

worms: city of religions

Judentum



Jewish history



Warmaisa: Worms as a centre of Jewish learning and culture

In the Middle Ages, the Jewish communities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz (Schpira, Warmaisa, Magenza = SchUM) were highly regarded throughout Western Europe as "Jerusalem on the Rhine". They maintained a lively exchange of ideas with one another and were famous for their important yeshivas and their pioneering rabbinical conferences. It is because of this uniqueness that the three cities together aspire to recognition as a World Heritage Site.



The most evidence of Jewish life in the past can be seen in Worms. For this reason, thousands of people come to the historic sites of old Warmaisa year after year. The name Rashi is a particular draw. The great scholar, really called Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105), who composed the one commentary on the Talmud that is still highly valued today, spent several years studying in Mainz and Worms. Although he later returned to his home town of Troyes, his name is still connected to Worms forever.



The first Jews probably came here very early. Evidence can be found of a first community from 1034. At that time, a first **synagogue (1)** was consecrated; the endowment plaque is still preserved on the façade. What we can see today is the result of several renovation and extension phases. As with other religious buildings in the city, a new building was constructed in the 12th century in the late Romanesque style. In 1186, the mikvah, the ritual bath, was put in. In 1212/1213, the women's synagogue was added. The final extension took place in the early 17th century in the form of the addition of the vestibule and the yeshiva, also called the Rashi chapel.



The Worms Synagogue, like the other Jewish places of worship in Germany, was completely destroyed in the Night of the Broken Glass on 10th November 1938. Due to a tireless initiative by the citizens of Worms, it was possible to rebuild the synagogue in 1959 to 1960 according to old plans and using original materials. Today, Jewish religious services take place here again, and Jewish festivals are celebrated, for Jews settled in Worms again in the 1990s, coming from countries of the former Soviet Union.

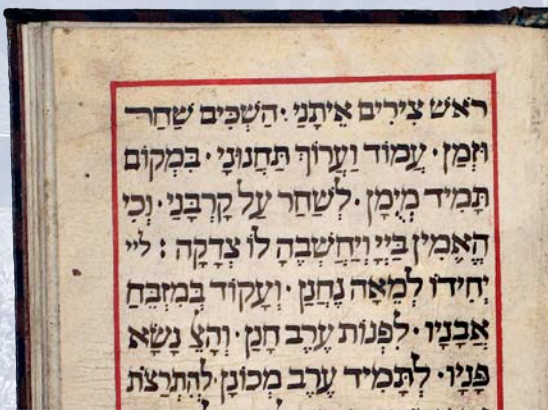


The **Rashi House (2)** now stands where the dance and wedding house once was, erected on the preserved original vaulted cellar. The Jewish Museum is housed there, which displays ritual instruments and valuable manuscripts, including a copy of the Worms Mahzor, a richly illustrated prayer book from 1272, in which the first sentence is in Yiddish. Exhibits which exemplify the life of the flourishing community of the 19th/20th century, and items recalling the events of the Third Reich complete the collection.



The synagogue is embedded in the former densely built-up **Jewish quarter (3)**, which was restored in the course of a comprehensive, very careful renovation of the old town. Whilst the close connection of the houses to the city wall can still be traced in many places, the **Rashi Gate (4)** only originates from the early 20th century; it is a concession to the increase in motor traffic.

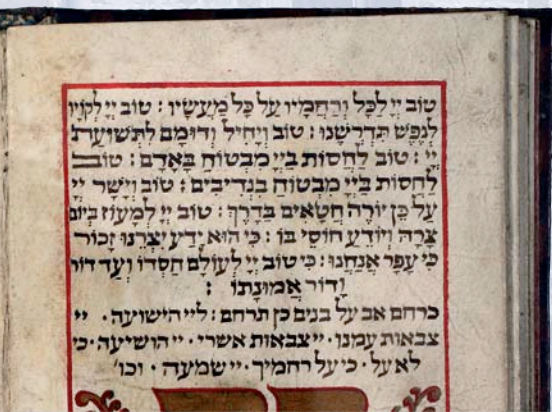
The most visited place in old Warmaisa is the “**Holy Sands Cemetery**” (5). Even gentiles are touched by the sight of the old, often half-submerged gravestones that convey a sense of eternity. The oldest stone is from 1076. But many that have now disappeared forever in the sandy earth may be even older. As soon as you go through the



ראש צירים איתני: השפים שחר
וזמן. עמוד וערוך תחנוני. במקום
תמיד מין. לשחר על קרבני. וכי
האמין ביי ויחשבה לו צדקה: ליי
יחידו למאה נחנן. ועקוד במזבח
אכניו. לפנות ערב חנן. והצ נשא
פניו. לתמיד ערב מוכן להתרצות



little gate from the forecourt with the tahara house and the ritual hand basin into the cemetery, the graves of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg and Alexander ben Solomon Wimpfen Süßkind will catch your eye. They are covered with little pieces of paper and stones, symbols of particular veneration. Legend tells us that the rabbi was captured and died in prison because he did not want the community to pay a high ransom for him. Solomon Wimpfen ransomed his corpse and had it buried here, and he himself rests at his side. Devout Jews also visit the Valley of the Rabbis, where great scholars, such as Yaakov haLevi Molin (Maharil), Elia Loanz and Jair Chaim Bacharach are buried. As the cemetery, which was closed in 1911, provides information about 900 years of Jewish



טוב וְלִכְלֹל וְרַחֲמֵי עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו : טוֹב וְלִקְוֹ
לְנֶפֶשׁ הַדְּרִישְׁנו : טוֹב וְיַחֲדָל וְדוּמָם לְתַשׁוּעָתָ
יְיָ : טוֹב לְחַסוֹת בֵּינֵי מַבְטוֹחַ בְּאֲדָמָה : טוֹב
לְחַסוֹת בֵּינֵי מַבְטוֹחַ בְּנְדִיבִים : טוֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ
עַל כֵּן יוֹרֵה חַטָּאִים בְּדֶרֶךְ : טוֹב וְלַמַּעֲזָה בְּיוֹם
צָרָה וְיִדְעַ חוֹסֵי בּוֹ : כִּי הוּא יִדְעַ וְצָרָנוּ זְכוֹר
כִּי עַפְרָא אֲנַחְנוּ : כִּי טוֹב וְלַעוֹלָם חֶסֶד וְעֵד דָּוָד
וְדוֹר אֲמוֹנָתוֹ :
כִּרְחֹם אָב עַל בְּנֵים כֵּן תִּרְחַם : לֵי הִשְׁוִיעָה . יְיָ
צַבָּאוֹת עִמָּנוּ . יְיָ צַבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר־יְיָ הוֹשִׁיעָה . כִּי
לֹא עָלָה . כִּי עַל רַחֲמֵיךָ . יְיָ שְׁמַעְהָ . וְכוּ



community life, it is referred to by researchers as a "stone archive". All the inscriptions, as far as they are still visible, have now been indexed and recorded; they are to be deciphered, investigated and documented.

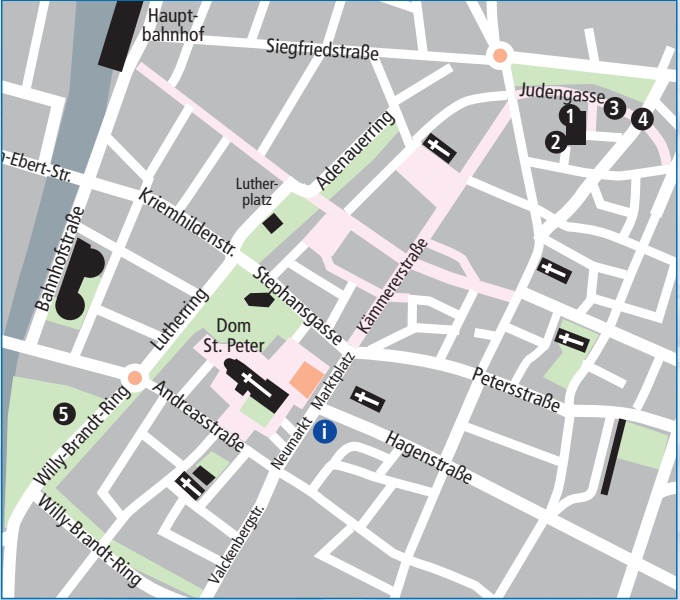
Since the start of the 20th century, there has been a new Jewish cemetery at the Hochheim Hill Central Cemetery with a Darmstadt Art Nouveau funeral hall that is well worth seeing.



TIPS

From April to October, the tourist information office offers a public city tour on the subject of "Jewish Worms" (every 1st Sunday of the month, 10:30, meeting at the synagogue). For use at home, we recommend the DVD "Warmaisa - Worms: holy community on the Rhine", which is available in the tourist information office. Further information at www.worms.de

1 cm \triangleq ca. 100 m



- 1 Synagogue with mikvah
- 2 Jewish museum/Rashi House
- 3 Jewish quarter/Judengasse
- 4 Rashi Gate
- 5 Jewish "Holy Sands" Cemetery
- i Tourist Information