leader of the German Reich is solely competent for all missions of the physical, ideological and moral education of the entire German youth of the Reich area outside of the house of the parents and the school. The competence of the Reich Minister for science, education and public orientation remains unaffected as far as private education and social education are concerned.

2. The following problems are transferred from the sphere of action of the Reich and Prussian Minister for science, education and public orientation to the sphere of action of the youth leader of the German Reich:

All affairs of youth care, the youth hostel system as well as of the accident and liability insurance in the interest of youth care.

The question of competence for the year's service on farms (LandJahr) is left to a special regulation.

3. The youth leader of the German Reich with the Hitler Youth is subordinated to the financial authority of the NSDAP.

Article 2

1. The Cadre Hitler Youth (Stamm Hitler-Jugend) exists within the Hitler Youth.

2. Whoever was a member of the Hitler Youth since 20 April 1938, is a member of the Cadre Hitler Youth.

3. Juveniles, who have had at least one year of good conduct in the Hitler Youth, and fulfil the conditions of ancestry for the acceptance into the NSDAP, may be accepted into the Cadre Hitler Youth. More specific regulations will be issued by the Reich Youth leader of the NSDAP in agreement with the Führer's deputy.

4. The acceptance into the Cadre Hitler Youth of persons over 18 years of age, who are to be used in the leadership and administration of the Hitler Youth, can take place immediately.

5. Only the Cadre Hitler Youth is an affiliate of the NSDAP.

6. Membership in the Cadre Hitler Youth is voluntary.



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Article 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior will appoint the national agencies, subordinated to the youth leader of the German Reich, in agreement with Führer's deputy and the Reich Minister of Finance.

Berlin, 25 March 1939

Article 4

The members of the Hitler Youth are entitled, and are obliged, if ordered, to wear the prescribed uniform.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Adolf Hitler

The Deputy of the Führer

R. Hess

The Reich Minister and Chief of Reich Chancellery

Dr. Lammers

**Second Executive Order for the Law on the Hitler Youth
(Youth Service Regulation)**

From 25 March 1939

On the basis of Article 4 for the Hitler Youth of 1 December 1936 (Reich Law Gazette, Part 1, page 993) I order:

Article 1

Length of Service

- (1) Service in the Hitler Youth is honorary service to the German people.
- (2) All juveniles from the 10th to the end of the 18th year of age are obliged to serve in the Hitler Youth, and namely:
 1. Boys between the ages of 10 and 14 in the Junior Hitler Youth (DJ – Deutschen Jungvolk),
 2. Boys between the ages of 14 and 18 in the Hitler Youth (HJ – Hitler-Jugend),
 3. Girls between the ages of 10 and 14 in the Young Girls' League (JM – Jungmädelsbund),
 4. Girls between the ages of 14 and 18 in the League of German Girls (BDM – Bund Deutscher Mädel).
- (3) Pupils of elementary schools, who have already completed their 10th year of age, are deferred from the service in the Hitler Youth until they leave the classes of the elementary schools.
- (4) Pupils of elementary school, who have already completed their 14th year of age, remain, until their discharge from school, members of the Junior Hitler Youth or the Young Girls' League (DJ or JM).

Article 2

Educational Authority

All boys and girls of the Hitler Youth are subject to a public-legal educational authority according to the provisions of regulations, decreed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor.

Article 3

Unworthiness

- (1) Those juveniles are unworthy of membership in the Hitler Youth, and thus are excluded from the community of the Hitler Youth, who:
 1. Commit dishonourable acts,
 2. Were dismissed from the Hitler Youth, before this law came into effect, because of dishonourable acts,
 3. Who cause offence by their moral behaviour in the Hitler Youth or in public, and thus injure the Hitler Youth.
- (2) Young people are excluded from Hitler Youth membership, as long as they are under official control.
- (3) The youth leader of the German Reich can allow exceptions.

Article 4 Unfitness

(1) Juveniles, who have been found, in the opinion of a medical officer of the HJ or of a physician, commissioned by the HJ, to be unfit or only partially fit for service in the Hitler Youth, must be relieved altogether or partially from service in the Hitler Youth according to the medical decision.

(2) The co-ordination with health authorities and the implementation of other health measures is regulated by the youth leader of the German Reich, in agreement with a representative of the Führer and the Reich Minister of the Interior.

Article 5 Deferment and Exemption

(1) On request of the legal guardian or the HJ leader concerned, juveniles can in each case be deferred or exempted from service in the Hitler Youth up to the duration of one year, if they:

1. Are retarded considerably in their physical development,
2. In the judgment of the school principal cannot fulfil the demands of school without the exemption.

(2) In individual cases, an application for deferment or exemption from service in the Hitler Youth may also be granted, if the conditions of paragraph 1 are not met, but there are other reasons to justify the temporary or long-term absence of a young person from serving in the Hitler Youth.

(3) Further orders are issued by the Youth Leader of the German Reich.

Article 6

German subjects of non-German origin

(1) Juveniles of German citizenship, whose parents or father belong according to their own statement to the Danish or Polish ethnic groups, are to be exempted from membership in the Hitler Youth on request of those who are charged with their care. If several persons have the right and duty to care for the juvenile person, and not everyone of them makes the request, the juvenile may be exempted

from membership in the Hitler Youth on request of those who are charged with their care, if the mother belongs according to her own statement to the Danish or Polish ethnic groups; they are to be exempted if the guardian agrees to the request.

(2) The request must be addressed to the lower administrative authority. The higher administrative authority determines whether the request is for the Danish or Polish ethnic group. The Reich Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the Youth Leader of the German Reich, issues the detailed administrative regulations.

(3) The Reich Minister of the Interior is responsible for overseeing the youth organisations of the Danish and Polish ethnic groups. New groups require its approval.

(4) A compulsion to join any youth organisation of the Danish or Polish national minority may be exercised by its own side.

Article 7

Racial Requirements

Jews (Article 5 of the 1st proclamation to the law of Reich citizenship of 14 November 1935, Reich Law Gazette, Part 1, page 1333) are excluded from the membership of the Hitler Youth.

Article 8

German nationals resident abroad

Young people of German nationality who are resident abroad and are only temporarily resident in the German Reich are not obliged to serve in the Hitler Youth.

Article 9

Registration and Induction

(1) All juveniles are to be registered with the respective Hitler Youth, leader for induction into the Hitler Youth before 15 March of the calendar year during which they complete their 10th year of age. If a juvenile fulfils the conditions for acceptance into the Hitler Youth (for instance release from official custody, receipt of citizenship, permanent residence in the German Reich) after this time, the juvenile is to be registered within one month after fulfilment of the conditions named.





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- (2) The legal representative of the Juvenile is liable for the registration.
- (3) Admission to the Hitler Youth will take place on 20 April of each year.
- (4) The youth leader of the German Reich issued the detailed instructions on the application and admission to the Hitler Youth.

Article 10

Release

- (1) Release from the Hitler Youth:
 - 1. Adolescents after the expiry of the period laid down in Article 1, and girls who enter marriage,
 - 2. Adolescents who are found to be excluded from membership of the Hitler Youth Association under the provisions of this Ordinance,
 - 3. Young people, who go against the disciplinary code of Hitler's youth will be discharged.
- (2) Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 3 (3) shall be applied correspondingly.
- (3) Male leaders and female leaders remain members of the Hitler Youth after the expiry of the period stipulated in Article 1. Their dismissal is by special arrangement and done at their request.

Article 11

Suspension of Hitler Youth membership

- (1) Hitler Youth membership is in abeyance for the duration of active military service.
- (2) Members of the Reich Labour Service are not allowed to work in the service of the Hitler Youth

Berlin, 25 March 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Adolf Hitler

The Deputy of the Führer

R. Hess

The Reich Minister and Chief of Reich Chancellery

Dr. Lammers

Article 12

Punitive Regulation

- (1) A legal guardian will be punished with a fine up to 150 marks or with confinement if he intentionally acts against the provisions of Article 9 of this law.
- (2) Whoever malevolently prevents or attempts to prevent a juvenile from serving in the Hitler Youth, will be punished with prison and fine, or with one of these punishments.
- (3) Legal punitive action will only be taken on request of the youth leader of the German Reich. The request can be withdrawn.
- (4) Juveniles can be forced by the respective local authorities, to fulfil the duties with which they are charged on the basis of this law, and of the implementative regulations issued for it.

Article 13

Final Regulations

For young people from the year from the years 1921 to 1929, who have not yet belonged to the Hitler Youth, the Youth Leader of the German Reich determines the date of registration and induction to the Hitler Youth.

The People's Court



Wilhelm Leuschner
before the People's
Court.

When the National Socialists seized power with their system of violence on 30 January 1933, the German judicial system started down a path towards the most reprehensible and despicable period of the administration of justice, as well as the misuse of justice, in the history of our people. Until 1945, the courts of the German Reich were structured as follows:

1. Ordinary courts

a) For civil matters.

The **Local Court**, single judge (first court of justice).

The **District Court**, civil chambers, chambers for commercial matters with multiple judges and commercial judges (first and second courts of justice).

The **Higher Regional Court**, the civil courts of appeal with multiple judges (second court of justice).

The **Supreme Court** of the German Reich, civil courts of appeal with multiple judges (third court of justice).

b) For criminal matters.

The **Local Court**, local court judge as single judge, court of lay judges with multiple judges and jurors (first court of justice).

The **Juvenile Court**, part of the Local Courts.

The **District Court**, lower and higher criminal divisions with multiple judges and lay judges.

The **Jury Court**, with multiple judges and jurors (first and second courts of justice).

The **Higher Regional Court**, criminal divisions with multiple judges (first and second courts of justice).

The **People's Court**, primarily dedicated to the sentencing of cases of treason and high treason (highest court of justice).

The **Supreme Court** of the German Reich, criminal divisions with multiple judges (second court of justice).

2. Special Courts

The **Labour Court**, the **District Labour Court** and the **Supreme Labour Court**.

The **Farm Inheritance Court**, the **Regional Hereditary Farm Court**, and the **Supreme Hereditary Farm Court**. These were dedicated to the application of the State Hereditary Farm Law.

The **Local Eugenics Court**, and the **Regional Eugenics Court**. These were dedicated to the application of the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring.

The **Special Court**, for serious political crimes.

3. Federal Administrative Courts

Federal Office of Homeland Affairs
 Commercial Court of the German Reich
 Higher Maritime Board of Inquiry of the German Reich
 Patent Office of the German Reich
 Fiscal Court of the German Reich and Finance Court
 Insurance Office of the German Reich
 Healthcare Court of the German Reich
 Legal Authority for Unemployment Insurance

The special courts that were established in 1933 and the newly created People's Court pursuant to the law of 24 April 1934, were, however, specifically dedicated to the elimination of all opposition to the regime. One of the pretexts for the creation of the People's Court was the burning of the Reichstag. The arson attack on 27 February 1933, which was not fully explained, was repeatedly blamed on the National Socialists. As the Communist Party was under the control of the National Socialists, the regime had the opportunity to eliminate the Communist Party by banning them. The trial for the burning of the Reichstag ended with four verdicts of not guilty and a death sentence for a lone offender, Marinus van der Lubbe.

The People's Court, as the special instrument of the system of violence, was created to sentence treason and high treason and to remove the Imperial Court of Justice's jurisdiction over these crimes, which only made decisions from a legal perspective. The National Socialist lawyer said the following about the establishment and



Wilhelm Leuschner, union secretary in Darmstadt, 1919.

purpose of the People's Court: "The mission of the People's Court is not to administer justice, but to crush opponents of National Socialism".

All officials, including the judge took the following oath:

"I swear that I will be loyal and obedient to the Führer, Adolf Hitler, and the German people, and that I will observe the laws and conscientiously carry out my official duties, so help me God."

The contrast between ideology and reality gives us an insight into the reality of this time, the application of German justice through the Nazi regime, and for that matter, its judges.

The approximately 45,000 special courts, which

were established in every local court, and from 1939 in occupied territories, issued death penalties according to the motto of Judge Roland Freisler (1893–1945):

“It should be possible to punish even such behaviour which may not explicitly be considered punishable but deemed as such based solely on common sense.”

Defence before the people’s court was impossible, as was a fair hearing. It was impossible to challenge a sentence. The NS regime arrested all people it saw as suspects without further ado and took them into protective custody. There was no explanation or any right of appeal. These people ended up in prisons, labour camps and concentration camps. They suffered humiliation and pain, and were tortured. They were transferred to the special courts and the people’s court before they went to their deaths.

The resistance fighter Wilhelm Leuschner (1890–1944) deserves a mention here in representation for all of these victims. For participating in a resistance fight on 20 July 1944, he was hanged on 29 September 1944, at 7.17pm in Berlin-Plötzensee.¹

Colonel-General Ludwig Beck (1880–1944) from Hesse should also be remembered. From 1935–1938 he was chief of staff for the German Wehrmacht. He was intended to become preliminary head of state in Hitler’s liberated German Reich. But Beck opposed Hitler’s criminal war policy and resigned in 1938. Like Wilhelm Leuschner, Beck was one of the men working with Count Schenk von Stauffenberg in the plot to kill Hitler. The plot failed and Beck shot himself whilst in custody on 20 July 1944.



The Wilhelm Leuschner medal is the highest honour awarded in the state of Hesse.



Social Democratic Party of Germany (Grand Duchy of Hesse)
 Membership card for Wilhelm Leuschner
 Profession: Woodcarver. Born: 15 June 1890.
 at (place of birth) (relig. gov't. region or district, office 2c.)
 Nationality:
 Joined the party on 5 April 1913
 Social Democratic Association for the constituency of
 Darmstadt Gr. Gerau
 The Board: Wilhelm Ernst (signature)

1. Wilhelm Leuschner (15 June 1890–29 September 1944) was forced from his office of Hessian Interior Minister when the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933. Leuschner worked closely with the unions and built up a resistance network. He was imprisoned and sent to concentration camps for his actions. He was arrested in August 1944, after the failed attempt on Hitler’s life, and sentenced to death. He died at Plötzensee Prison in Berlin.

Kristallnacht 1938

On 7 November 1938, Herschel Grynspan, a Jewish man, assassinated the German ambassador Ernst vom Rath in Paris to take revenge for his parents' persecution by the National Socialists. This incident was said to have triggered the public outrage towards German Jews. Yet, in reality such wrath against Jews had already been organised and artificially incited by the party since 1933. Under the name of 'Reichskristallnacht' this event went down in German history, by no means a glorious chapter.

Late on 9 November 1938, the SA and the SS acted throughout the Reich. Theft, murder, manslaughter, fire and looting lasted well into the next day. Crystalware of well-to-do Jews was trampled on by the SA. Jewish shops that had already endured years of boycotts took the brunt of these attacks. The destruction of Jewish homes and businesses left broken glass all over the streets, and led to the name of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass).

No adverse or special occurrences were reported from Bickenbach because since 11 April 1938, Bickenbach had officially been 'free of Jews' after Benno Wolf and his family had relocated to Tiergartenstrasse 18, in Frankfurt.

The SA destroyed the school and the mortuary at the Jewish cemetery at Alsbach. In Zwingenberg a Jewish person was ordered to clean the market square with a toothbrush. Fear was in the air! The human barbarity started here and led all the way into the gas chambers of the concentration camps.

The NS-led Reich administration never granted any compensation for the pain, humiliation and material losses suffered by the Jewish people during Kristallnacht. Yet, for Ernst vom Rath's assassination, Jews had to pay the sum of 1 billion marks to the Reich administration as penance.

Childhood memories – scarlet fever and Kristallnacht

During any season when my peers went swimming in Jugenheim, enjoyed ice-skating on submerged meadows in freezing temperatures, or went tobogganing on local sandy mounts or higher up in the mountains, one thing was certain, I would be sick in bed at home. It was obvious, I was prone to diseases. I was susceptible to cold-like illnesses in all their forms, such as sore throats, tonsillitis, scarlet fever and diphtheria.

I was born in March 1931. In November 1938, as a seven-year-old I was admitted, teary-eyed, to the

quarantine ward at the municipal hospital in Darmstadt with acute scarlet fever. Our local team of father and son doctors, the Doctors Mischlich from Zwingenberg, could do no more for me. Hospital was inevitable. Despite my mother's reassurance that 'Dr Schorsch' would come and visit and that for Christmas I would also get a clockwork train set from Faix in Darmstadt, I was unable to hold back my tears. Dr Georg Schemel from Bickenbach was my cousin, and he was the local assistant doctor. In appreciation of his services, local families called him 'Dr Schorsch'. ('Schorsch' was the local nickname for 'Georg' in Bickenbach dialect. 'Dr Schorsch', therefore, referred to Dr Georg Schemel.)

The large hospital hall with whitewashed walls was full of boys between five and fourteen years of age. Whether there were 20 boys or more, there were definitely quite a few boys in the isolation ward. I was placed in a room with four beds and cried day and night. I got to know life at a hospital and learned what it meant to be homesick.

From the first night, I could hear machine guns. The older kids, particularly the townfolk, explained that the shooting came from the 'Exert'. Others maintained it came from the military training area at Griesheim. Infantry Unit 115 practised shooting at night we were told. Others said that soldiers were involved in manoeuvres. The soldiers reminded me of the hospital uniforms.

As far as I could remember, nurses wore white and could be recognised by their bonnets and aprons. Some wore no insignia, such as Oma the night nurse, while others had a red cross on their bonnets. The NS nurses had bonnets with brown trimmings and wore brown aprons. Käthe, one of the NS nurses, was a real dragon in matters of so-called public health care. She was forever busy, giving instructions on physical care and cleanliness, and interrogated individuals about their family circumstances. Do you have a bathroom at home? If not, where do you bathe and wash? Do you regularly brush your teeth in the morning and at night? Is your bed located in your parents' bedroom? Do you have a nursery? And so on. Some may doubt whether what they read here is true, particularly given that the author is recalling these events off the top of his head 45 years later. Perhaps one may think these things are made up. But no, these events are all true.

Once you revive the memories which have long lain dormant it all comes back. It can be said with fair certainty that some food served to the sick one night was sago porridge. Among lovers of oriental food, this

palm pulp-derived ingredient is popular today, often served as a side dish. Back then though it was sold to us as fish eggs. The comparison is flawed of course but as a consequence, after I had forced down the last spoonful of sago, I choked and, under the deafening and gleeful applause of my fellow patients, vomited on top of the bed and beside it. Nurse Käthe was furious because she had to clean up my bed. It was probably thanks to the first visit by Dr Schorsch that saved me from worse things to come.

As is well known, towards the end of a bout of scarlet fever, a sufferer's skin peels off all over their body. After dinner, and before bedtime, your skin was scrubbed and rubbed, particularly your feet. This procedure was done with the help of a pumice stone which everyone was given. Feet were placed in a washing bowl of lukewarm water and were worked on with the pumice stone until the dead skin became completely detached. This experience was behind me, as was my cousin's promise to visit me again soon, when Kristallnacht occurred on 9 November.

I can no longer precisely recall the events that took place on the second or third nights, but on the first night, the night light which rendered the room a dull green had already been switched on. The night nurse, the grandmotherly Oma, had just finished her tour to say goodnight and to urge the older boys to be quiet, and had left the rooms.

Wide awake, I laid there quietly in bed and thought of everyone at home. I cried to myself. I noticed the trams intermittently rattling past, stopping and departing at a nearby tram stop with squeaking brakes and jingling bells. I heard cars driving by.

After a seemingly long time, a bright flickering and blazing glare penetrated the curtain from the outside and illuminated the room. It crackled and pattered. The fire got rid of my homesickness and began to scare me. Oma came in from the big hall and looked out of the window.



Orthodox synagogue in Bleichstrasse, Darmstadt, 1872/73.

She shook her head and mumbled something to herself which I couldn't understand. Scared as I was, I asked her what had happened. I was told the synagogue was on fire.

For some time, the crackling fire drowned out the shooting noises that could be heard earlier on. Nurse Oma took me into her strong arms and carried me to the window. A building very close to the hospital was ablaze. Soon the piercing sound of sirens from the approaching fire trucks could be heard. I remember seeing a giant glow of fire in various shades of colours, as bright as day.

The night was similarly lit-up on 11–12 September 1944, when Darmstadt was reduced to ash and rubble. The dark night sky was once again lit almost as bright as day, and could be seen all the way from Bickenbach.

It was a restless night at the hospital, not just in the sickbays. It fell to Oma to comfort the children as they woke one by one. The next day we could hear jackhammers. The scene of the fire was being cleared and the remaining ruins blown up. Two doctors who had ignored instructions by the national labour service men working on site, crossed some barriers and were badly injured during a misfire. If I remember correctly, the doctors were Dr Sauer and Dr Wiegand or Weigand. One of them was said to have lost his eyesight due to splinters and dust from an explosion.

When I returned home after my recovery my grandmother, Marie Schemel, told me about the synagogue, the temple and the schul as Jewish people call it, and made comparisons with our church. During the night of 9 November, a date which only brought bad things for Germany's history, the few Jews from Bickenbach had already emigrated or, as in the case of Benno Wolf's family, relocated to Frankfurt (11 April 1938).

Nearby at the Alsbach Jewish cemetery, the chapel or mortuary on Landchausee, between Bickenbach and Zwingenberg, had been destroyed by the SA. I wasn't aware of it at the time, but my experience at the hospital in Darmstadt – the events of Kristallnacht and the fire at the synagogue on Bleichstrasse – was the beginning of the unfathomable end.

The Final Solution

Expulsion and extermination of the Jews

The “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem” was the code name for Hitler’s plan to eradicate the Jewish population in Europe. Emigrations began with the Nazis’ acquisition of power in 1933. From 1939 onwards, an emigration centre carried out this task under the supervision of the SD and the mass exodus of German Jews began. The subsequent figures give an indication of the global intake of Jewish emigrants up until 1938, even though the fact remains that many countries weren’t overly interested in, or receptive towards, taking Jewish people.

The systematic persecution of Jews in Poland began in 1939 with the invasion by the Wehrmacht. About 6,000 Jewish soldiers of Polish origin were killed in battle. Among the total 400,000 captured Poles there were 61,000 Jewish soldiers who were not treated as prisoners of war, but ended up in forced labour camps and concentration camps. After successful campaigns in 1940, suffering in the West spread rapidly. Misery began to unfold all throughout Europe with the 1941 invasions of Russia and the Balkans.

Named after a suburb of Berlin, the infamous Wannsee Conference took place on 20 January 1942. It was at this point in time that 230,000 Jews were murdered in the occupied Baltic States of Latvia and Lithuania, while Estonia was declared as being “free of Jews”. The so-called “Final Solution” was drafted on 20 January 1942. This was to be put into practice by implementing compulsory labour for physically able Jews, mass deportations, and separating men and women.

By August 1942, Switzerland had granted 28,512 Jews asylum. It was during that month that at least 9,751 Jewish refugees from the German-occupied part of France were refused entry and deported again. In Nazi Germany and the occupied territories, the killings proceeded rapidly.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from 19 April 1943 to 8 May 1943 is an example of the resistance and desperation that can arise as a result of such operations.

On 18 January 1943, the Jews in Warsaw had resisted new deportations. Within 4 days, 600,000 of them had been deported and 1,000 had been shot dead on the street. The resistance, as well as the fighting on the streets carried out by underground Jewish organisations, was

so violent that further deportations were temporarily suspended.

On 19 April 1943, German units penetrated the Ghetto to proceed with the deportations and killings. The Germans had to withdraw themselves from the Ghetto after being met with heavy resistance from the Jews. A few hours later, systematic burnings began. House after house was taken, and the Jewish resistance was broken. On 8 May 1943, German troops attacked the Jewish headquarters.

During the violent battle, more than 56,000 Jews were burnt alive, shot or captured as they fled the sea of burning houses. Those captured were deported to Treblinka concentration camp [and eventually] the commander of the German troops, General Stroop announced: “The Warsaw Ghetto no longer exists”.

The so-called fortunes of war eventually reached a turning point with the defeat of Hitler at Stalingrad. The landings of the Allies in North Africa, Sicily and Southern Italy, and the invasion of France in 1944, led from “total war” to the “total defeat of Germany”. From 8 May 1945, weapons were silenced and the suffering of the Germans commenced.

In addition to the 300,000 concentration camp survivors, about 1.5 million European Jews survived Hitler’s intent to kill them. The courage of one individual would often save another’s life. According to current knowledge, the most accurate estimate is that 6,000,000 Jews were killed by the Nazis between 1939 and May 1945. Sadly, an exact figure can never be determined. In the autumn of 1942, kill teams murdered thousands of toddlers and infants before their births could be registered for “statistical purposes”. Furthermore, thousands of people, especially from remote Polish villages, were simply loaded onto deportation trains that came from major towns without ever being recorded. Throughout many former Jewish communities that were wiped out during this period, the sombre record remains: “Fate unknown”.

Jewish host countries 1933–1938:

Argentina	63,500
Australia	8,600
Belgium	12,000
Bolivia	7,000
Brazil	8,000
Denmark	2,000
Dominican Rep.	470
England	52,000
France	30,000
Italy	5,000
Japan	several hundred
Yugoslavia	7,000
Canada	6,000
Cuba	3,000
Mexico	several thousand
Netherlands	30,000
Norway	2,000
Palestine	33,399
Philippines	700
Poland	25,000
Portugal	10,000
Sweden	3,200
Switzerland	7,000
Shanghai (China)	20,000
Spain	3,000
South Africa	26,100
Czechoslovakia	5,000
Hungary	3,000
Uruguay	2,200
USA	102,000
Venezuela	600



After the liberation.

The number of Jews who perished:		
German Reich	131,800	
– including Austria	43,700	175,500
Bohemia and Moravia		74,200
Ukraine	2,994,684	
USSR	5,000,000	
Belarus	446,984	
Latvia	3,500	
Lithuania	39,000	
Reichs commissariats Ostland/Ukraine ¹		420,000
Generalgouvernement ²	2,284,000	
District of Bialystok	400,000	
Slovakia	88,000	
Hungary	742,800	
Romania	342,000	
Bulgaria	48,000	
Croatia	40,000	
Serbia	10,000	
Albania	200	
Greece	69,600	
Italy	58,000	
France (esp. areas included under the Vichy Government)	165,000	
France-North Africa (Algeria)	700,000	
Belgium	43,000	
Holland	160,800	
Denmark	5,600	
Norway	1,300	
The number speaks for itself:	14,306,668	



From the *Darmstädter Echo* newspaper, Wednesday, 27 March 1946.

The main headline reads: "Homicide as the ethos of the Nazis. Göring tried to shun responsibility for the shooting of British POWs."

1. Reichskommissariat Ostland – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, northeastern Poland, western Belarus, and Reichskommissariat Ukraine were established in 1941 as civilian occupation regimes in countries which the USSR had annexed in 1939.

2. Generalgouvernement (General government) was an area of central Poland occupied by the Germans in October 1939. It included the districts of Warsaw, Krakow, Radom, Lublin, and L'ov and was to serve as a supply of slave labour.

Persecution of Gypsies in the Third Reich

Gypsies were another group that experienced violence and death during the Nazi regime, and this should also be remembered and reflected upon. In addition to Jews, Gypsies were a foreign minority group who suffered heavily in the concentration camps. Society is still struggling with these groups even today – the problem is that they lack advocates.

From 1933 to 1945, men, women and children died horrific deaths in the concentrations camps. After 1945, Hessian Attorney General Fritz Bauer was one of the few people who supported the Gypsies. He had experienced suffering alongside them in the Heuberg concentration camp.

Citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany might like listening to Gypsy music, but on the other hand aren't open to listening to the problems of these people. At the same time, Germans are still frequently referred to as "Nazi fascists".

In the southern parts of Hesse, pejorative expressions such as "Hornnägge, Haare, Haarade" can still be heard today among speakers of local dialect, without people actually fully understanding their meaning. One might notice something derogatory in the pronunciation and emphasis of these words. "Haare" (hair) was a term used to address Gypsies. Sometimes it was also used for an anti-social fellow.

In the official writing and speech of post-war Germany, the word "Landfahrer" (vagrant) was introduced, in order to avoid defamation of the Gypsies. In almost all references after 1945, describing the term "Zigeuner" (Gypsy) was quite difficult:

"The Gypsies, a people numbering 5 million plus, whose tribes and clans are spread out over Northwest India, Western Europe and, in smaller numbers, America. In most cases they are wandering traders, craftsmen, jugglers, musicians and fortune-tellers who have taken on parts of the language and culture of the variety of people who share their blood (e.g. Spain, Hungary, Romania).

Depending on their origins, Gypsies identify themselves as either the Lom, Dom, Romani or Roma people, as well as Sinti in Central Europe."

Over the course of their history, the Gypsies have suffered discrimination and received minimal rights.

It is perhaps as a result of this that they have retained important parts of their language and culture, despite being in small numbers where they have settled.

In the mid-1970s, there was one family of Gypsies in Bickenbach who lived in an apartment on a permanent basis during the cold winter months.

According to old forestry documents, in the construction of the state road from Bickenbach to Zwingenberg at the end of the 18th century, the section of forest on the B3 opposite the Wolf-Bergstrasse roadside rest stop was referred to as a "Gypsy forest". Until the establishment of the Höhsand playground in 1975, this area was sporadically used as a camping ground for caravans. Horse-drawn wagons were still seen there until about 1957.

There were few documents available in Bickenbach's municipal archives relating to Gypsies. The following text was a declaration from the Hessian Reich Governor's second police division of the state government on fighting the Gypsies, and the cost of relocating Gypsy families, dated 23 September 1937:

Such costs are usually caused by the fact that from case to case there are no coverings for the caravans, or that the vehicles are damaged – especially the wheels. It should not be the authorities' job to use public funds to transport vagabond Gypsies from place to place in the most convenient and comfortable way possible. In cases where the covering of the vehicle is missing, the residents of the caravan should be urged to move the vehicle along themselves, regardless of the lengthy duration of relocation. In the case of damaged vehicles, it should first be established whether or not the damage was caused intentionally for the purpose of gaining a longer stay or obtaining a convenient relocation at the behest of the state. In the latter case, a quick repair of the damage is to be ordered and monitored. If necessary, an allowance of 5 Reichsmarks is available for the repair of a damaged cart-wheel as a last resort. Under no circumstances are any Gypsies or travelling folk to be robbed of their nomadic lifestyle by police enforcement. However, utilising public funds to move Gypsies between localities is to be stopped by all means. In the future it is expected that relocation costs will be avoided, or at least kept as low as possible if they are unavoidable.

Stamps from the former German Democratic Republic.

On 10 February 1938, by order of the Bensheim District Office, all municipalities were requested to submit lists of local Gypsies within 8 days. The road to death and suffering then took its course.

Just like the Jews, the Gypsies also fell victim to the devastation and eradication administered by the Nazis. On 16 September 1942, it was decreed that all Gypsies living in the Reich were to be deported to Auschwitz. Gypsy clans and tribes were annihilated all over Europe. There were the occasional Gypsy uprisings, but like Jews, the Gypsies were confronted with a combination of excessive “racial” hatred, ignorance, permanent deception and overwhelming military power.

Many Gypsies were deported to Jewish ghettos. In Lithuania, the Gestapo locked 1000 Gypsies in a synagogue until they starved to death. Thousands of Gypsies were murdered side by side with Jews. By 1945, the Nazis had murdered 220,000 of the 700,000 Gypsies living in Europe at the time.



Treblinka memorial, 1963.



Sachsenhausen memorial, 1986.



Mittelbau-Dora memorial, 1979.



Sachsenhausen memorial, 1960. “In Sachsenhausen concentration camp, 100,000 citizens from many nations were murdered by fascists. To honour the dead and remind the living, a commitment was made to build the Sachsenhausen National Memorial.”



Mauthausen memorial, 1978.



Majdanek memorial, 1980.



The New Berlin series, Jewish Community House, 1966.



Kristallnacht, Never Again, 1963.

Foreign workers and displaced persons

Like the Jews and the Gypsies, foreign workers from German-occupied regions were just as helpless and stripped of their rights in the face of Nazi violence.

After the downfall of Poland in October 1939, the first Polish civilian workers arrived in Bickenbach towards the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940. Two girls, Anna and Sophie, and a young man named Emil, stayed with “privileged” families in villages and on farms in Hartenau. The town’s mayor hosted Anna, who had bicycle lessons on Sundays, mostly in the afternoon, with a police officer we called Blue Philipp. The lessons took place on Chausseegasse, although it took many hard cuffs to the ear before perfect balance was achieved. The local school children had “Polish lessons” with Emil who worked as a milkman, until he set off by freight train one day to an unknown destination.

An exact list of names should be compiled from the municipal archive documents, however, some documents had been destroyed prior to the US Army invasion.

Ukrainian, Lithuanian, French, Belgian and Dutch people worked as farmhands, craftsmen and factory workers in the village, along with the Poles. During the war they were known as foreign and eastern workers. Options were limited; compulsory, forced-labour was the standard.

Like the Russians and Ukrainians of the National Ukrainian Association, the Lithuanian farmhands were privileged and were paid the same rates as German farmhands. In two cases it was documented that instead of 29.20 or 41.95 Reichsmarks respectively, monthly wages of 13 and 20 Reichsmarks respectively were paid, and a back-payment was arranged (1942/43).

Most of these people were treated in a primitive manner. Initially they were not allowed to eat meals at the same table as their hosts and their freedom of movement was highly restricted. Abuse was present here and there and, despite state surveillance, the end of the war saw some of these harsh measures lifted, perhaps out of fear of retaliation.

In the winter of 1940/1941, the dance hall at the Gasthaus Hirsch was used to hold French prisoners of war. These men partly worked in the commune on Sundays. Their French house band, two guitarists and a mandolin player played music in the restaurant under

the supervision of the guards, to the delight of the skat players there. The guards were housed in private quarters, where they lived in the lap of luxury.

After two or three successful escape attempts, the camp was abolished. Despite all of the prohibitions in dealing with foreign workers, ties were still made. If such ties became public knowledge, those involved were met with the most serious consequences. If a German woman fell in love with a foreigner, she was accused of having committed treason. On the other hand, patriotic German ‘men of the house’ could sleep with foreign workers and get off scot-free.

In May 1943, the Gestapo in Darmstadt declared the following to the head of the district authority, who then announced it to the municipalities. The declaration was titled *Polish Post*:

“Between the 14th and the 21st of May, 238 letters and 102 postcards were received by the Reichspost that had been sent from those local service areas with a heavy presence of deployed Polish civil workers. These letters and postcards were passed directly into the postal system by breaching the issued guidelines. I would urge the responsible offices to re-emphasise to their Polish employees the importance of compliance with the mandatory postal routes, and make it a known fact that any mail sent directly into the postal system will be destroyed by the Gestapo.”

On 11 June 1943, after consulting with the police, Bickenbach’s Mayor Christoph Rau informed the district authority in Darmstadt that future rules of conduct would be made known to all Polish farmhands employed in the area, as well as the Polish workers listed in the document.

In the early summer of 1944, two French prisoners who had fled from Thuringia were apprehended and beaten black and blue until they confessed. Due to a lack of regular police, auxiliary police were employed; they were identifiable by their distinctive armbands. Auxiliary policeman Ludwig Ganser, who at the time was 66 years old, had to take the two Frenchmen to Darmstadt by tram, departing from the Jugenheim tram stop. He was obliged to serve and had no idea of how to deal with firearms. According to his own personal account, he was just as scared as the prisoners were because he would

have been in trouble if the prisoners had been aware of his inexperience and used it to their advantage.

During the harvest season of 1944, several Cossacks who had joined the so-called voluntary associations after their imprisonment were employed as harvest workers. For the Russian foreign workers it was a living hell; they suffered, they bled, they were labelled as the underprivileged dregs of society and they lacked any form of contact with their homeland.

Around the Christmas period of 1944, the two halls on the ground floor of the school in the town square, today's town hall, were occupied by Russians who were being used for the construction of the Reichsbahn, the German National Railway. The guards admitted that come nightfall, hand-carved children's toys could be traded for bread and potatoes. After a few days, this nightly activity was put to an abrupt stop; someone had reported it to the police.

In the middle of 1943, chief employment officer Gauleiter Sauckel obtained extensive powers, in order to compel urgently needed manpower from the occupied territories to work in Germany. With the extended powers, he was able to bring 7.5 million foreign workers over into the German defence economy.

After the surrender of the Germans, the foreign workers were given a new description. They were then called "DPs" or "Displaced Persons", uprooted people without a place to call home. They first received help from the UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which was the section of the United Nations responsible for helping refugees. The Polish found their way to a camp in Käfertal in Mannheim, from where they returned home. Many decided to leave behind the destroyed remains that were Europe and didn't seek revenge in Bickenbach.

At the local cemetery in Bickenbach there is an "eternal grave" in section B, row 1, grave number 9. There, a child who was born abroad and who died abroad, as well as a man with the hope of returning to his Ukrainian homeland, have been laid to rest.



From left to right: Maria and Nikolai Saj with hostess, Birgit Rösicke, on their visit to Bickenbach in 1989.

Since 1945, contact has continued between Nikolai Saj and his employers, Peter and Anna Müller from the Steingasse. Nikolai and his wife Maria now live in Manchester, England. Maria worked on a farm in Gernsheim during the war. They both came back to Germany in 1992 and said that after the political turn in the USSR they visited their old homeland, Ukraine. Bickenbach and Gernsheim however, always remained a piece of home for them as well.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the families of Christian and Friedrich Herpel invited Ms Sophie Kubacka and one of her daughters to come to Bickenbach as guests. Crucial information from Ms Kubacka's memoirs, compiled on 18 November 1981 in Wronki, Poland, may now be given in full:

It was September 1939. War between the Reich and Poland had broken out. In a relatively short amount of time we were defeated due to military superiority. The hatred that stemmed from Hitlerism was a disaster for our people, and forced labour soon began. Youths, girls and boys, young married couples with and without children, men, women, sons and daughters, were all sent into the Reich by force. There was no mercy or understanding; everyone was forced



Sofie Kubacka's visit to Bickenbach in 1974.
From left to right: Werner Krämer, Chr. Herpel and his wife, Sofie Kubacka and her daughter Dunjata, Mayor Karl Schemel, Peter Stein.

to work for the Third Reich without pay. My youngest sister, two of my brothers and myself also had to go out and work in the Reich.

I was born in a small mountain village not far from the Czech border. The journey into the Reich via Krakow and Heilbronn, where we were searched, took almost three weeks. Finally we arrived at the Rummel restaurant in Darmstadt. Tired, hungry and forlorn we awaited our fate. It was there that the local farmers from the Darmstadt area came and began a "market" trading slaves.

Two young lads and myself were chosen and taken on by a farmer named Christian Herpel. It took an hour by tram, followed by a walk, to reach Bickenbach.

The entire time I was terrified about where I was going, what the farmer would be like and what the work would entail. The farm was quite large, and the work was hard and exhausting. I had never worked on a farm before and I even needed medical attention at the very beginning.

Overall it was quite a bit easier for me than it was for the others, seeing as I was able to speak and understand German. I worked in the fields and on the farm, and went nowhere else; I didn't want to come across the police,

who treated us 'Polish slaves' with hostility. Everything was forbidden to us!

However, as time went on I began to realise that Bickenbach was big, beautiful, clean and well managed. The Aßmuses, Kleins, Schemels, Röders, Hennemanns and others were some of the German families who were kind towards us Polish. Nevertheless, many Germans were still hostile towards the Polish, such as the teacher in Bickenbach and other Nazis. My farmer and his family were good people and we understood each other. I was given sufficient food and it was good quality as well. It was just my salary, 10 marks a month, then 18 marks, followed by 20 marks in the final year, which was too low. With this amount of money I could buy just about nothing. We Polish received ration coupons worth only 20 points, with which I could only get two pairs of stockings.

The clothes and shoes that I had brought with me were almost worn out. With great difficulty I was able to obtain a pinafore and a pair of wooden shoes from the head of the village, probably because I could speak German.

Strenuous work in the autumn and winter time without any warm clothes or stockings was probably the cause of my persistent rheumatic pain, in particular because the work back then was all manual labour, without the help of technical machines like the ones available nowadays. As well as all of this, during my five years of working there I was never given time off work.

In the last year of the war, the Darmstadt Gestapo paid us a visit regarding the treatment I received. They instructed my host and his family to treat me in certain ways; they also instructed me that I was not allowed to have relations with anyone, I was "just supposed to do my work and do it well". I was very worried that the worst was still to come. The cause of this, I suspect, was due to the difficult situation in the Reich and failures on all of the fronts.

After the war I decided to go home, but due to a lack of news from home I ended up staying in Mannheim and worked for the US Army. Not long after, I ended up travelling back home. Along the way I received the news that most of the boys who were sent to work in the Reich

had ended up in concentration camps; many of them did not return.

In my homeland, I soon met the man that I would end up marrying, and with whom I moved to Greater Poland and still live with in Wronki to this very day. I have a son and three daughters, who are all married.

Mrs. Kubacka visited Bickenbach with her daughter 29 years after the war ended. She has since passed on.

Mrs Anna Goraczka registered with the municipality at the end of the 1980s for reasons concerning hours worked and pension entitlements. Mrs. Goraczka worked for Mayor Christoph Rau's family on Darmstädter Street from June 1940 until July 1945, during which new relationships were formed. Mrs Helga Wagner and her husband Heinz visited the Goraczka family in Krakow in 1991, and in mid-1992, Anna and a neighbour were guests at the Rau siblings residences in Bickenbach, Gernsheim and Jugenheim. They also met with former neighbours from Darmstädter Street. Mrs Goraczka hoped to be able to return to Bickenbach in the coming years if her health allowed it.

Not all of the foreign workers who lived in Bickenbach have good memories of the place, men and women alike. For their entire lives, many of them would have remembered the humiliation and beatings that they were subjected to. Such a person was the Polish farm hand Johann who, on 25 March 1945, was handed a brutal beating from his liberators. Drunk US soldiers forced their way into Post-Freundsche House in broad daylight, where they sought to force themselves onto the women who were being held in the cellar. Johann stood in front of the women, blocking the intruders. He was beaten so badly that he required hospital treatment. Not even the red and white Polish armbands that he wore could spare him the terrible blows; this was the sad reality of war.

At the end of May 1945, liberated French prisoners of the Buchenwald concentration camp spent a night here in the village. Overnight accommodation was available at the Gasthaus Zum Hirsch and in private



Anna Goraczka (middle) visiting Bickenbach.

quarters. My father, Philip Schemel, served as an interpreter for Mayor Karl Dieter. In the conversations it became established that there were formerly “well-fed criminals and politicians” who looked like “living corpses”. A sick and emaciated lawyer from Paris, who looked like he had a death mask on, came and stayed with us for a night. He announced that the Kapos, who were responsible for helping SS soldiers, were immediately arrested at the border crossing in Saarlouis and handed over to the French courts for sentencing. These beasts were sometimes worse than those handing down the orders.

Katja, a Polish girl, had been a part of our family since 1944. When Glaser, the bakery in Jugenheim, shut down operations due to lack of supplies, Katja the pregnant female assistant was transferred to Bickenbach. Her pregnancy meant that no farmers were interested in having her work as a farm hand. Mayor Rau said that she could live with us in the empty guesthouse. That was that; Katja would come stay with us. She was a good cook and helped out in the house and the sausage kitchen. She belonged in our family and despite having a fiancé, a young soldier from Berlin who spent some time in the Jugenheim military hospital, she seemed to have had a



Natja Schegula



Alekx Schegula



Marya Wiezeinska



Wally Kadaschuk



Ludmila Hube



Viktor Jüz

filing with my brother. After the arrival of the Americans she didn't want to know anything about "Germanisation", and even her marriage seemed to be forgotten about. The young soldier from Berlin never knew his daughter. When she arrived at her friend Lisbeth Ewald's house in Jugenheim on 19 May 1945, Katja (also known as Käthchen) the beautiful Polish girl, was quite Americanised. She seemed to love the uniforms, and only after the insistence of her countrymen and relatives did she leave Bickenbach with her daughter Monika for the displaced persons camp in Käfertal.

For almost four months I was Anna's babysitter and through her connections with the US soldiers, I was also able to reap the benefits of the American occupation. And thanks to the taxes on cigarettes, coffee and canned lard, I was able to do a swap with Mr. Konstanz for a small radio – a Volksempfänger. A theatre musician, Mr. Konstanz and his wife rented from Ms. Grumach at Waldeck house. They had very little of anything, but food was a major problem; it was due to this circumstance that our business trading with one another began.

Katja and Monika were picked up in a jeep, along with their possessions. As the tears flowed, promises were made to never forget Bickenbach and to write to each other. Their departure was what led me on to my lucrative job as a babysitter. In hindsight though, it seemed to me that all of us in the house dearly missed baby Monika. However, no news or letters ever made it to us from Poland or from anywhere else in the world for that matter. What a pity! When Anna Goraczka visited, she was unable to provide any information as to the whereabouts of Katja and her daughter Monika.

Mrs Hella Klein from Bickenbach, who worked at the firm Friedrich Bahrfels during the war, kindly provided these cherished photos of former Russian and Ukrainian forced labourers and workers.

Club life in Bickenbach

A socio-political image of the time of the Third Reich up until the beginning of WWII.

From 1933, many clubs were forced to disband due to the so-called “Gleichschaltung” (Nazi-enforced coordination and uniformity). Clubs also became centralised, practically controlled by the Nazi Party, and thus the Nazi State apparatus.

In Bickenbach, some of the following clubs were affected: Workers’ Choir Group (founded in 1893); Free Sports Association (1919); Red Sport (1929/30); the Riding Club; and the Workers’ Samaritan Association.

However, the Small Animal Breeding Associations were necessary to the new system because their interests served the nutritional needs of the population. They were subsequently ideologically realigned. This type of self-sufficiency, such as the keeping of goats and breeding rabbits, as well as farming poultry such as chickens, geese, ducks and pigeons, was born out of the hardship and poverty of the 19th century factory workers with their low daily wage.

The Nazi State, in order to reduce the need for foreign exchange, wanted to be independent of imported foodstuffs. So they promoted self-sufficiency to the population through the Nutrition of the Reich, the Public Statutory Corporation for German Agriculture. The Bird Breeding Association (1905) and the Goat Breeding Association (1900) remained untouched. Half of the Committee members were simply changed due to the new policies.

The oldest club in Bickenbach was the Men’s Choir (1859), followed by the Warrior Club (1873), Worker’s and Harvester’s Association (1891), Workers’ Choir Group (1893), German Sports Club (1897), Military Association (1900), Goat Breeding Association (1900), Poultry Breeding Association (1905), Fire Brigade (1907), Rifle Club (1909), Victoria Football Club (1912), Free Sports Association (1919), Workers’ Samaritan Association (1919/20), Red Sport (1929/30), and the Stenographer’s Association.

A loose association, organised by Philipp Ganser, involved zither players and in-home concerts. Members consisted mostly of children and teenagers from workers’ families. Alongside the zither, the piano, trumpet, harmonica, mandolin and violin were also represented.

During the time of the Third Reich, two new clubs were formed, namely the DRK (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz

– German Red Cross) in 1933 and the Harmonica Playing Group in 1938. The Riding Club became the SA Mounted Company, and the German Sports Club (1897) became a gathering place for young people playing sport whereby, it must be noted, handball players were accepted as a separate section in 1923. In addition to gymnastics and handball, after 1933, light athletics, football, fistball and swimming were periodically practised at the Sports Club or, with respect to swimming, only offered.

Of all the associations founded before 1933, their club records, apart from the protocol book of the German Sports Club, were destroyed. The flag of the Workers’ Choir Group was taken from the association’s meeting place, Adam Daum’s Gasthaus Zur Waldesruh, and consigned to the flames by the Nazis.

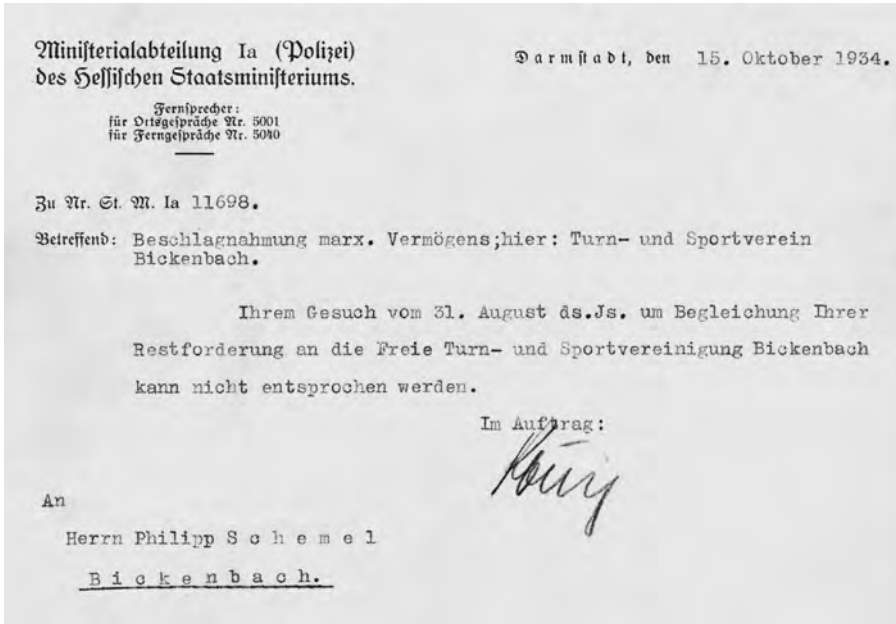
At this stage it can thankfully be pointed out that Adolf Friedrich, the longstanding First Chairman of the Sport and Cultural Society (SKG) of Bickenbach, and occasional Representative of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) until its prohibition in 1956, saved the German Sports Club’s book before the general destruction in 1945.

The German Sports Club’s protocol book for the years 1924–1938, as well as the reference file for the playing field of 1930–33, gives us an insight into the beliefs of the associations, as well as the political development in Bickenbach and the fate of some of the people.

An extract from 14 November 1925 regarding Point 1, “Admission of new members” was most telling: *Christoph Herpel, Fritz Herpel, Hugo Wolf, Georg Schemel, Peter Aßmus, Fritz Dörr, Adam Zeißler, Heinrich Zeißler. Resigned: Philipp Schemel, butcher.*

Hugo Wolf was a member of the German Sports Club, but he left Bickenbach during Pentecost in 1933. He emigrated because he was Jewish and in doing so, he saved his life. During Pentecost in 1976, Hugo Wolf visited Bickenbach with his wife, Fanny. Hugo Wolf’s family now live in Chicago, USA.

In 1930, Philipp Schemel joined the Free Sports Association and lent the Free Athletes, as they were generally called, 300 Reichsmarks to build a wooden hut on the sports field. Nothing more is known about the terms and conditions [of the loan]. In 1933, after



Ministerial Department (Police)
of the Hessian State Ministry.
Darmstadt, 15 October 1934

Telephone:
for local calls: No. 5001
for long-distance calls:
No. 5040

Concerning: Seizure of assets;
namely Bickenbach gymnastics
and sports association.

Your request of 31 August this
year to pay the outstanding
amount to the Bickenbach
Free Gymnastics and Sports
Association cannot be met.

By order of: (Signature)

To Mr Philipp Schemel,
Bickenbach.

the Free Sports Association was disbanded, Bickenbach was the beneficiary of the German Sports Club. The residual claim of about 200 Reichsmarks against the Free Sports Association was forfeited.

Transcripts from meetings

Transcript 293 of a meeting, 11 May 1933, showed that new thinking and action was widespread

The First Chairman, Sports Brother Herpel, opens the meeting at 9.40am and, after the greeting, goes over the agenda.

Point I:

Admission of new members: Philipp Draudt.

Point II:

Announcement and settlement of the instructions of District Leader Roth.

Guidelines for synchronising the Sports clubs; the athletes Christoph Herpel, Christian Herpel jr. and Dr. Scriba were proposed.

Christian Herpel declines, omitted from the submitted votes (33): 9 votes for Dr. Scriba, 9 were invalid, 15 for Christoph Herpel. The vote is submitted to District Leader Roth for approval.

Point III:

Change of statute: proposal is to be postponed until the next full meeting.

Point IV:

Settlement of the sports field question. The club places the levelled piece of land at the disposal of the community.

Point V:

Registration for a medical training course. The application cannot be completed, as nobody has hereto applied.

Conclusion of the meeting at 11.30am.

Leader: Herpel

Second Secretary: Philipp Schemel

**Transcript 294 of a meeting of the Full Assembly,
20 May 1933**

*Greetings by the future leader Christian Herpel jr.
At the commencement of the assembly, around 9.30am,
District Leader Roth is present as a guest.*

Point I:

*Reading out of two letters concerning the Civil
Engineering Professional Association and the withdrawal
of Herr Dr. Scriba.*

Point II:

*Speech of the District Representatives with the subsequent
commitment of the Association Leader.*

Point III:

*Speech of the Leader with a subsequent commitment of the
employees via a handshake.*

Point IV:

Reading of the statutes.

Point V

*Speech of the District Representative concerning the
leadership principle, education and fighting spirit.*

Point VI:

*New address of the District Representative concerning the
ratio of athletes and the SA as well as the diverse training
in the Club.*

*The meeting concluded with the Deutschlandlied (Song of
the Germans) and the Horst Wessel Song at 11.00am.*

Leader's (previously known as Club Chairman) staff:

Treasurer (bookkeeper): Peter Pieler

Record Keeper (secretary): Georg Knoos jr.

Rent Custodian: Teacher Horst

Senior Sports Manager: Justus Dieter

Transcript 296 of a General Meeting, 2 August 1933

*Agenda: Event on Sunday, 6 August 1933, on the occasion
of the inauguration of the newly renovated Sports Centre
on Pfungstädterstrasse and the 10th anniversary of the
Handball Department.*

*I. Welcome from the Association Leader Christian Herpel.
Sports brothers from Bochum were present as guests, who
came to participate in the German Sport Festival in
Frankfurt.*

*II. Sports Brother Wolf announced the festival program,
like the festival ball celebrating the 10th anniversary of
the Handball Department, and confirming the admission
prices:*

*Lunch: for members, unemployed and SA – 15 pfennigs;
non-members – 30 pfennigs; for relatives of the former –
30 pfennigs.*

*In the evening: Individuals – 20 pfennigs; members free;
dance band – 80 pfennigs, 1 Reichsmark for 1 man and 1
woman to dance.*

*The first team of our newly formed Football Department
played on Sunday, 30 July 1933, against those of the
Auerbach Sports Club and lost 3-1.*

Team line-up:

*Karl Jährling, Charles Zeißler, Adam Zeißler, Adam
Reimund, Albert Flemmisch, Michel Zeißler, Valentin
Dieter, Philipp Jakoby, Georg Rebenich, Adam Becker,
Friedrich Gebrisch.*

**Excerpt from Transcript 297 of the Board Meeting,
6 February 1934**

*2: Association statutes, which were formulated by the
District Press Leader Dr. Emil Gobbert jr., were adopted
as statutes for our Club.*

*3: The Association fees have been established as follows:
working members – 30 pfennigs per member;
unemployed members – 20 pfennigs per member.*

**Excerpt from Transcript 298 of the Annual General
Meeting, 5 May 1935**

*Game Warden Georg Wolf: Report on the past game year.
Football Division in 3rd place. Disbandments are to be
determined by the Army and labour service. Handball
is to be discouraged.*

*Cash holdings: A total of 68.56 RM, with 4.03 RM
available as ready cash; Credits District Savings Bank
Zwingenberg 23.74 RM. Loan fund 40.79 RM.*

*Choice of the Club Leader: The Club Leader Christian
Herpel resigns due to overwork in his capacity as a Local
Group Leader (Nazi Party). Because no athlete is ready to
take up the Office, a Commission was formed, which checks
the Member list and should provide a club guide.*

Excerpt from Transcript 299 of the Extraordinary General Meeting, 29 May 1935

Sports Brother Stiep was unanimously appointed by the Assembly as Club Leader ... with a triple "Sieg Heil" to the People's Chancellor Adolf Hitler by Sports Brother Stiep, and the closing hymn Turner auf zum Streite (Athletes to the contest), the meeting was concluded at 10.25am. Present: 49 members.

Excerpt from Transcript 300 of the Board Meeting, 12 June 1935

Club Leader Stiep mentioned that Sports Brother Philipp Baumunk was appointed to the inner employee's circle and his many years of experience as an athlete were cited. Ernst Kaltwasser is temporarily employed to support School Sports Supervisor Baumunk.

Excerpt from Transcript 301 of the Board Meeting, 12 October 1935

Advice concerning the "Sports Groschen" (sport fee) which is to be paid to the Reich League for Physical Education. Members pay 25 pfennigs for playing and events, including a 5 pfennig fee. Non-members pay 30 pfennigs, including a 5 pfennig fee. The next general meeting is set for 26 October, in order to farewell the athletes who are enlisting in the army (reintroduction of compulsory military service).

Excerpt from Transcript 302 of the General Meeting, 18 January 1936

Opening by Club Leader Stiep. "He was pleased by the attendance of so many and stressed that more could have come, whereby the Assembly would count an attendance rate of 85-90%."

It was clear to him that the year 1935 was a year of building. The Sports Club was, by and large, good. The sports teams (presumably football) pretty well clambered together in terms of numbers. Recently, along with football, there was a call for the reintroduction of handball. The board of directors carried the cost.

This reminded athletes and the players of their comradeship with each other. It was not permitted for this to be destroyed!

The female athletes performed well in the past year. Their numbers grew. Women's sports would hopefully be revived in the new year. The children's division totalled 75 members. From 1 January 1936, there was still a Reich Association for Physical Exercise, to which all sport clubs belonged. Not only the clubs but also the individual athletes and players. Last of all they were given a passport through which every member was granted responsibility.

It was later decided that Stiep would remain as Club Leader for another two years. Stiep explained that in future all who submitted their declarations of entry could become a member of the Sports Club.

Herr Bindel, the leader of the Warrior Club, thanked the participation of the female athletes on the last family evening of the Warrior Club.

At 11 o'clock the Club Leader Stiep made the closing remarks with "Sieg Heil" and O Deutschland hoch in Ehren (O highly esteemed Germany).

Excerpt from Transcript 303 of the Members Meeting, 18 April 1936

Greetings from Club Leader Stiep. He reminds us of a higher attendance to the convention and regrets the low turnout. Furthermore he made it known that today the founding of the Reich Association for Physical Exercise takes place in the German Hall in Berlin. Rent Custodian Teacher Horst reported on three questions which were submitted by us to the Reich Leadership of the German Reich Association for Physical Exercise:

Question 1: What is Adolf Hitler's position regarding physical exercise?

Question 2: What is the relationship between state and physical exercise: People's sports?

Question 3: What is the aim now of physical education in the new state?

Attachments and debates about this.

... a board meeting will take place on the coming Tuesday. 10.45am: closing remarks by Sports Brother Stiep with a simple "Sieg Heil".

**Excerpt from Transcript 305 of the Members Meeting,
16 April 1936**

Greetings from the Club Leader Stiep. He reminds all players of real sport and the spirit of comradeship. On 27 September 1936, sports will take place on the sports playing field, (the participants) will gather together on Adolf-Hitler-Platz (Market Place) to march to the sports field at 8.30 in the morning and at 1pm.

Sports Brother Teacher Abl thereupon presented the certificate for the subscription for Winter Help 1935-36 which totalled 12.66 RM. Stiep thereupon closed the meeting with a thrice "Sieg Heil" to the leader Adolf Hitler.

**Excerpt from transcript 306 of the General
Convention, 20 February 1937**

Present 43 members; Senior Sports Supervisor Baumunk declared a regression of 50% instead of a progression; Sports Supervisors Mohr and Borger were not present; Children's Sports Supervisor Philipp Rebenich reports on the children's gymnastics and light-athletics;

Sports Brothers Wolf and Wiemer report on handball and fistball; Swimming Supervisor Iffland reports that interest in swimming was decreasing; Rent Custodian Teacher Horst was not present due to illness, the tenants evenings will in future take place at the monthly meetings.

Association Leader Stiep gave notice of the 40th Anniversary on 1 August 1937 at 10.45. Stiep closed the meeting with a thrice "Sieg Heil" to the People's Chancellor and the song Turner auf zum Streite (Athletes to the contest).

**Excerpt from Transcript 308 of the Members Meeting,
5 July 1937**

39 participants; agenda is the 40th anniversary celebrations. All competitions are to take part; Members of the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls are on leave for this day.

Entry fee inclusive of Sportsroschen: per visit each event 30 pfennigs; season ticket 1 RM. Dance money for members 70 pfennigs; non-members 1 RM.

Transcript 311, Bickenbach, 3 August 1937

The association celebrated its 40th anniversary on 1 August, and on 31 July there was a Kommers (a festive academic celebration) which went particularly well in the courtyard of the clubhouse (the Gasthaus Hirsch).

For this the District leadership was represented by Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel) Metzner.

The arrangement of the program played an important role: the gymnastics clubs of Jugenheim, Seeheim, Hähnlein, the German State Railways Sports Club (Darmstadt), with the Rhönrädern (gymnastics wheel) and the Mens' Choral Society. Gymnasts performed the piece, In diesem Zeichen siegen wir (In this sign we will be victorious). At the same time as the foundation tribute, the following were awarded the gilded badge:

Former mayor Rau, Fritz Rebenich, master wainwright Adam Roß.

In addition, the following pupils who were admitted to the foundation were honoured for 40 years of membership: Georg Schemel, Gottlieb Weigert, Jakob Zeißler, Christian Linder.

For 25-year membership, the following were honoured on the same day: Karl Seitz, Teacher, Friedrich Schneider, Railway Official, and Adam Bauer, Club Guardian.

The member Dr. Karl Hauck was appointed a member of the Honorary Consortium for regular donations to the association.

Finally, former mayor Rau spoke on behalf of all the honourees and promised to continue to promote the club in the future.

The attendance of the celebrations was very large.

On Sunday 1 August, after the ceremony at the monument at the sports ground, there were tournaments, with the participation of the aforementioned clubs. In the afternoon there was a parade to the sports field, followed by a public festival.

In the evening there was a ball in the clubhouse. With the warm weather, the progression of the festival was quite excellent and satisfactory.

Regarding the Kommers, it is also necessary to acknowledge the women who have contributed to the founding of the association. They were personally invited.

Deceased members Georg Knoos and Justus Dieter were also remembered in a dignified manner.

Club Leader Stiep

Secretary: Knoos

**Excerpt from Transcript 312 of the Members Meeting,
4 September 1937**

Beginning at 9.15am

Welcome by Sports Brother Stiep. He regrets the small attendance, especially as we recently celebrated our jubilee. The Club Leader expects that in future the specialist custodians will proceed with all rigour against those half-hearted members. Sports Brother Steip points out the newly installed Sammelglocke (collection bowl), the proceeds of which will be made available to the Reich Sport Leader on his birthday. He expects each member to contribute at least 10 pfennigs. Members who are not present are invited by Club Attendant Adam Bauer to visit the collection bowl. The net profit from the jubilee is reported as 167.30 RM, but cash flow is still very tight.

A speech by Rent Custodian Horst about German national characteristics abroad, above all about the Sudeten Germans and their leader, Konrad Henlein. Horst compares Henlein to the Founder of German Gymnastics, Turnvater Jahn (popularly known as the father of gymnastics). Club Leader Stiep thanks the Rent Custodian for his remarks and hopes that the members will keep in mind much of what he says. The meeting closes at 10.50am.

The minutes of the meetings ended with Transcription 313 and the reference to a “colourful evening” held on 26 February 1938. Over the 138 pages of entries, the history of the association can be seen, with insights into the political and economic situation from 1924 to 1938. Much human behaviour and fates may be construed from the contents.

The Record Keeper Georg Knoos jr. used the remaining pages of the book, 139 to 143, as a notebook at his insurance agency. The Club Leader Steip no longer signed off the entries; he seemed to have left Bickenbach about 1938.

It remained to be added that despite the “bringing home” of Austria into the Reich, marching into the Sudetenland in 1938, and the dimming of the lights in Europe on 1 September 1939, there were still sport lessons at the clubhouse in the Gasthaus Hirsch up until about 1942, as well as young people playing soccer matches on the sports field.

During the war, people used the neglected sports ground. With billeting in the village, the sports field was part exercise yard and part riding arena. After the American invasion, these fields became catering areas for a short period. The hungry people of Bickenbach – the bombed-out and the refugees – collected leftover scraps from here and took them home to their own kitchens after the Americans departed.

The US Military government allowed new clubs to form. In Bickenbach, the inaugural assembly of the Free Sport and Cultural Community took place in October 1945.

Hugo Wolf had emigrated in 1933. Philipp Rebenich opposed the Nazis and was therefore sent to Osthofen concentration camp. He was the Children’s Sport Supervisor in the Sports Club. He was forced to join the army and subsequently fell for the Führer, the People and the Fatherland, just like many others who despised the system.

Others became guards in concentration camps and lived as respectable people with “well-earned” pensions up until their deaths. This is also part of the German post-war reality.

Bickenbach Free Sports Association
 9th District – Member of the
 Workers' Gymnastics and Sports
 Association – 1st Precinct.

Honorary Certificate.

Junior gymnast: Heinrich Ber_y
 won with 59 points

In the 'Dreikampf' (a three-part
 competition consisting of sprint,
 long jump and shot put)

Among 19 competitors, ranked 2nd.

Bickenbach, 16 July 1922.

For the Gymnastics Committee:

Philipp Baumunk, Gymnastics
 Supervisor; Philipp Pühler, Chairman.

Below: From Valentin Schüßler,
 a handmade Fahnenstange
 (decoration atop a flagpole or
 banner) for the Freie Turngemeinde
 Bickenbach – FTGB (Bickenbach
 Free Sports Association), from
 1919/20. The letters "FFST"
 represents – Frisch-Frei-Stark-Treu
 (Fresh, Free, Strong, True).





Workers' Choir Group, founded in 1893.

A scene from "Müllersch Lies'l von Waldmichelbach".



"In memory of the consecration of the flag of the Bickenbach Gymnasts Association."

Bickenbach Free Sports Association, founded in 1919. Football team 1926.

From left to right:

Manager Heinrich Pieler, Christoph Weigert, Heinrich Gehrisch, Adam Emmerich, Ludwig Reimund, Heinrich Hennemann (Seeheim), Heinrich Schneider, Jakob Zeißler, Heinrich Crößmann (Pfungstadt), Hans Huckele (Viernheim), Name unknown (farmhand from Hof Hartenau), Erich Zöllner.



Darmstadt Sports Club.

Handball team 1936/37.

From left to right:

Philipp Pfeifer, Heinz Birkenhauer, Christof Flemmisch*, Wilhelm Zeißler, Willi Kraft, Heini Leuthner, Heinrich Dingeldey, Georg Schneider*, Philipp Götz, Heinrich Schäfer*, Jakob Götz*. (*Killed in WWII)





Darmstadt Sports Club.

Faustball tournament.
(literally 'fistball', a form
of volleyball) c.1935/36.

Back row, left to right:

Georg Wolf, Philipp Baumunk,
unknown, Heinrich Meier, Adam
Miliz, unknown, Georg Mink,
Ernst Kaltwasser.

Front row: Georg Ganzen,
unknown, Fritz Gehrich,
Swimming Supervisor Iffland.



Mass gathering, 1938.

The "Losers" (i.e. those who
were 'lost' as a result of the
war) gathered at the town
square in front of the town
hall. The majority of them
were killed in action, others
returned from the war as
invalids. The type of club life
(mentioned in previous pages)
existed until 1945.

Historical legalities up until the Holocaust

In 1090, Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, known to the Germans as Kaiser Heinrich IV, set the decree which guaranteed Jews the right to move freely throughout the empire and be able to maintain a business, to buy and to sell, and not be charged tariffs or public or private fees.

A Jewish community in Cologne was first mentioned in 321, during the reign of Emperor Constantine. The common path of Jews and Germans, their shared history, began in the border lands of the Roman Empire.

During the period of the Roman Empire, Jews came to what is today's

Germany through an area that was called Germania Magna (Great Germania). This area consisted of Germania Inferior to the north (present-day southern Netherlands, Belgium, and western Germany), and Germania Superior to the south (Switzerland, south-western Germany, and eastern France) and these areas were inhabited by warlike tribes.

The cities on the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers belonged at that time, like Jerusalem, to the Roman Empire. There were Jews in all of these cities before there were Christians. The Roman State religion demanded that the Emperor would be honoured as God. People who obeyed this law were then allowed to also pay homage to their own Gods, and there were many who did just this.

In the Jewish calendar year 4856 (1096 on the Gregorian calendar), Christian crusaders from France and Germany brought suffering, affliction, death and the expulsion of Jews in the Rhineland communities.

At the end of the 12th century, Europe was overrun with rumours: "the Jews slaughter children, drink blood, commit hostilities". Neither the clergy nor the secular ruler countered the inhuman persecution of Jews, even though they knew that Jews obeyed the laws of Moses which commanded that he who killed a person would be punished by death. The laws also prohibited Jews from the consumption of blood. There was a prescribed ritual in the slaughter of animals for meat – they had to be completely bled before being processed and prepared for consumption.



The Jewish hat (or cap) in a jewellery maker's mark. (Speyer, 18 August 1354)

France was the first to embark on a radical program of ridding the country of Jews. Dispossession and expulsion were the result. From about the Middle Ages until the French Revolution, Jews were repeatedly persecuted and then returned.

Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and they remained banned from the island for about 350 years, until the time of Oliver Cromwell.

In Germany, the deaths of five children in a house fire in Fulda, during Christmas 1235, resulted in the slaying of 34 Jews when neighbours rose against them believing that the Jews took the

children's blood. The people of Fulda then brought the children's bodies to Emperor Frederick II, who held court in Alsatian Hagenau. Investigations were initiated and a report was prepared. Based on the result, Frederick II ruled that all Jews were fundamentally acquitted of such a crime, as such a thing would have contravened their religious laws.

In 1235, Frederick II presented the Mainzer Reichslandfrieden (Imperial Peace of Mainz), the first laws composed in Middle High German and Latin. The aim of this basic set of laws was to bring peace to the Empire. He also re-established the rights for Jews. The Jews were the Emperor's "attendants", meaning they were under his personal protection and subsequently obliged to pay taxes and offer benefits to the Emperor.

The Emperor had the power to pledge or sell these benefits to the secular and spiritual sovereigns of the Empire. Many special regulations and conditions were required of the "servi camerae nostrae" (servants of the royal chamber). The status of Jews was laid out in the large body of laws of the 13th century, in the *Sachsenspiegel* and the *Schwabenspiegel* (both are law books written in Middle High German).

The special regulations included the following: Jews were not allowed in the street during Holy Week and they were also not allowed to show their faces at the window. They were forced to wear particular garb, which clearly differentiated them from all Christians.



Costumes worn by Jews in the town of Worms, 14th century.

For example, rules were set for the length of the sleeves, the design of the collars and the position of the hems. It was a requirement for men to wear a high, yellow hat, the point of which arched in a horn-like fashion or was furnished with a knob.

Jews were also forbidden to enter Christian inns. Yet, they were permitted to eat, bathe or even dance with Christians.

The Archdiocese of Gniezno, the oldest Latin Catholic archdiocese in Poland, was established in the year 1000. Emperor Otto III, had ruled that Jews were forbidden to live next door to Christians, so the first ghettos emerged. From the late Middle Ages, this enforced seclusion spread throughout Europe. In 1516, the Venetian Jewish quarter was first mentioned in documents.

Economic conditions worsened in the 13th and 14th centuries. The craftsmen's guilds as well as the merchants' guilds refused entry to Jews so they had to find work in the secondhand trade. They were prohibited from

acquiring more land and therefore could not be farmers or winemakers. They also lost the right to wield a sword.

The resulting social descent was enormous. The only professions left for Jews to pursue outside this strictly regulated social order, were money lending and hawking. Those with property assigned credits and lived from that, while the small, poor man peddled in order to survive.

Up until this point the monasteries were responsible for money matters, but they were always in conflict with the Christian moral code, which fundamentally forbade profiting from money lending. So this field was left to Jews, who were characterised as ominous cutthroats.

The plague came to the Rhine in 1348 and the Black Death was rife – Jews were deemed responsible. When the plague subsided in 1351, over 200 Jewish communities had been destroyed in Germany. Those who survived fled to the east, to Poland, where the largest Jewish settlement in Europe developed – until the Schutzstaffel (SS) appeared.

In 1356, Emperor Charles IV issued a decree called the “Golden Bull”, by which the political conditions of the empire were regulated, proving significant for the empire and its Jewish people. However, at that time the Roman Empire was in decline and losing control of the German nation’s territorial states and small principalities.

The Emperor was aware of the power of the regional dukes and prince, and offered them his rights to the mineral resources as well as his most profitable monopoly, his control over the Jews, which was the “Schutzbrief” (letter of protection), giving Jews the privilege to reside within a territory.

The Schutzbrief was the legal instrument to take control of the Jewish community, as well as the method for obtaining financial returns from them through fees and charges. With this instrument, the living conditions of the protected charges were controlled and regulated, and the financial burden had a direct impact on the Jewish community.

With the Golden Bull of 1356, Jews were no longer ‘Kammerknechte’ (servants or attendants of the royal chamber) to the Emperor alone, but belonged equally to the rulers in whose land they lived, and to city governments as well. The imposts brought them hardship, sorrow and squalor, as well as a lack of freedom.

The special taxes applied to Jews in the 15th century were varied. King Sigismund, who ruled Germany from 1411 declared: *“If you resist we will have you punished on body and property, so that you would be sorry to have opposed this royal commandment.”*

In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg, assisted by Peter Schöffer from Gernsheim, published his famous bible from his print works in Mainz, the first bible to be printed with movable type. From this invention, Jewish scholarship also benefitted. The first printed edition of the Babylonian Talmud was published in Venice in 1520, printed by Daniel Bomberg. At the time, Venice was the centre of book printing. Books could be set in many

languages, such as in Hebrew, as well as in Yiddish.

On 31 October 1517, the German monk, Martin Luther, initiated the Protestant Reformation with the posting of his 95 Theses on the door of the All Saints Church, commonly known as Schlosskirche (Castle Church) in Wittenberg. Luther was summoned to appear before Emperor Charles V at the Imperial Diet of Worms in 1521 which resulted in his excommunication by the Pope.

For a long time, Jews had great hopes in Luther for religious reform, but ultimately they were disappointed when he expressed antagonistic views against them.

For German Jews, every change of ruler was an event of drastic importance, because it was necessary for them to know what sort of person was to have the power of authority over them, who was to protect them, and to whom they were obliged to pay.

In 1526, Emperor Charles V called for the Reichstag in Speyer, at which the Edict of Worms was temporarily suspended, and the decision gave landlords and owners of secular power the legal basis to enable the introduction of the Reformation.¹²

The driving force behind the introduction of the Reformation in Hesse was Philipp I, Landgrave of Hesse (1504–67), known as “the Magnanimous”.³

From Speyer, Philipp the Magnanimous presented the new Protestant doctrine to his territories. In the years between 1530 and 1540, he began his role as a ‘Zehntherr’ (landlord or tithe lord) and acted as an aristocratic village nobleman, urging the Lords of Venningen who had political authority over the village of Bickenbach (1466 to 1556) to accept the new doctrine. Shortly before 1540, he seemed to have had some success, converting the Lords of Venningen and the abbess of Paterhausen monastery, which had the patronage of Bickenbach. Pastor Michael Schäfer, who had been in Bickenbach since 1529, also turned to the new doctrine, and became the first Protestant pastor from 1540 to 1542.

1. The Reichstag – also know as “Diet”, was originally the assembly of the imperial estates of the Holy Roman Empire. It later became a council or assembly of leaders, the meeting of which could last several weeks or months.

2. The Edict of Worms was a decree issued on 25 May 1521, by Emperor Charles V banning the writings of Martin Luther and labelling him a heretic and enemy of the state as the result of the ongoing struggle between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church over the contents of his 95 Theses.

3. The title of Landgrave was a noble title used in the Holy Roman Empire, and later, in its territories. The title is similar to a duke, and above the rank of a count.

In the free Imperial city of Frankfurt, an internationally important place for trade fairs since 1330, German emperors had been elected and crowned since 1562. A prosperous Jewish community lived in this city and traded all over the world. Through its extensive trade relations and thriving business, the entire community benefited. The city council promoted this fact, but the guilds became jealous of Jewish prosperity.

Emperor Matthias, who reigned from 1612 to 1619, placed the Jewish ghetto specifically under protection of the Empire. Henceforth, he guaranteed the right of residence for Frankfurt Jews for all time.

However, in August 1614, the so-called “Fettmilch Uprising” occurred. Under the leadership of Vincent Fettmilch, a lebkuchen baker, insurgents invaded the Jewish ghetto then plundered, pillaged, murdered and expelled the Jews from the city. The uprising itself was originally directed at the mismanagement of the city council, but it became associated with the guilds’ resentment of the Jews.

It was not until the spring of 1616 that Imperial troops put an end to the revolt. Fettmilch was convicted and publicly executed. His head was displayed on a tower as a warning and a deterrence to others. The city of Frankfurt had to compensate the Jews for all the damage, and the dispossessed were led back into the ghetto under the protection of Imperial troops.

In 1556, Bickenbach came under the rule of Count Georg von Erbach, and the House of Erbach did not tolerate Jews in its domain. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), Bickenbach had been stricken.⁴ In 1622, the town’s church and 20 houses were reduced to rubble.

Spaniards, Imperialists, Swedes, people from Lorraine, and the French controlled the open country, marching through as well as taking occupation. Bickenbachers found refuge behind the walls of the nearby town of Zwingenberg. When the religious war ended and the long-awaited peace came in the late summer of 1648, about 40–50 people of what was

previously 400 inhabitants, still lived in Bickenbach.

The following war of succession spared the village and its people, but new suffering and misery was to follow.

On 31 December 1714, the debt-ridden House of Erbach sold its “pearl on the Bergstrasse” – the province of Seeheim, which included Bickenbach, to the Landgrave Ernst Ludwig of Hesse-Darmstadt (1714–1739). In 1708, he had introduced ‘par force’ hunting from France, and in 1720, he built the Bickenbach hunting lodge in order to indulge his expensive passion.⁵

Over the course of 282 years, from 1524 to 1806, the Landgraves of Hesse-Darmstadt had adopted more than 330 regulations, decrees and authorisations concerning Jews living in their territories, some of which are cited here.

1524

Regulation by Landgrave Philip I regarding, among other things, the residence of Jews in official offices of Hesse, and the escort of foreign Jews.

1539

Landgrave Philip I of Hesse issued an order regarding Jews for the Landgraviate of Hesse.

1545

A police regulation by Landgrave Philip I concerned the trade of foreign Jews in the Landgraviate.

1627

Regulation by Landgrave Georg II regarding the acquisition of land by Jews.

1651

Decree by Landgrave Georg II regarding the Sabbath service of Christians with Jews.

1655

Regulation by Landgrave Georg II regarding Jewish taxes.

1677

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig VI regarding the levying of storage charges for wine purchased by Jews in the upper county.

4. The Thirty Years War began between various Protestant and Catholic states in the Holy Roman Empire, developing into a conflict involving most of the European powers. It resulted in eight million fatalities – military as well as civilian. There was a high mortality rate, especially in German and Italian states.

5. ‘Par force’ stands for ‘by force (of dogs)’, a form of hunting where an animal was pursued and exhausted by mounted hunters and dogs before the kill was made.

1679

Regulation by Landgravine Elisabeth Dorothea regarding the demand for Jewish customs to also be paid for by foreign Jews.

1695

Letter of authorisation from Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the permission of Jewish prayer rooms.

1697

Decree by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the swearing-in of Jews and the reading out of printed Jewish regulations.

Gießen, 11 March 1697

First of all, a printed copy of the Judenordnung (Jewish regulations) must be read out to the Jew. Before the oath is taken, a book in the Hebrew language, containing God's commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, must be at hand. Thereupon the Jew shall listen to the pledge in the form of the following words:

Jew, by the one and only living and almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth and all things, and by the Torah and the law God bestowed upon his servant Moses on Mount Sinai, I give you orders to truly say and affirm whether this book here is the book upon which a Jew shall and must duly take an oath from a Christian or another Jew. Once the Jew acknowledges such invocation and confirms the book to be that very book, the Christian demanding the oath from him or someone demanding the oath on his behalf, may present and read out the following question and admonishment:

In all honesty I declare that we Christians worship the one and only almighty and living God, who created heaven and earth and all things, and that we do not have, honour, or worship another God besides this God. I tell you this so that you will not erroneously assume you were excused before God through a wrong oath by assuming we Christians had an unjust faith and worshipped foreign Gods which is not the case. And also, not to assume, that the main people of Israel were guilty of having sworn by the men of Giffan, who were however serving foreign Gods. Rather you owe it to us as Christians who worship one living and almighty God, to pledge and to take a truthful oath. May the Jew say: Yes.

Furthermore, Jew, I ask you whether you will call on the one, living and almighty God with well-considered courage free from any suspicion or wrong intentions to be your witness of truth and that you will honour all points within the Jewish regulation as read out to you devoid of illusion or deceit. May the Jew say: Yes.

This taken care of, the Jew shall place his right hand on the knot of this Book of Moses of which the seventh verse contains the Hebrew words and command as follows: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Before he takes the oath, the Jew shall repeat the following words with his head covered in front of the Christian before whom he is to take the oath, or before another person on the Christian's behalf:

Adonai, my eternal, almighty God and Lord over all Melachim, the united God of my fathers, who has given us the sacred Torah. I call upon you and the sacred name of Adonai and your almightiness to help me attest my oath, which I am about to take. Should anything I pledge be untrue or deceitful I shall be stripped of God's mercy and all sentences and curses God has inflicted upon the damned Jews shall be inflicted upon myself, and my soul and body shall no longer be deserving of the promises God has made and I shall no longer be part of the Messiah or the sacred, blessed land that was promised. By the eternal God Adonai I promise and testify that by taking this oath now I will not covet, seek or take on any declarations, interpretations, acceptance or forgiveness from any Jew or any other person I should betray. Amen.

Hereupon the following oath is to be read out to the Jew which he shall repeat clearly with his head covered:

I, ___ Jew of ___, pledge by the living God who created heaven and earth and to whom Moses appeared in front of the burning bush, that under his Serene Highness Prince and Lord, Ernst Ludwigen, Landgrave of Hesse, Prince of Hersfeld, Count of Katzenelnbogen, Dietz, Ziegenhain, Nidda, Hanau, Schaumburg, Ysenburg, Büdingen etc., that under his gracious Prince and Lord, for as long as I may remain under the protection of his princely serenity and as such remain loyal, meek,

obedient and aware, I will do everything written in the Jewish regulation just read out to me and what is described within and receive my graciously granted writ of protection. And wherever I give a false pledge I shall be eternally damned and cursed and shall be consumed by the fire that raged through Sodom and Gomorrah as well as by all curses written within the laws of the Torah, I shall be devoured by the earth as were Dathan and Abiram, and I would remain a reminder like Lot's wife who became a pillar of salt and my wife and children would become a widow and orphans respectively. So help me God, the true God Adonai.

1704

Decree regarding the organisation of Jewish funerals on Sundays.

1714

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig (Exchequer) regarding special toll obligations of Jews from the upper county for weddings and circumcisions.

1715

Letter of authorisation from Landgrave Ernst Ludwig to the Jewish community regarding their exemption of obligation to maintain Par force hunting dogs (dogs that were used for their keen sense of smell).

1719

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding a ban of trading by Jews on Christian holidays, on pain of confiscation of trading profits.

1719

Agreement by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the tobacco covenant with the Hesse court Jew, Isaak Löw.

1719

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig for the main office of Darmstadt regarding the prohibition of Jewish vagabonds in the capital.

1721

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the sentries of Jews during epidemics.

1723

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the demand for payment of protection money from Jewish leaders and the Jewish community and the security (bond) for this protection money.

1730

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig of an imperial patent regarding restraint of trade of horses and war equipment by Christians and Jews.

1735

Letter of authorisation from Landgrave Ernst Ludwig for Jews from Darmstadt regarding the purchase of a house for the construction of a synagogue.

1735

Regulation by Landgrave Ernst Ludwig regarding the mutual assistance over the way rabbis and chiefs of Darmstadt collect the contributions from Jews at a synagogue.

1739

Edict of the Hesse proselytes fund of Darmstadt regarding permission of Jewish proselytes to solicit sponsorship from elsewhere.

1749

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig VIII (Exchequer) regarding advance payment of protection money from Jews.

1750

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig VIII (Privy Council) regarding the obligation of Jews, with their protected status, to deliver to the town hall a leather bucket (as fire insurance).⁶

1750

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig VIII (Privy Council) regarding the slaughter of livestock and the sale of meat by rural Jews.

1756

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig VIII (Privy Council) regarding the reduction of "feminine legal benefits" of Jewish wives.

6. Due to fire danger, it was common for every home to have a leather bucket as a fire safety regulation, and every male citizen was obliged to help in case of fire.

1765

New proclamation of a Jewish order from 12 February 1629, amended in 11 March 1697, but at twice the rate.

1775

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig IX (Privy Council) regarding the spice trade of Jews in central Pfungstadt.

1783

Decree from the Darmstadt tax deputation regarding Jewish use of personal services in Chausseebau.

1787

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig IX concerning requests for marriage dispensation at the registrar, confirmation of marriage contracts, and registrations in the Jewish register of births, marriages and deaths.

1794

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig IX (Privy Council) regarding the punishment of sexual offenses between Jews and Christians.

1801

Regulation by Landgrave Ludwig X (Exchequer) regarding the abolition of duty for those Jews living on the left bank of the Rhine.

Darmstadt, 13 October 1801

Under the grace of God, Ludewig X, Landgrave of Hesse
...

Estimable and dear faithful ones. In collaboration with us, the accredited business officer of the French Republic, the citizen Helftinger, has informed us about the following request: Given that the Leibzoll (individual tax) formerly stipulated to be paid by Jews within the French Republic is now being suspended and is thus no longer permitted to be claimed from Jews residing in this country while passing through French territory, the same regulation should be enacted with regards to those Jews holding French citizenship living on the left bank of the Rhine when they pass through our princely territories. In view of the friendly and neighbourly accordance between the French government and our princely house, as well as the complete guaranteed reciprocity by the French, we feel obliged to graciously decree that those Jews living on the left bank of the Rhine and travelling

through our princely territories proving to be French citizens, in future will be relieved from all payments in the form of Leibzoll, without, however, granting them any further freedom of trade. In accordance with this we graciously inform you to instruct and order all of your subordinate customs officers urgently that they shall waive any Leibzoll in the case of those Jews residing on the left bank of the Rhine who prove themselves to be French citizens at any customs stations.

We are well-disposed towards Your Grace
Darmstadt, 13 October 1801

By the Grace of God, Princely Pensions Chamber of Hesse
Nungesser Moter

1805

Decree by Landgrave Ludwig X (Secret Ministry) concerning the abolition of the special Jewish tax.

Darmstadt, 19 January 1805

The electoral Hessian court factor and Kammeragent [royal chamber attendant] of the county of Isenburg, Breidenbach of Offenbach, present here, is informed about a resolution which results from his own submitted petition and those petitions submitted by others in the name of the Jewish nation. In the light of this resolution and based on the reasons put to him for the best of his nation, his Serene Highness, the Landgrave, has graciously decided to abolish the hitherto payable levy of the Leibzoll in all higher territories in such a manner, that not only local Jews but also those from foreign lands where the Leibzoll is abolished, will be exempt from its payment henceforth. The same person is advised, that in order to support the commendable activity of conducting these matters of the Jewish nation in person up to now, the authority has been instructed to make recommendations to the neighbouring administrations where the cancellation of the Leibzoll has already been fully or in parts sought or will yet be sought.

Darmstadt, 19 January 1805

Special command of the highest priority
Landgrave Secret Ministry of Hesse
by Barkhaus v(idi)t Stiebert

Both of the aforementioned decisions of the Landgrave reflect the situation he was forced to reckon with. The pressure came from the outside. In France, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte created new standards. On the 19 September 1792, Goethe described the events and gave an appraisal of the situation in his “Campaign in France 1792”, where he alluded to the French Revolution and its repercussions: “A new epoch in world history starts here and now ...”

With the Treaty of Lunéville in 1801 and the passing of the resolution of the Imperial Recess of 1803, the dissolution of the Empire took place in 1806. Kaiser Franz II abdicated from the Roman-German throne. The German Reich no longer existed as Napoleon belligerently conquered Germany, and his army pushed forward right up to the doors of Moscow. The states of Confederation of the Rhine pledged allegiance to him. The defeat of Austria was followed by Prussia. The victor divided the spoils at his discretion, and his youngest brother, Jerome, became King Jerome I of the newly founded Kingdom of Westphalia.

The Napoleonic tyranny called for the resistance of the repressed European peoples, which led to bloody rebellions. But the journey from Moscow via Leipzig to Waterloo was a journey of suffering and death for Napoleon’s Great Army as it coped with the cold Russian winter, which brought starvation and disease, as well as constant threats from Cossacks and Russian fighters.

However, positive innovations did come out of the Napoleonic period. Prussian statesmen Baron vom Stein and Karl August von Hardenberg, who later became Prime Minister of Prussia, were instrumental in feudal reforms and the abolition of serfdom and, among other things, Jewish emancipation.

The European political landscape after the fall of Napoleon, through to the Congress of Vienna of 1815, the French July Revolution of 1830 and the February Revolution of 1848, gave the signal for the German Revolutions of 1848–49.

As a result of the Congress of Vienna held in 1814–15 at which leaders gathered to reorganise Europe after the Napoleonic wars, the Grand Duchy of Hesse–Darmstadt was given a new constitution. On 17 December 1820, a constitutional monarchy was introduced and this remained in place until 1918. The Ludwigsmonument (also known as Langer Lui or Langer Ludwig), in the middle of Darmstadt, is in recognition of Ludwig I who was the Grand Duke of Hesse and Rhine at the time of the new constitution.

Hesse’s State Constitution

Section I: Head of State

Grand Duke

§ 1 The Grand Duke is the Head of State. All rights of state authority are united in him. That authority is exercised by him in the constitutional charter of fixed regulations.

His person is holy and inviolable. 17 December 1820, Article 4

Attacks against him are high treason and insulting his Majesty will be met with severe punishment. Displays of both are directly against the law. The violation of the Grand Duke’s crests or other public symbols of the Grand Duke will be punished according to criminal law.

§ 2 During their establishment of residency, all citizens of the state, as well as all servants of the state at the time of their appointment, are bound by the constitutional oath, in case it has not occurred earlier, it is as follows:

“I swear loyalty to the Grand Duke, obedience to the law and observance of the state constitution.”

Article 108, 1 September 1848.

§ 4 The Grand Duke gladly gives hearing to the justified questions and appeals of his subjects.

... All written communications to the Grand Duke are to use the title of “His Grand Ducal Highness of Hesse and the Rhine”, and the form of address is to be: “Your Highest Honour”.

In Section XII: Matters pertaining to Jews are outlined in paragraphs § 303 to § 313.

Article I: Accommodation and marriage

§ 303 A. General policies:

Due to the legislation dated 2 August 1848 sanctioning the equality of political and civil rights of different religious groups, in the provinces of Starkenburg and Upper Hesse former exemptions for Jews are now obsolete and also in the province of Rhenish Hesse – previously under French sovereignty – individual remaining exemptions are now obsolete.

The former special prerequisite for protective accommodation of Jews alongside any form of obligation to make special payments to the nation or municipality have now been abolished.

§ 304 Person's status and relationships

I. Family names. It is decreed that Jews take on a permanent family name and use it unaltered in all public and private records.

Decree dated 20 July 1808 and preference resolution dated 15 September 1808 for the province of Rhenish Hesse etc.

II. Civil status register for Jews and Jewish register including births, deaths, marriages.

Article II: Jewish trade and business

§ 305 In line with the civic equality for Jews all former restrictions and exemption clauses with regards to trade and business of Jews are now regarded as obsolete.

Article III: Jewish-run community relations and institutions

§ 306 I. Israelite local council

§ 307 Election of such

§ 308 Official position

§ 309 II. From Israelite parishioners

§ 310 III. Religious practice and tuition

The religious practice of Israelites is led by state-appointed Rabbis as part of the existing Rabbinic parish.

... the former jurisdiction of Rabbis has been suspended.

... paragraph P.Str.G.Art. 232 serves to protect religious practice against disturbances.

... to manage external order, not so religious customs can be persecuted, but where special regulations for synagogues are deemed necessary.

... religious tuition of Jews is considered a private matter.

In addition to salaries paid from Israelite municipal funds for religious tutors in relevant municipalities, all members of a community are liable to contributions. To qualify for employment, religious tutors must pass the state exam and hold a licence from the government authority.

... anything relating to the office of Shechita, the principle was adopted that the appointment of kosher butchers now falls to the Israelite authorities and that the administrative authorities may only intervene in the case of complaints, i.e. if a Rabbi's approbation is insufficient.⁷

... with regards to the teaching of young people, it was decreed on 17 July 1823 that in all those places where Mosaic (Jewish) religious communities do not run their own schools with a valid licence from government authorities or under their supervision, children must attend regular schools except in the case of religious education.

... Jewish children generally celebrate their confirmation at the age of 14. If sufficient knowledge is present, this can take place earlier at the age of 13½. If dispensation is sought, the Rabbi makes any decisions initially under the condition that any recourses are submitted to the governing authority.

7. The Hebrew term Shechita is the Jewish method of slaughtering permitted animals and poultry for food. It is performed by the Shochet who is trained in the only method by which to produce kosher meat and poultry.

§ 311 IV. Circumcision of Israelite boys may only be performed in the presence and with the approval of a legally responsible medical practitioner and by a person who holds a certificate from the regional medical authority confirming his competency. Otherwise a considerable police fine will be imposed.

The fee for such services is 1 florin and 30 kreutzer for low-income families and 3 florins for wealthy families; the fee for the certificate is 1 florin and 30 kreutzer. From 17 January 1844.

Following the introduction of the mark, the conversion of guilder and kreutzer is as follows:

*1 florin and 30 kreutzer = 2.57 marks
3 florin = 5.14 marks*

§ 312 V. All public institutions of the Israelite religious communities such as synagogues, burial places, Jewish female baths and other places are subject to police supervision. Any imposition with regards to the facility of female baths against the will of the Israelite directors is inadmissible, as they are considered simply a type of practice that has been removed from the secular world.

§ 313 VI. The association for improved conditions for Israelites protected by the State government is a recommendation to participating local councils.

Continuing on, a chronological review of the German Revolution of 1848–49, the German Confederation, the North German Confederation, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, and Bismarck's Foundation of the German Empire must take place. A glimpse into the Constitution of the German Reich of 1849 created by the Parliament in Frankfurt, showed documents granting fundamental rights to Jews for the first time. This "condition" was formally abolished again in 1851.

After victory in 1871, and with the war indemnity of five billion francs paid by the French after the peace treaty of May 1871, it became possible for Bismarck to create economic prosperity in the Reich. Industrialisation and, subsequently, the industrial proletariat, and socialist laws and the accompanying social legislation did not improve internal peace in the country. Again, the insidious anti-Semitism emerged and spread.

When Kaiser Wilhelm II ascended the throne, he was of the opinion that Germany could be the number one world power without England and Russia being able to respond. But after the departure of Chancellor Bismarck from the helm in 1890, dismissed by the Kaiser, the German ship was capsized by foreign affairs.

In 1904, the 'Entente Cordiale' was signed between France and England, which resolved some long-standing issues and established a better relationship between the two countries. The agreement also provided a degree of protection from any form of aggression from Germany.

After the Moroccan Crisis, when Wilhelm II visited Tangiers and challenged France's influence, Germany, with the exception of Austria-Hungary, stood alone.

With the outbreak of WWI in 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II stated: "I only know Germans". The so-called fatherless journeymen that he simply referred to as workers, trade unionists, and social democrats, were now in demand as cannon fodder. And they obeyed! All the domestic political quarrels were forgotten.

The people hastened to the flag. However, WWI was lost, and the German Army blamed it on 'Dolchstoßlegende' (stab-in-the-back legend), a break down on the home front through actions of civilians and politicians in Berlin. Blame was placed on socialism, communism, trade unions and Jews, and the fuelled hatred of the hereditary enemy, France.

Burdened with heavy reparations, and the hardship of the Great Depression of 1923–1929, the situation gave the chance for republican supporters to consolidate and take Germany on the road to the Third Reich.

Hitler seized power on 30 January 1933. The cry, "Germany, awaken!" which came into common use since the founding of the NSDAP in 1920, became, for many who were called "enemies of the people", more noticeable in the Third Reich. As a result of WWII, this regime brought abomination and misery to the people of occupied Europe.

The following was proposed in the party manifesto: "A citizen can only be a national patriot. A national patriot can only be one of German blood, regardless of denomination. Therefore no Jew can be a national patriot!"

With defamatory intentions, Hitler claimed in his book *Mein Kampf* (1925) that the goal of Jews was among other things “to destroy the hated white races, to topple their cultural and political heights and to advance their own men”.

Even before the Nazi takeover, the enemy of the “Jew” was already carefully and coherently supported in the written word, in line with the Regime.

From 1933, Germany and its people were led and ruled under tight policies of the “Party = State” structure. In order to keep domestic peace in accordance with the new paradigm, communists, social democrats, unionists, social misfits and Jews were persecuted.

As of 28 February 1933, Article 48, Paragraph 2 of the Reich Constitution – to repulse subversive communist acts of violence – was the directive the Reich President followed in order to protect the people and state (Reichsgesetzblatt Part I, No. 17). Through this act, the first step was thus taken: to persecute and eliminate undesirable elements, as they were called.

This resulted in the directive announced on 1 March 1933 by the Reich President regarding actions of betrayal of the German people as activities constituting high treason. The so-called “Enabling Act”, the Law for the Rectification of the People and the Reich was hastily put into the law-making machinery of the Nazi State on 24 March 1933.

Today, it is still generally believed in part, that Hitler overruled the entire Reich constitution of 1919. In fact, only parts of it were overruled, but those parts were far-reaching laws. It was in fact the victors of WWII, the Allied Control Council (its members were the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France – referred to as the Four Powers) who passed Control Council Law No.1 – the repealing of Nazi Laws in September 1945.

It repealed numerous legislations put in place by the Nazi regime, including discrimination against any person based on race, or religious beliefs. However, the legitimacy of the law set by the Allied Control Council was challenged on the grounds that they were acting as occupying forces and the German Republic was not represented.

From hatred of Jews, to persecution of Jews, to the final solution – the Holocaust – this was Hitler’s main and deliberate intention.

Two months after the Nazi takeover, hatred turned into persecution. On 1 April 1933, the first general measure of violence against Jews was proclaimed all over the Reich, that is, in all regions, be that town or village. The “Party” publicly called for the boycotting of Jewish businesses, without any opposition from the government. Pressure on doctors, lawyers and notaries was provoked. Jewish children could no longer be allowed to go to schools and universities.

In the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, 7 April 1933, as became customary in other laws and ordinances, the “Arian Paragraph” came first, which stipulated that civil servants of “non-Arian descent”, that is, Jews, were to be retired.

If the persons concerned had not been in service for ten years, they would not receive a pension, and possibly face immediate destitution. Those who had been in office since 1 August 1914 were spared. Also spared were those who had fought at the front, or whose fathers or sons had fallen on the front line during WWI. In 1935 these exemption clauses were repealed.

The next discrimination, that is, the vilification of Jews, was brought by the Law against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities, 25 April 1933.

The first terrible signal of things to come was the book burnings. Under the leadership of Nazi sub-organisations, the Militant League for German Culture (1928), and the German Student Body (1926), a four-week campaign called ‘Against the non-German Spirit’ began on 12 April, which was proclaimed as one of enlightenment. This culminated in the action on 10 May 1933. Writings and books of immorality and corruption by ostracised writers were given over to the flames.

The broad masses in Germany now paid tribute to Hitler’s “idea”, but did not yet see the abyss. Those who had guessed what was to come were silenced, or found themselves in concentration camps. Others were silent out of fear or cowardice. The majority of the people’s behaviour was demonstrated by the enormous mass gatherings. The solution was: “Oh Leader command us, we follow thee!”

In Berlin, Reich Propaganda Minister Dr. Joseph Goebbels allowed 20,000 books to be publicly burned. The local Nazi elite in Bickenbach, by means of their supporters, removed the entire body of written material, the club flag, and even the “Germanic” drinking horn of the 1894 Workers’ Choir Group from the club meeting place, Zur Waldesruh, owned by Adam Daum, and burned them in front of the building.

During this time, Dr. Carl Hauck, (possibly from the Talhof mill in Bickenbach) packed some valuable books from the library in his apartment in Düsseldorf-Benrath into a box, and his chauffeur, Georg Ganser, brought them to my grandparents’ house in Bickenbach. These were banned books and, although they were unfortunately packed into a box that was not dust-proof, they did not fall victim to the flames.

As a 12 or 13 year old, that is, in 1943 or 1944, I found this box in the hayloft of my grandparents house on Hügelstrasse 17, then known as “Street of the SA”, and I prised it open. My grandmother bade me under the strongest reprimand to never talk of this “discovery” and that the contents of this chest could bring bad luck to the Hauck and Ganser families. My mother and father gave even stricter lectures over the possible consequences. I thus kept this secret to myself.

During the summer holidays I went to the hayloft to read. There were a lot of new things which were hitherto unknown to me. Two books, which I read under that hot roof, are still very clear in my memory to this day: *Die schöne Sünderin oder Zwei Frauen unter einem Dach* (*The Beautiful Sinners or Two Women under one Roof*). Beyond even the raciest of romance novels from the belle époque, I blushed more than once reading it. My grandmother – the word “granny” was foreign to me – was under the impression that I was upstairs reading some Karl May books, that is, [American] Indian stories. And so I was permitted to read.

With the second book, entitled *Jettchen Gebert*, I definitely believed back then that I was discovering further erotic practices. I now see that it was definitely about the love and loss of a young Jewish woman in Berlin, who was in love with a Christian. More by accident than anything else, I found a reprint of

Jettchen Gebert in a bookstore in Darmstadt about 1980.

Jettchen Gebert was written by Georg Hermann, and published by Fischer Taschenbuch. The following is a synopsis:

With its publication in 1906, this endearing novel from the Berlin Biedermeier period brought immediate fame to the art critic and author Georg Hermann. Today, three generations later, this story is just as enthralling. Restrainedly written, touching, melancholic, a love story of a beautiful Jewish girl, set around 1837 in Berlin, it is a genuine “new-old” pleasure to read.

The lovely and clever Henriette (known as Jettchen) Gebert grows up as an orphan in the wealthy household of Uncle Salomon and Little Aunt Rieke in the middle of Berlin. She soon senses that she does not fit into their austere world.

It is thus no accident that she falls in love with a romantic outsider from bourgeois society, the young and talented, but also poor literati, Dr Friedrich Kößling. Little Aunt Rieke prevents the marriage of this “expensive beauty” to an academic who holds no position. Instead she pairs off Jettchen with her devious, small and rather fat nephew Julius.

Jettchen complies with the plans of the family and just after the wedding with her unloved, enterprising cousin, she panics and collapses.

Georg Hermann, who is often identified as a follower of Theodor Fontane, did not invent *Jettchen Gebert* and other characters of the large Jewish Berlin family. They were characters from his own family album. With a love of detail and an skill with storytelling, he interwove portraits of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Biedermeier Berlin in his touching love story.

Georg Hermann (a pen name of Georg Borchardt) was born in 1871 and was the son of a poor Jewish merchant in Berlin. In 1933, he went into exile to Laren, Holland. In 1943, he perished in Auschwitz. Today, the novels *Jettchen Gebert*, *Henriette Jacoby* and *Kubinke*, are among the best known novels of this Berlin writer.

After more than 40 years, I devoured the book in one sitting and suddenly I could smell the hayloft again. Whether I wanted to or not, I had been returned to the small hayloft of my grandparents, Ludwig and Margarethe Ganser, in the forbidden time of 1943/1944.

The National Socialist System acted just as rigorously against what they called “degenerate art.” In July 1937, a travelling exhibition was instigated under this slogan. The rationale of this action:

“We do not reject the Modernists because they are modern, but because in their unrestrained individualistic caprice, they have an intellectually destructive effect and have propagated a subhuman state.”

In the territory of the Reich, around 5,000 paintings and about 12,000 graphic works were removed from public collections. Distinguished artists had to leave Germany. The National Socialist art critics coined the particular expression “Jewish Art” for Jewish artists. Any art that denounced social problems, fell under the brand of “Bolshevist Art”. In May 1938, the Law of the confiscation of Products of Degenerate Art was decreed. Thus the legal groundwork was also laid for the confiscation of works to benefit the Reich’s coffers, one instance of which was the public auction in Switzerland in 1938.

Over 1,000 oil paintings and over 3,000 watercolours, graphic works, and drawings were burnt in the open marketplace in Berlin in March 1939. All actions, until their downfall in 1945, embodied the Party’s absolute state authority. The actual power of the state lay in the NSDAP, the enforcers of the legislation, plans and acts of the Party.

The masses had to be reached and mobilised once again, with help via the medium of radio. The National Socialist propaganda apparatus brought this about in 1933, with “Nazi-era radio” which cost less than 80 Reichsmarks to bring onto the market, and spread the National Socialist propaganda to the people far and wide. Current radio sets hitherto had cost between 200 to 400 Reichsmarks. The VE 301, the name a reflection of the date 30 January 1933, was only equipped with medium wave, in order to prevent the reception of foreign broadcasters.

By the end of 1933, 680,000 of these Nazi-era radios were sold. At the same time, the number of radio listeners was listed as 5.4 million. The slogan was: “All Germany hears the Führer through the radio.”

In October 1933, Germany exited the League of Nations. In 1934, in Berlin, Martin Niemöller founded the Pfarrernotbund (Emergency Covenant of Pastors) a combined Christian resistance to National Socialism. The Emergency Covenant of Pastors was followed by the founding of the Confessing Church which opposed the Nazification of German Protestant churches. For his actions, Niemöller was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1938 to 1945, but he somehow managed to survive the ordeal.

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Part 1

Issued in Berlin, 28 February 1933. No. 17

Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State (Reichstag Fire Decree) from 28 February 1933

On the basis of Article 48, Section 2, of the German Constitution, the following is decreed as a defensive measure against Communist acts of violence that endanger the state:

Article 1

Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are suspended until further notice. Thus, restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press, on the right of assembly and the right of association, and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications, and warrants for house searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property are permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed.

Article 2

If any state fails to take the necessary measures to restore public safety and order, the Reich government may temporarily take over the powers of the highest state authority.

Article 3

State and local authorities must obey the orders decreed by the Reich government on the basis of § 2.

Article 4

Whoever provokes, appeals for, or incites the disobedience of the orders given out by the supreme state authorities or the authorities subject to them for the execution of this decree, or the orders given by the Reich government according to § 2, can be punished – insofar as the deed is not covered by other decrees with more severe punishments – with imprisonment of not less than one month, or with a fine from 150 to 15,000 Reichsmarks.

Whoever endangers human life by violating § 1 is to be punished by sentence to a penitentiary, under mitigating circumstances with imprisonment of not less than six months and, when the violation causes the death of a person, with death, under mitigating circumstances with a penitentiary sentence of not less than two years. In addition, the sentence may include the confiscation of property.

Whoever provokes or incites an act contrary to the public welfare is to be punished with a penitentiary sentence, under mitigating circumstances, with imprisonment of not less than three months.

Article 5

The crimes which under the Criminal Code are punishable with life in a penitentiary are to be punished with death: i.e., in Sections 81 (high treason), 229 (poisoning), 306 (arson), 311 (explosion), 312 (flooding), 315, paragraph 2 (damage to railways), 324 (general public endangerment through poison).

Insofar as a more severe punishment has not been previously provided for, the following are punishable with death or with life imprisonment or with imprisonment not to exceed 15 years:

1. Anyone who undertakes to kill the Reich President or a member or a commissioner of the Reich government or of a state government, or provokes such a killing, or agrees to commit it, or accepts such an offer, or conspires with another for such a murder;
2. Anyone who under Section 115, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code (serious rioting) or of Section 125, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code (serious disturbance of the peace) commits these acts with arms or cooperates consciously and intentionally with an armed person;
3. Anyone who commits a kidnapping under Section 239 of the Criminal Code with the intention of making use of the kidnapped person as a hostage in the political struggle.

Article 6

This decree enters into force on the day of its promulgation.

Berlin, 28 February 1933.

The Reich President, von Hindenburg
 The Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
 The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick
 The Reich Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner





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Part 1

Issued in Berlin, 1 March 1933. No. 18

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Published in Part II, No. 7, issued 27 Feb. 1933: Decree of the Reich government on the provisional application of an Additional Agreement to the French-German trade agreement. – Notice on the International Convention on the fight against trafficking of girls [*known as 'Maid Trade'*]. – Notice of termination of individual tariff commitments and tariff reductions resulting from the Additional Agreement on the French-German trade agreement. – Notice of ratification of the Agreement on International Exhibitions by the Netherlands. – Notice on the participation of Australia, Papua and the mandated area of New Guinea administered by Australia to the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, as amended by The Hague on 6 November 1925. – Notice of the participation of Latvia to the Conventions concerning uniform determination of rules for collision of ships, assistance, and maritime salvage. – Three notices on protection of inventions, samples and trademarks from expositions.

Published in Part II, No. 8, issued 28 Feb. 1933: Decree of the Reich government on the provisional application of the trade agreement between the German Reich and the Republic of Costa Rica from 26 October 1932.

Decree of the Reich President against betrayal of the German people and highly treasonous activities.

From 28 February 1933.

On the basis of Article 48, paragraph 2, of the German Constitution, the following is decreed:

1st Section

Strengthening rules against treason and betrayal of military secrets

Article 1

Anyone who commits treason or spies on military secrets can be punished.

1. In the case of serious betrayal of military secrets (Article 1, (3) of the Law against the betrayal of military secrets) with death;

2. In the case of treason under Article 92, (1) of the Criminal Code, and in the case of the betrayal of military secrets pursuant to Article 1, (1) and (2) of the law against the betrayal of military secrets with death or lifelong imprisonment;

3. In the case spying on military secrets (Article 3 of the Law against the betrayal of military secrets) with death or with lifelong imprisonment or with imprisonment up to fifteen years.

Article 2

(1) Anyone counterfeiting or distorting objects of which secrecy is required before a foreign government in the case of authenticity for the welfare of the Reich, with the intention of acquainting them with a foreign government or communicating them publicly shall be punished with imprisonment of up to ten years.

(2) Also punished are those who make known to foreign governments the objects or messages of which he knows are false and whose secrecy is necessary in the case of authenticity or truth for the welfare of the Reich before a foreign government without publicly mentioning them as false.

(3) Anyone who procures objects of the kind referred to in paragraph (2) with the intention of making them known to a foreign government without publicly declaring them as false will be punished with imprisonment of up to five years.

(4) If there are mitigating circumstances, imprisonment shall not be less than one year.

Article 3

(1) Anyone who has publicly communicated or discussed objects or messages whose secrecy would be required before a foreign government for the welfare of the Reich, if they had not already been publicly communicated to the foreign government, or communicated publicly, thereby endangering the welfare of the Reich, shall be imprisoned for not less than three months. It makes no difference whether the objects or messages are real or false, true or untrue.

(2) The act shall be pursued only at the request of the Reich government. The withdrawal of the application is permitted.

Article 4

The provisions of Section 4 (2) (2) of the Criminal Code apply to crimes and offenses against Sections 2, 3 of this Ordinance.

2nd Section

Combating high treason

Article 5

(1) If, in the case of treason, the act is aimed at rendering the Reichswehr or the police unable to perform its duty to protect the Reich and its countries against attacks on their external or internal population, breaches are punishable under articles 81 to 86 of the Criminal Code.

(2) In the case of mitigating circumstances, the penalty in the case of article 81 of the Criminal Code is imprisonment; in the cases of articles 83 to 85 of the Criminal Code prison of not less than one year;

in the case of article 86 of the Criminal Code prison from one up to three years.

Article 6

(1) Anyone who has publications, that, by request or incitement, ask for violent struggle against the sovereignty or its preparation; or by request of incitement ask for highly treacherous strikes, a general strike, any mass strike or any other act of treason; or (under the provisions of articles 81 to 86 of the Criminal Code) even though he could have recognised the criminal content upon careful examination of printed matter, will be subject to more severe punishment in other regulations and is punished with imprisonment from one month to three years.

(2) Article 86a of the Criminal Code shall apply the necessary changes to objects which are used or intended for the purpose of committing an offense punishable by this provision.

3rd Section

Rules on jurisdiction and criminal proceedings

Article 7

(1) For crimes and offenses against articles 2, 3 of this regulation, article 134 of the court constitutional act applies.

(2) For offenses against article 6 the court judges are responsible. Article 6 of the Introductory Law to the Court of Jurisdiction is not applicable.

Article 8

(1) In the courts belonging to the jurisdiction of the Reich supreme court, transactions which are required by the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure in the preparatory proceedings may also be carried out by one or more special investigators of the court. The appointment and the distribution of transactions among several investigators is carried out by the Reich Minister of Justice for the duration of one financial year. Every member of a German court and every magistrate can be appointed to the investigator.

(2) The Reich supreme court shall decide on the appeal against an injunction of the investigator.

(3) The Reich Minister of Justice shall issue the necessary legal and administrative provisions.





Article 9

If a printed copy has been confiscated in accordance with article 23 of the Act on the Press of 7 May 1874 (Reichsgesetzblatt, p. 65) or pursuant to article 8 of the Ordinance for Protection of the German People of 4 February 1933 (Reichsgesetzblatt I, p. 35) the content of the printed matter establishes the offense of a criminal offense belonging to the jurisdiction of the Reich supreme court, the following provisions shall apply if a judge of the Reich supreme court is appointed:

1. On the confirmation or abolition of the provisional embargo, the investigating judge of the Reich supreme court has to take the place of the magistrate.
2. The decision must be taken without delay. The authority, which may embargo without an order of the superior prosecutor, must send the negotiations to the prosecutor within twelve hours at the latest. The prosecutor shall have the request for judicial confirmation if he has ordered the embargo himself within 24 hours after the order of the embargo, otherwise within 24 hours after the receipt of the negotiations to the investigator, provided that he does not revoke the embargo by means of an immediately enforceable decree. The investigator shall adopt the decision within 24 hours of receipt of the request.
3. A period of seven days shall be substituted for the time limit specified in article 24 (4) of the Act on the Press.
4. The immediate adjudication is lodged against the decision of the investigator, which repeals the provisional embargo. The appeal has suspensory effect.
5. The provision of Section 26 of the Act on the Press is not applicable.

Article 10

- (1) The criminal proceedings which fall within the jurisdiction of the Reich supreme court shall be without prejudice if the facts of the case are simple and, therefore, they are not necessary for the preparation of the main hearing, in accordance with the discretion of the Chief Prosecutor.
- (2) The Reichsgericht may, after the submission of

the application, decide ex officio or at the request of the alleged offender to initiate a preliminary investigation if it appears necessary to clarify the facts or to prepare the defence of the defendant.

4th Section

Entry into force of the Regulation

Article 11

Section 6 of this Ordinance shall enter into force on the day following its promulgation. The regulation shall enter into force on the fourth day after its promulgation.

Berlin, 28 February 1933.

Reich President
von Hindenburg

Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler

Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick

Reich Minister of Justice
Dr. Gürtner

Third Decree about the Reich Commissioner of Aviation. From 28 February 1933.

From the Decree from 23 July 1927 (Reichsgesetzblatt I, p. 237) the central department for air traffic control has been named "Reich Office for Air Traffic Control".

Berlin, 28 February 1933.

Reich President
von Hindenburg

Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler

Reich Commissioner of Aviation
Göring

Reich Law Gazette

Part 1

Issued in Berlin, 24 March 1933. No. 25

Law to Remove the Distress of the People and the State (Enabling Act) from 23 March 1933.

The Reichstag has passed the following law, which is, with the approval of the Reichsrat, herewith promulgated, after it has been established that it meets the requirements for legislation altering the Constitution.

Article 1

National laws can be enacted by the Reich Cabinet as well as in accordance with the procedure established in the Constitution. This also applies to the laws referred to in Article 85, Paragraph 2, and in Article 87 of the Constitution.

Article 2

The national laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet may deviate from the Constitution as long as they do not affect the position of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat. The powers of the President remain undisturbed.

Article 3

The national laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet shall be prepared by the Chancellor and published in the Reichsgesetzblatt. They come into effect, unless otherwise specified, the day after their publication. Articles 68-77 of the Constitution do not apply to the laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet.

Article 4

Treaties of the Reich with foreign states which concern matters of national legislation do not require the consent of the bodies participating in legislation. The Reich Cabinet is empowered to issue the necessary provisions for the implementation of these treaties.

Article 5

This law becomes effective on the day of its publication. It becomes invalid on April 1, 1937; it also becomes invalid if the present Reich Cabinet is replaced by another.

Berlin, 24 March 1933.

Reich President
von Hindenburg

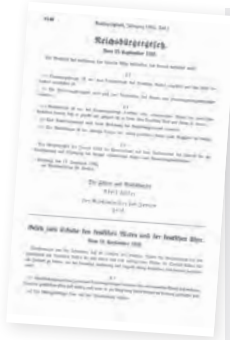
Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler

Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick

Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs
Baron von Neurath

Reich Minister of Finances
Count Schwerin von Krosigk





Reich Law Gazette, 1935, Part 1, p.1146

Reich Citizenship Law from 15 September 1935

The Reichstag has unanimously enacted the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

Article 1

- (1) A subject of the state is a person who enjoys the protection of the German Reich and who in consequence has specific obligations toward it.
- (2) The status of subject of the state is acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and the Reich Citizenship Law.

Article 2

- (1) A Reich citizen is a subject of the state who is of German or related blood, and proves by his conduct that he is willing and fit to faithfully serve the German people and the Reich.
- (2) Reich citizenship is acquired through the granting of a Reich citizenship certificate.
- (3) The Reich citizen is the sole bearer of full political rights in accordance with the law.

Article 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer, will issue the legal and administrative orders required to implement and complete this law.

Nuremberg, 15 September 1935,
at the Reich Party Congress of Freedom

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour from 15 September 1935

Moved by the understanding that purity of German blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

Article 1

- (1) Marriages between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law.
- (2) Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the state prosecutor.

Date of issue: Berlin, 16 September 1935, p.1147

Article 2

Extramarital relations between Jews and subjects of the state of Germany or related blood are forbidden.

Article 3

Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of Germany or related blood who are under 45 years old.

Article 4

- (1) Jews are forbidden to fly the Reich or national flag or display Reich colours.
- (2) They are, on the other hand, permitted to display the Jewish colours. The exercise of this right is protected by the state.

Article 5

- (1) Any person who violates the prohibition under Article 1 will be punished with imprisonment with hard labour.
- (2) A male who violates the prohibition under Article 2 will be punished with imprisonment or prison with hard labour.
- (3) Any person violating the provisions under Articles 3 or 4 will be punished with imprisonment with hard labour for up to one year and a fine, or with one or the other of these penalties.

Article 6

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer and the Reich Minister of Justice, will issue the legal and administrative regulations required to implement and complete this law.

Article 7

The law takes effect on the day following promulgation, except for Article 3, which goes into force on 1 January 1936.

Nuremberg, 15 September 1935,
at the Reich Party Congress of Freedom

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick

The Reich Minister of Justice
Dr Gürtner

The Deputy of the Führer
R. Hess (Reich Minister without Portfolio)



Translation: Attributed to Nuremberg staff.

Transcript from a newsletter of the “German Christians”, from Alsbach, made available shortly before going to press.

German Christians

Unification of the National Church

Rural Community, Bayerische Ostmark

(Bayerische Ostmark – Bavarian Eastern District – was an administrative sub-division of Bavaria created by the Nazis.)

Bayreuth II, 21 August 1939

Postbox 1

APPEAL

To all German Christians of the Bayerische Ostmark

Dear Comrades!

The religious situation in Germany is increasingly demanding a final decision. A wide range of our people no longer feel at home in the churches of both denominations,

1) because a large part of the clergy still denies any cooperation with the 3rd Reich and thus constantly creates a source of opposition against the state and the party, which is not understood by the people;

2) because all of our people are tired of the discord between the denominations and are longing for an end to the eternal dispute between Catholics and Protestants and countless other sects. The people have long given up their support for us Germans, who have been overcome by all that divides us, to continue to be divided in their faith, considering the same God is above all of us. But who is it, who wants to deny us Germans religious unification? Who is it, who categorically keeps the people apart in the various denominations, so that they cannot stand united before God, living in one faith and worship in one church? The spiritual guardians of the denominations want to avoid this.

But, the voice of the people saying “Give us religious peace” will be stronger than all priestly compulsion. The church leaders were unable to prevent the ending of the political struggle amongst the parties to become a single community

under one leader; nor will they be able to prevent our victorious ending of the fight between the religious parties and the building of a new German community of faith in the true spirit of Christ, a renewal that will replace the fragmented Jewish degenerates, and international Christianity on the basis of a positive Christianity, as enshrined in the program of the party and in accordance with the slogan:

“One people. One Reich. One Führer. One God. One church.”

We were able to win one position after another during our fight of almost ten years. Most church territories are already in our hands and will be reformed according to our principles. Today, we count millions of members and supporters in all districts of the empire. Each year, our meetings are becoming more impressive, in particular the rallies during our state-wide conference in Eisenach. There is no doubt that our ultimate victory cannot be stopped.

In addition, we have recruited tens of thousands of new members and supporters in the Bayerische Ostmark in the last two years alone that are standing ready to fight on.

We have established our community groups in each district and are now expanding our base further. The resistance of the enemy is becoming visibly weaker. A large proportion of the parish priests have begun to rethink, having recognised the fatal error of their ways and have admitted that they can no longer keep our ideas out of Bavaria. In recent weeks, a schism has become apparent within the Bavarian confessional front, a sure sign of their commencing dissolution. Our opponents are also falling apart in Bavaria.

Dear Comrades!

All this is an incentive for us to now commit our whole strength to the battle of this winter. In the coming winter months, we will reinforce our efforts to educate the people who have been filled with hatred and been misled and have stood aside until now, in order to get them across to join us.

At this moment, as we are preparing for the final fight, I am addressing you all with the following

Call to action:

- 1) *Take part in all our meetings and religious worships without exception. Show that we are organising to unite and are dedicated to our great, holy cause and remain as a solid block of indestructible comradeship in the struggle for our national church.*
 - 2) *Do not only come by yourself, but bring your family and friends to every event. Look at this personal activism as a self-evident duty.*
 - 3) *Provide your services to the local leaders of our organisation happily when you are called to cooperate and called upon to do special duties. Be mindful that every single one of us must practically and actively lend a hand in order to promote the whole cause. In relation to the following, I especially appeal to your willingness to make sacrifices which you have shown before and of which I am sure you will show again now, in order to support the great breakthrough of our idea.*
 - 4) *Each member is to purchase and wear the badge of the German Christians, which is now deemed throughout the empire as a sign of recognition of all German Christians and as the symbol of our struggle. Those who do not have it yet, are to order it immediately from their community leader or home cell leader, or request it directly from the Secretariat of Bayreuth (small size 70 Pfg., large size 90 Pfg.)*
 - 5) *From now on, our central publication, the weekly magazine, "The National Church", with a special supplement for Bavaria, belongs in every German Christian home. (Subscription price per month 46 Pfg.) It is absolutely necessary that all comrades read this publication and then pass it on to educate others. Place your order at the post office or at our office immediately.*
 - 6) *This year's main State Conference will take place in Eisenach on the 8th and 9th of October. I expect that as large a number of comrades as possible from all communities will join the shared rides organised from all larger cities. Reserve these dates now.*
 - 7) *A special donation of 50 Pfg. will be levied per member to allow the State Conference to take place, which understandably will be very costly. I cordially ask you to make this unique sacrifice in support of our ideas, in the awareness that each sacrifice will help our great cause and bring us a step closer to victory.*
 - 8) *On Sunday, the 26th November we will hold our regional meeting in Bayreuth where the heads of the national church union, Leffler and Leutheuser will be speaking. All comrades of the Bayerische Ostmark will meet at this regional meeting. (Siegfried Leffler and Julius Leutheuser founded the German Christians and actively agitated for the Nazis)*
 - 9) *In the coming weeks, the sale of our German Christian Yearbook for 1940 will start again. I certainly hope that every German Christian family will purchase this valuable, full-featured and inexpensive yearbook.*
 - 10) *I call on every comrade to attract a new member within the next four weeks. Do not spare any effort. We need your personal commitment.*
- Now comrades, stand with us faithfully and engage with us confidently to work with holy passion and fervent idealism. Know that our faith and sacrifice will pave the way for the ultimate goal of the national church!*
- In this we must succeed! We do our work in joyful trust in God and with unconditional obedience for the leader whose followers we are in this part of the fight.*
- Heil Hitler!*
- Adolf Daum*
Director of the Bayerische Ostmark community



Volksstimme (Voice of the People)

Social Democratic publication for south-west Germany Frankfurt, Saturday, 9 November 1918

Ahead to the German Republic!

Abdication of Wilhelm; renunciation of throne by crown prince; Ebert is Reich Chancellor; elections for the Constituent Assembly.



Civil Service Law, Berlin, 11 October 1936.

Refusal of the Hitler salute; Cause for dismissal

“Communities call for poll tax”

Hitler took on ideas and aims from the Weimar period and began work on the first motorway section between Frankfurt and Darmstadt. At the time, there was no need for this based on traffic volume, but there was a need based on military strategy – to build access routes towards France.

At the time, it is estimated that there were about 20,000 cars and 14,000 trucks registered in the Reich. The construction of “Adolf Hitler’s Roads” provided work and wages for thousands of unemployed. Things were looking up! Later came the construction of the Westwall and the armament of the Army, Navy and Air Force.⁸ There was enough work available for all, and people went on holiday with the KdF, even abroad.⁹

The slogan of the SPD, “Who votes for Hitler, votes for war”, seemed to have been forgotten. Thousands of people such as Jews, political suspects and political opponents were able to leave – or had to leave – their German homeland, but at the same time these people were deprived of all their material possessions by the dictatorship. And not all got away! Visa requirements, guarantees and much more were asked for. There was little willingness around the world to offer refuge. These people were disgraced, arrested, tortured, driven to death and the world remained silent. The victors have only talked about the Holocaust after 1945.

The family histories in previous chapters shed some light on the plight of those who could get to safety. But some individual stories were lost in the inferno. Here, in post-war Germany, utter silence prevailed; nobody wanted to be reminded of this time. To forget – obliviousness was the order of the day. Who will ask those who escaped, those who survived torture? Do those who survived still want to talk to us? I think they do. But it will take a long time until they decide to do so, and this is understandable. Only, will we ask them?

The generations of victims and perpetrators are naturally decreasing. This will make it easier for most of us to forget – or will it?

8. Westwall – referred to in English as the Siegfried Line. The original, built by Germany in WWI, was a line of forts and tank defenses in northern France. In WWII, the “Westwall” was the term Germans gave to a similar defensive line built further east, and which was over 600km long.
9. KdF – Kraft durch Freude, translates as “Strength through Joy”. The KdF was a state-operated leisure organisation run by the German Labour Front.



Aufbau was founded in 1934 and was a journal targeting German-speaking Jews around the globe. Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig wrote for the publication. It was published in New York until 2004 and is now published in Zürich.

Let's remember the year of 1934. The newspaper *Aufbau* (build or construct) which still exists today, provided a glimpse into the culture of self-help of German Jews in America. (The paper was founded by the German-Jewish Club, and its original purpose was as a monthly newsletter that contained useful information and helpful advice for Jewish refugees.)

In America in 1935, Benny Goodman, the King of Swing, began his triumphal era. Even the Nazis could not completely suppress these “un-German tones”, although this so-called “nigger-jazz” was banned on all German radio stations.

On 15 September of the same year, the Nuremberg Laws were announced on National Socialist Party Freedom Day.

About a month later, on 10 October, George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* premiered in America and the first peace time air-raid exercise was performed in the capital Berlin.

On 19 June 1936, Germany's Max Schmeling beat the “Brown Bomber” Joe Louis in a 12th round knockout in front of 40,000 boxing fans at the Yankee Stadium in New York.

In the USA, in San Francisco Bay on the American west coast, it was hoped that traffic would be eased by the opening of the 7.2km long San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge in 1936, and in 1937, the 2.8km long Golden Gate Bridge, as the ferry services no longer satisfied the rapid increase of motor car usage.

In 1937, Walt Disney brought the first feature-length colour animated film to cinemas in America with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The new superstar in German cinema was the Swedish singer and actress, Zarah Leander. She rose to fame with the films *To New Shores* and *La Habanera*. And the songs *Yes, Sir!* and *Der Wind hat mir ein Lied erzählt* (*The Wind has told me a Song*) performed in her full alto voice, contributed to her popularity.

Jewish hardship leading up to WWII

On 26 January 1934, Germany and Poland signed a non-aggression pact. Hitler eliminated the opposition within the Nazi party, thus consolidating his power. In late June there was the “Röhm Putsch” (Night of the Long Knives) where Hitler’s main rival, SA Chief of Staff, Ernst Röhm, was eliminated. After the death of Paul von Hindenburg, Hitler took over the role of President of the Reich and became the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

Over the previous 250 years more than 330 regulations pertaining to Jews had been issued in the county of Hesse. However, the Nazis managed to pass 250 laws, regulations or decrees between 1933 and 1939 to order and propagate the extermination of Jews.

The Reich Citizenship Law determined Jews to be second-class citizens. They had no legal right to vote, nor could they hold any public office.

The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, generally known as the Blood Protection Act, prohibited marriages and extramarital sexual relations between Jews and German citizens or those of Germanic blood.

By 1 July 1943, 13 additional regulations had been added to the Reich Citizenship Law. The second regulation of 21 December 1935 decreed that Jews could no longer become senior doctors in hospitals nor independent medical examiners. This was followed by further restrictions on activities for Jews in various professional fields.

To avoid jeopardising the Berlin Olympic Games in 1936, on 3 December 1935 it was ordered that all anti-Jewish signs and evidence of attacks were to be removed in the area of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, in which the Olympic Games were to take place.

In 1936, the world looked to Germany where the Games of the XI Olympiad were opened by Hitler. Over 4,000 athletes from 49 countries joined these summer games. Athletically and politically, this perfectly organised competition became a triumph for the Nazi regime. However, with four Gold medals, black American, Jesse Owens, was the undisputed star of the games.

During 1936, Jews were not bothered much by further regulations, but this did not improve their general situation.

In Spain, a civil war still raged. The country proved to be a testing ground of weapons systems for the Italian Fascists and the German National Socialists, especially the air force.

At the beginning of 1938 a popular slogan was “All power to the Führer”. On 12 March, another slogan appeared, “Return Austria to the Reich”. The so-called annexation of the Alpine State of Austria, the homeland of Hitler, whom the Allies called “Schickelgruber” after the beginning of the war due to his origins, was welcomed by large parts of the Austrian population. People spoke proudly of the “Eastern District”. World powers stood by and watched.

Faithful to his leadership principles, Hitler personally took command of the armed forces then dissolved the War Ministry and ordered the mandatory retirement of 16 generals. Thus, any conservative opposition in the leadership of the armed forces, which had been against the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, was removed.

On 30 September 1938, the world sat up and took notice of the Munich Agreement, in which the heads of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany agreed that Czechoslovakia would surrender the Sudeten German territories to the German Reich (incredibly, Czechoslovakia was not part of the conference). The rest of Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany in 1939. People in Europe said they “believed in peace”.

The world sat up again when the press reported on the “Barium breakthrough”. Otto Hahn and Fritz Straßmann discovered that neutron beams could be used to split uranium atoms. With this discovery of artificial nuclear fission, the prerequisites for the atomic bomb – and also for the peaceful use of nuclear power – were created. In the autumn of 1939, attempts were made to develop a “Nuclear Reactor” or “Uranium Burner”. A race with the Americans had begun. In late 1939, in a letter to US President Roosevelt, Albert Einstein warned of a German nuclear bomb.

Restrictions on Jewish life

In Germany, more regulations and stipulations were directed against Jews.

26 April 1938

Jews had to declare any assets of over 5,000 Reichsmarks.

14 June 1938

Jewish businesses and factories were required to be registered and had to be visibly marked as Jewish.

25 July 1938

Jewish doctors were only allowed to call themselves “health care providers” and not allowed to treat Aryans.

17 August 1938

On their official documents, all Jewish men and women were forced to add the names ‘Israel’ or ‘Sarah’ to their given names.

17 September 1938

Jewish lawyers were now referred to as “Jewish consultants”.

9-10 November 1938

“Kristallnacht” (Night of Broken Glass).

10 November 1938

Jews who had weapons in their possession were taken in for ‘protective custody’ for up to 20 years. This really meant being taken to a concentration camp.

12 November 1938

Jews were not allowed to visit theatres, cinemas or concerts and, eventually, attend any public events.

19 December 1938

Requests from Jews and “Mischlings” (people of mixed blood) of the first degree to change their names were denied as a matter of principle.

.....
 The year 1939 brought the start of WWII. Jews were, in stages, more and more restricted in all phases of life.

1 April 1939

The Spanish Civil War ended and brought victory for Franco’s fascists.

24 April 1939

Surrender of valuables of all kinds owned by Jews, such as jewellery, ornamental pieces, furs and works of art.

30 April 1939

Jews were forced into designated Jewish housing. This approach was justified by a law governing rent agreements with Jews.

To expedite Jewish emigration from Germany, the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Berlin was established with the Chief of the Security Police (SiPo) as its head.

All Jewish associations, congregations or organisations in Germany were under the umbrella organisation called the Reichsvereinigung. But from 4 July 1939, it was compulsory for all Jews still living in Germany to belong to this organisation. The federation was charged with the responsibility for the welfare and public education of Jews. However, the apparent purpose was to place Jews under so much pressure that they would organise their own emigration.

Emigration reached its peak in 1938/39. While about 142,000 Jews emigrated from Germany between 1933 and 1938, in 1939 about 80,000 Jews left the Reich.

After Kristallnacht in November 1938, even the most trusting Jews realised that the Nazi regime was determined to convert its anti-semitism into reality with all the available instruments of power.

But a passage abroad was becoming increasingly difficult. Most countries closed their borders to Jewish emigrants from Hitler’s Germany and 300,000 people were kept imprisoned in German concentration camps.

15 July 1939

German athlete Rudolf Harbig ran the 800m in Milan in what was then a world record time of 1:46.6 minutes. Harbig was later killed fighting in Russia, for “Fuehrer, People and Fatherland”. Also in 1939, there were about 300,000 people kept imprisoned in German concentration camps in terrible and cramped conditions.

1 September 1939

Jews were no longer allowed to leave their homes or accommodation after 9pm during summer and after 8pm in winter.

The German invasion of Poland took place and the Nazis unleashed WWII.

Key dates throughout the war

The outcome of WWI was not well remembered by Germans so there was not the overwhelming support from volunteers to fight in the war as there had been in 1914. However, the “Blitzkrieg” unleashed on the Poles made Corporal Hitler into Commander Hitler overnight.

23 September 1939

Radios owned by Jews were confiscated. If anyone was caught listening to an enemy broadcast, they were arrested and sentenced as a “public enemy”.

17 October 1939

Where Germans and Jews lived in the one house and Germans made up the majority of that house’s inhabitants, its Jewish inhabitants were not to participate in air raid drills. In the opposite case, Jews had to perform the exercise alone.

In Bickenbach, during the winter of 1938/39, several night-time air raid exercises were performed, but only as war trials. The “blackout” of apartments was rehearsed and checked. Air alerts were announced by hand siren. During October/November 1939, gas masks were issued to the population for a fee paid to the National Socialist Welfare Home which was in a former teacher’s apartment at the school in Steingasse. In the second or third year of the war, an air raid siren was installed on the roof of the Town Hall. After the war began, water buckets and fire beaters were to be kept ready in all households and workshops. Bucket hand-pump extinguishers were purchased in some instances.

The Euthanasia Command

Hitler had introduced a law on **1 September 1939** that ordered the murder of “incurable” patients. This campaign started at the end of October, 1939.

From the outset, the breeding of German people into a “master race”, superior to all other peoples, was among the declared intentions of the Nazis. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had expanded on his views about “worthless life” and outlined his ethnological ideas.

The Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases was passed on 14 July 1933. This law meant that the Nazis could determine that people were to be sterilised if they presented with any of eight types of diseases. The diseases listed were congenital dementia, schizophrenia, manic-depressive insanity, epilepsy,

Huntington’s Disease, hereditary blindness or deafness, and severe physical deformities.

In addition, people who suffered from severe alcoholism could be sterilised. According to the principles of the National Socialist “genetic health study”, sterilisation was part of the planned eradication program. By 1936, 167,000 men and women were sterilised, including severe alcoholics. In 1935, the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People, the Marriage Health Act, followed the law pertaining to genetically diseased offspring.

With the euthanasia command, Hitler ordered that a mercy killing could be granted to incurable patients after critical assessment of their health condition. The euthanasia program was meant to be kept secret from the public. Therefore, the Führer’s Chancellery, reporting directly to Hitler, was delegated to a party office. In order to achieve strict secrecy around the killings as ordered by Hitler, cover organisations were established. “Community medical and nursing homes” were created for the recording and selection of the victims. An organisation called “The Charitable Transport for the Sick” was founded specifically for the purpose of transporting the victims.

Those selected to be killed were brought to certain institutions in Grafeneck in Württemberg, Hadamar in Hesse, Brandenburg on the Havel, Bernburg in Saxony-Anhalt, Hartheim near Linz and Sonnenstein near Pirna. These institutions were operated by another cover organisation, “The Charitable Foundation for Hospital Care” and financed by the Nazi party. In early 1940, the killings began on a large scale. Children were mainly poisoned by pills, adults murdered, and killed in gas chambers. The bodies were burnt immediately.

In August 1941, Hitler stopped the killings because the facts had leaked to the public, 120,000 people had been murdered, 20,000 of whom were children. Although organised mass murder had ceased in 1941, thousands more fell victim to the racially motivated euthanasia order in health and medical institutions until 1945.

23 November 1939

Effective from this date, all Jews in unoccupied Poland, and from 1 September 1941, all Jews in the Reich from the age of six, had to wear a Jewish star in public.

In order to especially humiliate Jews, the fascists had selected the Star of David, a sign that appeared degrading to them but was revered by Jews as a religious and national symbol.

The star to be worn was six-sided and made of two overlapping yellow black-outlined fabric triangles. In the middle of the star the word 'Jew' was printed in black.

In 1942, a corresponding regulation was adopted for all countries occupied by German troops.

As the lepers in the middle ages had to wear a bell around their necks so they could be recognised from a distance, the star was imposed onto Jews living under German rule. This was to be worn visibly on the left side of the chest, thus signifying the inferiority and lack of rights of the wearer. The star had to be paid for and treated with care and, when sewn on a garment, the edges of the fabric had to be folded over.

With the introduction of mass deportations to the extermination camps in the East in 1941/42, Jewish households also had to have their front doors marked with a white Jewish star.

.....

1940 was the year of Hitler's victories. The German armed forces were marching forward. They conquered Denmark and Norway in a two-month Blitzkrieg. The Germans invaded the neutral countries of the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium without declaration of war. On **5 June 1940** the "Western campaign" and the war against the French began. Paris fell by **14 June 1940**. On **21 June**, an armistice was signed in the forest of Compiègne. France was divided.



The arch enemy had been defeated and the disgrace of 1918 had been redeemed. Almost 2 million Allied soldiers were taken into German captivity and 190,000 Germans had fallen, including the first Bickenbach citizens, Philipp Loos and Heinrich Heeb; more than 300,000 were wounded.

Jews, as well as political opponents of the Nazi regime fleeing Germany to neighbouring European countries, were pursued and, when caught, faced terrible destinies, usually death. In **May 1940**, Auschwitz concentration camp was set up.

July 1940

The air battle against England began. However, the planned invasion of the British Isles eventually failed. For the first time, Hitler's war machine reached its limits.

16 September 1940

General military service was introduced in the United States. The British counter-offensive against Italian troops in Africa began.

24 September 1940

The anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jud Süß*, directed by Veit Harlan, came to cinemas in Germany.

6 November 1940

A Jewish-Mischling index was set up for the Gestapo.¹ There were three categories: pure Jews; first-degree mixed breeds; and German-blooded persons belonging to the Jewish religion.

Between October and November, German police set up a ghetto in Warsaw. About 400,000 Jews were compulsorily resettled in this restricted area, where they were kept in miserable conditions.

.....

1. Mischling was a measurement in grades, either 1st or 2nd, depending on the number of one's Jewish ancestors. It was a pseudo-scientific racial division that was the basis of racial policies of Nazi Germany. Only people with four German grandparents were considered to be "full-blooded" Germans. German nationals with three or four Jewish ancestors were considered Jews according to the Nuremberg laws. All Jewish grandparents were automatically defined as members of the Jewish religious community whether they had actually identified it as their religion or not.



From a war album of a German soldier, c.1941. Was he from Poland, Galicia or Ukraine? Instead of stars, Jews now had to wear an armband, and a symbol was attached onto their front door.

The year **1941** brought new war zones. The German Africa Corps was formed. The United States, under worldwide pressure caused by Germany and its main allies, Italy and Japan, passed the Lend-Lease Act in March, allowing for immediate and comprehensive arms deliveries to Germany's enemies.

12 March 1941

Formulation of the "Final Solution", administered by Adolf Eichmann, the head of the Jewish Department in the Reich Main Security Office of the SS.

29 March 1941

The Reich Association of Jews had to submit a complete list of Jewish accommodation in Aryan houses by 1 April 1941. The list had to include addresses, number of rooms and additional details.

April 1941

The invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece commenced.

13 April 1941

The Russians and Japanese entered into a non-aggression pact.

19 April 1941

Berthold Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* premiered in Zurich.

20 April 1941

If provisions were received by Jews from packages abroad, their food rations were reduced accordingly.

Food, textiles and shoes were allocated by the authorities by means of coupons. Ration cards entitled holders to purchase food from 28 August 1939 until 30 April 1950, well past the time of the end of the war. The cards, printed in 1937 and kept in vaults in case of war, were issued to households on 27 August 1939, four days before the start of the war.

Jews, whose ration cards were marked with the word 'Jew', were allowed to buy smaller allocations compared with the non-Jewish population, and only in nominated shops and at certain times. Besides Jews, the population living in the territories occupied by German troops, and "foreign workers" living in the Reich, received fewer food rations than the German population. Black market trade in food, clothing and so-called vital war materials, incurred severe punishment.

29 May 1941

A command of the Reich Security Head Office to the Gestapo and SD authorities carried references to the “coming Final Solution for the Jewish question”. By this time, thousands of Jews had already been murdered in mass shootings in Poland.

22 June 1941

Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union, began. Hitler broke the German–Soviet Non-aggression Pact between the two countries which had been entered into in 1939. Prior to the start of Operation Barbarossa, Hitler issued the Commissar Order in which instructions were given that the captured Soviet political commissars could be murdered. Through this war of ideologies, Hitler finally declared his goal to become master of the whole of Europe. Military units from Italy, Romania, Hungary and Finland joined the German troops. However, there was no second lightning victory for German troops on the Eastern front.

The loss of fighting strength, plus the mud and snow, and the increasingly strengthened opposition from the Russians brought the German attack to a halt 27km from Moscow. Stalin proclaimed the “Great Patriotic War” and mobilised the people of the Soviet Union. Hitler personally took over supreme command of the army. The German troops had to pull back on all fronts. At the end of 1941, they had lost 180,000 men.

Significantly more people fell victim to a second, brutal killing spree behind the front. The succeeding troops of the security police and SS security services systematically killed the Jewish population in the conquered Soviet territories, at least with the knowledge and support of the army leadership. During the Russian campaign, about 900,000 Jews were killed.

In **July 1941**, England and Russia concluded a military pact. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill announced the Atlantic Charter in August, which laid down the Allied goals for the post-war world.

The German Africa Corps retreated from the British offensive in North Africa and the Red Army began its Winter offensive against the Germans.

2 September 1941

A police regulation on the wearing of the Star of David in the territories of the Reich was imposed.

3 September 1941

The first mass killings with the poison gas, Zyklon B, began at Auschwitz.

18 September 1941

Jews could only use public transport if there was still room for them, but definitely not in any time of great demand and not if any gentile had no place. Jews were only allowed to travel in the lower classes and could only take seats if other travellers no longer needed them.

14 October 1941

The beginning of the deportation of Jewish citizens, who were declared enemies of the Reich since the start of the war in 1939, to death camps in the east.

23 October 1941

A ban on emigration for Jews was imposed.

24 October 1941

People with German blood who, in public, appeared to be in friendly relations with Jews were, for educational reasons, to be taken temporarily into protective custody or, in serious cases, instructed for a period of three months in a Stage 1 concentration camp. A Jewish person was to be taken to a concentration camp in any case, and put in detention and protective custody until further notice.

The high command of the army ordered executions of resisting hostages in the occupied territories.

Also in 1941, a song went around the world, *Vor der Kaserne (Outside the barracks)*. The German forces’ radio Belgrade broadcast the song *Lili Marleen*, making the singer, Lale Andersen, famous. Marlene Dietrich contributed with the English version. Despite the great success of *Lili Marleen*, Lale Andersen was banned from performing in Germany in 1942 due to her frequent engagements in neutral foreign democratic countries.

17 November 1941

A German idol, stunt pilot and Air Force General Ernst Udet, broke under the German system and chose suicide. Carl Zuckmayer wrote the drama *The Devil’s General* while in exile in distant Vermont, USA. Zuckmayer’s general bore the name “Harras”. It was said: “The plot is invented, as are its supporters, and is inspired only in part by actual events and living – or dead – people.” As in the actual course of events, the play ended with a “state

funeral". The Germans witnessed Udet's state funeral via a "newsreel".

7 December 1941

In the early hours of the morning, Japanese warplanes attacked the US military base in Pearl Harbour on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Japan entered the war on the side of Germany and Italy, and the Americans also took up arms. WWII was thus extended to the Pacific. On **11 December**, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

By the way, before I forget, all children born in my birth year, 1931, were registered with the Hitler-Youth on Hitler's birthday (20 April). Troops from Seeheim, Jugenheim, Ober-Beerbach, Balkhausen, Alsbach, Hähnlein and Bickenbach paraded on the Seeheim schoolyard. They were inducted by the local Hitler Youth leader of Section 115, Erich Schaidler, with the commitment "tough as Krupp steel and nimble as greyhounds ..." and the song *Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland, und morgen die ganze Welt (For today, Germany is ours and tomorrow, the whole world)*, which I still remember after more than 50 years. With the demise of General Paulus' 6th Army, Erich Schaidler was lost, "missing in Stalingrad".

By 1941, war had spread like wildfire around the globe, unabated on land, water or in the air. Also by this time, the Germans had learned to fear the Allied bombing campaigns more and more, and Goebbels spoke of "terror bombers".

5 January 1942

Jews, who had to wear the yellow star in public, now had to deliver all fur and woollen clothes in their possession



"Pimpf" Karl Schemel, 1941.²

for front-line soldiers by 16 January 1942.

The general German population had to donate winter clothing for the front "voluntarily". In addition, skis and skiing equipment, as well as sledges, had to be delivered to supply the front. Children's toboggans, if it had the names marked on them, were returned at the beginning of spring 1942, as they could not be used. The Bickenbach "Depot" was established in Emil Wolf's barn in Schulstrasse.

20 January 1942

The Chief of the Security Police and SS Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, invited representatives of the party, the ministries and authorities to attend the Wannsee Conference in Berlin.

During this conference, the "Final Solution to the European Jewish question" was discussed. The organisational approach to the murder of Jews was determined here. 11 million Jews from Germany and the occupied territories were considered; Jews from Spain, Sweden and Switzerland were also meant to have been included. These so-called "subhuman" Jews were targeted for complete annihilation.

In 1941, Hitler had approved the "evacuation" of Jews instead of their "emigration" to the east. During the course of the final solution, the "deportees" were forced to work under appropriate supervision. Those who could work were organised into large columns, separated by gender, and used for road construction, which undoubtedly resulted in the demise of the majority due to natural causes. The remaining or "residue" would have to be treated accordingly, because they undoubtedly represented the toughest contingent due to natural selection, and would become the "breeding stock" of a new Jewish revival if released.

2. Pimpf means a boy or little rascal in German. Pimpfe (plural) were the youngest sub section of the Hitler Youth of Nazi Germany from 1933–1945. Aged 6–10, boys served a sort of apprenticeship for the Hitler Youth as a Pimpf, taught to be loyal to Hitler and the regime. Membership in the Hitler Youth was compulsory after 1939.

During the practical implementation of the final solution, the deliberate and intentional destruction of lives, Europe was scoured from west to east, with primary focus on German Jews.

The conference that planned these horrors determined that half-Jews, so-called first-degree ‘Mischlings’ (crossbreed or mongrel), were to be treated the same in terms of the final solution, or were to be sterilised in specific cases. The so-called second-degree Mischlings were to remain largely unaffected. Finally, they discussed the various possible solutions for the deliberate killing of people. (In 1961, Adolf Eichmann stated in a Jerusalem court that “solution options” had meant “killing options”).

Japanese troops had conquered the Philippines. German-Italian tank units in Africa began their counter-offensive against the Allied forces.

An American chemist, Louis Fieser, developed napalm in **early 1942** for use in incendiary bombs.

In **March 1942** British aerial bombings almost completely destroyed the town centre of Lübeck.

German submarines operated off the American East coast for the first time. In **early May 1942** Japanese formations fought the Americans in the first naval and air battle in the Coral Sea.

At the **end of May** the British started flying their first “1,000-bomber attack” against a city, Cologne.

7 June 1942

The Battle of Midway in the Pacific ended with a heavy defeat for the Japanese against a US aircraft carrier formation.

The destruction of the village of Lidice in Bohemia in **June 1942**, and the murder of its inhabitants by the SS followed as a reprisal for the successful assassination attempt on the SS leader Reinhard Heydrich in Prague.

In **August 1942** the Gestapo arrested more than 100 members of the anti-fascist spy- and resistance organisation Rote Kapelle (the Red Orchestra).

20 August 1942

Roland Freisler took on the presidency of the people’s court in Berlin.

In **November 1942** the German army invaded the unoccupied part of France, but in Stalingrad by **late November** the German 6th Army was completely surrounded by their Russian counterparts.

The Gestapo had also cracked down heavily on the youth resistance group Edelweißpiraten (Edelweiss Pirates – a loosely organised group that started in the late 1930s, in response to the Hitler Youth).

In **1943**, the mood in Germany reached a significant low point after the fall of the 6th Army at the Volga River. Confidence in victory began to fade. 146,000 troops had died, and 90,000 soldiers were held in Soviet captivity. By 1956, only 6,000 had returned home.

14 January 1943

The Conference of Casablanca. The United Kingdom and the United States demanded the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan for the first time. An intensified bombing campaign against Germany was decided.

18 February 1943

In Berlin, Nazi propaganda Minister Goebbels proclaimed “Total War”.

22 February 1943

After a two-day hearing before the People’s Court, the siblings Sophie and Hans Scholl, 22- and 25-year-old members of the Weiße Rose (White Rose) were sentenced to death and executed. The members of the Munich-based resistance group were mainly students. In the spring of 1942, members of the group started to distribute leaflets in which they called for fighting against Hitler and the Nazi regime under the guidance and support of the philosophy professor, Kurt Huber. The young people distributed the leaflets not only at Munich University, but also in Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Mannheim. They maintained links to resistance groups at the universities of Hamburg, Berlin and Vienna. Professor Huber was arrested a short time later. In April 1943, the court case against him and a further 13 members of the Weiße Rose began. In his closing remarks, Huber admitted his actions and said among other things:

“What I intended was to create awareness in student circles, not by an organisation, but by the simple word, not to entice an act of violence, but of moral insight into the existing serious damage to political life. Return to clear, moral principles, to the rule of law, to mutual trust from person to person. This is not illegal, but conversely the restoration of legality.”

Huber was sentenced to death and executed in July 1943, as well as three other members of the Weiße Rose.

A report from the *Chicago Tribune* of 10 March 1993: **Dying to save Germany**

“The White Rose” ... when most people hear about “The White Rose”, they think it’s a “Nazi play” ...

And it was Sophie Scholl who said sometime during those nine memorable months: “With all those people dying for the regime, it is high time that someone died against it.”

31 March 1943

The musical *Oklahoma!* by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein premiered in New York.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had been quelled by **May 1943**. “There is no Jewish residential district in Warsaw any more” announced SS-Brigadeführer Stroop. Of the last approximately 60,000 Jewish inhabitants, 7,000 were killed and the rest deported to concentration camps. This major campaign was completed by blowing up the Great Synagogue on **16 May 1943** at 8.15pm.

Of the 400,000 Jews penned into the ghetto in 1940, the Germans had deported approximately 300,000 to Treblinka extermination camp by 1942.

In **May 1943**, the remaining troops of the German Africa corps capitulated outside of Tunis. The submarine war against Allied convoys in the North Atlantic was stopped in the face of excessive losses.

In **July 1943**, Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship in Italy ended. (He was removed from power by King Victor Emmanuel III). The Allies wanted to hold German troops in the south by entering the Italian mainland from Sicily in early September 1943 to prepare for the invasion of France, which was scheduled for mid-1944.

US Vice President Henry A. Wallace mobilised the general workforce by announcing: “After the war, a solution for the race issue in the United States will be found.”

The Allies performed a combined bombing offensive against Germany, with precision attacks during the day, and aerial bombing at night. In **July 1943**, 30,000 people lost their lives during a number of serious attacks on Hamburg known as Operation Gomorrah.

Germany experienced “Total War” by day and

night, in the truest sense of the word as described by Goebbels. Air force and ground defence forces were no longer able to act effectively against flying bomber squadrons. The Allies dominated the German air space. Since 1942, their goal had been the demoralisation of the civilian population in addition to the destruction of industrial plants and transportation routes. The escalation of wartime bombings against the civilian population led to the strengthening of the will to prevail and the reinforcement of the enemy image, rather than what was expected by the other side. But the last major German offensive against the Red Army failed and the Germans left behind only “scorched earth”.

28 November 1943

On a first joint conference in Tehran, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, England’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, decided upon an Allied invasion of Northern France. This was planned to start in mid-1944.

10 December 1943

Jewish couples of mixed marriages, which were no longer valid – who had been exempt from wearing the Star of David – as well as those with partial Jewish ancestry, were now to be sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp.

By **1944**, the war had become more ‘total’ on all fronts, especially on the home front. Air attacks continued unabated. Low-flying aircraft, fighter planes of the US Air Force, tracked every movement on the ground and shot at everything that moved. The US “Mustangs” were especially feared.

27 January 1944

In a major offensive, the Red Army liberated Leningrad, which had been previously blockaded by the Germans.

In Italy, the Allies advanced towards the north. Other Axis powers left the German fraternity of arms.

In **March 1944**, German forces occupied Hungary. As a consequence, 500,000 people were taken from Hungary and murdered in Auschwitz under Eichmann’s special command.

In **February 1944** German industrial sites were hit hard by the Allied air offensive “Big Week”. What the Germans had done previously to the Dutch town of

Rotterdam and the English town of Coventry, was now being reciprocated, and was experienced by the civilian population around the clock, day and night, especially in the big cities.³

In the Pacific, US armed forces achieved great success against the Japanese in the air and at sea.

6 June 1944

The Allied invasion Operation Overlord began. The “assault on fortress Europe” started in Normandy. The first front was formed between the cities of Cherbourg and Caen. In September 1944, US soldiers entered Germany, near Trier.

10 June 1944

In retaliation for increasing partisan activity, SS units murdered all 642 inhabitants of the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane.

Neither of the German miracle weapons V-1 and V-2 (‘V’ stood for Vergeltungswaffen – retaliation weapons), which were launched on the United Kingdom in 1944, nor the Volkssturm, the “last reserve” of 16- to 65-year-olds, could prevent defeat on all fronts, and the subsequent doom of the Third Reich.

Seven million foreign forced labourers, so-called alien workers, who had been used in agriculture and industry, were also treated terribly.

Though illegal, people listened to BBC London and to the American station Radio Luxembourg. They heard reports from the front, but listened mostly to jazz, and did not have to worry about being punished even though local authorities, as in Bickenbach, listened through their curtained windows at night.

20 July 1944

A bomb attack on Hitler in his East Prussia headquarters, “Wolf’s Lair”, and an associated coup failed because some participants hesitated. The NS system retaliated with a merciless clean-up. Two hundred people fell victim to these actions in the following days. A resistance group, consisting of members of the military, politicians, diplomats and trade unionists, was responsible for the attack on Hitler. The driving force was Colonel Claus

Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, who deposited a time-bomb at a meeting set up for the Führer. Hitler survived and the planned associated coup was quelled in the course of a day.

Stauffenberg, Ludwig Beck and other high-ranking officers were executed by firing squad on the same evening. Freisler’s court handed out death sentences and imposed prison sentences on the families of the condemned. Hitler deployed NS Senior Officers to monitor the morality of the soldiers in all units.

23 July 1944

The Red Army liberated the Nazi concentration camp of Majdanek.

24-25 August 1944

On this night, the usual air raid warning was given out; an aerial mine and incendiary bombs were dropped on Bickenbach. Seven people lost their lives. The destroyed homes were rebuilt by 1950-51.

The German population of East Prussia was fleeing from the advancing Soviet army. In the armies of the Western Allies and the Soviet army, Jews were serving as regular soldiers; they were active resistance fighters and partisans in the east, behind the German lines. The mass murders in the areas occupied by the Germans had an impact on the military readiness of the Jewish population in the non-occupied parts of the Soviet Union. The high combat morale and commitment of the Jewish soldiers in the Red Army increased considerably due to the certainty that they would be murdered by the Germans if captured.

According to Soviet records, 212,000 of the 425,000 Jews of the Red Army had fallen in the “patriotic war” against Hitler’s Germany. The Litvak Divisions deserved special mention. They were elite units mainly formed of Lithuanian Jews (known as Litvaks), whose songs, vernacular, and command language was Yiddish, and were feared by opponents for their spirit of attack and death-defying commitment.

More than 30 years after this terrible experience, a satirical literary monument was dedicated to the Litvaks, written by Efraim Sevela.

3. Big Week, or Operation Argument, was a series of raids from 20–25 February 1944. Led by the US Strategic Air Forces, the US made daytime bombing raids which were supported by the RAF Bomber Command who bombed the targets at night.

Efraim Sevela, a journalist and writer, was born in 1928 in Belarus. He belonged to a group of 24 Jews who, in 1971, occupied the building of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow to enforce their right to emigrate to Israel. Under the pressure of worldwide protest, the Soviets felt compelled to allow departure for these people, including Sevela. This was the beginning of the exodus of Russian Jews to Israel. In 1973, Sevela participated in the Yom-Kippur War, and lived in Israel as a freelance writer. (He returned to Russia in 1990, and died in Moscow on 18 August 2010.)

In 1977, Sevela published a work in Tel Aviv titled *Monya Tsatskes (Flag Bearer)*, a satirical novel about the military life of the Jewish-Lithuanian Red Army soldiers. The German title of the book is *Moshe, you go first*.

After the war started in the Volga region, Jewish units, on Stalin's orders, were trained specifically, ideologically and militarily, and sent to serve at the front. The troop losses were high, but the hero "Monya Tsatskes" survives and, thanks to his brains and humour, overcomes the most delicate situations during training and at the front.

The author closely analysed the conditions of the Soviet military and detected precise weaknesses of political indoctrination. The leadership of this unit was in the hands of Russian officers and commissioners. Sevela's "Political Commissar" bore the family name Katz. What was achieved in the work of Czech folk poet Jaroslav Hagek in *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik* in his service for king and country during WWI, was matched here by "Monya Tsatskes" during yet another war, albeit under different circumstances. The Jewish Red Army soldiers presented at the flag parade, swearing their allegiance, passing the honour gallery of the officers with a Yiddish marching song on their lips:

"Marsch, Marsch, Marsch Ich gej in Bod!"	<i>"March, March, March, I go to have a bath!"</i>
Kratz ma ojs die Plejze!	<i>Scratch my back,</i>
Nejn, nejn, nejn!	<i>No, no, no,</i>
Ich wil nit gejn!	<i>I don't want to go,</i>
Ich dank dir far die Ejze!"	<i>Thanks for your advice!"</i>

And to offer them something special, they rewrote their own marching song, deleted "Ejze" and sung: "Stalin wet mir fiehrn!" ("Stalin will lead me!").



In Bickenbach on 14 November 1990, Inge Auerbach, who survived Theresienstadt concentration camp, presented her book *I Am a Star* which outlined her childhood memories of the extermination camp.

The following word translations may help to better understand: ‘Gej’ means ‘go’; ‘ma’ means ‘me’; ‘ojs’ means ‘from’; ‘Plejze’ means ‘back’; ‘nejn’ means ‘no’; ‘wil’ means ‘want’; ‘far’ means ‘for’; ‘Ejze’ means ‘advice’; ‘wet mir’ means ‘will me’; ‘fiehrn’ means ‘lead, contribute’.

11-12 September 1944

During this night the city of Darmstadt went up in flames.

October 1944

The free city of Aachen was the first German city to be conquered by Allied forces.

In **mid-December 1944** the Ardennes offensive (Battle of the Bulge) began but failed by the end of **January 1945** due to the superiority of the Western Allies.

On **24 December 1944**, on a bitterly cold, sunny winter’s day with deep blue skies – beautiful Christmas weather – hundreds of “flying fortresses” from the West moved across our area in the afternoon, staggered in peacetime formations. The roar of the engines drowned out any sound. On this day, the “flying fortresses” destroyed the Fichtel & Sachs factories in Bamberg.

At dusk, Pastor Böckner, not a friend of the Nazis, who had been transferred against his will from Schlitz in Upper Hesse to Bickenbach, led the Christmas prayers. To the best of my memory, there was a low attendance at the service – the recently confirmed members of the congregation, some young women, and for the most part the elderly and old women. Four advent candles lit up the room and Pastor Böckner spoke of peace. And as we stepped out of the church into the dark, cold night, a blanket of snow had covered everything peacefully.

By the end of the war, air attacks had killed between 500,000 and 600,000 people in Germany.

In 1933, about 500,000 Jews lived in our country. By 1 September 1944, there were only 14,574.

Early in **1945** there was a saying: “Celebrate, because peace will be terrible!”

For years, the months of January and February have been bitterly cold in our area and back then fuel was in short supply. School was often cancelled due to “coal holidays”.

13-15 February 1945

Dresden was razed to the ground. Enemy armies moved further into the country, from the east as well as the west.

A “good” Bickenbach Nazi party member – classified on the home front as “indispensable” – refused to offer his house to host bombed-out citizens from Frankfurt, and was arrested and sent to Darmstadt into Gestapo custody. He survived, and was later freed by the Americans, calling himself a victim of persecution by the Nazi regime. One way to survive.

Anne Frank, the girl from Frankfurt who went to Amsterdam, died **February/March 1945** in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

24 March 1945

Americans moved into our village at night. For us, the war seemed to come to an end. Spring had burst out powerfully in mid-March. It sprouted, grew and blossomed, only disturbed by the continuing air attacks.

25 April 1945

American and Russian soldiers shook hands at the river Elbe. German soldiers went into captivity with hands held above their heads, and those who had lost their homes roamed country roads without hope. There were 12 million of them.

7 May 1945

An unconditional surrender of all parts of the German army was signed with the Western Allies in the French town of Reims, and on **8 May 1945**, in the presence of the Soviet army at Berlin-Karlshorst. Europe lay in rubble and ashes. Germany was defeated – “The Lord had beaten them with man, and steed and wagon” (“Mit Man und Roß und Wagen, so hat sie Gott geschlagen” comes from *Das Fluchtlid*, (*Song of Escape*), a 19th century poem by Ferdinand August about Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow in 1812.)

10 April 1945

The Americans allowed the Bickenbach Council to meet for the first time.

Stamps titled:
20th Anniversary,
German Resistance,
20 July, 1944–1964.

(On 20 July 1944,
an attempt was
made to assassinate
Adolf Hitler at the
Wolf's Lair.)



Bickenbach, 10 April 1945

With the invasion of Germany by American troops on 24 March 1945, fascism was finally forced out after a 12-year reign of terror. All Nazi mayors had to leave their posts, and in their place, the previous mayors, who were forcibly removed in 1933, were reinstated. The eligible former Mayor Becker refused because he managed the local credit bank for many years and still wanted to continue that. Consequently, Karl Dieter I, communist and honest fighter for the liberation of the working class, took the fate of our community into his hands. Dieter, who was deprived of his freedom for six months in the fight against fascism and who has always proven to be an honest fighter for socialism, enjoys the general confidence of the inhabitants of the village. He was appointed Mayor by the American military government and committed to the position on 15 April 1945. At the same time, he was also appointed Registrar, and Christoph Herpel V was named his representative. Georg Hill was appointed First Deputy Mayor and Christoph Herpel Second Deputy. Wilhelm Metzger was appointed and committed as local policeman.

Mayor Dieter faced tremendous challenges left behind by the Nazi regime. He did not falter and began immediately by installing a building group to repair the damage caused to houses by the war. To facilitate this work, he acquired a band saw from a local company, Barfels, for the price of RM 450.00, which was set up in the courtyard of the town hall. As the procurement and transportation of building materials created a lot of difficulties, a lorry was purchased

for the price of RM 1,800.00 and put into service.

Due to the large daily stream of returnees who had to be catered for by the municipality and the fact that it was impossible to leave this burden to the local farmers, Mayor Dieter established a community kitchen in the town hall and night lodgings at the school, which became a blessing for all.

On 6 June 1945, a 'Bulldog' vehicle was purchased for the price of RM 200.00 which was used for transporting the threshing machine and also for other purposes. The construction of a wood shed in the former garden of the town hall is already under way in order to garage the aforementioned means of transport and other communal agricultural machinery.

Initially, some light damage occurred during construction, which has already been fixed for the most part. The house of Georg Glock III in Hugelstrasse, which had been completely destroyed during the bombings, was rebuilt. A temporary home for Wilhelm Mink of Hugelstrasse was completed for the most part by Karl Dieter I in Hugelstrasse, and work on the house of Johannes Seeger, also in Hugelstrasse, was started. It is planned to finish work on the gable side of Ludwig Rebenich's house in Sandstrasse before the onset of winter.

Due to the removal of all party members from public duty, Mr. Georg Wolf has taken the place of Mrs. Frech (issue of ration cards). Miss Hella Klein was employed to support Mr. Johannes Ahlheim (nutrition). Since 5 April 1945, Mr. Johannes Seeger is looking after the administrative records

of the building department, as well as the management of the kitchen, the band saw and the vehicle park.

The local fire brigade was newly formed under the leadership of officer Ludwig Schüßler.

Secretary: Seeger

Councillors: Hill, Herpel

Mayor: Dieter

17 July-2 August 1945

At the first post-war meeting of the victors of WWII in Potsdam, the course for the future was set, and the former Germany was split into four occupation zones.

9 August 1945

After the dropping of a second atomic bomb over Nagasaki, Japan surrendered on **15 August**. But, just as people came to believe that “World Peace” had arrived, the “Cold War” was right at their doors.

US soldiers in Germany had to abide by the rule of “No Fraternisation”, but the GIs loved “Fräuleins” as previously the Germans had liked girls in other parts of the world. Coloured American soldiers could marry white women without punishment.

The black market flourished, and the Reichsmark wasn't worth a penny any more. The so called ‘Cigarette Currency’ was introduced quickly. Four Lucky Strikes for one egg was the going rate.

The first free newspapers were allowed, and Germans read of the horrors of the concentration camps and did not want to believe the truth. The first men came back from captivity and hunger became commonplace.

20 November 1945

The Nuremberg trials against major war criminals began on the basis of the victors’ agreement of 8 August 1945 in London on “the prosecution and punishment of major war criminals of the European Axis powers”, i.e. Germany and Italy.

The Americans and UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) established camps in Bensheim and Babenhausen for Jews coming from the concentration camps.

.....
On **1 December 1946**, the constitution of Hesse came into force.

There was hope ...

Act of Military Surrender, 7 May 1945

On 7 May 1945, the document of surrender was signed in Reims by the Allied powers and the supreme command of the German armed forces. The Act of Military Surrender was reconfirmed on 8 May 1945 in Berlin-Karlsborst. Only this document was legally recognised by the Soviets.

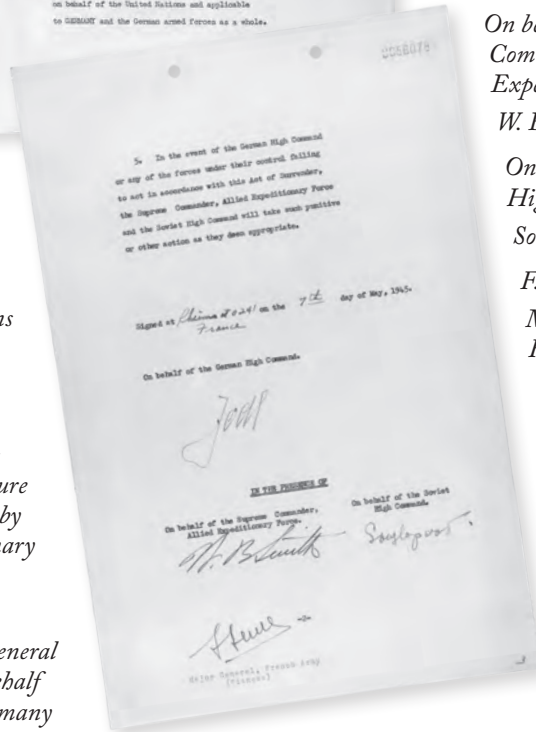
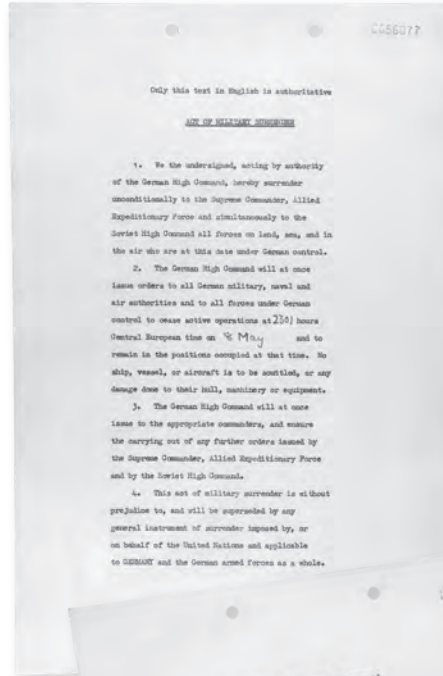
ACT OF MILITARY SURRENDER

1. *We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command all forces on land, sea and in the air who are at this date under German control.*

2. *The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8 May and to remain in the positions occupied at that time. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment.*

3. *The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commander, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Soviet High Command.*

4. *This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole.*



5. *In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Soviet High Command will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.*

Signed at Reims, France, at 0241 on the 7th day of May, 1945.

On behalf of the German High Command.

Jodl (Signature)

In the presence of

On behalf of the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force.

W. B. Smith (Signature)

On behalf of the Soviet High Command

Sousloparov (Signature)

F. Sevez

*Major General,
French Army (Witness)*

Wartime handbills signalling the end of the war



German handbill, 1944 (front).

**Take a Look
at These Figures**

ETO

7 days of fighting	\$ 15.00
Saturday	00.00
Sunday	00.00
Overtime	00.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 15.00

Your job: Privation and death

HOME FRONT

5 working days	\$ 20.00
Saturday	6.00
Sunday	9.00
Overtime	10.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 45.00

His job: a safe pleasant life

Who wants the war in Europe to last?

You or he?

S K J 2006

The back of the handbill features two bar charts. The first bar chart, titled "ETO", shows a single bar representing 7 days of fighting for \$15.00. The second bar chart, titled "HOME FRONT", shows four bars representing 5 working days (\$20.00), Saturday (6.00), Sunday (9.00), and Overtime (10.00), with a total bar for \$45.00. The text is arranged around these charts, contrasting the soldier's low pay and high risk with the worker's higher pay and safety. The handbill ends with the question "Who wants the war in Europe to last? You or he?" and a small reference code "S K J 2006".

German handbill, 1944 (back).

English handbill 1943 (front).

Extermination zone on Bug River

The Eastern bastion of "Fortress Europe" is being repaired along the line of the Polish Bug River. This East wall has been declared the "extermination zone" by Hitler.

For three years now the Nazi leaders in Poland have been putting their policy of "total destruction of foreign people" into practice. Hundreds of thousands of innocent peasants have been victims of this policy of extermination and been killed off by machine gunning, gassing and electrocution.

When German defeats in the South and the East brought about the great turning point of the war, this extermination was carried out particularly thoroughly in areas along the Bug. In numerous districts such as those of Zamosc, Krasnystaw, Hrubieszow, Tomaszow, Pulawy and Lublin, the local peasant population is driven from villages into prison camps; children, particularly those under six years of age, are deported to the Reich. Parents who refuse to be parted from their children are shot on the spot. Men capable of work are to do forced labour in the East under conditions that destroy life and health. The aged, the sick, and those incapable of working any more, are killed.

Nazi leaders are trying to justify this mass murder as a political necessity. They know that sooner or later the battle will be fought out along this last defence line in the East and they fear that the local peasant population would not be enthusiastic enough in the defence of the "German Eastern space" and their SS system. On the land which has been taken from its rightful owners and which is soaked with their blood, Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans living abroad) from the Ukraine and Bessarabia are to be settled.



DIE AUSROTTUNGSZONE AM BUG

DER östliche Wall der „Festung Europa“ wird an dem polnischen Fluss Bug instandgesetzt. Diesen Ostwall hat Hitler zur „Ausrottungszone“ erklärt.

Seit drei Jahren setzen die Naziführer in Polen ihre Lehre von der „totalen Vernichtung fremden Volkstums“ in die Tat um. Hunderttausende von Unschuldigen sind dieser Vernichtungspolitik zum Opfer gefallen und mit Maschinengewehren, Giftgas und Starkstrom beseitigt worden.

Als die deutschen Niederlagen im Süden und Osten die grosse Wende des Krieges brachten, wurde die Ausrottung mit besonderer Gründlichkeit in den Gebieten des Bug betrieben. In zahlreichen Bezirken — wie denen von Zamosc, Krasnystaw, Hrubieszew, Tomaszow, Pulawy und Lublin — wird die ansässige Bauernschaft aus ihren Dörfern verjagt und in Sammel-lager getrieben. Dort teilt man sie in Gruppen ein: Kinder, vornehmlich die unter 6 Jahren, werden nach dem Reich verschleppt. Eltern, die sich von ihren Kindern nicht trennen wollen, werden auf der Stelle erschossen. Arbeitsfähige Männer müssen im Osten unter Bedingungen, die Leben und Gesundheit zerstören, Zwangsarbeit leisten. Wer alt, krank und arbeitsunfähig ist, wird umgebracht.

Dieses Massenmorden wollen die Naziführer mit politischen Notwendigkeiten rechtfertigen. Sie wissen, dass es über kurz oder lang an dieser letzten Verteidigungslinie im Osten hart auf hart gehen wird, und sie befürchten, dass die einheimische Bauernbevölkerung nicht genug Begeisterung für die Verteidigung des „deutschen Ostraums“ und des SS-Systems aufbringen wird. Auf dem Grund und Boden, der von seinen rechtmässigen Besitzern befreit und mit deren Blut getränkt ist, sollen Volksdeutsche aus der Ukraine und aus Bessarabien angesiedelt werden. Die sollen dann — auf der gestohlenen Scholle ermordeter Bauern — den Massenmördern helfen, Deutschland an dem polnischen Flusse Bug zu verteidigen und zu retten.

Aber Deutschland kann in Wahrheit nur dann gerettet werden, wenn es sich weigert, diese Verbrechen weiter mitzumachen; wenn es sich nicht länger von seinen Führern in Mitverantwortlichkeit und Mitschuld verstricken lässt; wenn es diesem Millionenmord nicht mehr teilnahmslos zusieht wie der hier photographierte Soldat vor den unschuldigen Opfern entmenschter Grausamkeit.

G.3

On this stolen ground of murdered peasants they are then to help defend and save Germany along the line of the Bug River.

But Germany can only be saved if it refuses to take part in these crimes; if it refuses to let its leaders make it an accomplice in their crime; unless it ceases to look on indifferently at this murder of millions, just as the soldier in this picture stands by the innocent victims of inhuman cruelty.

Photo caption reads: A German soldier in front of the bodies of murdered Polish peasants.

English handbill 1943 (back).

The turning point

According to official Russian statements, 144,000 men and officers belonging to the Wehrmacht and the vassal armies have been captured since the opening of the Russian winter offensive and up to the first week of January 1943; 144,000 undernourished, badly clothed, and insufficiently equipped soldiers had to surrender.

In this offensive the Russians have driven the enemy out of 60,000 square kilometres of their country. Among the 1,595 towns and villages that have been recaptured the strategically important key points are: Maltshchik, Mozdok, Elista, Kotelnikovo, Kalatsch, Tsimlianskaya, Tschertkone and Velikiye-Luki.

The Axis Armies have lost 207,000 dead and further hundreds of thousands wounded.

They have lost 3,425 tanks, 6,032 heavy guns, 30,000 submachine guns and rifles, 130,000 fully-loaded trucks and lorries, 800,000 bombs and shells, as well as 20,000,000 rounds of ammunition.

One third of the Eastern Army is involved in the retreat on the Southern Front in Russia; twenty-two divisions are encircled and cut off at Stalingrad.

Plentifully equipped by their own armament industry, regularly reinforced with war material of every sort by the Allies, and strengthened by the enormous booty they have captured, the Red Army continues its advance Westward. Its reserves are sufficient, its equipment first class, its Air Force dominates the sky. The German Luftwaffe had to be partly drawn off to the African Front.

In Africa, the British have chased Rommel out of Egypt and driven him 1,620 kilometres to the west, a distance



equivalent to that from Berlin to Istanbul. They have captured 78,000 Germans and Italians, have destroyed over 1,000 aircraft in combat or on the ground. In the meantime a convoy of 850 ships, the greatest convoy of history, has landed the English and Americans in North Africa from where they threaten the Southern flank of "Fortress Europe".

Retreat in Russia, retreat in Africa – the great turning point has arrived. This is the beginning of the end.

Photo captions reads:
Above: Nine of 144,000.
Below: German prisoners in Libya.

Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1945
(front).

Either ... or

The collapse of the German Armed Forces is imminent.

Every day brings new reports of Russian victories.

Every day brings the Russians closer to the capital.

The German defence in the East can hardly be termed an organised one any longer.

And in the West, 7 Allied Armies are awaiting the signal to deliver the crucial blow.

- Thousands of Jabos (Jagdbombers: fighter bombers) and bombers,
- Countless heavy artillery guns,
- Overwhelming war materials stand ready to strike.

Germany's fate is decided!

Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin have determined Germany's future at the Yalta Conference.

They have resolved,

that the Nazi reign will be ruthlessly smashed,

that German militarism will be destroyed once and for all,

that the German people will be guaranteed a chance to rebuild in peace and liberty.

You must decide your fate yourself!

Die – under the relentless onslaught of the Allied Armies,

Die – for the Nazi Germany of yesterday,
or

Live – under the secure protection of an American POW camp,

Live – for a better Germany tomorrow.





Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1945 (back).

In the last hour

This is the situation as of 17 February at 1800 hours:

In the East:

The Oder River north of Breslau has been crossed by Russian troops on a wide front.

Berlin is threatened from the East and the South.

Russian tanks are rolling into Dresden.

Budapest has been captured.

The road to Vienna is open.

In the West:

The Rhine has been reached at the Dutch border.

Cleves has fallen.

The Americans are at the Roer River.

The Allies are united and ready for a big offensive from Strasburg to Arnhem.

The final hour has struck.

Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1945
(front).

5 minutes after 12!

It is over

with the war criminals who, under their lying promises, have driven the German people to misfortune and death, and now, 5 minutes after 12, you sacrifice yourselves in order to stay in power a few weeks longer.

It is over

with the SS who, are being pulled from the frontlines and, instead of being used against the Allied Troops, their weapons are now directed against the home front and against you to keep you in line at 5 minutes after 12.

It is over

with the Westwall which today is as riddled with holes as the Atlantic Wall and even as, at 5 minutes after 12, you try to prove that your pitiful air raid shelters can hold out against the hundredfold superior artillery and tank strength of the Allies.

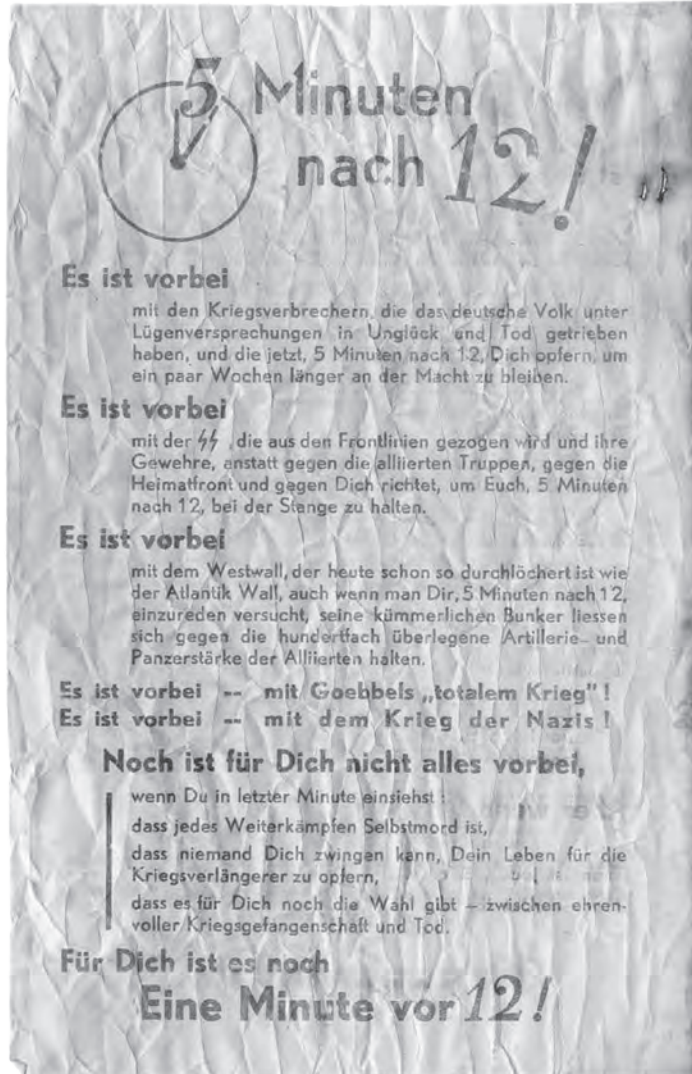
It is over – with Goebbels' "total war"!

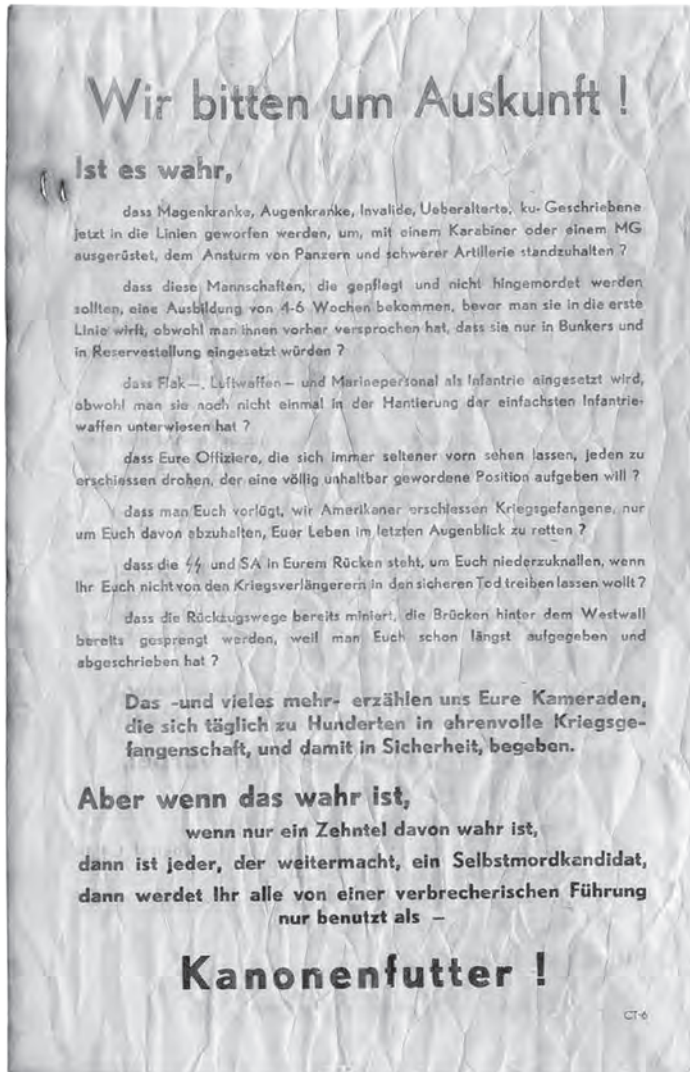
It is over – with the Nazi's war.

Still, not everything is over for you,

if at the last minute you can see:
that continued fighting is suicide,
that nobody can force you to sacrifice your life for those who want to extend the war,
that there is a choice for you – between an honourable prisoner of war and death.

For you it is still one minute before 12!





Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1945 (back).

**We ask for information!
Is it true,**

that sufferers of gastric disease, sufferers of eye disease, the disabled, the elderly, the denigrated are now thrown into the lines equipped with a carbine or a machine gun, to withstand the onslaught of tanks and heavy artillery?

that these teams, which should be looked after, not murdered, get training for 4-6 weeks before they are thrown into the frontline, although it has been promised beforehand that they would only be used in air-raid shelters and reserve positions?

that anti-aircraft, air force and naval personnel are used as infantry, although they have not been trained with handling the simplest of infantry weapons?

that your officers, who let themselves be rarely seen, are threatening to shoot anyone who wants to give up a position that has become completely untenable?

that you tell lies of Americans shooting prisoners of war which serves only one purpose, i.e. to prevent you from saving your lives in the last moment?

that the SS and SA is on your back to shoot you down if you don't want to extend the war and be driven to certain death?

that retreat routes are already mined, bridges behind the Westwall are already blown up, because you have already given up?

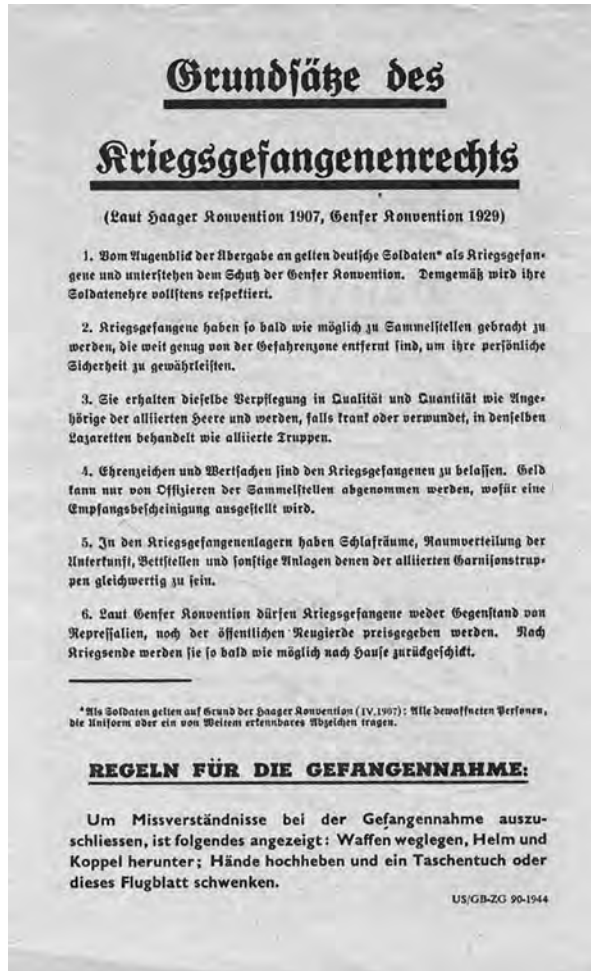
This – and much more – tell your comrades, who, daily in their hundreds, become honourable POWs, and are thus offered safety.

But if this is true, if only a tenth of this is true, then anyone who continues is a candidate for suicide, and you will all be used by a criminal leadership as

Cannon fodder!

Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1944,
after the invasion (front).





Leaflet from the US Air Force / RAF, 1944, after the invasion (back).

Basic Principles of Law for POWs

(According to the Hague Convention 1907, Geneva Convention 1929)

1. From the moment of surrender German soldiers* are regarded as POWs and come under the protection of the Geneva Convention. Accordingly, their military honour is fully respected.
2. POWs must as soon as possible be taken to assembly points which are far enough from the danger zone to ensure their personal safety.
3. POWs must receive the same quality and quantity of rations as members of the Allied armies and, if sick or wounded, must be treated in the same hospitals as Allied troops.
4. Decorations and valuables should be left with POWs. Money may only be removed from non-officers if a receipt is issued.
5. Sleeping quarters, accommodation, bunks and other installations in a POW camp must be the equivalent to those of the Allied garrison troops.
6. According to the Geneva Convention, POWs must not become subjects of reprisal, or be become objects of public curiosity. After the war ends, they must be returned home as soon as possible.

*According to the Hague Convention (IV, 1907): soldiers are all armed persons who wear uniforms or any insignias which can be recognised from a distance.

Rules for capture:

To avoid misunderstandings when surrendering, the following is advisable: lay down all weapons; take off helmet and belt; raise hands above your head, and wave a handkerchief or this leaflet.

Official Gazette

of the German government of the State of Hesse

Darmstadt, 9 August 1945.

Once the area of the territory is demarcated, the German government will intermittently publish an interim news bulletin. The first bulletin contains government regulations published so far, as well as other notices and references of general interest.

Wreckage and tears are the legacy of Hitler's reign.

Meanwhile, the senseless destruction of residential and production areas, and large supplies of food in the last moments of a long-lost war, threatens the foundations of living standards and make rebuilding difficult. The need is great! Hunger, misery and worry about loved ones burden us all. Nazi officials have fled, the authorities must cease their work. All transport is at a standstill. The administration unit has collapsed. Therefore the undersigned, with the consent of the military government, have formed a single government for the Starkenburg province. It consists of experts and has the task of taking all measures appropriate to restore and consolidate peace, security and legal order, to distribute foodstuffs according to fair principles, to fix traffic as soon as possible, to create healthy financial foundations for the restoration of economic and social life, and to begin reconstruction. This government is subject to all existing Reich and state authorities within the Starkenburg province.

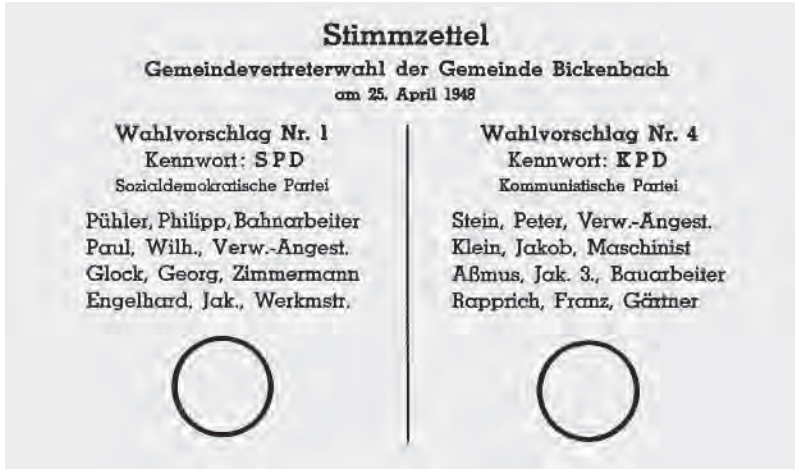
None of the employees of the now reigning government are unaware of the difficulties of finding solutions to the problems. But everyone is convinced that it must and will be possible to bridge the chaos and finally overcome it.

The actions the government takes will often be hard, but always fair. It is expected that every German, in recognition of the terrible necessity brought about by the Nazi war, will willingly comply with our orders and those of the authorities subordinate to us. Only when everyone is working to the best of their ability and with all their strength in the tasks which the collapse of Hitler has led us, only when all fulfill their duty can work flourish for the benefit of our people.



The government is housed in the building of the former provincial chamber of agriculture at Rheinstraße 62.

The German Government of the State of Hesse. President: *Dr. Bergsträßer*, Police: *Ahl*; Healthcare: *Dr. Vix*; Finance: *Dr. Boll*; Justice: *Dr. Hansen*; Reconstruction: *Walk*; Nutrition and Farming: *Dr. Keil*



Ballot paper

Community representatives of the Bickenbach municipality, 25 April 1948.

Nomination No. 1

Catchword: SPD

Social Democratic Party

Philipp Pühler, railway worker

Wilhelm Paul, administrative official

Georg Glock, carpenter

Jakob Engelhard, foreman

Nomination No. 4

Catchword: KPD

Communist Party

Peter Stein, administrative official

Jakob Klein, machinist, engineer

Jakob ABmus III, labourer

Franz Rapprich, gardener

Gathering at the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach

15 July 1988



FROM THE BICKENBACH MAGAZINE,
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 29, SEPTEMBER 1988

“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away”

Memorial plaque at the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach

By Hans-Jürgen Krause

Friday, 15 July 1988, at the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach. A large contingent of prominent figures from political and cultural circles are standing between the gravestones, listening to the Jewish lament for the dead, the Kaddish, sung by cantor William Usher from the Jewish parish of Darmstadt.

Subsequently, Director Moritz Neumann of the regional

association of the Jewish municipalities in Hessen leads the prayer.

The skies are draped in clouds, a falcon hovers over the site, almost symbolically. Many citizens also came to attend the ceremony, somewhat amazed, because everything is so completely different compared to other official events. Used to taking off their hats when entering sacred places, on this solemn occasion it is expected to keep the head wear on, which requires some self-restraint.

On this day, we are celebrating the inauguration of a memorial plaque in the place where the funeral home once stood. The following text can be read in German and Hebrew under the stylistic seven-armed candleholder, on a black background:

“On the nights of the 9th–10th November 1938, the Jewish cemetery ingloriously entered the history books during Kristallnacht, when it was devastated, and the funeral home blown up.

An inscription chiselled into a stone tablet, which had been there for centuries there, read:

*The Lord giveth,
The Lord taketh away,
Praised art thou eternally
Who revives the dead.*

According to old Alsbach court book records, Count Ludwig V of Hesse had approved the clearing of the site to become a burial place on 17 June 1616. The peace of the dead had remained undisturbed for more than 300 years. As a cautionary reminder for the cities and municipalities of:

Alsbach, Auerbach, Bensheim, Biblis, Bickenbach, Biebesheim, Bürstadt, Crumstadt, Eberstadt, Elmshausen, Eschollbrücken, Gernsheim, Goddelau, Gross-Hausen, Gross-Rohrheim, Hahn, Hähnlein, Heppenheim, Hofheim, Jugenheim, Kleinhausen, Lorsch, Pfungstadt, Nordheim, Reichenbach, Schönberg, Seeheim, Schwanheim, Stockstadt, Zwingenberg.”

And they all came, the representatives of these municipalities, whose fellow citizens had found their last resting place here; also, in memory of those who had lost their lives elsewhere, in a cruel way, simply because they were Jews.

Mayor Hans Christ (Alsbach-Hähnlein) and County Commissioner Dr. Hans-Joachim Klein (Darmstadt-Dieburg) remembered this dark chapter of German history in their speeches. The memorial plaque mounted on the cemetery wall is meant to help us not forget the past and to learn from the events of this time.

The memorial plaque is inaugurated in the presence of County Commissioner Willi Blodt (Groß-Gerau), Town Councillor Fritz Glenz (Darmstadt), Town Delegate Georg Vogel (Darmstadt), Ruth Bratu (Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, Darmstadt), Pastor Mingo (Alsbach), Pastor Zeuch (Bickenbach),

Pastor Koch (retired, Bickenbach), Dr. Heinemann (Commission for the History of the Jews in Hesse) and many others.

It is a moment which might give particular satisfaction to one of the people present: Mayor Karl Schemel (Bickenbach). Since 1979, he has not only supported this cemetery and the establishment of the memorial plaque with determination, but has made a significant contribution to the realisation of this project with much courage and strength. He will be most grateful when the project can be completed today with the support of the City of Darmstadt, the districts of Darmstadt-Dieburg and Groß-Gerau, and active assistance from the neighbouring municipality of Alsbach-Hähnlein.

The Hebrew songs sound like messages from a distant time, delivered by the ecumenical choir of the Bergstrasse school village under the direction of Pastor Gerhard Hechler. The ceremony ended. Some, mostly older citizens, visit the graves of friends and acquaintances, amongst them Philipp Röder of Bickenbach.

In the meantime, the sky has darkened and thick rain drops are falling on the new memorial plaque, and the 2,100 gravestones of the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach.



FROM THE DARMSTÄDTER ECHO NEWSPAPER,
18 JULY 1988

“Learning from dark moments of the past”

At Alsbach Jewish cemetery, a memorial plaque was solemnly inaugurated, with visitors from the whole region

A plaque at the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach now reminds us of the fact that Jewish fellow citizens from approximately 30 municipalities in the region have found their final resting place here for more than 300 years, since 1616. The plaque also reminds us of the fact that SA members devastated the cemetery and blew up the funeral home during Kristallnacht on 8 November 1938 [sic].

Two Initiators

The inscription above the door of the destroyed building “The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, praised art thou eternally, who revives the Dead” is located at the centre of this inscription in German and Hebrew, which is completed with the names of the municipalities, whose Jewish fellow citizens were buried here. This memorial plaque was made possible by an initiative led by Mayor Karl Schemel (Bickenbach) and his colleague, Hans Christian (Alsbach-Hähnlein). They turned to the districts Darmstadt-Dieburg, Bergstrasse and Groß-Gerau as well as the city of Darmstadt, thus covering the area of the former Jewish municipalities which had used the cemetery and asked for support of this project.

Donations from the districts and municipalities made the installation of the plaque possible.

The plaque was revealed at an official event on Friday, in the presence of numerous representatives of the districts, cities and municipalities as well as the churches. In addition, Mayor Christ welcomed above all, Director Moritz Neumann of the regional organisation of Jewish municipalities in Hesse. At the same time, Christ thanked his Bickenbach colleague, Schemel, for the determination with which he had pursued the establishment of the memorial plaque. Christ recalled the infamous actions which had brought about the destruction of the funeral home and the devastation of the graves in 1938.

Such an act must never be repeated. Christ further mentioned that many visitors still come to visit this cemetery and the graves of their families. On many occasions the conversations and discussions are about this dark point of the past in 1938. From this can arise hope and mutual understanding, said Christ in his concluding remarks. District Councillor Hans-Joachim Klein (Darmstadt-Dieburg) called for people to come to terms with history on this truly historical location and to learn from the memory, as this was the function of the memorial plaque. Only if we can learn from the memory of the event, that hate paired with prejudice is wrong, then a repetition of the atrocities becomes impossible. Klein also expressed the hope that the memorial plaque will help prevent the cemetery from being forgotten, and draw attention to lessons from history.

Lamentation for the dead, and prayer

Afterwards, First Cantor William Usher, from the Jewish municipality in Darmstadt, sang the Jewish Lamentation for the Dead, the Kaddish. Then Moritz Neumann said the prayer. The official occasion was accompanied by Hebrew singing by the ecumenical choir of the Bergstrasse school village under the direction of Pastor Hechler.

The Alsbach Jewish cemetery ranks among the 20 most important Jewish burial grounds in Hesse. The land was cleared of rocks in 1616 and leased to Jews by the Landgrave as a funeral ground. It was expanded several times in the past.

In 1757, a wealthy Jew paid for a wall to enclose the grounds, as recorded in the inscription on his gravestone. In 1843, an entrance building was established which received a second floor in 1854. In 1938, this building was destroyed together with the 300-year-old death register. Now, many of the approximately 2,100 gravestones, which were made from sandstone, are endangered, the inscriptions weathered.

Also a Cultural Monument

Since 1979/1980, Karl Schemel has looked after this valuable cultural monument of the local Jewish population. In 1980, the Bickenbach local administration conducted an inventory of the cemetery, in order to gain insights into the number and condition of the gravestones.

In the meantime, the Commission of the History of Jews in Hesse located in Wiesbaden, has catalogued the Alsbach cemetery, i.e., the inscriptions were copied, translated and documented. Its publication is to follow soon, as explained by Dr. Heinemann, a member of the Commission, during a conversation at the ceremony. Local historians will be able to access this material.

It is rare to find a Jewish collective cemetery in a rural area like this one in Alsbach, Hesse. And a cemetery which was continuously used over such a long period, Dr. Heinemann explained. Even after 1938, and also after the end of the war, individual funerals took place here.

FROM THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG,
THURSDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 1988

“Because it is not enough to be against it”

“The Jews in Bickenbach”: Attempts to keep the memory alive, exhibition and discussion

Located on Bergstrasse in the small community of Bickenbach, at a small exhibition in the top floor of the Kolbschen House – which will be a museum in the future – the local mayor has compiled in his free time, a documentation about “The Jews in Bickenbach”.

At the opening of the exhibition, Mayor Karl Schemel said he had learnt “only about suffering” from official documents, papers and verbal accounts during the preparation of the exhibition. He had tried to respond – especially after such a long period of silence – to address facts that had been treated as taboo until now. According to local records, 57-year-old Schemel is a Social Democrat, and has held the office of mayor for almost two decades. He comes from an old and established family which had provided three sheriffs or mayors before him. His parents had operated a butcher shop with Jewish customers until 1937/38. Schemel remembers: “My father addressed most of them with ‘Du’ (meaning ‘you’, in a familiar way).” Of the Jewish customers, only a Darmstadt businessman had survived the Holocaust – he was able to emigrate to Israel with his family in time.

The teacher, Mr Frank, of Alsbach, who had slaughtered cattle in the yard of the Schemel butcher shop as late as 1938, also fell victim to the Nazi terror. He was assisted by Mr Falter, a butcher from Zwingenberg – and then eight-year-old Karl Schemel. To ensure fair division of the beef, a butcher’s knife was tossed, and the boy, with his face turned to the wall, called out “back”, “edge” and “shaft” to the names of the people involved, (editor’s note: the meaning of this process remains unclear). Mayor Rau, installed by the Nazis, soon instructed his neighbour, Schemel, to avoid such business at all costs. Such fraternising with a Jew was not to be repeated.

From 9 November 1938 onwards, no further “special incidents” were reported from Bickenbach. On Kristallnacht, the area was already “free of Jews”. In April of that year, Benno Wolf had moved to Tiergartenstrasse in Frankfurt, with his wife, Settchen, and his daughter, Rosel.¹ In the autumn of 1941, Benno Wolf returned to Bickenbach on a secret visit – shortly before the family’s deportation to the Minsk extermination camp.

Attempts to keep the memory alive

In Bickenbach, the exhibition goes hand in hand with a series of events organised by the local SPD. On Tuesday, mainly older citizens were invited into Kolbschen House to participate in a discussion with the former Minister of State and first Darmstadt post-war Mayor, Ludwig Metzger. The local club chairman, Mr Engelhard, wished that the younger generation, who still know too little, could all learn from the discussion.

Metzger, who was a lawyer, and once chairman of the Federation of Religious Socialists in Hesse, lost his office as government assessor with the Heppenheim district office in 1933 for political reasons. Now 86, he is convinced of the fact that the majority of the German people did not “intend” this, but “simply allowed things to happen” and considers remembrance as imperative. Only then can it be made clear, “that it is not enough to be against a bad thing, but that it is important to take action”.

To learn of the fate of some of the individuals touches us. Metzger remembers his friendly meetings with the religious philosopher Martin Buber, and his very close relationship with a Jewish family, of whom only his friend, a university student, was saved by going to Brazil. His friend’s brother, a physician, had hesitated to go into exile because, according to Metzger, he only thought “the Germans capable of doing good” – a point of view which was commonly believed by Jews. Similar memories were also evoked amongst the circle of discussion participants, and some contributions still echoed the agitation experienced half a century ago.

1. Benno and Settchen Wolf’s sons, Ludwig and Ernst, also went with the family to Frankfurt, however, both succeeded in leaving Germany. Ludwig Wolf managed to get to the USA, and Ernst Wolf reached England but was then deported to Australia as an “enemy alien” due to his German background.

Criticism could be heard from the younger people, whose historical instruction at school “had finished with Bismarck”. They wanted to hear from those who had been there, whether or not the confrontation with the Nazi-past was decades too late. Ludwig Metzger’s view is that those who wanted to be informed, could have been able to do so in the past, and today each individual is still called on to ensure that people know what happened.

The exhibition at the Kolbschen house is expected to be open for visitors until mid-October. Advance bookings at the local administration is recommended. The events will conclude on Sunday with an attendance at the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach, where for centuries Jews from surrounding municipalities were buried. On Mayor Schemel’s initiative, a memorial plaque was installed only recently, financed by the districts of Bergstrasse, Darmstadt-Dieburg and Groß-Gerau as well as the municipalities of Bickenbach and Alsbach-Hähnlein. The meeting place to attend the cemetery event is in front of the Gräff bakery in Wilhelm-Leuschner-Strasse, at 2pm.

Exhibition: The history of the Jews in Bickenbach

11 September to 25 October 1988, at Kolbschen House, the Bickenbach municipal history museum.



Former SPD Minister Ludwig Metzger and Bickenbach mayor Karl Schemel.

FROM THE BICKENBACH MAGAZINE
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 30, DECEMBER 1988

“Jews in Bickenbach”

A successful event series by the Bickenbach SPD

By Herbert Engelhard

The aspiration of the Bickenbach SPD to structure local government policy successfully in order to present Bickenbach’s citizens with an endearing and liveable community where one can feel at home is only one of the areas of work for the SPD.

Another self-imposed task is the presentation of topics, which are of general interest, or where their discussion can provide new focus. These were the requirements under which the SPD dedicated itself to the topic “The Jews in Bickenbach”.

Mayor Karl Schemel took on the central task to revive the topic and to present the key results to the public as part of an exhibition.

The opening event in the community centre, with Dany Bober and Frank D. Koblinsky, was a very special experience. Dany Bober’s great personal charisma, his strong voice, as well as the musical virtuosity of his partner, Koblinsky, inspired the visitors in the well-attended hall of the community centre.

The two artists sang and also told about Judaism from its early beginnings to the present. They sang songs in German, Yiddish, Hebrew and Sephardic. Dany Bober was a master at introducing people to Judaism by telling anecdotes. Great applause was the well-earned reward for a splendid opening event.

On Sunday morning, many visitors again came to the attic at Kolbschen House. This redesigned “jewel” of Bickenbach was the worthy venue for the exhibition and the lecture on the Jews of Bickenbach by mayor Karl Schemel. Karl Schemel reported on the motivation which had moved him to reawaken this topic.

He told of his personal experiences and presented the result of his work. The exhibition, prepared by Karl Schemel, which was extended by two weeks, had become

very popular. Many school groups who studied the topic of Jews in their lessons came to visit and obtained valuable ideas from the exhibition.

Party members of the local association took part in the afternoon meeting series, which was held under the title: “Party seniors remember National Socialism”.

Ludwig Metzger, the 86-year-old former Minister of State and Darmstadt’s first post-war mayor, recalled meetings and experiences from the time of the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist dictatorship. It was truly a special experience to listen to the report and stories of that period from this witness. His experiences and advice were also particularly valuable for the younger generation present.

It was quite amazing that many visitors participated in the events of the afternoon by spontaneously telling their own experiences, thus giving the meeting a vibrance that could not have been foreseen.

The event series continued with a contribution from the group “Women for Women” of the Bickenbach SPD, followed by a film afternoon arranged by Hans-Jürgen Krause.

The series concluded with a visit to the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach. Mayor Karl Schemel described the history of this burial place, and the more than 100 visitors became aware of the special atmosphere of this cemetery.

Finally, there is the question of the overall evaluation of this event series. All events registered very good attendances. The qualitative content of the individual meetings was deemed to be very good. This is particularly pleasing for the organisers.

The event topic, “The Jews in Bickenbach”, had been expanded in such a way that it became possible to gain insights beyond the original investigation into Jewish history, culture and religion. The local SPD association had not expected such positive and large resonance. They were pleasantly surprised.

The local SPD association expresses sincere thanks to all visitors. A special thank you goes to Mayor Karl Schemel who made the main contribution to this event series.

Old Bickenbach in pictures



Greetings from Bickenbach on the Bergstrasse

Top left: "Gasthaus Deutscher Kaiser" then known as "Deutsches Haus", and is now the "Kastanie" (chestnut), corner Bachgasse and Alte Strasse.

Top right: View of upper Chausseegasse.

Bottom left: The town hall and schoolhouse, built 1895.

Bottom right: A view of the evangelical church; to the left the rectory, to the right Hofreite Hennemann (Hennemann estate), named "Kirchbäcker".



Bachgasse, Jakobs Hannes house.

Both of the above pictures were taken c.1908, at the latest, 1909 (the addressee of the card had married and taken another name after that date).

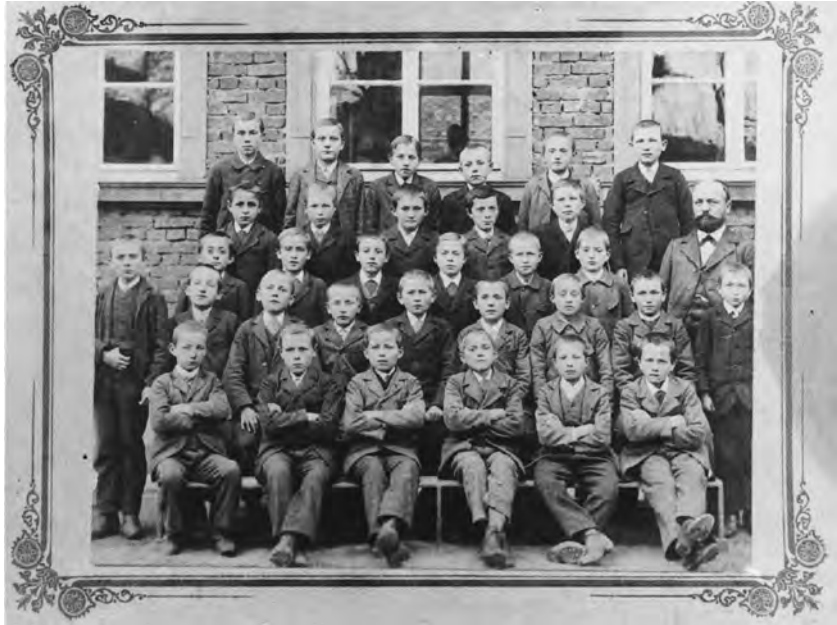
For both photos, the photographer must have been Friedrich Freund, who did not return from WWI. These postcards came from the estate of Ludwig Ahl (1883–1957), a Bickenbach teacher.



Schulzengasse.

The footbridge across "die Bach", built after WWI, gave access to the Balß house at Schulzengasse 5. After this, a fixed bridge was built. The boy sitting on the footbridge is Adam Burger, who was born in 1897.

School year 1887/88 in front of the town hall (market place).



Christoph Schemel's butcher shop, called "de kloa Metzger", in Chausseegasse c.1900. On the left, the post office garden wall is recognisable.





View of the upper Chausseegasse with the Gasthaus Zum Hirsch, before 1925. The original inn sign still graces the house today.



Gasthaus Zur Krone, on the corner of Pfungstädterstrasse and Bahnhofstrasse about mid-1920s, shows the host Georg Herpel, called "de Scholz" and Mrs Elise Hils.

**The Hennemann family,
Hintergasse.**

The house was burnt down in 1920, and was then rebuilt. On account of the many "Hennemans" in Bickenbach, to this day the family have the nickname "Die Hinnergässer".





The last "Hinnergässer", Philip Hennemann c.1943, coming from the foal pasture below the railway. He died in 1991.



The house at Sandstrasse 5, c.1915; adjacent is the retail store and home of butcher, Peter Daum.

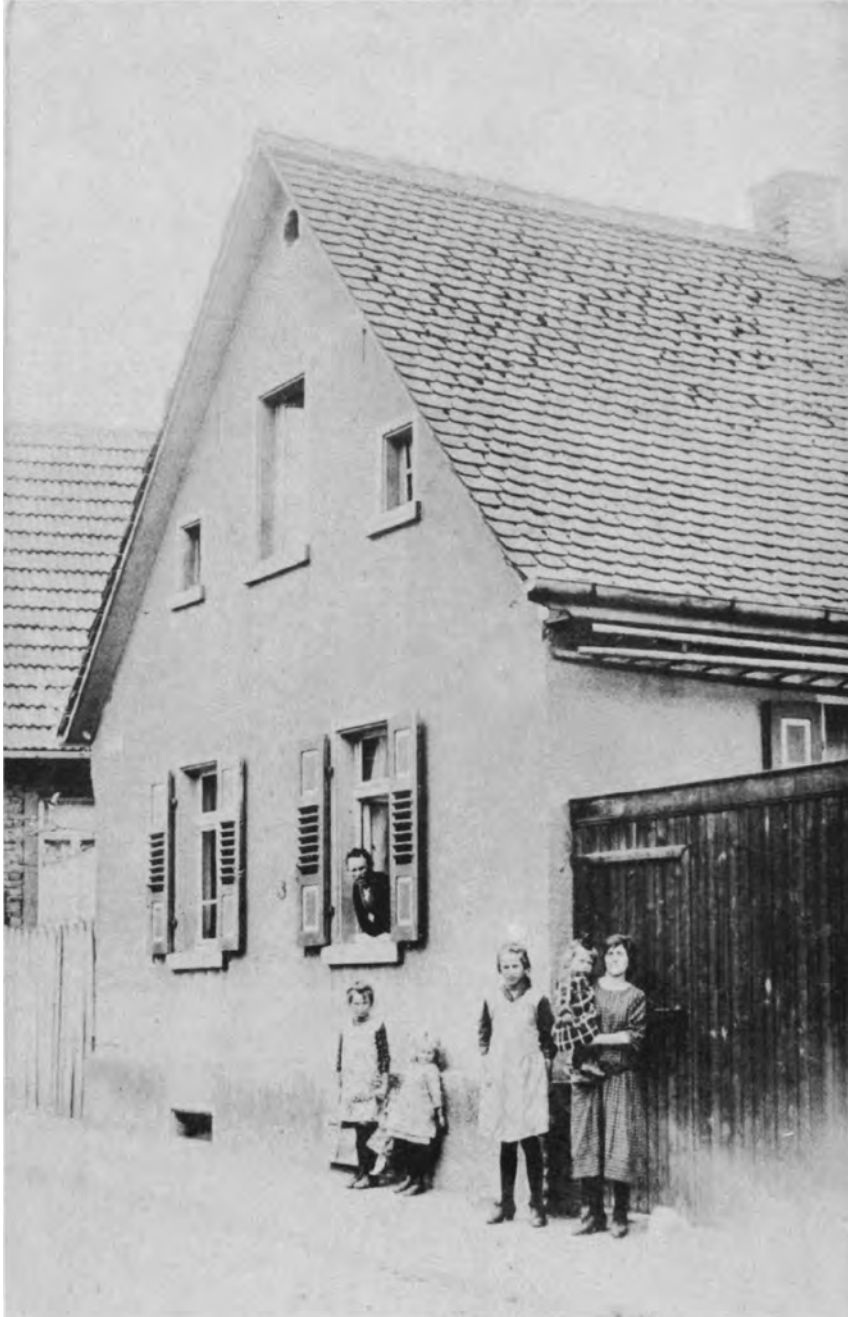
Pictured are Jakob Aßmus senior, daughter Elisabeth and son Peter. Left-hand window: Margarethe Schmidt and son Erwin. Right-hand window: Mrs Margarethe Aßmus, (née Kaffenberger).

The Bickenbach Riding Club at the Pfungstädter Strasse sports field, taken on the occasion of the local shooting club celebration, about 1930/31. From left to right: Friedrich Bindel, Karl Garst, Karl Schemel, Philipp Röder, Ludwig Müller, Valentin Schäfer (Hähnlein), Karl Hennemann, Willy Koppert.



The house of "Jakobs-Hannes", Stein family, today Petendra, in the Bachgasse, mid-1930s.





In Sandstrasse, view of the house of railway worker Peter Draudt with his wife and daughters. Several ladders can be seen stored under the eaves for protection from the weather.

Bickenbach "Kaiserstein", now in the gallery of the Bickenbach community hall.





The right-hand drive car belonging to Thorbeck, a cigar manufacturer from Mannheim. Pictured in front of the manor house (at the Hunting Chateau). The photo may have been taken in the mid-1920s.



Aerial photograph c.1935. The Hunting Chateau grounds (1720) with the manor house, the L-shaped coach house, and the two residential towers, known in Bickenbach as the "front" and "rear" Babylon, the hunter's house and the barracks building, referred to as the "factory". At this time it was still a complete ensemble of buildings.



Top left: "Main street". Chausseegasse; since 1920 it has borne the name "Darmstädter Strasse". At the edge of the picture are some women having a neighbourly morning chat. At the Rebenich house (at right) is a gas lamp.

Top right: Hügelstrasse at the junction of Hintergasse. At the George Stein house (at left) a mailbox for the Reichspost can be seen. In the foreground is the track for the Bickenbach-Seeheim branch line.

Above left: Evangelical church with the funeral home. The avenue of acacia trees were planted by Lundgreen, a millionaire from Sweden.

Above right: War memorial below the church hill on Jugenheimer Strasse. The picture was taken at about the end of the 1920s or the early 1930s.



Formerly the house at Schulstrasse 3, next to the town hall. It was the home of Emil Wolf and his family until about 1933. The picture was taken in 1948.

Master blacksmith,
Philipp Ahl III's house at
Chausseegasse 26.





Greetings from Bickenbach on the Bergstrasse

Gasthaus Zur Rose – the pub still bears this name today. In mid-November 1992, Willi Aßmus contributed this picture postcard from the estate of his aunt Elisabeth. On 5 March 1921, son Heinrich Pieler told his friend in Hamburg, Christian Aßmus, that his brother, Jacob, had died. Somehow the picture postcard returned to Bickenbach.

As with most postcards of the time, it was the innkeepers who used these picture postcards as advertising material, and thus captured a piece of village history. It is probable that this card was printed before WWI, since the money would not have been available around 1921.

Upper row: Left, Gasthaus of Christoph Pieler, below Ludwig Marquardt's property, had to give way to a new building in the 1970s. The resplendent sign above the entrance displays the following text: "Gasthaus Zur Rose proprietor Chr. Pieler Gundrum Brewery Bensheim". A reference to the delicatessen and grocery store is missing.

Right, Hunting Chateau estate. The manor house, guardhouse and the "factory" and barracks building. Also, the house of the Gußmann family can be recognised. The church sits dimly in the background. This shot was likely taken at the end of a workday in the cigar factory, as evidenced by the many people, women, men and children. To the left, by the post office gate stands a two-wheeled handcart.

Lower row: The church image is repeated on other postcards, as is the town hall and school building.



A more recent postcard of Gaststätte Zur Rose comes from about the 1960s.

Top left: The market place with the old village linden tree, the schoolhouse (today the town hall) and in the background part of the fire station newly-constructed in 1957.

Top right: View of Pfungstädter Strasse, corner of Hartenauer Strasse.

Above left: View of the newly refurbished dining room with special attention paid to Ludwig Pieler's TV. It was one of the first televisions in Bickenbach!

Above right: In the evenings, the front door is emblazoned by an illuminated sign set above it, reading:

**Zur Rose
Provisions
Ludwig Pieler
Gundrum Brewery**

Next to the front steps (left side) is a cigarette machine, above it a sign for 'Libella' (a brand of soft drink). On the right, the lower sign is not recognisable, but what can't be missed is a sign above it for the world famous Coca-Cola. Further to the right, next to the grocery store window, is an 'Underberg' advertisement for bitters, with an outdoor thermometer. (Underberg is a digestif bitter produced from aromatic herbs.)

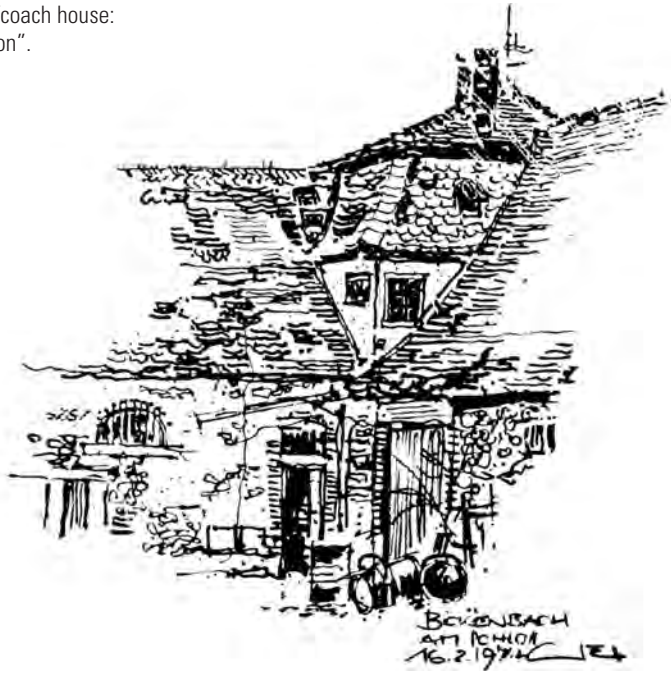


There were many horse breeders in Bickenbach. The photo shows Philipp Gußman senior and Philipp junior in the courtyard of their dwelling at Darmstädter Strasse 3, 1938.



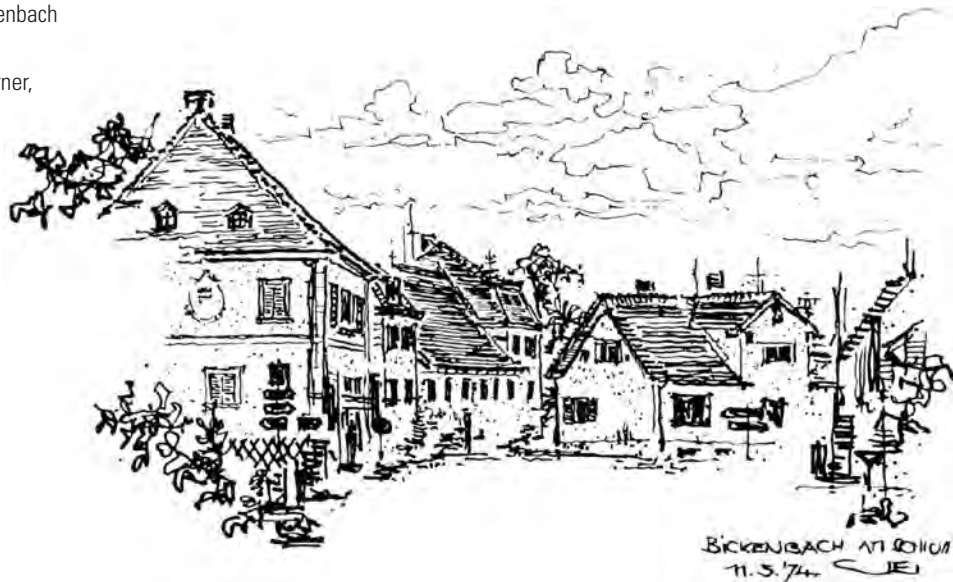
This drawing of Bickenbach, by Jürgen Winnefeld, shows part of Schulzengasse in 1985.

Old Hunting Chateau/coach house:
called "back of Babylon".



Manor house of the Bickenbach
Hunting Chateau.

Drawings by Helmut Werner,
Bickenbach.





Aerial photograph taken in the mid-1960s.

At the top of the photo – to the left – houses from the western residential area of Jugenheim can be seen. The locality had expanded to take in the Jugenheim-Bickenbach border. The Hunting Chateau estate was subdivided and the Bickenbach savings and loan society acquired the coach houses and the vast open spaces; the new bank is not yet built. The barracks was the property of the contractor Adam Engelhardt. The manor was acquired by hairdresser, Otto Pfeiffer. Clearly visible is the new white-framed store window. In the courtyard is Karl Jacobs' family home.



The housebook of Philipp Freund from 1832 and the tin spice box of baker, Wilhelm Brunner, from 1747, probably originating from the Odenwald.



View of Darmstädter Strasse from the corner of Steingasse. The almost 200-year-old chestnut tree became a victim of the axe about 1970. Between the property of Georg Rau and Freund's house the newly built cooperative store is recognisable.

US Air Force aerial photo of Bickenbach

Aerial photo by Allied Air Forces from Saturday, 24 March 1945.

From mid-March 1945, the Allied Forces had been building several bridgeheads over the Rhine and also near Oppenheim. Apart from a few lines of resistance the [German] armed forces had nothing left to show their opponents so the civilian population remained largely free of assaults and damage. On 22 March, the bridge over the Rhine in Gernsheim was blown up in order to stop the opposing attack and, in Bickenbach, the Americans' approach became apparent from the fact that "official documents" were burnt.

The 24 March 1945 was a uniquely beautiful spring day. In the shops of butchers, bakers, and grocers, busy trading prevailed from early morning to noon. Everyone wanted to obtain what was still available with their food coupons.

However, low-flying aircraft attacked everything that moved from the early morning. Around 3pm, American tank vanguards had advanced as far as the passage for the Main-Neckar railway, the Pfungstädt hollow, however they pulled back again and one could observe their procession on the motorway from the Kirchbuckel hillside. People became fearful. Straggling soldiers, some also in groups, withdrew hastily in the direction of Odenwald. Anti-aircraft guns (3.7cm) had been placed in position at Pfungstädt trench, in the small forest near Hartenau's yard, in the sow pasture, underneath the station, and at Böllheckweg. Hardly any resistance was offered, presumably due to the superiority of the US Air Force and the lack of ammunition.

Towards evening, it might have been close to 7pm, an enormous detonation shook the houses. The retreating troops had blown up the MUNA (Ammunition Depot) in Eberstadt. At nightfall, the military requested people to move into their cellars. Unrest and fear struck the people and much anxious waiting was the result. Isolated rifle shots and machine-gun fire could be heard.

The Americans moved into the town at midnight coming from the direction of Hähnlein. The Volkssturm home guard had not closed the provisional anti-tank barriers (made from tree-trunks) at Postgarten and the corner of Hintergasse and Sandstrasse. A squad, armed

with light machine guns, opened fire on the advancing US tanks and was quickly annihilated. Gottlieb Weigert approached the tanks with a white flag and surrendered the town. During the short exchange of fire, one German soldier died; he was buried in Bickenbach and transferred to his northern German homeland in 1946.

During the nights of 25–26 March, the Americans withdrew from the village and attacked it with sweeping fire of their artillery. Several houses were hit. No lives were lost. As it turned out later, the SS had blown up the Melibokus Tower during the early evening and as intensified fighting took place in Bensheim, 9km away, the town came under attack from the air. US combat forces moved into the destroyed town centre of Bensheim on 27 March 1945.

People readjusted their thinking quickly. The Americans attached their instructions and proclamations in German and English to yard gates – military occupation rule prevailed. And the US-Puerto Ricans residing at the school in Steingasse did not care about the instruction "No Fraternisation with the Germans"; they looked for and found contact with females, like all soldiers in this world. Phrases such as, "Have you got chewing-gum", "Have you a smoke for me" and above all, "ok", quickly found their way into the German language.

Vehicles and tanks continued to roll towards the East day and night. Diehard traditionalists experienced the enormous superiority of American resources. As early as the beginning of April, the Americans appointed a KPD (communist party) man, Karl Dieter, as mayor. The victors permitted the first steps towards democratic life. The need was great, particularly for the those who had lost their homes to bombing, and arriving refugees. On the day of the final surrender of all German troops, 8 May 1945, Mayor Dieter notified the rural council at Nieder-Ramstadt of the community's needs.

And people lived in hope. One of the last ones to return home from Russian imprisonment was Philipp Ganser. This happened on a cold January evening in 1950.

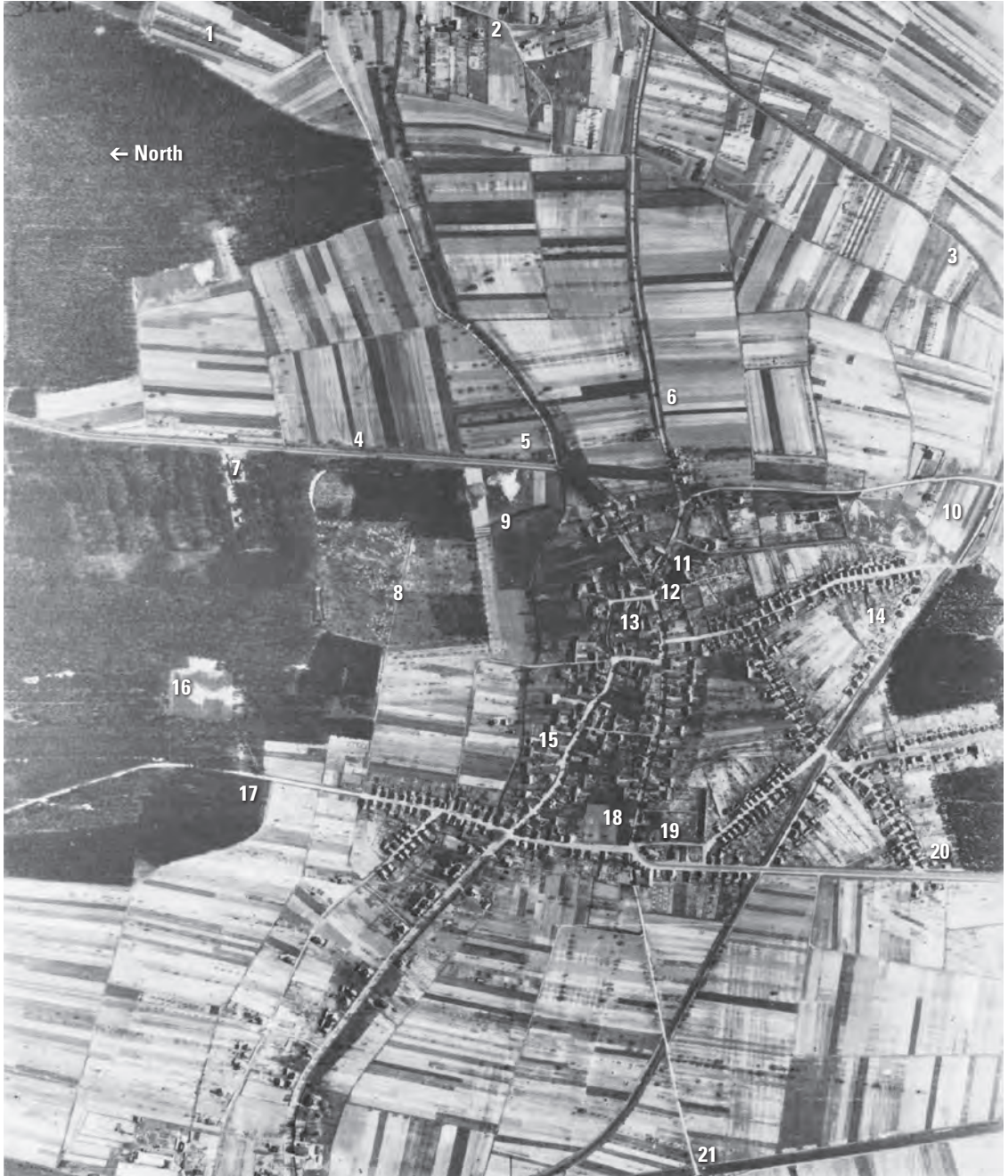


Image description:

1. District of Seeheim.
2. District of Jugenheim, western outskirts.
3. Track system – single track – the branch line, Bickenbach-Seeheim.
4. Road from Eberstadt-Bickenbach-Zwingenberg.
5. Hasengrundweg (to Seeheim), parallel to it is the course of the Landbach (die Bach, or creek).
6. Jugenheimer Strasse.
7. Bergblick Hotel and Cafe, a US Officers Club until 1947.
8. Forested area: although immature for harvesting, from 1942–1944, it was used as a fuel supply for the local population.
9. Weißgerber sand dunes, today unfortunately built upon.
10. Platform installation and shelters at Alsbach holding station on the Bickenbach-Seeheim branch line. In addition, the so-called “Jurreopad” to Alsbach. The name “Jews’ Path” stems from the fact that Jews from Bickenbach chose this way to go to the school in Alsbach.
11. Evangelical church with cemetery grounds.
12. Kolbsches House (1584), served as City Hall until 1972.
13. Schoolhouse with marketplace.
14. Hügelstrasse: site of British Air Force bombing on 24–25 August, 1944; Seven people died and several houses were totally destroyed.
15. The Jewish Fountain (1769) in Bachgasse, next to the former (women-only) Mikvah, or bath.
16. Sports ground.
17. Pfungstädter Road.
18. Post office garden (the anti-tank barrier is not clearly visible).
19. The Hunting Chateau grounds (1720).
20. German soldiers’ firing positions on the night of 24–25 March, 1945.
21. Railway post office 39 – restricted railroad crossing – with the caretaker’s house of the Main-Neckar-railway (Frankfurt-Heidelberg). The railway station buildings, the south German Anton Argenton cleaning rag factory, the western district area, and the Hartenau are not visible on this image.

Chronology 1932–1949 (and beyond)

Note: Italics indicate text added in the translated edition.

1932

31 JULY

Reichstag elections: The NSDAP, with 37.8%, became the largest party in the Reichstag. 230 out of 608 mandates were now attributable to that party. The Reichstag president was Hermann Göring.

6 NOVEMBER

Reichstag elections: The NSDAP had a mandate of 196 seats out of 584.

3 DECEMBER

General Kurt Schleicher became Chancellor.

1933

In 1933, Frankfurt had the second largest Jewish community in Germany and the highest percentage of Jews among its pre-war population.

28 JANUARY

Kurt Schleicher resigned.

30 JANUARY

Reich President, Paul von Hindenburg, appointed Hitler as Chancellor.

1 FEBRUARY

Dissolution of the Reichstag.

27 FEBRUARY

Fire at the Reichstag in Berlin.

28 FEBRUARY

Reichstag Fire Decree – Regulation for the Protection of People and State.

5 MARCH

Reichstag and municipal elections.

6 MARCH

Seizure of power of local and state governments.

21 MARCH

Day of Potsdam – the new Reichstag was constituted with an opening ceremony held at Potsdam’s garrison church. The Malicious Practices Act was introduced to rid the state of its ‘oppressors’ and ‘enemies’ and made it illegal to criticise the regime or its leaders.

24 MARCH

The Enabling Act – Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the Reich.

28 MARCH

Arrangement of the party leadership of the NSDAP regarding the discrimination of Judaism.

31 MARCH

Preliminary Law for coordination of the states with the Reich.

1 APRIL

The beginning of the expulsion of Jews from areas and occupations of all kinds; Jewish businesses were boycotted.

7 APRIL

Second Law for coordination of countries: Establishment of Reich Governors; Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service included all “non-Aryans” and initiated replacement for political reasons.

2 MAY

Abolition of trade unions, occupation of trade union offices.

10 MAY

Formation of the Labour Front.

26 MAY

Law on the Trustees of Labour. Law on Confiscation of Communist Assets.

21 JUNE

The Jewish population of Frankfurt was 26,158.

21 JUNE

Unification of the Stahlhelms. (Stahlhelm, or League of Frontline Soldiers, was a paramilitary organisation that arose after WWI.) The end of political parties. The KPD was banned after the Reichstag fire; from 27 February 1933, the German Kampffriege (literally, a fighting squad) was banned.

22 JUNE

Banning of the Social Democratic Party.

27 JUNE

Dissolution of the German national front.

4 JULY

Dissolution of the Bavarian People’s Party.

5 JULY

Dissolution of the Catholic Centre Party.

7 JULY

Regulation to ensure governance.

14 JULY

Law on the constitution of the German Evangelical Church. Law against the formation of new parties. The NSDAP was now the only party in the German Reich. Law for the prevention of genetically diseased offspring.

20 JULY

Agreement between the Holy See and the German Reich.

23 SEPTEMBER

Construction of Reich autobahns began.

27 SEPTEMBER

Beginning of the Protestant church struggle with the pastors' protest by Martin Niemöller; Emergence of the "Confessing Church".

29 SEPTEMBER

The State Hereditary Farm Law aimed to "preserve the farming community as the blood-source of the German people". In theory any farm of 7.5ha to 125ha could be declared hereditary, or a family farm.

19 OCTOBER

The German Reich exited the League of Nations.

12 NOVEMBER

Reichstag elections.

1 DECEMBER

Law to Safeguard the Unity of Party and State.

23 DECEMBER

Judgement in the Reichstag fire trial.

1934

2 JANUARY

Work Order Act.

26 JANUARY

Non-aggression pact with Poland.

30 JANUARY

Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich. The parliaments of local and state governments were cancelled; their sovereign rights went to the Reich.

14 FEBRUARY

Law on the repeal of the Reichsrat.

27 FEBRUARY

Law on the preparation of the organic structure of the German economy.

24 APRIL

Act to amend provisions of criminal law and criminal procedure – Establishment of the People's Court.

14–15 MAY

Law for the regulation of labour input.

4 JUNE

Decision of the League of Nations for the Saar plebiscite.

14–15 JUNE

First meeting of Hitler and Mussolini in Venice.

30 JUNE

The Röhm affair; Hitler ordered the dismissal and discharge of the Chief of Staff of the SA (Sturmabteilung or Brown Shirts). Röhm was murdered by the SS (Schutzstaffel) and Gestapo.

3 JULY

Law Regarding the Measures of State Self-defence; law to post-legalise killings (*of Röhm and Night of the Long Knives*).

2 AUGUST

Hindenburg's death. Law regarding the head of the German Reich. The powers of the president went to the "Führer and Reich Chancellor". Swearing in of the Wehrmacht's allegiance to Hitler.

8 DECEMBER

Resolution of the League Council regarding the establishment of an international police force for the Saar.

20 DECEMBER

Treachery Act – Law against Treacherous Attacks on the State and Party and for the Protection of Party Uniforms.

1935

13 JANUARY

Vote in Saarland; 91% for the reintegration into the German Reich, 9% for maintaining the League of Nations mandate, 0.4% for annexation to France.

30 JANUARY

German municipal code – office of Reich Governor created to gain control over federal states.

16 MARCH

Law regarding the structure of the Wehrmacht.

26 JUNE

Reich Labour Service Law.

15 SEPTEMBER

Reich Flag Act. Law "for the Protection of German blood and German honour". With this law, marriages to Jews were forbidden. The proof of "Aryan" descent was a prerequisite for any public employment. Progressive elimination of legal status of Jews. By Autumn 170,000 Jews – a third of their total number in Germany – had nowhere to go due to Reich citizenship laws.

7 NOVEMBER

Dissolution of the Stahlhelms.

1936

12 MARCH

Invasion by the Wehrmacht, in defiance of the Locarno agreement, regarding the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland.

18 APRIL

Law regarding the People's Court.

11 JULY

Beginning of the Spanish Civil War and Condor Legion (a unit of volunteers from the German air force and army that served with the Nationalists).

1 AUGUST

Opening of the XI Summer Olympic Games in Berlin.

24 AUGUST

Decree regarding the introduction of two-year military service.

8–14 SEPTEMBER

Nuremberg Rally, announcement of the Four Year Plan in connection with rearmament.

3 OCTOBER

Discrimination of Judaism with jurisprudence laws by Hans Frank.

18 OCTOBER

Recognition of Franco's government in Spain.

25 NOVEMBER

German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact.

1937

30 JANUARY

Bill to extend the Enabling Act (for 4 years).

14 JULY

German-Polish agreement regarding Upper Silesia.

7 SEPTEMBER

Hitler's proclamation of the German colonial demand.

13 OCTOBER

German memorandum regarding Belgium's inviolability.

5 NOVEMBER

German-Polish agreement for the treatment of minorities; at the same time Hitler gave permission for the commanders of the Armed Forces to solve the alleged "Lebensraum" problems by the use of violence. Immediate objectives were Austria and Czechoslovakia.

1938

11–13 MARCH

The German invasion of Austria.

11 APRIL

Date on record that Benno Wolf's family changed their place of residence to Tiergarten 18, Apt. 3 in Frankfurt am Main. Their house in Bickenbach was sold on 29 April 1938.

19 MAY

Ludwig (Lou) Wolf, eldest son of Benno Wolf, left Germany for the US from Bremerhaven on the SS Berlin. His journey to New York took 11 days.

SEPTEMBER

Sudetenland crisis.

1 OCTOBER

German troops begin the invasion into the Sudetenland.

9–10 NOVEMBER

Persecution of Jews in Germany. "Kristallnacht": Goebbels organised "spontaneous" riots against Jews, particularly by young people incited by the SA and the SS, resulting in 91 deaths, the destruction of Jewish homes, more than 7,000 businesses, and nearly all the synagogues in the Reich.

12 NOVEMBER

- Regulation for elimination of Jews from German economic life.
- Regulation for restoration of the street scene in Jewish commercial enterprises.
- Order of the President of the Reich Chamber of Culture.
- Order of the Reich Minister of Education for the dismissal of Jewish students from German schools.
- Police Regulation regarding the appearance of Jews in public.
- Arrangement relating to the withdrawal of licenses for Jews.
- Regulation for the use of Jewish property.

13 NOVEMBER

Benno Wolf was sent from Frankfurt to Buchenwald Concentration Camp under an ASJ (Aktionsjuden) directive of 10 November 1938. He became a Jewish prisoner of the post-Kristallnacht round-ups.

21 NOVEMBER

Law on the reunification of the Sudetenland with the German Reich. Promulgation of the Atonement Tax on Jews of German nationality.

30 NOVEMBER

Benno Wolf was released from Buchenwald.

1939

30 JANUARY

Bill to extend the Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the Reich.

16 MARCH

Destruction of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Hitler's decree on the formation of Bohemia and Moravia, thus ending British appeasement, and the advent and imminent threat of war from continuing German demands.

21 MARCH

Hitler made demands of Poland, including the return of Danzig (now Gdansk).

23 MARCH

Law regarding the reunification of the Memel region with the German Reich (Memel was an area in Lithuania).

31 MARCH

British-French military alliance for Poland.

3 APRIL

Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to prepare for an attack against Poland.

MAY

13,751 Jews remained in Frankfurt.

23 AUGUST

German-Soviet non-aggression Pact (Hitler-Stalin-Pact).

26 AUGUST

Ration cards issued.

31 AUGUST

Hitler ordered an attack on Poland.

1 SEPTEMBER

The beginning of WWII with the German attack on Poland.

Ernst Wolf, youngest son of Benno Wolf, left Frankfurt by train for England, via the Hook of Holland.

3 SEPTEMBER

British-French declaration of war on Germany.

22 SEPTEMBER

German-Soviet Border and Friendship Treaty (after the partition of Poland).

9 OCTOBER

Hitler's Directive no. 6: for the preparation of the Offensive in the West and warfare.

26 OCTOBER

Regulation regarding forced labour for the Jewish population.

1940

9 APRIL

Beginning of the occupation of Denmark and Norway.

10 MAY

Beginning of the German war of aggression against Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland and France.

Winston Churchill became British Prime Minister after Neville Chamberlain resigned.

26 MAY-4 JUNE

Evacuation of Allied forces from Dunkirk.

29 MAY

Documents record that Benno Wolf was employed as a labourer at a Jewish Community Hospital in Frankfurt.

22 JUNE

German-French armistice.

29 JUNE

Recorded date of Ernst Wolf's capture by officers from Scotland Yard at Enfield, London. He was detained at Huyton, near Liverpool.

11 JULY

Ernst Wolf left Liverpool, England on board the HMT Dunera. There were 2,732 detainees plus crew. Most thought they were going to Canada.

16 JULY

Hitler's directive on the preparations for a landing operation against England.

17 JULY

Detainees aboard HMT Dunera were informed that their destination was not Canada, but Australia.

5 SEPTEMBER

German-Soviet agreement about resettlement of ethnic Germans from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

6 SEPTEMBER

After a trip in appalling conditions, the HMT Dunera arrived in Sydney, Australia. The journey took 57 days.

7 SEPTEMBER

After a 19-hour train journey from Sydney, four trainloads of detainees from the HMT Dunera arrived at the town of Hay in south-west New South Wales and were placed into newly built prisoner of war and internment camps. Ernst Wolf was put into Camp 7, Hut 22.

1941

JANUARY

Introduction of the Jewish system.

2 MARCH

German troops invaded Bulgaria.

21 MARCH

Lou Wolf, in Chicago, was drafted into the US Army.

10 MAY

Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, flew to Scotland.

19 MAY

Ernst Wolf was transferred to the town of Tatura in Victoria, to another internment camp. By 22 May, 1941, the last Dunera internees had left Hay.

22 JUNE

Invasion of the Soviet Union – Operation Barbarossa.

11 AUGUST

Atlantic Charter.

SEPTEMBER

By the end of September the Jewish population of Frankfurt was 10,592.

18 OCTOBER

All Jewish emigration from Germany was officially ended.

11 NOVEMBER

Date recorded for the transportation of Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf from Frankfurt to Minsk, Russia. They were 'evacuated' with 1,042–1,052 others on Train DA 52. The train travelled through Berlin, Warsaw, Bialystok, Volkovysk and Baranovichy to Minsk. According to historian Monica Kingreen, there were only nine Jewish survivors from this transport. The total number of Jews from Frankfurt who survived the Holocaust was about 600.

17 NOVEMBER

Train DA 52 arrived in Minsk. Some of the occupants were put into a special ghetto for German Jews, known as the "Hamburg Ghetto" in reference to the first transport from Hamburg in autumn 1941.

7 DECEMBER

Seizure of Jewish property; Hitler's "Night and Fog Decree". (This was intended to sort out all political activists and resistance fighters and anyone endangering German security.)

19 DECEMBER

Hitler took over the High Command of the army.

1942

20 JANUARY

At the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, the "Final Solution" – resettlement in the East and "other" measures – was set by Reinhard Heydrich.

7 MARCH

According to the 'Prisoner of War – Service and Casualty Form' records, Ernst Wolf was released from internment on or about this date.

8 APRIL

Ernst Wolf enlisted in the Australian Military Forces (AMF). He joined the 8th Australian Employment Company, which could not participate in combat.

30 JUNE

End of the German advance – Africa Corps – in North Africa.

18 AUGUST

English landing attempt at Dieppe in France.

11 NOVEMBER

German troops invaded the unoccupied part of France.

1943

14–26 JANUARY

Casablanca Conference. The US president raised the demand for unconditional German surrender.

2 FEBRUARY

Surrender of the 6th Army under General Paulus at Stalingrad.

10 JULY

Landing of the Americans and the British in Sicily.

12 JULY

Russian summer offensive led to the German retreat behind the Dnieper River.

25 JULY

Fall of Mussolini.

9 SEPTEMBER

American landing at Salerno.

13 OCTOBER

Italy declared war on Germany.

28 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER

Tehran Conference. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin defined the division of Germany and established eastern and western borders of Poland.

1944

SOMETIME THAT YEAR

Lou Wolf was stationed in New Guinea. While on leave, he travelled south to Australia and briefly met up with his brother, Ernst, who was then living in Melbourne. At the time, neither knew anything of the fate of their parents and sister.

4 MARCH

Beginning of the major Soviet offensive against the German southern wing.

6 JUNE

Anglo-American forces landed in Normandy under the command of General Eisenhower.

22 JUNE

The main Soviet attack advanced to the Vistula River.

20 JULY

Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg and his co-conspirators failed in an attempted to assassinate Hitler at the Wolf's Lair headquarters in East Prussia.

15 AUGUST

Allies landed in southern France.

AUGUST – OCTOBER

The Dumbarton Oaks Conference, with the participation of the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Britain, decided to replace the League of Nations with the UN.

25 SEPTEMBER

Hitler's decree on the formation of the Volkssturm (a militia set up by the Nazis; it conscripted men between the ages of 13 and 60.)

SEPTEMBER

The Western Allies reached German soil at Aachen.

16–24 DECEMBER

Unsuccessful German Ardennes offensive against the Anglo-Americans.

1945

12 JANUARY

Breakthrough of the Soviets on the Vistula; they advanced to the Oder River by the end of January.

5–11 FEBRUARY

Yalta Conference – Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill decided on the division of Germany into four zones of occupation. German reparations began to be established.

6 MARCH

Those born in the year of 1929 were conscripted.

The advance of the US Army at the Rhine at Remagen initiated the collapse of the German Western Front.

20 MARCH

Hitler's last appearance in public.

24–25 MARCH

Bickenbach was occupied by the Americans.

12 APRIL

Death of US President Roosevelt.

25 APRIL

Soviet and American troops met at Torgau on the Elbe.

30 APRIL

Hitler's suicide. His successor was Admiral Karl Dönitz.

2 MAY

Conquest of Berlin by the Soviets.

7–9 MAY

Total surrender of the Wehrmacht. The signing of Germany's unconditional surrender took place in Reims (Western Allies) and in Berlin at Karlshorst (Russians).

23 MAY

The victors dissolved the appointment of the caretaker national government of Dönitz.

5 JUNE

The Four Powers' Berlin Declaration. The four Military Governors – General Dwight D. Eisenhower (USA), Marshal Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov (USSR), Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (Great Britain) and General Jean Lattre de Tassigny (France) – assumed the supreme power in Germany and in the four zones.

17 JULY – 2 AUGUST

At the Potsdam Conference the victorious powers came to an agreement regarding the treatment of the German Reich:

1. They expressed the intention not to destroy or enslave the German people, but to help put their political life back on democratic foundations.
2. The four commanders-in-chief would jointly exercise supreme authority.
3. The leadership of the Allied Control Council (from 30 August, 1945) took over the German "central administrative departments" and State functions (Finance, Transportation, Industry and Foreign Trade).
4. The German economy was to be decentralised and put under Allied control.
5. The territories of the German Reich east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers were to be placed under Soviet and Polish administration.

6. Germany was to demilitarise and denazify. The leaders of the Third Reich were to be held accountable before an International Military Tribunal.

30 OCTOBER

Ernst Wolf was officially discharged from the Australian Military Forces at Royal Park, Melbourne.

20 NOVEMBER

The Allied Control Council reported about resettlement plans for refugees from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and deported Germans to the four occupied zones of Germany.

1. The entire reported German population of 3.5 million people from Poland were added to the English occupation zone of Germany.
2. The entire reported German population of 3.15 million people from Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary were added to the American, French and Soviet occupation zones of Germany.
3. The preliminary allocation of population in the zones would be the following:
 - a) Soviet zone, from Poland 2 million people, and from Czechoslovakia 750,000 people;
 - b) British zone, from Poland 1.5 million people;
 - c) US zone, from Czechoslovakia 1.75 million people;
 - d) French zone, from Austria 150,000 people.

21 DECEMBER

Greater Hessian Municipal Code.

1946

9 MAY

Kurt Schumacher became chairman of the SPD (Social Democratic Party) for the three Allied-occupied western zones. He had revived the SPD in October 1945 when he chaired the first meeting in Hanover.

23 AUGUST

Ernst Wolf received his Australian 'Certificate of Naturalisation'. He did not return to Bickenbach again until 1995. His brother, Lou, had returned to Bickenbach in October 1989.

5 SEPTEMBER

The British and American military governments agreed to economically unite their two zones.

1 DECEMBER

Constitution of Hesse is established.

1947

1 JANUARY

Association of the British and American zones (Bizone).

1948

20 JUNE

Currency reform in the Western-occupied zones.

25 JULY

Currency reform in the Soviet-occupied zone.

1949

12 MAY

Lifting of the Berlin blockade.

23 MAY

Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany.

14 AUGUST

Election of the first Bundestag.

1953

18 JUNE

Frankfurt District Court decided on a date of death for Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf. The official date was 31 December 1945 but this date was not made legally valid by the Court until 21 September 1954.

In a further notification made on 6 April 1957, by the District President of the Compensation Authority in Wiesbaden, it was revealed that it was likely Benno, Settchen and Rosel Wolf were killed in Minsk about 21 August 1942.

A glance at the history of Israel



A selection of stamps from Israel.

Menorah, 1952.



Knesset Building, 1966.



Abraham, 1977.



Sabbath, 1977.



Jerusalem, 1980.

Israel – the biblical country and historical homeland of the Jewish people – is located in the Middle East on the east coast of the Mediterranean and forms a land bridge between three continents – Europe, Asia and Africa. The Jewish people originated there and began to develop their national consciousness and cultural life nearly 4,000 years ago.

The Biblical Period (c.2000–538 BC)

The Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob settled the country of Israel, once called Canaan, and later Palestine. When a famine spread through the country, Jacob and his sons went to Egypt, where their descendants were enslaved.

Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt and received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. After their return to the land of Israel, the Jewish people, consisting of twelve tribes, lived under the guidance of their leaders known as Judges.

A monarchy developed under Saul. Israel's second king, David, made Jerusalem the capital (c.1,000 BC). David's son and successor, Solomon, strengthened the kingdom and established the Temple of Jerusalem. After his death (c.930 BC) the country was split into two kingdoms: Israel (with 10 tribes) and Judah (two tribes).

The Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians (721 BC) and its people were sent into exile (the ten lost

tribes). Judah was attacked by the Babylonians (586 BC), who destroyed the temple and drove the Jews into exile.

The period of the second temple (538 BC–70 AD)

After the conquest of the Babylonian realm by the Persians, Jews returned from Babylon (538 BC) and re-established the temple in Jerusalem. Under guidance of Ezra and Nehemia, Jerusalem was fortified again, and Jewish life was restored. Four centuries of Jewish theocracy under Persian (538–332 BC) then Hellenistic rule (332–168 BC) ended with the Maccabean rebellion (167–160 BC), which was instigated by attempts to force Greek culture upon the country and limit Jewish autonomy. This was followed by more than two centuries of Jewish independence (168 BC–70 AD). The increase of Roman rule over the country (60 AD) led to a second Jewish rebellion (66–70 AD).

Foreign rule (70 AD–20th century)

The Jews remained the controlling power in the country for several centuries and continued their development in areas of law, education and culture under Roman and Byzantine rule. Jewish law, which is concerned with all aspects of life, became codified in the Mishna (2nd century) and the Talmud (4th–5th century).

After the Bar-Kochba rebellion against the Romans (132–136 AD) the Jewish population gradually diminished



Festivals 5729, 1968.



Settling Hevel Ha-Besor, Arava & Hevel Aza, 1984.

until about the 5th century, when Jews had become a minority in the country. Afterwards, the country was occupied repeatedly by intruders and conquerors: by Arabs (638–1072), Seljuks (1072–1099), Crusaders (1099–1291), Mamelukes (1291–1517) and Osman Turks (1517–1917). In the 19th century, Jerusalem’s Jewish population began to grow.

Ascent and Zionism (mid-19th century to 1939)

Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people, developed in the 19th century as a structured political movement similar to other national movements which developed during this time. Increasing anti-Semitism spurred the realisation that the time was ripe for a clear acknowledgment of Jewish identity. In 1897, the Zionist movement found its politically organised form at the first Zionist Congress in Basel, convened by Theodor Herzl.

Inspired by the Zionist idea, thousands of Jews began to return to the country to engage in agriculture, founded industries and established cities and villages. They developed communal services and facilities, and the Hebrew language, which had been limited to liturgy and literature, was awakened to new life. At the outbreak of WWI in 1914, the Jewish community – called the Yehudim – counted 85,000 people.

In 1922, the League of Nations transferred the mandate over Palestine – the area, which makes up Israel

and Jordan today – to Great Britain. In acknowledgement “of the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and ... the reasons for the re-establishment of its national homestead in that country” Great Britain was assigned, “to install such political, administrative and economic conditions in the country, that would ensure the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people”, as had been intended in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The British, however, let these regulations for the establishment of a national Jewish home only apply to the Western part of Palestine (23%) and initiated the Emirate of Transjordan (77%) in the entire area of Palestine, to the East of Jordan.

Extreme Arab nationalists opposed the establishment of the Jewish homeland. British attempts to appease the Arabs by restricting Jewish immigration and settlement missed their goal and the acts of violence against Jews continued until the outbreak of WWII (1939).

The Holocaust (1939–1945)

During WWII the Nazis deliberately and systematically pursued their goal of exterminating Jewish communities in the countries of Europe. Of the approximately 7 million Jews in the countries occupied by the Germans, 6 million were murdered; very few managed to escape and a few hundred thousand were liberated from the concentration camps at the end of the war.

Achieving Independence (1945–1948)

After all attempts for an Arab-Jewish reconciliation had failed, the British referred the Palestine question to the United Nations. In 1947, the General Assembly voted for the division of West Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish community, which counted about 650,000 people at that time, accepted the compromise, the Arabs did not.

On 14 May 1948, when the British left Palestine, the State of Israel announced its independence within the area assigned by the United Nations; immediately afterwards, five Arab armies invaded Israel. Israel's War of Independence, with interruptions, went on for about one year and during this time the newly formed Israeli Defence Forces, although badly equipped and outnumbered, fought off the Arab attacks. By July 1949, separate ceasefire agreements based on the individual firing lines had been signed between Israel and each of the neighbouring Arab states. During the years of establishing itself as a state, Israel constantly lived under the shadow of the threat of war and terrorism. In 1967 and 1973, Israel again had to resist attacks from the Arab states. Israel had occupied the Sinai Peninsula. In March 1979, Jerusalem and Egypt signed a peace treaty which included the return of the Sinai area to Egypt.

And what could hardly have been expected, in mid-September 1993, stirring news was published by the media: "Today, a new creation story begins in the Middle East". Rabin and Arafat shook hands; the Gaza-Jericho Agreement was signed. After decades of bloody hostility, Israel and the PLO recognised each other. The autonomy of the Palestinians in Jericho and the Gaza Strip was sealed owing to mediation of the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Johan Jørgen Holst.

True peace in this region will still take a long time to come.

Postscript

It is now 2018 – 25 years into the future from that last sentence and, sadly, its sentiment still rings true.

At the time of writing, peace in the Middle East seems far from attainable and this situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

In conclusion

“A great affection for Germany runs rampant in my heart, it is insatiable.”

So writes the poet, Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), to the publisher Friedrich Campe on 29 December, 1843.

Heine was Jewish but converted to Protestantism in 1825. He emigrated to France in 1831 due to conditions in Germany he could no longer accept, nor wanted to. He became an intermediary between Germany and France, explaining Germany to France, and France to Germany.

I take responsibility for any conclusions made about the aforementioned quotation. Sometimes I just can't shake the impression or the feeling that my Jewish friends and correspondents in America and Israel, who had to leave their homeland because of Hitler's Germany, sometimes unconsciously express similar thoughts in their letters. They saw from 1933 what Heine had expressed ninety years earlier, and I hope they will understand why I am concluding on that note.

In 1820, Heine cited reality in his Spanish tragedy, “Almansor”. The following excerpt from the poem is attributed to Almansor, Regent of Caliph Prince Hisham II, to which Hassan his old servant replies:

Almansor

Wir hörten dass der furchtbare Ximenes,
Inmitten auf dem Markte, zu Granada –
Mir starrt die Zung' im Munde – den Koran
In eines Scheiterhaufens Flamme warf!

Hassan

Das war ein Vorspiel nur,
dort wo man Bücher verbrennt,
verbrennt man am Ende Menschen.

Almansor

*We heard that the terrible Ximenes
In the midst of the market at Granada –
It burns my tongue to say it –
Threw the Koran into the flames of a pyre!*

Hassan

*That was but a prelude,
Where they burn books,
They will also, in the end, burn people.*

Almansor, as the Christians called him (c.938–1002), undertook campaigns against the Christian kingdoms in northern Spain, founded the dynasty of the Amirids, and built the Medina Azahara palace in Cordoba.

In his 1844 poem, “Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen” (Germany: A Winter's Tale), Heine repeats the German conditions in chapter IV:

Die Flamme des Scheiterhaufens hat hier
Bücher und Menschen verschlungen;

*Here the flames of the funeral pyre
Both books and men once devoured;*

How true and applicable this was to Germany from 1933 to 1945 – book burnings at the beginning, the Holocaust at the end.

And those of us who are left to carry the responsibility should not wear blinkers and resist new beginnings, for our grandchildren might then ask us – why?

Karl Schemel

Supplementary explanations, abbreviations, technical terms and keywords

Adonai (My Lord): The vocalised form of the name of the God of Israel is Yahweh. In Judaism, the name of God is not read aloud; it is replaced with ‘Adonai’.

Aggadah: A compendium of rabbinic texts that incorporates folklore, historical anecdotes, moral exhortations, and practical advice in various spheres, from business to medicine.

Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark): Originally the name of the Biblical Ark of the Covenant, the chest containing the two tablets on which was written the laws Moses had received from God on Mount Sinai. Today, the name stands for the often ornate cabinet in a synagogue which holds the Torah scrolls.

Baal (Master/Lord): God of pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan and the Phoenicians. He was opposed by the prophets of the Old Testament.

Baal Shem Tov (Master of the good name): Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1700–1760) considered to be the founder of Hasidic Judaism.

Barbarossa (Redbeard): Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor. Also codename used for Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union.

Bar Mitzvah (Son of the Commandment): A boy of 13 years of age is introduced, with a celebration, (confirmation) to all the religious rights and responsibilities of an adult Israelite.

BDO (Bund Deutscher Osten): A National Socialist version of German Eastern Marches Society (a radical, nationalist and xenophobic organisation which had been shut down by the Nazis in 1934).

BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädel): League of German Girls.

Belles-lettres: Essays, particularly on literary and artistic criticism, written and read primarily for their aesthetic effect; in French, literally “beautiful” writing.

BNDJ (Bund Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Juristen): National Association of Legal Professionals.

BRD (Bundesrepublik Deutschland): Federal Republic of Germany, emerged in 1949, from the zones occupied by the US, the British and the French.

Brit Milah (Covenant of circumcision): The removal of the foreskin is considered a symbolic sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. The operation is performed by a mohel on male infants aged one week, and on male converts.

Charoset: A mixture of chopped nuts and apples, wine, and spices that is eaten at the Seder meal on Passover; traditionally regarded as symbolic of the mortar used by Israelite slaves in Egypt.

Chausseegasse (an expression used in Bickenbach): Chaussee – The word “chaussee” was borrowed from the French in the 18th century. An historic term for rural highways designed by road engineers, as opposed to traditional unpaved country roads.

Gasse – Small street, lane, alley. Darmstädter Strasse in Bickenbach was called “Chausseegasse” until 1920. Before the construction of the road from Eberstadt to Zwingerberg in the 18th century, it was a narrow lane.

Chuppah: Wedding canopy. A canopy beneath which Jewish marriage ceremonies are performed. The word simply means covering or protection, a roof.

Dadscher: Baked pastries, small flat cakes; challah.

DAF (Deutsche Arbeitsfront): German Labor Front.

DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik): German Democratic Republic (1949–1990), emerged from the division of Germany in 1945 and the Soviet zone of occupation.

Deutscher Reichskriegerbund ‘Kyffhäuser’ (German Warriors Association ‘Kyffhäuser’): Association of former war veterans for the preservation of traditions and representation of social interests. Founded in 1920/21. Disbanded in 1945 by the occupying powers.

DFW (Deutsches Frauenwerk): German Women’s Welfare Association.

DJ (Deutsches Jungvolk): German Youth; boys from ages of 10–14; part of the Hitler Youth, refer to HJ.

DR (Deutsche Reichsbahn): German Imperial Railway.

DVP (Deutschnationale Volkspartei): German National People's Party.

Dybbuk: In Jewish mythology, a malicious spirit that possesses a living person.

EK (Eisernes Kreuz): Iron Cross (1st and 2nd class) was the military decoration for courage against the enemy. In WWI – 1914–1918 it was marked “W” (for Wilhelm), WWII – 1939–1945 it was marked with a Swastika.

Etrog: A fragrant citrus fruit, also known as “paradise apple”. It is one of the four freshly-cut branches used for the Sukkot festival, including a palm frond, two willow branches and three myrtle branches, secured together.

Fl: Florin, guilder.

Freikorps (Free Corps): Volunteer military units formed after the dissolution of the army in 1918. From January 1919 onwards mainly used to combat leftist insurgencies; for the majority, it was anti-republican oriented. These units were incorporated into the defence forces in 1921.

Ganerbentum: Community of joint ownership. Ganerbschaften were established in order to keep an important family property, such as a castle. Although initially a very close community of co-heirs (Ganerben) it relaxed control over the decades, but the unity of the estate to the outside world was maintained. Expressed through the use of a common banner or emblem. Later, joint ownership could be arranged with persons who did not belong to the family.

Gemara: Section of the Talmud consisting essentially of commentary on the Mishnah.

Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei): Secret State Police.

Golden Bull: Decree issued in 1356 by Emperor Charles IV which defined the procedure of the election and the coronation of the Roman-German kings, and the most important fundamental law of the constitution until 1806. The name refers to the golden seal on the document.

Golem: In Jewish popular belief one can, through incantations, create a “living” creature from inanimate matter that has no soul.

Haggadah: Text recited at the Passover Seder on the first two nights, including a narrative of the Exodus.

Halacha: The legal part of Talmudic literature, an interpretation of the laws of the Scriptures.

Hanukkah: Ordination. Also known as the Festival of Lights and Feast of Dedication, an eight-day holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt in 2nd century BC. One candle on an eight-armed Menorah is lit each night.

Harzburger Front (HF): A political alliance of Nazis and the DVP (1931–1932), among others, as a national opposition to Chancellor Heinrich Brüning's government. The HF disintegrated because Hitler's candidacy for the presidency was not supported.

Hasidism: From Hebrew, “Hasidim” meaning pious ones. Movement which started in about the 12th century in Germany. Became popular in the first half of 19th century in Eastern and Central Europe. Hasidism seeks to overcome the laws of faith through harmony between God and the world.

Havdalah: Separation, farewell. Marks the symbolic end of Shabbat and ushers in a new week.

Hazzan: Prayer leader; cantor in Jewish worship.

HJ (Hitler-Jugend): Hitler Youth.

Holocaust: Destruction and slaughter on a mass scale, especially caused by fire or nuclear war. “The Holocaust”; the extermination of Jews during the Nazi era.

Israel: Second name of the patriarch Jacob. In Hebrew the word was also used for the entire Jewish people or for a single Jew (Israelite). The name for the modern state of Israel is derived from the older expression, Eretz Israel (land of Israel).

Jgg. (Junggenosse): Young comrade (see HJ).

Jirrisch (Bickenbach dialect): Yiddish.

Jurem(er) (Hessian dialect): A person from Jugenheim.

Jurre (Bickenbach dialect): Jews, Jewry.

Kabbalah (Receiving/tradition): The ancient Jewish tradition of mystical interpretation of the Bible, more notable around Spain and southern France in the 12th and 13th centuries. It reached the height of its influence in the later Middle Ages and remains significant in Hasidism. The most important work of the Kabbalah is the book “Zohar”, meaning “splendour” or “radiance”.

Kaddish: An ancient Jewish prayer sequence regularly recited in the synagogue service, including thanksgiving and praise, and concluding with a prayer for universal peace. A form of the Kaddish is recited for the dead.

Karpas: Vegetables, celery and parsley used in traditional ritual in the Passover Seder.

KdF (Kraft durch Freude): Strength through joy.

Kibbutz (Gathering or community): Rural settlement in Israel with collective economy and lifestyle.

Kiddush: A ceremony of prayer and blessing over wine, performed by the head of a Jewish household at the meal ushering in the Sabbath (on a Friday night) or a holy day, or at the lunch preceding it. In the synagogue, the Kiddush decides the evening service.

KL or KZ (Konzentrationslager): Concentration camp.

Kohen: Jewish priest.

KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands): German Communist Party.

Kr: Kreuzer. A silver coin and unit of currency. The South German Currency Union of 1837 used a system of 60 Kreuzer = 1 Gulden, and 1¼ Gulden = 1 Thaler.

Levite: Member of the Hebrew tribe of Levi, especially that part providing assistance to the temple priests.

Limes: A border defence of Ancient Rome. It marked the boundaries of the Roman Empire, e.g. Odenwald-Limes.

Luach: Jewish calendar.

Lulav: Palm frond. One of the four freshly-cut branches used for the Sukkot festival.

Luxemburg, Rosa: Revolutionary socialist, of Polish/Jewish ethnicity, born in 1870. She was involved in the Russian Revolution in 1905. In 1897, moved to Germany. Member of the SPD; in January 1919 co-founded the Spartacus League. After a split from the SPD she co-founded the KPD with Karl Liebknecht. On 15 January 1919, in Berlin, Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered by Freikorps officers.

Mame-Loschen: Mother tongue.

Matzoh: Unleavened bread. An integral element of the Jewish Passover.

Menorah (Candelabrum): The seven-branched candle holder which was placed in the tabernacle and in the temple in Jerusalem. The eight-branched candelabrum is one of the best-known symbols of Judaism.

Mezuzah: Parchment inscribed with religious texts from the Torah and attached in a case to the doorpost of a Jewish house as a sign of faith.

Midrash: Early Jewish interpretation of, or commentary on, Old Testament text. Clarifying or expounding a point of law, or developing or illustrating a moral principle; between the 3rd and 12th centuries. See Halacha and Haggadah.

Minyan: A quorum of ten men over the age of 13 required for traditional Jewish public worship.

Mishnah: The first section of the Talmud, being a collection of early oral interpretations of the scriptures compiled about 200 AD. The Mishnah and Gemara together form the Talmud.

Mohel: A Jew who performs the ritual of circumcision on a baby boy eight days after he is born.

Morgengabe: Old German, for a gift given to a bride by her husband on the morning after the wedding night.

Moshav: Israeli town or agricultural cooperative settlement with private property. Intermediate form of the kibbutz.

NSBO (Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation): National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation.

NSD (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher): National Socialist Germans.

NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei): Nazi Party.

NSDÄB (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztenbund): National Socialist German Doctors' Association.

NSF (Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft): National Socialist Women's League.

NSFK (Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps): National Socialist Flyers Corps.

NSKK (Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps): National Socialist Motor [or Drivers] Corps.

NSKV (Nationalsozialistische Kriegsoferversorgung): National Socialist War Victim's Care.

NSLB (Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund): National Socialist Teachers League.

NSR (Nationalsozialistischer Reichskriegerbund): National Socialist Imperial Fighter's League.

NSRB (Nationalsozialistischer Reichswahrerbund): National Socialist Lawyer's Association.

NSRL (Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen): National Socialist League of the Reich for Physical Exercise.

NSV (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt): National Socialist People's Welfare.

Omer: First fruits. Jewish religious offering of the first agricultural produce of the harvest. Also an ancient Hebrew dry measure, a tenth part of an ephah.

Parforce hunting: From French; hunting, horse riding and hunting with dogs.

Pentateuch: From Greek; Five books of Moses.

Pesach: Passover. Festival to commemorate liberation by God from slavery in Egypt and freedom as a nation.

Pogrom: From Russian; devastation, persecution of national, religious or racial groups.

RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst): Reich Labour Service.

RDB (Reichsbund Deutscher Beamten): Reich Federation of German Civil Servants.

RDF (Reichsbund Deutsche Familie): Reich German Family League.

RDH (Reichsstand des deutschen Handwerks): Reich National Profession of German Crafts.

Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (Black, Red, Gold Banner of the Reich): Founded by the Social Democratic Party, Centre Party and German Democratic Party in 1924, banned in 1933.

RGBL (Reichsgesetzblatt): Reich Law Gazette.

R.G.O. (Revolutionäre Gewerkschafts-organisation): Revolutionary Union Organisation.

RKB (Reichskolonialbund): Reich Colonial League.

RKK (Reichskulturkammer): Reich Chamber of Culture.

RLB (Reichsluftschutzbund): Reich Air Protection Corps.

RM (Reichsmark): German currency.

Roter Frontkämpferbund: Founded in 1924 as a subdivision of the Communist Party; already prohibited in 1927 and 1929.

Rosh Hashanah: Jewish New Year, beginning on 1st and 2nd of the month of Tishri.

RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt): Reich Main Security Office, includes Sipo (Sicherheitspolizei) Security Police and SD (Sicherheitsdienst) Security.

SA (Sturmabteilung): Storm Detachment; Assault Division; Brownshirts.

Salmen (or Salomon): Different spellings of the name Solomon.

Sargenes: Smock, loose white linen garment. Generally a term used in western Germany, with ‘Kittel’ used in eastern Germany.

SD (Sicherheitsdienst): Security Service.

Seder: A Jewish ritual service and ceremonial dinner for the first night or first two nights of Passover, with all members of the household at the feast. The Seder itself is based on the Biblical verse commanding Jews to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Septuagint: Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It is the primary Greek translation of the Old Testament. The title refers to the legendary 70 Jewish scholars who translated the Five Books of Moses in as early as the 3rd century BC.

Shammash: Servant. Now a salaried sexton in a synagogue to assist the cantor and direct the public service.

Shavuoth: Commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai.

Shema Israel (Hear, Israel): The first two words of a section of the Torah, spoken at morning and evening prayer and upon rising in the morning and going to sleep at night, and may be recited by a dying person.

Shofar: Wind instrument made from the horn of a ram, which is blown at the New Year Mass and at the end of Yom Kippur. It also sounds on solemn public occasions and in religious communities to announce the Sabbath.

SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands): Social Democratic Party. The SPD unit in Bickenbach was established in 1911.

Spezereihandel: Spice trade or grocery trade.

SS (Schutzstaffel): Literally means ‘protective staff’; its membership was based on Nazi ideology of racial purity.

Stahlhelm (Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten – Steel Helmet, League of Frontline Soldiers [Veterans]): Established in 1918, it was a paramilitary organisation that arose after WWI. In the 1920s, there were several subsidiary organisations but after 1929 it took on a more anti-republican and anti-democratic character. After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933/34 it was merged into the SA.

St.P.St. (Staatliche Polizei Stellen): State Police Agencies

Stempel: In most cases it means stamp or seal.

StrGB (Strafgesetzbuch): Criminal code.

StrPO (Strafprozeßordnung): criminal procedure.

Sukkah: A temporary hut or shelter in which a practising Jew spends part of Sukkot.

Sukkot: Feast of Tabernacles.

Synagogue: From Greek; assembly. Place of assembly for Jews. Consisting of a large room for prayer and may have smaller rooms for study. There is a shrine on the wall facing Jerusalem for the Torah scrolls which are kept in the Ark, and a pulpit for reading the laws.

Tallith: A Jewish prayer shawl, worn over the outer clothes during morning prayers, and worn during all prayers on Yom Kippur. It has twined and knotted fringes at the corners. The cloth is usually of white wool with black stripes or white silk with blue stripes.

Talmud (Teaching, learning): A central text of Judaism. The Talmud normally refers to the Babylonian Talmud (5th century AD) though there is an earlier collection known as the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud. There are two components, the Mishnah and the Gemara. The term Talmud can be used to mean either the Gemara alone, or the Mishnah and Gemara together. It is written in Hebrew and Aramaic and is the basis for all codes of Jewish law. “Holy God, blessed be He” is a common euphemism for God in the Talmud.

Tefillin (Phylacteries): Two small leather boxes with compartments containing texts from the Torah. The boxes are attached to the head and left arm by leather straps, and worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law. Wearing is compulsory for every orthodox male Jew from the age of 13.

Torah (Law): The Torah contains the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures (the Pentateuch).

Train(kompanie): Train was a military term derived from the French “train”, Hessian pronunciation, “Träng”. In the German army, the term – until 1919 – designated units responsible for military supply.

UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration): An international relief agency representing 44 nations but dominated by the United States. Founded in 1943, it became part of the United Nations in 1945, and shut down in 1947. It operated primarily in DP camps, especially for 11 million non-Germans who had been moved into Germany during the war, but did not render assistance to ethnic Germans.

VDA (Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland): Association for German cultural relations abroad.

VVN/BdA (Verband der Verfolgten des Naziregimes/ Bund der Antifaschisten): Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime/Federation of Anti-fascists.

Weimar Republic: Designation for the German Reich, 1918–1933, named after Weimar, the place where the Constitution was adopted. The Weimar Constitution came into force on 14 August 1919.

Wessel, Horst (1907–1930): Student of national socialism; a member of the NSDAP in 1926; a SA leader in 1929; author of the lyrics of the official party song: “Raise the flag on high, the ranks are tightly closed ...”, that was raised to the level of a second national anthem in the Third Reich. Wessel died as the result of an assault and was considered a martyr by the Nazi Party.

WHW (Winterhilfswerk): Winter Relief Fund.

Yahweh: The name of the God of the Israelites was revealed to Moses as four Hebrew consonants (YHWH) called the Tetragrammaton. The name came to be regarded by Jews as too sacred to be spoken. In Judaism, the name traditionally is not pronounced but read as “Adonai”.

Zentrum: German lay political Catholic Centre Party formed in 1870. It was re-founded after 1945 and was represented in the German parliament until 1957.

Zionism: Originally a movement for the re-establishment, development and protection of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel. It was established as a political organisation in 1897 under Theodor Herzl, and was later led by Chaim Weizmann. The creation of Israel (1948) was only an intermediate step for Zionists, with the repatriation of all Jews from the diaspora the aim.

Zohar (Splendour, radiance): The classic text from the Kabbalah. The main piece of the Zohar, written at the end of the 13th century, is a mystical commentary on the Torah.

Note: Roman figures (I, II, etc.) after a surname were used to distinguish persons of the same name (e.g. Peter Hennemann XXIII). This custom has been abandoned since the 1950s and 1960s.

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About the author

Karl Schemel, born in 1931, was a dyed-in-the-wool Bickenbacher, as were many generations of his family who also lived and worked in Bickenbach.

From a young age, Schemel, a Social Democrat, dedicated himself to his home town where he was the mayor from 1968 to 1993. Here, too, he continued a family tradition, because before him there had been men from his family who were head of the municipality; in those days they were called ‘Schultheiß’.

For decades, Karl Schemel was engaged with the history of Bickenbach and its surroundings. His special interest was focused on the local Bickenbach dialect which was under threat of being forgotten.

For years, Schemel had contributed to the quarterly *Bickenbach Magazine*. In his project, “*Bickenbach Tales, Sayings and Recipes*”, the past was recalled and recorded, and thus preserved. At the time of the first publication of this book, his plan was to start a new multi-part project: “*In Conversation with Contemporary Witnesses*”.

