

FÜRTH

by Felix F. Lehmann

Fürth was called "Little Jerusalem". For hundreds of years it was an עיר ואם בישראל, renowned for its great Rabbonim, its famous Yeshiva, which at times had over 400 Talmidim, its shuls, its institutions, its famous printing presses, its dedicated Gemilus Chassodim and closely knit Kehilla life. There never was a ghetto. There never was a pogrom. And there never was an expulsion of Yehudim. As a result, it became an עיר מקלט for those who were driven out from other places at the whim of their rulers.

To understand the uniqueness of Fürth we have to delve into its history.

Fürth was supposedly started by Charlemagne as a furt-ford, which means a place where a river (normally an obstacle to travel) can be crossed because it is less deep than elsewhere. The Rednitz River was centrally located on the main traffic route between Prague and Frankfurt on the Main. The Jews spelled it Fjurde - פירדא.

In 1007, Emperor Heinrich II gave it as a gift to the Bishopric of Bamberg. But, in the 13th century it belonged also to the Count of Ansbach and to the city of Nuremberg. Each of these three owned their own area in Fürth.

The history of the Jews of Fürth begins with the expulsion of the Jews from Nuremberg in 1498, where they were not permitted to live again until 1850. The Bamberg part of Fürth accepted the Yehudim in 1531, but required them to pay a tax to be permitted to settle there and thereafter a yearly protection tax. In 1565, Nuremberg protested to the Emperor of Germany in vile anti-Semitic terms against the Jews living in the Bamberg part. But the Emperor sided with Bamberg and gave Bamberg the privilege to allow the Jews to settle there for good. Ansbach, which was the other partner of the city, followed Bamberg's suit and for the next 200 years there was a certain rivalry between Bamberg and Ansbach to attract Jews to their rulership because they brought money to their coffers.

The Kehilla started to grow. In 1601, the populace of that little area consisted of 321 gentile families and 22 Jewish families. That same year, the Kehilla acquired its own cemetery and installed Rav Shimshon ben Yoseph, who was the Rav until 1628. In 1607, they obtained the right to form a religious corporation to make contracts and acquire land. In 1617 the main shul was inaugurated. To quote the chronicle, "On the 23rd of February 1617, in the presence of 1500 Jews, they inaugurated their synagogue which they had built with great financial sacrifice. Old and young came and watched as one Rabbi after another went to the pulpit and thanked G-d in their Hebrew language for having finally achieved this great event for themselves and their descendants, which brought great happiness. And the Christians shared their joy by celebrating in their beer halls."

THE RABBONIM OF FÜRTH

By this time the Yeshiva was well established. In 1628, Rabbi Shabatai Sheftel Horowitz, the son of the שלח הקדוש, became Rav. In his introduction to ווי העמודים, he describes Fürth as "A small town, but as large as Antiyochia, because in it live outstanding Talmidei Chachomim with vast knowledge and deep understanding." A Talmid of the כלי יקר, he had first been Darshan in Prague and was later Rav in Frankfurt, Posen and Vienna.

From 1660 to 1667, Aharon Shmuel Kaydanower, the מהרשיק, was Rav. He was born in Vilna and was related to the Shach. He wrote ברכת הזבח, ברכת שמואל and other Seforim.

In 1653 one of the first Jewish hospitals in Germany was established in Fürth.

In 1670 the Jews were expelled from Vienna. Quite a few of them came to Fürth. Among them were the families Koppel and Berman Frankel. They brought their wealth with them and built the Klaus, and endowed it with funds to pay for the Rav of the Klaus, for the lights, for heating materials and even for a Shamos. A descendant of those Frankels was Reb Wolf Hamburg (1770 - 1850.) The last Klaus Rabbiner was Rav Mordechai Faust who lived to be 99 years old.

From 1670 to 1680, Rav Meir ben Asher, who was born in Fürth, was Rav. He founded the Matzevos Chevra.

From 1691 - 1864 there were several printing establishments which produced many hundreds of Seforim.

From 1691 - 1694 the Rav was Rav Shmuel of Woydislaw, author of *בית שמואל* on the *אבן העזר*, which was printed in 1694. It shows the high standard of the Kehilla that it could attract such a Gaon. In his introduction to the *Beth Shmuel* he writes, "Now that Hashem has brought me here to the holy and famous Kehilla Fürth, Hashem has once more given me the opportunity and I've studied in complete depth with pupils who listened eagerly and I made many additions to the work."

In 1692 the synagogue was rebuilt and an additional shul was built in 1697.

There were altogether in those 350 years at least 18 Chief Rabbis who each had their Dayonim and Rabbis for the Yeshiva. Many of them came from the East and remained. There was a lively exchange between Fürth and Jews in the East, particularly those in Prague and cities in Poland.

A significant political development occurred in 1719. Two years before, Ansbach had agreed to let Bamberg consolidate the rights of the Kehilla. Thus, in 1719, the following regulations were established for the Jews of Fürth.

- * All Jews and their property are protected after paying protection money.
- * They may build synagogues and schools, live according to their religion, and vote for their own officers. These officers have the right to mete out punishment.
- * They may hire their own Rabbonim, Chazonim, *Shul Klopfer*, grave diggers, and any persons they need for the administration.
- * They may buy and sell outside of the markets, lend money, tender and trade hardware, food, wine, beer and any agricultural products as well as livestock.
- * *In matters between Jews and Jews, they are under the exclusive jurisdiction of their Rabbi.* In matters between Jew and non-Jew, the law of the land applies with the right of appeal.
- * They are free to move into the town if their finances are stable.
- * They have the right to send two deputies to the city council and

may even become mayor (which indeed happened several times).

It has been stated that these were the most liberal conditions for any Kehilla in all of Europe at the time. This gave the Kehilla economic freedom and power. And soon they traded in jewelry, grain, hops from which beer is made, livestock, clothing, etc. The growing wealth resulted in the wearing of expensive jewelry, luxurious clothing and costly celebrations - overdone sometimes - when celebrating such simchas as *Zochor*, *Bris Miloh* and weddings. The Beis Din realized that this would draw unnecessary attention and envy from the populace, and therefore they made strict *Takanos* to limit any excesses in the purchase of expensive clothing, wearing of jewelry and the celebration of simchas.

Among the rules for a *seudoh* at a wedding: boys and girls cannot dance in the same room: "ולמען עשות משמרת למשמרת", to make sure that this does not happen, men and women cannot even be seated in the same room unless there is a curtain between them.

In Elul 1804, the Rav ordered a blackboard to be put up in the ladies' shul on which was to be written in large letters: "On this blackboard shall be noted any woman who has the *חוצפה* to dance with men, to differentiate them from ladies who live *בצניעות*."

From 1710 to 1746, the Rav of Fürth was Rav Boruch Rapaport, called Reb Boruch Charif, author of parts of *Responsa Shev Yakov*. In his days, denunciations were made claiming that *Seforim* contained certain anti-Christian remarks, which led to the confiscation of many *Seforim*. Rav Yonason Eybeschütz delivered a *hesped* at Rav Boruch's *levayo*.

From 1764 to 1776 the Rav was Rav Yoseph Steinhart, the זכרון יוסף, who was born in Steinhart, a small village in Bavaria. He was a talmid of Rav Yakov Poppers of Frankfurt am Main. Amongst his *Chaverim* were Rav Tewele Sheuer, Rav Naftoli Katzenellenbogen, and others. He attracted many outstanding Talmidim to his famous yeshiva, among them, Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim, Rabbi Tovia Sondheim and, for a time, Reb Mordechai Baneth (later Chief Rabbi of Nikolsburg). Requests for his opinion in Halachic questions came from all over the world. Since Fürth is situated on the confluence of rivers, it was suitable for *Gittin* and Rav Steinhart became an authority in these matters.

The Minhag book of Fürth which was printed in 1767 had his *Haskomo*. It is based on the Minhag of Nuremberg and was followed in much of Bavaria. The Selichos Sefer of Minhag Fürth, which was printed in 1758 in Sulzbach, has the following front page: "*Selichos according to Minhag Fürth which our forefathers have told us that they accepted, following the order and Minhag of Nuremberg of long ago.*" סדר סליחות על פי סדר ומנהג פיורדא אשר אבותינו ספרו לנו שקבלו עליהם לסדר ע"פ סדר ומנהג נירן בורג שהיו מקדמת דנא.

From 1778 to 1785, the Rav was Rav Hirsch Yanov, also called Reb Hirsch Charif, who was born in Lissa and was first Rav in Posen. He was well versed in mathematics and other sciences and led the fight against Moses Mendelssohn and his translation of the Chumash. At that time, the Kehilla consisted of approximately 2,600 souls or 500 families.

From 1789 to 1819 the Rav was Rav Meshulam Cohn, better known as the כהונה בגדי. He was born in Ravitch and got his *Semicha* from Rav Yonason Eybeschütz. He was an authority on Halochah, especially in חשן משפט and אבן העזר, as can be seen from his Sefer, בגדי כהונה. At times the government called on him to help decide matters between Yehudim. His *Hadran* on Masseches Gittin was delivered in Shul and specially printed. The siyum was an outstanding event. He was the last great Rosh Yeshiva and the last officially appointed Av Beis Din of the Kehilla in Fürth. He fought against the rising Reform movement. When the Westphalian Consistory wanted to permit Kitniyos on Pesach, he made a special announcement against it in Shul and wrote to all Rabbonim to officially denounce it. It was just during these years, when the Yeshiva with its talmidim was flourishing and at its height, and Kovod Hatorah was in its glory, that the Reform movement began gaining strength. The כהונה בגדי foresaw the threat to the future of the Kehilla. Amongst his many Talmidim, the most outstanding was Rav Wolf Hamburg (1770-1850), who signed himself "אוהב" (אברהם וולף המבורג). The כהונה בגדי asked him to become Av Beis Din in his lifetime to forestall the opposition of freethinkers in the Kehilla who would, however, not dare to oppose the old Rabbi's choice. This would also secure approval by the government. Reb Wolf in his modesty declined to acquiesce to his Rabbi's request to take over his Rebbi's seat in his lifetime. The consequences were tragic. In 1819, after leading the Kehilla for 30 years, Rav Meshulam Cohn passed away.

HOW THE RABBINATE FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE REFORM

The Kehilla now invited the Chasam Sofer of Pressburg to become Rav of Fürth. In his negotiations he addressed a letter to Reb Wolf in which he speaks of the Kehilla as famous and a praiseworthy jewel. He wrote that in Pressburg he had 150 talmidim in his Yeshiva who learn day and night but live under extremely difficult financial circumstances. Would Fürth improve their situation by providing them with the necessary room and board? Had the Reform movement already gone too far in Germany? Pressburg also had some Reform which he, *boruch Hashem*, could handle. Would he be able to devote his time to learning, and very little time to Kehilla matters, so that the interests of Heaven and Earth would be in balance? Would Rav Hamburg, known for his *Yiras Shomayim*, give him the proper answer? Also, what would be the attitude of the government if he became Rav in Fürth? The answer from Fürth to all these matters was positive. However, the Chasam Sofer was undecided as to whether he should leave his Kehilla, where he certainly could stem the advance of the Reform, and assume the position in Germany, where the Reform might pose more of a problem. Under the influence and pressure of his own Baale Batim, the Chasam Sofer expressed his appreciation for the invitation but decided to stay in Pressburg. (A facsimile of his handwritten letter is printed elsewhere in this issue.) He then advised the Kehilla to ask Rav Yoshua Ber Herzfeld of Ravitch to become their Rav. Rav Herzfeld accepted the invitation and the Kehilla, in a vote of 36 committee members, decided to approve his appointment.

ABROGATION OF THE BAMBERG AGREEMENT

However, drastic changes were taking place. In 1806, Fürth came under the rule of the King of Bavaria, who nullified the Ansbach agreement of 1719. The city now had 12,500 inhabitants, including 2,500 Jewish souls in 640 families. The Bavarian government decided that the Rabbinate had lost any binding authority over the Kehilla. It imposed a fixed limit to the number of marriages that could take place per year (Matrikel); the Jewish corporation was dissolved, and all religious matters as well as monetary matters came under governmental supervision and decision. However, Jewish children were now allowed admission to government schools. In all matters of law only the court

of the city had binding authority. The government had to approve the choice of a Rabbi. The regulation: The new Rabbi has to be a servant of the king; speaking, reading and writing in German; educated in the sciences; and in step with the new spirit of the times, the "Zeitgeist". He has to be appointed by five Parnossim (and not by a vote of 36 Baale Batim) who have to be able to judge the above-mentioned qualities and qualifications of the Rabbi. The Kehilla pleaded with the government to let the old system of voting for a Rav stand once more, but the government refused. Of these five Parnossim who had to choose and approve the new Rabbi, three were Orthodox and two were Reform. One of the three Orthodox did not vote. And since it was now two religious members against two Reform the matter went back to the government. Meanwhile, Rav Hamburg was appointed as caretaker Rabbi. In a new vote for the officers of the Kultusgemeinde in 1830, the Reform gained the upper hand.

In 1830, Rav Wolf Hamburg was dismissed as interim Rabbi. On *December 24, 1830*, a Reform Rabbi, Lowi, was elected to take over as Rabbi of the Kultusgemeinde, and began officiating in the old big shul. Through an instigation led by the heads of the Kultusgemeinde, the police forcefully ejected over 100 Bachurim from the Yeshiva and the Yeshiva was closed for good. With this, the glorious era of Fürth as one of the great Torah centers of Europe came to an end. *108 years later, others finished the job.*

Rav Wolf Hamburg, who wrote דעת זקנים and שמלת בנימין, remained Rav of the Klaus where he was protected through the private Frankel foundation and bequest. At times his life was threatened, but he continued to teach and lead until 1850, and became a guide and mentor to a new generation of Rabbonim, including Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, Rav S. B. Bamberger and Rav A. Sutro.

The Orthodox, who were now in the minority, built a new shul, the Neu-Shul. There also was the Mannheimer Shul, named after its founder who had made a bequest, the orphanage shul (Waisenhaus-Shul) and hospital shul. Each shul had its own parnossim, chazonim, etc. Although the Orthodox were part of the Kultusgemeinde to which they had to pay taxes, they remained in charge of Shechitah, Mikvah and their own shuls.

In 1841 the Chevra Kadisha printed its revised constitution

with 35 paragraphs, submitted and sanctioned by the King's Ministry of the Interior. The Chevra consisted of 18 members for Taharo and Oron and 24 members for Chevras Hakabronim. The ladies' Chevra had 18 members. In its preamble, the constitution states: "The Chevra Kadisha, which has already existed for over 200 years, proves the purpose of its existence already through the fact that although it demands great personal sacrifices, it always had the necessary amount of members. Beyond this, there were always more requests to be permitted to join than could be accepted." Paragraph 27 states that the 29th day of Adar should be observed as a fast day for both Chevras, and on the first day of Nisan each Chevra would have a seudoh. Many times Rosh Chodesh Nisan would be in the week of *פרשת ויקהל-פקודי*, so the saying in Fürth was: *ויקהל and פקודי go together with the Chevra seudoh*". It was a minhag to put one thousandth of one's property into a large collection box during the seudoh.

THE WAISENHAUS - ORPHANAGE

In 1763, Yisroel Lichtensteter, who had come from Prague, donated a large sum and made an appeal to the public to start an orphanage. The orphanage would take care of boys ages 5 to 15 and make sure they were fed, clothed and educated in Torah, as well as in worldly subjects. Then they would pick a trade according to their inclination and receive special support to reach their goal.

Soon a home was found, a house was built and the institution was well supported. After *עליו* all the boys would stand together and in unison say the Kaddish for whoever's Yahrzeit or Ovel year it was. If someone passed away without children, one boy would say Kaddish for him throughout the year.

By 1884 the building had been enlarged with the addition of a wing for orphaned girls, through the initiative of Reform Rabbi Lowi, whose congregants contributed large sums to this *גמילת חסד*. The orphanage building still exists in the same place today. It had a shul downstairs which was deliberately built partly below street level so that the *Posuk* *ה' קראתיך הי' ממעמקים*, (I call to you Hashem from the Depths) would be fulfilled.

The Directors of the orphanage included Shimon Bamberger, a talmid of the Fürth Yeshiva, who served until 1886; Dr. Moshe Yona

Königshofer, talmid of Rav Sekel Bamberger and the Ksav Sofer, until 1894; Rabbi Dr. Herman Deutsch, a talmid of the K'sav Sofer, from 1894 to 1929; and from 1929 until 1942, Dr. Ismar Hallemann, הי"ד. Several of the directors, in particular, Rabbi Dr. Deutsch, also gave shiurim to the Baalei Batim. The orphanage, which was the only one in Bavaria and one of the few in all of Germany, was a blessing for boys and girls and made them successful for life.

After the closing of the Yeshiva in 1830, many parents preferred to send their children to be taught in the Waisenhaus Orphanage rather than sending them to public schools. With the forced closing of the Yeshiva, intensive Talmud study lessened dramatically. The little religious instruction the students received in the public schools left them uninterested, and many followed the "Zeitgeist" and assimilated.

BÜRGERSCHULE - ISRAELITISCHE REALSCHULE (1862-1939)

In 1861, Joel Getz and Menki Zimmer (great-grandfather of the author of this article) as board members of the Kultusgemeinde, protested that the school which the secular-minded Kultusgemeinde planned would show no sensitivity to the needs of a great part of the congregation who have the deep desire to give a thorough religious education to the youth in the spirit of Orthodox Judaism. In Nisan 1861, there was a founders' meeting for a religious school, to be named Bürgerschule. Its aim was to provide, in addition to general knowledge, a thorough education in Tanach with Rashi, and also in Mishna and Gemoroh for those able to learn. The founders were Menki Zimmer, Seckel Zimmer, Abraham Felsenstein, Gerson Naumburger and J. D. Heumann, ז"ל. Such inspired, courageous men of dedication and sacrifice should never be forgotten. These five men decided to find a Principal *and to be personally responsible for his salary and other expenses for the first two years.* They pledged themselves mutually that no one could leave this committee for any reason. An appeal to the public immediately received 55 responses of subscribers to support the school. They were able to engage as principal Dr. Selig Auerbach, the son of Rav Tzvi Benyomin Auerbach, the Rav of Halberstadt and the מחבר of the נחל אשכול on the ספר האשכול.

In 1862 the school started with 48 pupils, and already three years later it received government approval for its high level of educational achievement. By 1869, enrollment had increased to 118 pupils. With

the growth of the school it became necessary to build their own school building in the Blumenstrasse, where it still stands today and is used for Jewish community affairs. To prevent any interference from the Reform, they bought the land and built the building first as the private property of the founders (including the additional members Neuburger, Feuchtwanger and Ichenhauser), with the statement that the land and the building could only be used for a private school in the strict Orthodox Jewish spirit. The property with the land and school later became the possession of the Verein of the Israelitische Bürgerschule. Dr. Selig Auerbach, who guided the school with total dedication, ability and wisdom, was called in 1872 to accept the Rabbinate of Halberstadt which had been vacated through the demise of his father, ז"ל.

The next principal was Dr. Samuel Dessau. Born in Hamburg, he had been a teacher for ten years in the school of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch. He broadened the curriculum to include six years of high school, after which a formal written and verbal examination took place in the presence of a government official. Those who passed could fulfill their military duty in one year instead of two. This was called the "Einjährige", the "one year". The government gave recognition in 1881 to what now became the Israelitische Realschule, consisting of four classes of elementary school and six classes of high school, including math and sciences, etc. Obtaining highly qualified teachers remained a problem since teachers had to pass a government examination, and the government placed the teachers who had passed the examination where they were needed. The problem for the Realschule was that qualified teachers after a while were called to the government schools; also, teachers would leave because the private school pay could not possibly compete with government salaries and pensions. Yet, this strictly religious school prevailed, and its graduates became as successful in life as those from any government school.

In 1898 Prof. Dr. Salomon Herzstein became principal. He had also taught in the girls' Hirsch Realschule and the Talmud Torah in Hamburg. The government supervised the curriculum which had to be changed to comply with its rules. Actually there were only four to five lessons a week in religious study, and those who wanted to gain a more thorough Torah education had to attend voluntary shiurim in the afternoon. Dr. Herzstein was followed by Dr. Markus Elias, who later on was called to become principal of the Hirsch Realschule in Frankfurt. After Dr. Elias, Dr. Fritz Prager became principal. He was a ben Torah and Yorei Shomayim of the highest standards and an excellent teacher

of math and physics. Under him was Dr. Benno Heinemann, who taught chemistry and sciences and was also the leader of the Ezra Agudah Youth organization. Gym was taught by Adolf Kohn, leader of Ezra Agudah in Nuremberg, who later founded and became the revered principal of the girls' seminary in Gateshead, England.

Rabbi Dr. Leo Breslauer, who became Rav in 1924, taught Chumash with Rashi and Gemorah and gave his pupils a very thorough foundation on which they could later build in other yeshivos. Altogether, the school educated thousands of boys and girls, many of them from other towns, and in this way made a great contribution to Jewish Orthodox life. Even a future American Secretary of State learned Chumash with Rashi there in his young years.

THE QUEST FOR "AUSTRITT"

In 1871, the Kultusgemeinde established new voting rules for the election of members of the board. A general election followed in which the Orthodox members lost their seats and were replaced by members of the Reform. Within a year an organ was put into the main synagogue. As a result, 65 families decided to try to secede from the Kultusgemeinde of Fürth.

In March 1873, they petitioned the king to form their own community. They gave as one of their reasons that the organ was against Jewish tradition, and they submitted written opinions of three great Rabbonim, namely, Rav S. B. Bamberger, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rav Hildesheimer of Berlin. They petitioned that they were Jews who strictly adhered to the thousand year old traditions of their forefathers and that those of the Reform were not practicing Jews in the traditional sense. They, therefore, demanded to have their own completely independent Rabbi who would have all the privileges and authority which were accorded to the Reform Rabbi. They would be willing to work together with the Kultusgemeinde in matters of charity, etc., but not in regard to basic religious rites and practices.

The government pressed for a compromise and declared the following rule: "There can be only one Jewish community in each district, and therefore the Jews of Fürth will have to find a compromise to live together or they will not be considered Jews at all. While Catholics and

From a letter of the Chasam Sofer to Reb Wolf Hamburg about
accepting the Rabbonus of Fürth - חי שבט תשפ"א לפ"ק - 1821

— *Stigmatalpha* *Stigmatalpha*

הוא וכל טוב ה' יוביא ושלל כל חיי, הה יום חי, יב פלג
כל ספירות האלויות כפי מה שהאזן הם ש -

הרב. גמליאל מרדכי

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Protestants are two different religions, there cannot be two groups of one religion in one district." Although there were other cities in which there already were separate congregations, as in Berlin, Frankfurt, Mainz, Darmstadt and Wiesbaden, the Bavarian government felt differently. Petitions were signed and for two years, the leaders of the Kehilla, Menki Zimmer, Simon Ichenhauser, Abraham Felsenstein, Feist Ehrlich and Amson Feuchtwanger, z.l. tried to obtain the government's approval. In the end the government decided against the Austritt but the *יראים* had the right to rule over their own ritual matters such as Mikvah, Shechita, schooling and synagogue. Funeral services and cemetery were under the authority of the Reform rabbi exclusively, and so it remained to the end (1940). From then on, the *יראים* and the Reformers went their different ways but worked together in matters of welfare and charity.

SPIRITUAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

By 1865 there were no more barriers to economic achievement based on any kind of class, race or religion. All areas of economic pursuit were open. Many of the Jews of Fürth became successful in manufacturing and even exported their products - like mirror glass - to America and established branches there. The first Jewish judge in Bavaria was from Fürth. The writer Jacob Wasserman came from Fürth as did the family Ullstein which later founded the Ullstein Publishing Company. Adolf Ochs, the founder of the New York Times, was born in Fürth. He returned to visit some families there in 1935 and on that occasion donated 5000 marks to the Kultusgemeinde.

The Jews took an important part in the economic, social and cultural development of the city. A Mr. Berolzheimer established the Berolzheimer Hall, a place for cultural development. It should be noted that on November 9, 1938 the Nazis took the Jews to that same Berolzheimer Hall and sent them from there to Dachau. Mr. Nathan established the Nathanstift, a place for mothers after giving birth. The Jews were equals and since they were so beneficial to the whole community and city, they were well regarded and respected and lived in peace with the community.

The *יראים* continued their separate ways. They now had their own school. They had their shiurim and Baalei Batim who were Talmidei Chachomim. In 1875, Rav Meir Weisskopf (1832-1912), a descendant

of the Tosfos Yom Tov, became Shochet and he attracted the youth to learning Mishnayos, Gemorah, קיצור שלחן ערוך and seforim like מצות ה'. His Gemoro shiur on Shabbos afternoon found a packed auditorium in the rooms of the school, and after his פטירה the shiur continued in a private home until 1939. Two days before Kristallnacht, the Shiur happened to stop at (עמלק סימן): בבא בתרא מז'.

The close Kehilla life which had existed for hundreds of years continued apace through learning, שמירת המצות and גמילת חסד. A new generation arose and in 1906 they organized the שומרי הדת, an organization to further the life of שמירת המצות and אמונה in Fürth. They organized the Auhawei Tauro Verein, called the A. T., where shiurim were held and people got together.

In 1912, Agudas Yisroel was founded in Kattowitz. Fürth was represented by Mr. David Lehmann (father of the author of this article). When he returned he formed the Agudas Yisroel of Fürth. The following year saw the emergence of the Agudas Tziirim, the Jewish youth group which was closely connected with Agudas Yisroel. Its purpose was to further Torah study, השקפה and togetherness in a pleasant social atmosphere. Naturally, the World War of 1914 proved a major disruption to Jewish life in Fürth and elsewhere. After the war, the Agudah and Ezra movement organized practically the whole Orthodox youth. There were lectures, discussions and excursions for young men and women together, as was the custom, and quite a few good Shidduchim resulted from this.

In 1924, Shomre Hadath brought Rabbi Dr. Leo Breslauer from Kiel to Fürth. He became the leader and center of Orthodox life. A Talmid Chochom of unbending principles in Hashkofo לשם שמים, he was also well versed in medicine and philosophy. Although Rabbi of all the Shomre Hadath Shuls, he davened regularly in the Neu-Schul, and davening schedules were synchronized so that all the other shuls would finish in time to attend his sermon in the Neuschul.

Many meetings were organized together with the Aguda Ezra of Nuremberg. Once the Jews were permitted to return to Nuremberg in the third part of the 19th century, Nuremberg Jewry grew by leaps and bounds. Nuremberg was a much more cosmopolitan city than Fürth. In 1933 Nuremberg had 7,500 Jews and Fürth had 2,000. Nuremberg developed a vibrant Kehillo and Torah life under the leadership of Rav Arnold Klein (אבי אברהם יצחק מ' ספר נביאי אמת וגט)

(מסודר). Guest speakers like Nathan Birnbaum, Rav Pinchas Kohn of Ansbach, Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim of Frankfurt and many others found packed audiences there. In 1937, at the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Agudah, Rav Moshe Blau of Yerushalayim and Dr. Hildesheimer were featured speakers. Although the Chofetz Chaim was recognized as the Godol and Tzaddik Hador, his Mishne Bruro remained practically unknown in Germany.

The relationship within the Kultusgemeinde was conciliatory. Starting in 1912 the general Kultusgemeinde had formed a welfare department to distribute money to needy cases. This was in the hands of the Orthodoxy, and Mr. David Lehmann was the גבאי צדקה from 1912 to 1939. He also headed the שומרי הדת and represented the Orthodoxy on the Kultusgemeinde board.

After 1933, Rav Breslauer also lectured to the general Jewish public. The non-Orthodox attended these lectures and he gained their highest respect. After 1933 slowly and increasingly emigration began to other countries outside the Nazis' sphere of power.

KRISTALLNACHT

On the 9th of November 1938, the Nazis took all males above 18 and under 60 from their homes in Fürth, and sent many of them to Dachau. 150 storm troopers surrounded the Reform synagogue at night and burned it down and also destroyed the Neu-Schul, the Mannheimer and the Klaus. The populace did not participate in this atrocity. They vandalized the Waisenhaus-Schul but did not destroy it. It was the זכות of גמילת חסד.

The police had orders to vandalize Jewish homes but the Commissioner of Police refused and declared that as long as he was in charge no Jewish home would be touched. It is interesting to note that during the second World War no bombs fell on Fürth, but Nuremberg, which had its particular Jew haters, was heavily bombed. Later on, the Nazis took all the orphans of the orphanage with their Director, Dr. Hallemann, his wife and some of their children, הי"ד and transported them to their deaths in the crematorium. After the war, that particular street was renamed Hallemann Street.

The Nazis expropriated all Jewish public and private property and at the end of the second World War there was hardly a Jew left in Fürth.

NEW LIFE - SHE'ERIS HAPLEITOH

After the war, things changed dramatically. The Torah returned to where it had once found a welcome home. Rav Dovid Kahana Spiro, a member of the Warsaw Beis Din, had a chance, together with Rav Menachem Zemba, to secretly leave the Warsaw Ghetto with a guarantee which could be trusted, given by the Catholic Church. Rav Kahana Spiro in those days was a young man, and he refused to leave all his poor fellow Yehudim in the ghetto alone. Shortly afterwards, the Nazis took him to concentration camp; his wife and children died al Kiddush Hashem. He was taken from one concentration camp to another until he ended up in Dachau. He was there when the war ended. An American Army Chaplain found him, and Rav Spiro said to him, "Can you find a brother of mine who escaped to the United States?" It turned out that his brother, Dr. Avraham Spiro was also a Chaplain in the American army. His brother brought him to Fürth. Since the Waisenhaus-Schul and school buildings were readily available, many displaced persons streamed to Fürth under the leadership of Rav Spiro. Among those to return was Jean Mandel, son of a religious family in Fürth. He started in business and soon became a member of the Bavarian Senate and president of the Kehilla. The Waisenhaus-Schul Synagogue which had been vandalized but not destroyed, was now renovated, and there were minyonim and shiurim under the leadership of Rav Spiro. He also corresponded with Rav Breslauer of New York, with whom he discussed matters of גיטין, the way they used to be given in that Kehilla. Rav Spiro was also an authority whose advice was sought far and wide in questions of עונה and other matters of דין and כשרות. For twenty-five years he guided the She'eris Hapleto. Very shortly before his פטירה, he went to Eretz Yisroel and he is buried in B'nei Brak where there is a little הקדש in his name called בית דוד with Talmidim and a Rebbe. He was a grandson of the שמך למאור and a nephew of the שם משמאל. He was a descendant of the מגלה עמוקות, the great Kabbalist. The *first Sefer* ever printed in Fürth in 1691 was the מגלה עמוקות.

During the war, the Nazis removed half of the old בית הקברות and מצבות and wanted to use the land for other purposes. After the war, the מצבות which were randomly lying around were picked up and

put in rows against the walls of the cemetery. The very old part of the cemetery was not touched and remains to this day. All קברים have been registered, and a special monument, dedicated to all those who perished during the Holocaust, has been erected. It appears that the only מצבה of the destroyed part of the cemetery which remained intact in its place was that of the כהונה בגדי כהונה.

THE FUTURE

The Kehilla continues to this day with weekly minyonim. The possibility of a rebirth of the Kehilla in the old sense exists if new שומרי שבת immigrants would arrive in sufficient numbers to give their children the proper education. The Shul is there, the Mikvah is there, the school buildings are there, the cemetery is there. As a matter of fact, the K.G. from Fürth prints yearly a most interesting booklet with greetings from the mayor of the city and even from the Prime Minister of Bavaria.



The Kehilla of Fürth, with its rich tradition of דקדוק במצות, dedication to תורה למד and uncompromising אמונה in Hashem lives on in its children, who have been swept into many foreign lands and have rebuilt their homes aiming to reach for new heights in the spirit of their forefathers.

בטבעות הארון יהיו הבדים לא יסורו ממנו

In the rings of the Ark shall be the staves, they shall not be removed from it.

על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו

By Hashem's command shall they camp and on Hashem's command shall they move on.

References:

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My father ז"ל's papers which my parents ע"ה brought to Gateshead, England, August 1939 - Personal recollections.