

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** *Davar* (Dec. 2, 1960); *Haaretz* (Oct. 6, 1968); *News from the Hebrew University* (Oct. 1968); *MB* (Jan. 2, 1970).

[Shlomo Shunami]

**WORMS**, city in Germany. Documentary evidence points to the settlement of Jews in Worms at the end of the tenth century. The community grew during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and a synagogue was inaugurated in 1034. In 1076–77 there was already a Jewish cemetery, which has been preserved and is the oldest in Europe. At the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the role of Jewish merchants in Worms was of such importance that they are mentioned by King Henry IV in a privilege document of 1074 before “the other inhabitants of Worms.” Around 1090 the king granted to the Jews of Worms a charter of privileges similar in most respects to the charter granted to the Jews of \*Speyer. The Jews of Worms were granted freedom to travel without restriction throughout the kingdom (they visited the fairs of \*Cologne) and to engage in commerce without paying customs duties. They were authorized to function as moneychangers, and could hire Christian workmen, wetnurses, and maidservants. The Jews were granted the right to own movable and real property. It was forbidden to convert their children forcibly to Christianity, and a Jew who converted lost his share in his father’s property. In lawsuits between Jews and Christians, each litigant was to be judged according to his own legal code; Jewish as well as Christian witnesses were necessary before judgment could be passed against a Jew. Lawsuits between Jews would be judged according to Jewish law. The Jews were subject to the king’s jurisdiction only. They were given extensive autonomy and could choose their own leadership, subject only to certification by the king.

A number of distinguished scholars were active in Worms during this period: among the “Sages of Worms” were Judah b. Baruch, a disciple of R. Gershom b. \*Judah and a prominent halakhic authority; the hymnologist Meir b. \*Isaac; Jacob b. \*Yakar and Isaac b. \*Eleazar, teachers of \*Rashi during his stay in Worms; Kalonymus b. Shabbetai of Rome, who became head of the yeshivah after the death of R. Jacob b. Yakar; and Solomon b. \*Samson, a halakhic authority and hymnologist who may well have been the *Episcopus Judaeorum* (“Bishop of the Jews”) to whom the charter of Worms was addressed. While the scholars of \*Mainz engaged exclusively in the study of Talmud, those of Worms also commented on Bible and Midrash and composed *piyyutim*.

This flourishing period was interrupted by the persecutions of the First \*Crusade that took place in May 1096. The crusaders, drawn from the simple townfolk and the peasants of the surrounding villages, attacked the Jews in Worms. Some of them were killed in their homes or took their own lives, while others found refuge in the palace of the bishop, until they were overwhelmed and massacred or chose to kill their children and then themselves. The number of martyrs reached 800. Only a few saved themselves by accepting baptism, but in the following year Henry IV allowed them to return to Judaism.

After a short while a new community was established in Worms, and in 1112 Emperor Henry V renewed the customs exemption which his father had granted to the Jews of the city. In the meantime, Jewish economic activity there had taken a new direction: commerce was replaced by \*moneylending. At the time of the Second Crusade in 1146, the Jews of Worms fled to fortresses in the surrounding region until the danger had passed. Subsequently the community grew in numbers. The synagogue was renovated (1174–75) and a women’s gallery was added (1213); a new *mikveh* was constructed (1186), and the cemetery was enlarged (c. 1260).

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Christian bishop assumed jurisdiction over the Jews in lawsuits with Christians, as well as in criminal law. He also collected a tax from them, in addition to that imposed by the king. The civic status of the Jews was determined by the municipal council. The Jews received its protection and were obligated in return to defend the town in case of attack. During the siege of Worms, in 1201, the Jews took part in its defense. Their obligation to military service later was exchanged for a payment toward the fortification of the city. A regular tax which the Jews paid to the city is first mentioned in 1265. During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries the kings transferred to the city an ever greater portion of the taxes paid by the Jews, and the municipal authority over the Jews thus became more extensive. Finally, in January 1348, Charles IV waived all the royal rights over the Jews of Worms in favor of the city. The community was led by 12 elected *parnasim*. The bishop of Worms appointed one of them “Bishop of the Jews” for life. The last “Bishop of the Jews” died in 1792.

The scholars of Worms took part in the rabbinical \*synods which were convened in the Rhineland, as well as in the drafting of communal regulations for the three communities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, which had wide-ranging influence on Ashkenazi Jewry (see \*Shum). The most important halakhic authorities of Worms in the period were the *paytan* Menahem b. \*Jacob; Eleazar b. \*Judah, disciple of Judah ha-Hasid (“the \*Pious”), the author of *Sefer ha-Roke’ah*; and Baruch b. Meir and his son Meir of Rothenburg (*av bet din* of Worms; d. 1281). From the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century there was, however, a spiritual decline in the community, and its influence waned.

On Second Adar 10, 5109 (1349), at the time of the Black \*Death, anti-Jewish violence broke out in Worms. Some Jews managed to escape to Sinsheim, \*Heidelberg, and other localities in the \*Palatinate; all the other members of the community set fire to themselves in their homes or were massacred by rioters. The property of the Jews was confiscated by the town, but the latter was also compelled to pay assignments which the king had granted to several of his creditors on account of the tax which was due to him. The local authorities therefore considered it advantageous to authorize the settlement of the Jews in the city once more (1353–55).

This third community fixed the day of Adar 10 as a perpetual fast day. The new community did not acquire the splendor of the past. Even so Jacob Moses \*Moellin (the Maharil)

preferred to live there in his old age and died in Worms in 1427. The kings and governors of the Palatinate renewed the “seals” of the community from time to time, but an uprising of craftsmen in 1615 caused the Jews to flee from the town; the synagogue and the cemetery were desecrated. Samuel Bacharach, the rabbi of the community, was among the refugees. In 1616 the uprising was subdued by the governor, and the Jews returned to Worms. The first *parnas* of the renewed community was David Joshua Oppenheim, who in 1624 built the *bet midrash* attributed to Rashi. Another *parnas*, Abraham b. Simeon Wolff Oppenheim, was the father of the noted David \*Oppenheim. Samuel \*Oppenheimer and Samson \*Wertheimer, who achieved fame in Vienna, were also natives of Worms. The rabbinical office was then held by the kabbalist Elijah b. Moses \*Loanz. From 1650 to 1670, Moses Samson b. Abraham Samuel \*Bacharach acted as rabbi and *av bet din* of Worms. It was in his days that Jephthah Joseph Yozpa, a scribe, recorded the legends then current in Worms on the glorious past of the community (*Sefer Ma'aseh Nissim*, Amsterdam, 1696).

Ten years after Worms had been set on fire by the French, in 1689, the community of Worms was again reconstituted. The first rabbi appears to have been Jair Hayyim b. Moses Samson \*Bacharach (d. 1702), author of *Havvat Ya'ir*. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Worms no longer ranked among the important communities of Germany, even though it was still renowned and remained attached to its ancient customs. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were about 800 Jews living in the city. They were granted civic rights along with the Jews of \*Hesse, and in 1848 a Jew was elected mayor of Worms.

### Holocaust and Contemporary Periods

On the eve of the rise of the Nazis to power, in 1933, there were 1,016 Jews living in Worms. Many Jews emigrated following the boycott of Jewish goods and other forms of harassment. A concentration camp was set up in the vicinity of the city. Nazi persecution stimulated communal activity in the sphere of Jewish adult education, and, after the expulsion of Jewish children from the public school, a Jewish school was founded in Worms in 1936. The ancient synagogue and the *bet midrash* of Rashi were destroyed on *Kristallnacht*, Nov. 9–10, 1938, but the cemetery was saved from destruction by Dr. Ilert, a benevolent non-Jew. Ninety-seven Jews were taken to concentration camps. By May 1939 only 316 Jews remained in Worms. During World War II, in 1941–42, the remaining Jews in Worms were deported to concentration camps and few survived. After the end of the war some Jews again settled in Worms, but the community was not reorganized. The German authorities rebuilt the synagogue and the *bet midrash* from their ruins (1961) and preserved the ancient cemetery. The archives of the community of Worms of 1522 were sent to the General Archives of Jewish History in Jerusalem.

In 1982 the Jewish museum of the history of the Jewish community in Worms was opened at Rashi House, located on the site of the former *bet midrash*. The cellar and parts of the first floor originate from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury; the rest of the building was erected in 1982. In 2005, a celebration was held in the city to commemorate the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rashi's death. In 2005 there were 133 Jews living in Worms, members of the Jewish community in Mainz. The majority are immigrants from the former Soviet Union who moved to Germany after 1990.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** L. Lewysohn, *Sechzig Epitaphien von Grabsteinen des israelitischen Friedhofs zu Worms* (1855); B. Rosenthal, in: *MGWJ*, 83 (1939), 313–24; A. Epstein, *ibid.*, 40 (1896), 509–15, 554–9; 45 (1901), 44–75; 46 (1902), 157–70; *idem*, in: *Gedenkbuch David Kaufmann* (1900), 288–317; E. Carlebach, *Die rechtlichen und sozialen Verhältnisse der juedischen Gemeinden Speyer, Worms und Mainz...* (1901); L. Rothschild, *Die Judengemeinden zu Mainz, Speyer und Worms 1349–1438* (1904); S. Rothschild, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der israelitischen Gemeinde Worms* (1929); J. Kifer, in: *ZGDJ*, 1 (1929), 291–6; *ibid.*, 5 (1935), 85–199; S. Schiffmann, *Heinrich IV und die Bischoefe in ihrem Verhalten zu den deutschen Juden zur Zeit des ersten Kreuzzuges* (1931); M. Grunwald, in: *REJ*, 104 (1938), 71–111; A. Kober, in: *PAAJR*, 14 (1944), 149–220; 15 (1945), 68–71; E.L. Rapp and O. Boecher, *Die aeltesten hebraeischen Inschriften Mitteleuropas in Mainz, Worms und Speyer* (1959); O. Boecher, *Die alte Synagoge zu Worms* (1960), includes detailed bibliography; *Germ Jud.* 1 (1963), 437–74; 2 (1968), 919–27; Aronius, *Regesten*, index; A. Habermann, *Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Zarefat* (1946); Finkelstein, *Middle Ages*; K. Duesell, *Die Rheingebiete in der Judenpolitik des Nationalsozialismus vor 1942* (1968), index; R. Krautheimer, *Mittelalterliche Synagogen* (1927), 151–76; **ADD. BIBLIOGRAPHY:** J. Schammes, *Wormser Minhagbuch* (Heb., 1992); J.L. Kirchheim, *The Customs of Worms Jewry* (Heb., 1987); F. Reuter, *Warmaisa. 1000 Jahre Juden in Worms* (1987<sup>2</sup>); *Germania Judaica*, vol. 3, 1350–1514 (1987) 1671–97; O. Boecher, *The Old Synagogue in Worms on the Rhine* (*DKV-Kunstfuehrer*, vol 181) (2001); A. Haverkamp and K. Birk, Karin (eds), *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages* (2004), 59–81. *CD-ROM:* K. Schloesser, *Die Wormser Juden 1933 – 1945. Dokumentation* (2002).

[Zvi Avneri]

**WORMS, AARON** (1754–1836), rabbi in France, born in Geislautern, Saar, son of R. Abraham (Aberle) Joseph. Aaron attended the yeshivah at Metz directed by R. Aryeh Loeb b. Asher \*Guenzburg. In 1777 he became rabbi in Kriechingen (Créange), Lorraine, and in 1785 was appointed *dayyan* in Metz and principal of its yeshivah. From 1813 he served as deputy rabbi, and from 1831, rabbi of Metz.

Although strictly orthodox, he was sympathetic to those desiring the integration of Jews into gentile society through “improvement of morals.” During the French Revolution, he joined the National Guard and served as a member of the \*Assembly of Jewish Notables and the Great \*Sanhedrin (1806–07), where he expressed the view that the granting of civil rights to the Jews would encourage them to assume added responsibilities toward the state. In the Sanhedrin he gave an address on the relations between Jews and non-Jews according to the Talmud, in which he maintained that the phrase *ovedei kokhavim u-mazzalot* (idolators) does not apply to the non-Jews of the present time. On the contrary, the Talmud enjoins a spirit of brotherhood between Jews and non-Jews. He also expressed the view that it is preferable to pray in the vernacular and to understand what one is saying