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German City, Jewish Memory

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SACRED REALMS

Within the medieval world, Ashkenazic communities embodied authority and legislative competence and exhibited a degree of autonomy derived from imperial, ecclesial, regional, and local powers. Despite networks of contacts, webs of exchanges, and temporary supra-communal rabbinical councils, these medieval Jewish communities displayed a high degree of independence from neighboring congregations. While the communities shared sacred Jewish traditions, their religious customs nevertheless exhibited significant local variations. To the communities, the customs of their ancestors were no less sacred than and even could take precedence over Jewish law, provided that they did not contradict the laws of the Torah or Talmud. These local variations, often reverberating within the communal recollection of historical experiences, contributed to the creation of distinct local cultures and memories that sometimes contradict historical fact.

Today, for example, scholars have dismissed the contention that Jewish communities were present in the Rhineland continuously from the Roman period onward.[1] Jewish life and culture in Ashkenaz instead likely commenced in the mid- to late tenth century when Jews, as international merchants, moved along the trade routes across the Alps and from the Mediterranean coast of southern France into the Rhineland, where they adopted various medieval German dialects (from which Yiddish originated). This adaptation of local vernaculars probably functioned early on as the primary vehicle for cultural contact and exchange. To be sure, these emerging communities, led by an elite of wealth and learning, became tightly knit, but they would never become wholly segregated from the surrounding culture and its people.

In Worms, historical evidence points to the Jews' settlement in the city

at the end of the tenth century. While these settlers were not restricted to the emerging "Jewish lane" until at least the fourteenth century, a cluster of buildings quickly arose that places Jews firmly within the walled space of the city at the southeast corner. By 1034, a synagogue, built by Christian masons, was inaugurated through the "munificence of the childless couple." Mindful of the importance of this act, synagogue authorities extolled the donation in an inscription and recounted it in a special prayer on the Sabbath well into the modern era.[2] With the building of the synagogue, the community acquired both a central place for worship and a space that could preserve events in their history, in addition to a burial ground, which they attained a few decades later.

Building activity during the eleventh century reflects the growth of the community that included probably a few hundred individuals, with families averaging two or three children each, like their Christian counterparts. Among these early residents were famous rabbinic authorities such as Jacob b. Yakar and Isaac ben Eliezer, Rashi's teachers, who resided in both Worms and Mainz and had studied with Gershom Me'or ha-Golah. Born in Troyes in 1040, Rashi was possibly attracted by the reputation of these sainted scholars and apparently spent some time with them before returning again to France.

When Henry IV rewarded the Jews and the city for allowing him to take refuge there during the Investiture Conflict in 1073, the Jews' presence became even more established. In recognition of their help and economic relevance, the emperor granted the "Jews and other burghers of the city" tax freedom in 1074.[3] The prominent naming of the Jews in this document underscores their important role as merchants and traders. In 1090, Henry IV further extended the privileges of the Jews in ways that illuminate their economic functions and life in the city. They were permitted to own houses, gardens, and above all vineyards, to employ Christians in their homes and at work, and to trade in wine, dye, and medicine. The granting of these rights established a lasting alliance between the Jews and the emperor that became a salient feature of local memory in Worms. Like other medieval emperors, Henry IV saw himself as an anointed ruler, and he based this last charter on those that Louis the Pious had already granted the Jews. Henry IV, however, went beyond these traditions and gave the Jews not only comprehensive protection but also jurisdiction over internal disputes.[4]

Despite these extensive rights, crusaders and burghers attacked the Jews during the 1096 campaign and devastated the community. Eco-

nomic competition between Jews and other city dwellers, the still ongo-
ing Investiture Conflict between the popes and the German emperors,
and, above all, religious zeal contributed to this outburst of hostility. The
chroniclers explained that this violent episode in Worms was instigated
by a rumor that the Jews had boiled and then buried a Christian corpse.
Worms's Christian citizens accused Jews of pouring the resulting con-
coction into the city's water supply to poison the population. This charge
functioned as the local pretext for the first attack on the Jewish commu-
nity, and many Jews committed acts of martyrdom on May 18, 1096 (the
23rd of Iyyar in the Hebrew calendar), when burghers and crusading vag-
abonds, led by Count Emicho, assaulted Worms's Jews.[5] The Jews initially
sought refuge in the bishop's palace, which led to a siege by the coalition
of crusaders, burghers, and villagers from the surrounding area. Most of
the city's Jews perished seven days later, on the new moon, the first of
Sivan, save those few who were forcibly baptized.[6] According to the He-
brew chronicle, approximately eight hundred Jews died in Worms, while
the *memorbuch* (book of memory) lists around four hundred who were
killed between the two attacks, with many having sanctified God's name.[7]

The crusade massacres illustrated the precarious status of the Jews
and the extent of potential anti-Jewish hostility and violence, but at the
same time the fate of this community paradoxically bound its surviving
members even more to their location, insofar as they commemorated
their martyrs. As Jeremy Cohen has observed, hostility and alienation did
not obviate the Jews' involvement in Christian culture.[8] In the holy cam-
paign's aftermath, Henry IV allowed those Jews who had been forcibly
baptized to return to Judaism, and the community reestablished itself in
the city of Worms. In 1112, Henry V renewed his father's tax-exempt sta-
tus for the Jews. Nevertheless, Jews' legal position remained uncertain in
the following decades, as the struggle between the emperor and the pope
regarding authority over earthly and religious matters intensified. This
conflict was somehow resolved by the Worms concordat of 1122, which
brought an end to the investiture struggle, if not to the rivalry between
pope and emperor. The agreement established an even closer alliance
between the emperor and the Jews, who, with the confirmation of the
Charter to the Jews of Worms in 1157, became "serfs of the chamber,"
a formulation that had already been used in an eleventh-century charter
to the Jews of Worms.[9]

To the survivors and returnees, the presence of hundreds of corpses,
buried only in mass graves, must have intensified the horror of the events.

The Hebrew chronicler from the twelfth century, who vividly recalls the destruction of the community, describes how several Jews decided during the attack to succumb to the approaching enemies when they saw members of the community lying naked: "Let us do their will for the time being, and then go and bury our brethren."[10] While these converts fulfilled their obligation to bury the dead, it is uncertain as to exactly where they did so. Today, with the exception of two graves dating from 1100, no other visible remains subsist on the burial ground.[11] Even if we were to accept the possibility that other graves had existed, most of the Jews who died during the First Crusade could not have had a proper burial.

In the minds of medieval Ashkenaz, martyrs who had not received a decent burial at times seem to have haunted the community of survivors. The medieval compilation *Sefer Hasidim* (Book of the pious) records the Jewish martyrs whom temporary converts had laid to rest. The converts purified themselves in water and brought the corpses of the martyrs to the cemetery before placing them in a large pit. On the way to the cemetery, the body of a woman fell off the body cart and was left behind. It is alleged that she later angrily reappeared in one of the survivor's dreams until her lost body was located and put to rest.[12]

The perceived distress of the deceased martyrs and the absence of places of memory in Worms might explain later attempts to locate the resting place of twelve community leaders that came to be associated with the martyrdom of the community.[13] According to a narrative strand in one early modern text, the leaders were among those who had remained in the bishop's house and fallen during the second attack. When a priest employed a mystical goose to illuminate their place of hiding, they ran along the city wall until they jumped from the tower to the cemetery, where the earth miraculously swallowed them.[14] The miracle here, then, serves to explain the absence of a grave,[15] but later generations appear to have felt more compelled to associate the memory of the martyrs with a distinct location. Thus in his description of customs, the same seventeenth-century author believed that the resting place of the community leaders was clearly identified. Whereas on other days throughout the year, the community encircled the cemetery's circumference, on the first of Sivan they "did not encircle it but visit[ed] the graves of the twelve *parnasim* and pray[ed] at their graves," he explains.[16] Yet no real grave seems to have existed, and the associated uncertainty prompted another seventeenth-century compiler of local customs to validate this claim by referring to an inscription on the cemetery wall.[17] During the nineteenth

century, excavators unearthed an older plaque stating "Twelve parna-sim—1096." This inscription had existed adjacent to an alternative marker of the past: "Twelve parnasim."[18]

These traditions identifying a resting place in the vicinity of the plaque are, however, of later origin and probably, if anything, reflect the uncertainty surrounding the legend and burial place. It might have been the absence of graves in the immediate wake of the atrocities that motivated the liturgical innovations and creation of rituals that would function as conduits of memory. As Ivan Marcus has argued, from the commemoration of these martyrs "a nearly universal cult in memory of the dead" developed in Ashkenaz.[19] Roughly between the end of the First Crusade and the 1140s, the Hebrew chroniclers created an "epic of defeat," as Robert Chazan has noted, that depicted the fate of a small and hopelessly outnumbered group, representative of a higher form of civilization, whose ultimate victory would transcend their immediate trials.[20] Reflecting the hostile crusading ideology of the twelfth century, the chronicles are permeated with the language and symbols of their Christian surroundings, thereby demonstrating that the piety of the martyrs was unsurpassed by Christian sacrifices.[21]

Couched in allusions to biblical and talmudic models, the narratives and liturgical laments about the destruction of the Rhineland communities gave rise to a distinct culture of remembrance in Worms that recalled Jewish unity in the face of danger and the unwavering piety of the community. And just as the chronicles and laments clarified the perspective of those who survived, they also sharply demarcated differences between Jews and Christians to counter the increasing doubts among Ashkenazic Jews regarding the boundaries between themselves and Christian society. The pressure to choose between death as a martyr and baptism had fostered a degree of indecisiveness that loomed large in the minds of twelfth-century Ashkenazic Jewry.[22] Valorizing the heroic deeds of men and women like Isaac ben Daniel and Minna of Worms, and calling upon God to avenge the Jews' fate, reasserted Jews' differences vis-à-vis their Christian environment.[23]

Moreover, the chroniclers depicted a community that readily opted for martyrdom instead of conversion. Insofar as the survivors comprehended and enshrined the memory of the destruction, they had to contend with the community's unprecedented acts of martyrdom, which were in apparent violation of rabbinic law against suicide and homicide. To be sure, the Talmud advocates sanctifying God's name in martyrdom

as a form of submission to avoid transgression, but it does not command the inflicting of death upon oneself and others.[24] The chroniclers' effort to comprehend and explain therefore did not refer to the halakhic discussion but slotted the events into existing narratives of destruction, persecution, and sacrifice as they apostrophized and memorialized the Jewish martyrs. Central to the chroniclers' narrative was the notion of Yitzhak's sacrifice.[25]

Whereas destructions of communities had traditionally been interpreted as divine punishments, the idiom of sacrifice created a new framework for comprehending the devastation. As Alan Mintz has observed, the self-perception of the Jews of Mainz, Speyer, and Worms did not permit a correlation between destruction and transgression.[26] In response to the enormity of the devastation, a new paradigm emerged that viewed the persecution as a divine test.[27] Replete with literary references, the so-called *Mainz Anonymous* alludes to Genesis 22 and the story of the sacrifice of Isaac when retelling the way Meshullam ben Isaac of Worms sacrificed his son before the approaching enemy killed him and his wife.[28] The description relies on the biblical idea of a sacrifice but replaces Abraham with Meshullam ben Isaac.[29] Using Yitzhak's sacrifice, the chronicler conveyed the belief that the Rhineland Jews had shown their unswerving dedication to God and thereby asserts that the Jews surrendered to their approaching enemies only after assuming that God had decreed their destruction. Instead of falling victim to persecutors, the Jews "placed their trust in their Creator, and offered true sacrifices, taking their children and wholeheartedly slaughtering them in witness to the Oneness of the Venerated and Awesome Name."[30]

Insofar as the Hebrew chronicles narrated the crusade's destruction according to its geographic unfolding, they focused on the fate of those communities for which the narratives fulfilled an important role in the commemoration of actual events. Gerson Cohen has conjectured that the chronicles were to be read in the synagogue as "hagiographic commentaries" to underscore their relationship to the martyrs' memorializing within individual communities.[31] Indeed, all of the chronicles, to varying degrees, interlace their narratives with poetic dirges. The longest chronicle, by R. Solomon b. Samson, quotes from Isaiah 64:11 and cries out, "Wilt thou restrain thyself at these things, O Lord?" His account not only bemoans the devastation but also prays for the rewarding of the martyrs, and for God's revenge.[32] In Rabbi Eliezer bar Nathan's narrative, the martyrs are bound up in the bond of eternal life and "garbed in

the eight vestments of clouds of glory, each crowned with two diadems, one of precious stones and pearls and one of fine gold; and each bearing eight myrtles in his hand."[33]

The chronicles' celebration of the Jews' courage and willingness to die as martyrs and to sacrifice their community became intimately connected with a theology of vengeance through which the laments aimed to arouse God. God is challenged to "avenge the spilt blood of Your servants."[34] Thus the narratives established a reciprocal relationship between the martyrs, the community of mourners, and God. Matching these calls for vengeance, the chroniclers likewise voiced the survivors' anger toward Christianity. Written only for an internal audience, the accounts are sated with anti-Christian invectives. The crusaders are described as those "who wander in error," and baptism is seen as "sullying." This language denigrated Christianity and reaffirmed the boundaries that even forced conversion threatened to blur.[35]

The number of surviving manuscripts in Hebrew, Yiddish, and German that were copied between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries underscores this chronicle's lasting impact on Ashkenazic culture.[36] In addition, well over twenty laments were composed in the immediate wake of the destruction during the early twelfth century. Unlike the chronicles, the laments focus less on the fate of individuals than on the memory of all of the martyrs, while remaining largely silent about cases of conversion.[37] In his dirge that entered the Worms liturgy, Eliezer ben Nathan, the author of one of the chronicles, describes not only the readiness with which the Rhineland community sacrificed themselves but also the destruction of Torah scrolls, a crime he too calls upon God to avenge.[38] Kalonymous ben Judah names Speyer, Worms, and Mainz in his lament, mourning those sanctified in God's name in Worms and portraying them as adorned with crowns.[39] The significant inclusion of this prayer in the Ashkenazic liturgy for Tisha be-Av placed the memory of 1096 alongside that of the destruction of the two temples and other subsequent calamities.[40]

Best known is the prayer *Av ha-rahamim* (Merciful Father), which in Germanic lands originally was said only twice a year on the Sabbath before Shavuot and Tisha be-Av. The prayer, by an unknown author, eulogizes the martyrs and calls upon God to avenge their death. In a striking analogy to the legendary origins of another famous prayer from this period, *u-netaneh tokef* (Let us declare the mighty holiness), attributed to Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, a seventeenth-century source stipulates that

Av ha-rahamim was in fact found on the reader's table in the synagogue after the Crusade massacres.[41] Reflecting on the miraculous appearance of this prayer, the *Minhag* book (Book of custom) of the Jewish community of Worms reports that the patriarch Abraham, whose name is contained in an anagram in the opening words, composed the lament.[42] This fictionalized authorship legitimizes this form of commemoration.

The inclusion of these dirges in the liturgy for Tisha be-Av reflects the impact of the Crusade-related destruction but also indicates a general reluctance to institute new days of mourning within Judaism. As the traditional day of mourning, Tisha be-Av served to commemorate not only the destruction of the ancient temple but all atrocities that had befallen Jewish communities. The traditional opposition to new fast days even found expression in one of the compositions about the Rhineland martyrdom by Kalonymous ben Judah: "However, we cannot add a day of mourning over ruin and conflagration . . . Instead today, I will arouse my sorrow wailing, and I will eulogize and wail and weep with a bitter soul."[43]

The traditional resistance toward new fast days and, more importantly, the fact that individual communities suffered on different dates explain the absence of a universal observance of the Crusade atrocities. In Worms, however, the memory of the Crusade was preserved with the inauguration of a specific local day of fasting on the 23rd of Iyyar with a prohibition to perform marriages, haircuts, or the trimming of beards. R. Eleazar b. Judah, who was born in 1160 in Mainz and died in Worms in 1238, recorded the tradition of a daylong fast and described the differences in observance between Worms's memorial fast and those of other communities.[44] On that day the community fasted, recited prayers and dirges, and visited the graves of the martyrs. References in the following centuries point to the continued observance of this day until the nineteenth century.[45]

Aside from the chronicles, the laments, and the communal day of fasting, books of memory memorialized the calamitous destruction of the Crusade as well.[46] The extant *Memorbuch* of the community details the list that begins with the martyrs of 1096 on the separate days and stipulates that it is to be read on the Sabbath preceding the holiday of Shavuot.[47] According to rabbi and codifier of Ashkenazi customs Jacob b. Moses Levi of Mainz (Maharil), during the fifteenth century, outside the Rhineland, only the names of the communities that had been attacked during the First Crusade were recited. The full list of martyrs was only obligatory for the Rhineland communities themselves.[48]

The atrocities of the First Crusade thus created a culture of remembrance that became in turn part of the cherished local traditions during the period when Yehuda he-Hasid (1185–1217), the co-author and editor of the *Book of the Pious*, led the sectarian followers of what came to be known as Haside Ashkenaz until he was succeeded by Eleazar of Worms (1165–ca. 1230). Eleazar of Worms significantly strayed from Judah's more radical sectarian program for accommodating the devastated communities.[49] Despite the mixture of innovation and tradition in the *Sefer Hasidim*, those associated with this group sought always to faithfully preserve received traditions.[50]

This compilation reflects already a much larger change in northern Europe in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries that came to bestow more authority upon written documents. A significant rise in Hebrew texts occurred during the period, and the Talmud acquired a more prominent place in medieval Ashkenaz as well. Along these lines, R. Eliezer bar Nathan (1090–ca. 1170), the author of one of the chronicles, compiled responsa and halakhic rulings following the order of the Talmudic tractates, while traditions and narratives that circulated in the Rhineland about the sages of Ashkenaz would also be inserted into the thirteenth-century *Sefer Hasidim*. This later collection promotes a utopian sectarian lifestyle and instructs the reader in the theology, ethics, and, above all, discipline required to attain salvation. The extent to which this work represents a pious ideal that became a social reality of sectarian followers, however, remains unclear. In line with the twelfth-century glorification of Jewish martyrdom, this ethical anthology celebrates the ideal self-sacrifice as tantamount to that of the martyr while commending those who had converted in order to bury their fellow Jews.[51]

More pertinent yet, the succession from Yehuda he-Hasid to Eleazar involved a geographic transfer that situated Worms as a new center of learning that had once paled in comparison to Speyer and Mainz. Already during the twelfth century, according to a decision at the rabbinical synod in Troyes, the three Rhineland communities had acquired judicial power over their German congregations. At the first meeting in 1150, it was decided that the *Shum* (Speyer, Worms, and Mainz) communities should regulate internal disputes among the communities of the German lands. Despite confirmation of their role in subsequent synods in 1223 and 1250, their authority was never formally accepted but depended instead on the presence of charismatic leaders. Yet whereas during the early medieval period, leaders of the community had been scholars and rabbis

who functioned as intermediaries with the non-Jewish authorities, the Rhineland synod declared in 1250 that an excommunication could be decided only by *parnasim* and rabbis.[52]

These apparent changes in rabbinic power notwithstanding, the self-understanding of individual communities continued to rest on the presence of individual rabbinic teachers, who carefully safeguarded the transmission of their knowledge and the divine name in a ceremony of purification, the wearing of white cloth, and the utterances of specific blessings, as Gershom Scholem has explained.[53] Moreover, these leaders inscribed themselves into elaborate chains of transmission. Initially, narratives of the beginning of the rabbinical academies in the Rhineland portrayed Kalonymous the Older as having arrived in either Mainz or Worms to found an academy. These genealogies created a cultural self-image that asserted the Rhineland community's superiority over the newly emerging centers of the Tosafists in France and linked the beginning of Jewish life in the Rhineland to its royal alliance. As Ivan Marcus has observed, they "bragged that they and they alone were the First Families of Ashkenaz."[54] The fact that Mainz and Worms are named interchangeably with regard to Kalonymous might indicate more than simple uncertainty; the conflicting accounts might illustrate the competition between the two centers of rabbinic learning in Ashkenaz.[55]

Such a rivalry would not have been the only reason for the creation of these chains of learning. The devastation of the community and the deaths of his son and Yehuda he-Hasid must have compelled Eleazar to put the esoteric oral traditions in writing. His chain, which had been significantly disrupted by the First Crusade, retraced a geographic transfer from the Babylonian center to Italian Jewry, to Mainz and Speyer, and, finally, to Worms. In his detailed account, Eleazar defended his versions of prayers against changes that had been introduced by the rabbis in France. In his commentary to a prayer book, Eleazar therefore outlined the chain of transmission of inherited traditions not only back to Babylonia and the Kalonymide families that had been brought to Mainz by Charlemagne but also up to himself, who received the teachings from Yehuda he-Hasid. In this self-serving reconstruction of transmission history, Eleazar portrayed himself as the sole and legitimate successor to the esoteric learning that had made its way from Babylonia to the Rhineland.[56] Moreover, this very personalized chain emphasizes the importance of individual teachers. In recognition of Eleazar's own reputation, in turn, during the thirteenth century his name became associated with a

study house in Worms that had been erected in 1175 that contributed to the lasting renown of the community.[57]

Eleazar also penned a very personal account of his wife, Dolce, and their two daughters following their murder in late 1196, in which he elaborately expressed his loss.[58] Based on Proverbs 31, he praised Dolce's economic, familial, religious, and educational qualities and recounted how she served not only the members of the large household but also the women of the community as a religious leader, probably as *sangerin*. Recounting the ambush, Rokeah relates that it was Dolce who escaped to seek help, only to be cut to pieces in the street outside the house.[59] Dolce was not the only woman commemorated in this fashion. Urania of Worms's tombstone similarly praises this "daughter of the chief of the synagogue singers" for her "sweet tunefulness" as a women's prayer leader during the thirteenth century.[60]

Despite the relative importance of these women for subsequent generations, it was a rabbinic leader who would become most intimately associated with the community of Worms. Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, who consolidated rabbinical authority and aimed to establish unity among the disparate communities of the Rhineland, exemplified the new brand of charismatic leadership. Born in Worms, most likely around 1220–23, he studied Talmud with R. Isaac Or Zarua in Wurzburg in 1235 before stopping in Mainz en route to Paris to study with the great Tosafist of the period. During his sojourn on the Seine, Meir witnessed the burning of the Talmud in 1240 that had been instigated by the Jewish convert Nicholas Donin in the Paris disputation. In 1247, Meir settled in Regensburg until his father's death in 1276 or 1281, when he returned to Worms. While traveling to the Holy Land, he was captured in Lombardy with his daughters and son-in-law and died in prison there in 1293.

The unfortunate conclusion of Meir's journey mirrors Yehuda Halevi's failed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. What remains of Halevi's trip is his well-known poem *Zion ha-lo tishali* (Zion, will you not ask?), which expresses his undiminished devotion to and longing for Zion and the patriarchs' graves at Hevron.[61] Meir, witnessing the burning of the Talmud, expressed his bereavement in a poem that carefully echoes Halevi's, titled *Sha'ali serufah be-esh*.[62] Whereas Meir, like Halevi, empathized with suffering in exile, he longs for the Torah, not Zion. Nevertheless, in either case the object of the desire of their laments, which became part of standard Ashkenazic liturgy for Tisha be-Av, is elsewhere than their domicile in the Diaspora. Yet the body of the deceased Meir became an object of

Jewish communities' ambition following their failed efforts to secure his ransom. When Meir was finally laid to rest in the cemetery of Worms in 1307, his tombstone recalled him as "our teacher" and retold of his imprisonment, death, and eventual burial. His ultimate fate was probably responsible for an inscription expressing the hope that "he may rest among the souls of the righteous of the world in the garden of Eden."[63]

The concern that was extended to Meir of Rothenburg's body suggests that his remains had acquired a religious importance comparable to the Christian sacred relics that proliferated during this period in northern Europe.[64] To be sure, relic veneration is not easily reconcilable with the ritual status of graves in Judaism, but the tombstones of martyrs and rabbinic leaders nevertheless became the objects of reverence. A special request by Alexander Wimpfen in the thirteenth century (he had invested his fortunes to pay the ransom of Meir of Rothenburg's body) substantiates this reading. Before Wimpfen passed away in 1307, he asked that he be granted the "fortune" to be buried adjacent to the rabbinic scion, as his tombstone recalls.[65] Not just Meir of Rothenburg's grave but the resting places of other martyrs acquired a religious function from which Jews sought assistance. For an increasing number of Jews outside the community as well, the cemetery had come to matter as a place for rituals of remembrance and prayers. A religious obligation existed for the descendents of those buried to annually visit their graves, and other Jews followed the custom of journeying to the graves of venerated scholars as well.

All of this in fact follows a very well established practice that is, however, difficult to document.[66] To visit graves, to commemorate the deceased, and to ask them to intercede on behalf of the living all imply a reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead that would become fundamental to the culture of remembrance. Instead of representing two opposite poles, life and death were placed on a sliding scale. Death did not connote a fundamental break but instead a transformation (this was also the case for Christians).[67] Already the Talmud describes how Caleb traveled to Hebron "to prostrate himself" at the graves of his ancestors and ask God to guard him against spies.[68] Recording the contested nature of this practice, however, the Talmud in another place reports a difference of opinion between R. Levi b. Hama and R. Hanina. According to one view, Jews go to cemeteries to underscore that they are "as the dead before Thee," while others hope to petition the dead to intercede for mercy on their behalf.[69]

Medieval commentators took it upon themselves to explore and nego-tiate these different textual traditions, which had already become part of a dispute with the Karaites, where the issue of worshiping at graves fea-tured also in intra-religious polemics.[70] In his code, the philosopher and halakhist Moses Maimonides interpreted the talmudic references from *Ta'anit* 16a as directed only to visits to the cemetery to pray for rain (*Ta'anit* 4:17). He contended that visiting graves, however, made clear that humans are "as the dead before Thee." In contrast, the thirteenth-century *Zohar* took the same textual tradition as the basis for a discussion of prayers to the departed to intercede on behalf of the living.[71] Within the Ashkenazi orbit, Rashi noted the practice of students who gathered at the grave of their teacher to study on the occasion of the *yahrzeit*.[72] In-dividuals recalled the deaths of their parents in the time of the *yahrzeit* and expanded the liturgical remembrance of departed relatives in ad-dition to the Day of Atonement, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot as op-portunities to read the memorial prayers.[73] Other texts were mindful to emphasize the differences between Jewish and Christian practices. While Jews might have prayed at the graves of rabbinic sages, they did not share the Christians' enchantment with relics, at least according to a polemical fourteenth-century treatise titled *Sefer Nizzahon Vetus* (The old book of polemic), in which the anonymous author describes as impure the Chris-tian practice of taking the bones of the dead for holy relics.[74]

Despite these varying opinions, within Ashkenaz the legend about Caleb served to legitimize intercessory prayers.[75] *Sefer Hasidim* recalls a story about a community that was threatened with extinction if the members did not pay tribute to the dead.[76] The compilation even notes that the dead are pleased by visits to their graves and the recitation of prayers to them.[77] Reflecting the growing prevalence of these customs, Yehuda he-Hasid's grave in Regensburg became a popular stop on pil-grims' itineraries for centuries. Some visitors even chiseled their names into his tombstone.[78] Responding to the popularity of these practices, R. Haim Paltiel, a student of R. Meir of Rothenburg, claimed that this custom was not in accordance with Jewish law. He particularly spoke out against women and uneducated men visiting graves to pray to the deceased.[79] R. Jacob Moelin (Maharil), an important codifier of Ashke-nazic customs and a prominent Jewish leader in nearby Mainz, voiced his tacit opposition to this practice as well when he discussed cases in which individuals had vowed to visit the graves of their ancestors, righ-teous ones, or saints. Maharil argued that they could easily be absolved

from their vows because many authorities had condemned this practice as "inquiring from the dead." Clearly uneasy, Maharil suggested directing one's prayers to God instead of the dead person's body. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that due to the presence of righteous souls (*zaddikim*), a cemetery is a holy place in which to pray.[80] Reflecting more on existing practice than on its larger meaning, Maharil unequivocally stated that on the eve of Rosh ha-shana, everyone went to the cemetery to "prostrate themselves on the graves of the *zaddikim*."[81]

Thus the memory of 1096 had become joined together in texts and rituals both inside and outside of the community. These channels of remembrance promoted attachment to the place and expressed verbal hostility toward Christianity. Whether these invectives necessarily reflect an existing gulf between the two communities or represent an attempt to introduce some distance remains unclear. Regardless, however, the local memory culture enshrined new elements within it that underscored the Jews' royal alliance and historical roots in the Rhineland.

The alliance, however, came at a price. During a period of economic prosperity, when Worms was one of seven free imperial cities and belonged to the founders of the Rhineland city league of 1254, increasing financial demands were placed upon the Jewish community. Despite their substantial financial contributions during this period, Jews were perpetually in danger of being disenfranchised from the corporate structure of the medieval world.[82] Their precarious situation only intensified with the ritual murder accusation, and when urban internal uprisings spread throughout various cities in Germany. In response to these challenges, the Jewish community began to encourage the view that it had originated during the Second Temple period.[83] These foundation myths, which both reflected the community's vulnerability and elevated its self-understanding, became particularly popular during the period of the Black Death when Jews faced renewed religious hostility. The foundation myth that located Jews' origin in the Rhineland before Jesus's birth helped to refute the age-old accusations that the Jews had killed Jesus.[84]

Narratives like these reinforced traditions concerning the Jews' royal alliance when, over the course of the thirteenth century, the bishop acquired jurisdiction over the Jews in criminal lawsuits and litigations that involved Christians. Along with the emperor, the bishop collected taxes from the Jews, while the city and municipal council determined their civic status. In Worms, although the bishop maintained the title of *Stattherr*, a community council emerged that liberated itself from the ad-

ministrative yoke of ecclesiastical domination. Nevertheless, in 1313 the bishop confirmed and then restructured the self-government of the Jewish community by placing twelve community leaders at its head.[85]

The erosion of the traditional royal alliance during the fourteenth century reflected changing power relations between the emperor, the churches, and the city, and the shift in their rights threatened to unravel the legal protection of the Jews, particularly given the increasing anti-Jewish animosity of this period. After the Romanesque cathedral in Worms had been completed at the end of the twelfth century, several alterations were made to its southern part between 1310 and 1320, including a typological representation of the victorious Church and the defeated synagogue. Drawing on Lamentations 5:16–17 and Jeremiah 48:16, the figure embodying *Synagoga* is blindfolded and holding a broken scepter, which illustrates her loss of power. A ram's head under her right arm denotes the carnal lust of Israel. Above her left shoulder, the tablets with the Ten Commandments are falling down (fig. 2). *Ecclesia*, in contrast, carries a goblet in which she collects blood from her wound, wears a crown, and carries an intact staff, representing Christian power and rule. Furthermore, prophets are juxtaposed with evangelists from the New Testament, thereby establishing a connection of promise and fulfillment. Depicting the Jews with their medieval Jewish hats, the monument fuses biblical and contemporary times. Further down, the monument envelops *Synagoga*, who turns her head forward, forcing her crown to slide off. In this portrayal, *Synagoga* is placed in company with *Caritas*, *Infidelita*, and the women of the world, who represent arrogance, thereby underscoring even further the low position of Judaism.[86]

The monumental degradation of Judaism was representative of the renewed danger Jews faced at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with the Rindfleish massacre in 1298, the Armleder riots in 1322, and the outbreak of the Black Death in 1348. The plague in particular marked a turning point in the history of Western European Jewish life, ushering in the Christians' expulsion of Jews from almost all urban centers. As in many other cities, the citizens of Worms accused Jews of promoting the disease by poisoning the water supplies. Emperor Charles IV set the stage for trouble as well, when in 1348 he temporarily waived all royal rights over the Jews in favor of the city, leaving them at the citizens' mercy.[87]

Anti-Jewish violence soon broke out in the city, forcing some Jews to flee to Sinsheim, Heidelberg, and elsewhere. According to an early

modern Jewish chronicler of Worms, some burghers apparently took pity upon the Jews and hid them in their houses. Others used a magic goose, he reported, to reveal the Jews' location. A learned Jew, who had befriended a local priest, disguised himself and delivered a sermon in which he encouraged compassion among the Christians. Asking whether they would rather ascribe to reason or to a magic goose, he pointed to the goose that alerted the congregation to the presence of a Jew in the church. Since the members of the church believed there were no Jews

among them, the goose could hardly be deemed reliable. Impressed by this, the congregation stopped harassing the Jews; soon thereafter, the goose metamorphosed into an eagle that is still visible on the St. Martin's church.[88] The facts differed significantly from this account, unfortunately. In the face of this threat, many members of the Jewish community gathered together and then set themselves ablaze. No fewer than four hundred Jews died, and the fire destroyed parts of the women's synagogue; only the cemetery remained unharmed.[89] The *Memorbuch* lists the hundreds who perished during this time.[90]

The ravages of 1349 destroyed numerous communities; others, crushed by constant financial demands by the cities and the emperor, simply ceased to exist in the following century. After 1349, then, the Jewish presence in urban centers plummeted, and the Rhineland was no exception: Speyer's Jews left in 1435, Heilbronn's in 1437, and Mainz's in 1438.[91] Unlike these cities, Worms saw its Jews return relatively soon (the community of Mainz, for example, would only reconstitute itself in 1583). Following the attack, Charles IV noted in a privilege for the city that the destruction of Jews and their property had also damaged the city and its citizens.[92] Moreover, the city authorities quickly realized that the confiscated property of the Jews would not cover the claims of former creditors and decided to allow the Jews to return to the city in 1353.[93] Upon their return, however, the surviving members of the community were subjugated to the magistrate; the bishop maintained his authority over them; and the Palatine duke increasingly interfered in their internal matters as well.[94] In contrast to life prior to the violence and destruction, then, Jews now found themselves even more restricted to the *Judengasse*.

Within this period of intense uncertainty, the community commemorated the destruction in 1349 with a new perpetual day of fast on the 10th of Adar. On this day, the community prayed and recited *Av harahamim* along with other prayers, read the names of the martyrs from the *Memorbuch*, circled the cemetery, and offered their supplications at the graves of the *kedoshim* (holy ones).[95] R. Meir's prayer for the 10th of Adar eloquently captures the despair of a community confronted by enemies approaching them from all sides: "Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, they all act treacherously and lay to waste." He couched his outcry in language that Jews of the community would have been familiar with from the liturgical stanzas for the martyrs of the First Crusade, with each stanza concluding with a line from Isaiah 64:11: "At such things will you restrain Yourself, O Lord?"[96]

Despite the absence of many individual headstones, the Worms cemetery features the aforementioned tombstone dedicated to the memory of twelve *parnasim*, who also became associated with 1349. The legend was passed down that twelve community leaders had attacked the magistrate prior to the destruction of the congregation. When their intervention in the town hall was unsuccessful, it was said, they then assailed the city councilors. However, no historical evidence substantiates this account.[97] Still, the memory of the 1349 destruction remained vivid within the community when, roughly thirty years later, several Jews signed an official document as sons of those "who may rest in the Garden of Eden," of which "the memory of the righteous is for a blessing" and where "the Lord may avenge his blood."[98]

Despite the Jews' return to Worms, then, the situation was precarious and grew more so when, after 1406, burghers succeeded in abrogating certain rights over the Jews to the magistrate. Tension between the magistrate and the bishop, who succeeded in 1407 in freeing the local clergy from many city customs taxes, also acted to unsettle the city. Despite these intensifying struggles and the increasing influence of the Count Palatinate, though, Worms remained an imperial city. As the various powers competed for authority within it, new regulations made Jews legally more reliant on the city and bishop than on royal favor. Given this arrangement, then, the magistrate became more invested in their protection. In 1410, for example, Jews became the target of ritual murder accusation; however, the city—in exchange for a handsome sum—defended them against the local bishop and the Count Palatinate.[99]

Changes to the status of the Jews (and to their taxes) continued to unsettle the relations among the competing powers and social groups, until in 1431 the emperor validated the Jews' right to collect money from their debtors. Farmers besieged the city and demanded the surrender of the Jews, which the magistrate denied. In 1432, the conflict was finally resolved; the compromise stipulated the lowering of interest and the postponement of repayment.[100] Once again, the magistrate's protection had come at a financial cost.

All of this newly acquired protection proved less effective against other forces arrayed to the Jews' detriment, among them the Dominican preacher Petrus Nigri (1435–83), who had recently returned from Salamanca to become a professor of scholastic theology at the University of Ingolstadt. In the second half of the fifteenth century he delivered zeal-

ous conversionary sermons in the cathedral at Worms.[101] Nevertheless, the Jews of Worms persevered and their protection was somehow reasserted when the Palatine duke Philipp and his son Ludwig IV visited the synagogue in 1495 to hear them sing and instructed the local subordinates to deal kindly with them. A year later the German empress Bianca Maria Sforza, the second wife of Emperor Maximilian, also inspected the synagogue.[102]

The relief that the royal visit might have brought was short-lived, however; a fanatical apostate, Johannes Pfefferkorn from Moravia, who also attached himself to the Dominicans, soon thereafter published a number of anti-Jewish tractates. Pfefferkorn called for the expulsion of the Jews from the few cities that still had sizable Jewish communities, including Frankfurt, Worms, and Regensburg. With the help of the Dominicans, he gained access to Emperor Maximilian, who empowered him to confiscate "offensive" Jewish books. Pfefferkorn's call for the erasure of Jewish literature became part of an extended public debate that involved the German humanist and Hebrew scholar Johannes Reuchlin upon the invitation of Johann van Dalberg, the scholarly bishop of Worms. According to the emperor's letter from Padua, Worms became the target of Pfefferkorn's ambitions because it was assumed that the prestigious community possessed many books.[103] Upon the emperor's order, the magistrate ordered Pfefferkorn to confiscate books he deemed blasphemous in Worms on December 18, 1509. Aware of Pfefferkorn's actions in nearby Frankfurt, the Jews of Worms might have been able to safeguard some volumes before his arrival; the list of confiscated manuscripts and books that would be destroyed at least does not feature polemical anti-Christian texts like *Sefer Nizahon* (Book of polemics) or *Toldot Jeshu* (The generation of Jesus).[104]

Pfefferkorn was not content only with excising Hebrew books, however. He also celebrated the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg in 1519 and gleefully counted the cities from which Jews had been barred at the time, including Cologne, Augsburg, Strasbourg, and Nuremberg. For Pfefferkorn, the presence of Jews in Worms, a community that boasted many talmudic students, remained a thorn in his side. To complete his onslaught, then, he urged the magistrate of Worms to do its share and expel the Jews from the city. The emperor supported Pfefferkorn's quest and likewise urged the expulsion of the Jews, along with the razing of their synagogue in favor of a church or monastery in the

same spot. Yet Pfefferkorn's plea was to no avail, and Jews remained in Worms.[105]

With Jews' status in the city constantly endangered and the dispute over the Hebrew books in abatement, the Jewish cemetery in turn suffered great losses during the sixteenth century, when Worms citizens decided to build an underground pathway using its tombstones. In response to the Jewish community's intervention—they reminded the magistrate that the headstones were protected under Roman imperial law—these desecrations ceased.[106] It might have been the constant insecurity and the increasing fragility of their channels of remembrance that compelled the community to compile the liturgy and their religious customs during this period.[107] Preserving the markers of the past also motivated Elieser b. Samuel Braunschweig from Worms; his inclusion of the synagogue's interior and exterior inscriptions in a manuscript in 1559 suggests that he saw the synagogue as a crucial part of the community's heritage.[108] Braunschweig's inventory of the inscriptions provides a new form of historical connection informed by Renaissance sensibilities about the study of the past, which accorded historical artifacts an unprecedented importance. Indebted to these new historical sensibilities, Braunschweig also recalled the fate of Rabbi Amnon and transcribed the testament of Judah the Pious. His attempt to preserve even the fading or overgrown inscriptions was indicative of this period, in which the community became defined not only by its religious customs, legal autonomy, and particular organization but also by the historical heritage.

Over the preceding centuries, Jewish memories had become marked by the conflict with Christianity and the political tension within the city. Yet it was the experience of violence during the First Crusade and the Black Death that paradoxically bound the Jews to the vicinity of the city and their cemetery. Moreover, the violence against Jews, the destruction of torah scrolls and tombstones, and the monumental degradation of the culture were all echoed in the chronicles' verbal attacks upon Christianity and calls for vengeance as well as the liturgical dirges. Nevertheless, the way in which Jewish victims of the First Crusade and subsequent persecutions were depicted as religious sacrifices gave meaning to their deaths and underscored the extent to which Christian concepts functioned as interlocutors of Jewish memories. Notwithstanding the apparent opposition between Jews and Christians, the chroniclers and authors of liturgical laments expressed the ideal of martyrdom in the idiom of twelfth-century Christendom.[109] During the early modern period, the

religious antagonism that had governed the construction of Jewish memory was sidelined by the invention of new historical traditions. To be sure, the accounts of seventeenth-century persecution and expulsion would continue to reverberate with the textual traditions of previous attacks. The motif of vengeance would recede, yet the emotional attachment to Worms would strengthen.