

# PATH

# THE JEWISH HERITAGE

REGION OF GUEBWILLER



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2

VILLES  
& PAYS  
D'ART &  
D'HISTOIRE  
DIRE

**1. Chandelier of Hanukkah**

Museum of Bucheck.

**2. Polychromed wood ornaments ceremonial plaque, in the form of the Star of David that surrounds a double-headed eagle, topped with a Jewish hat.**

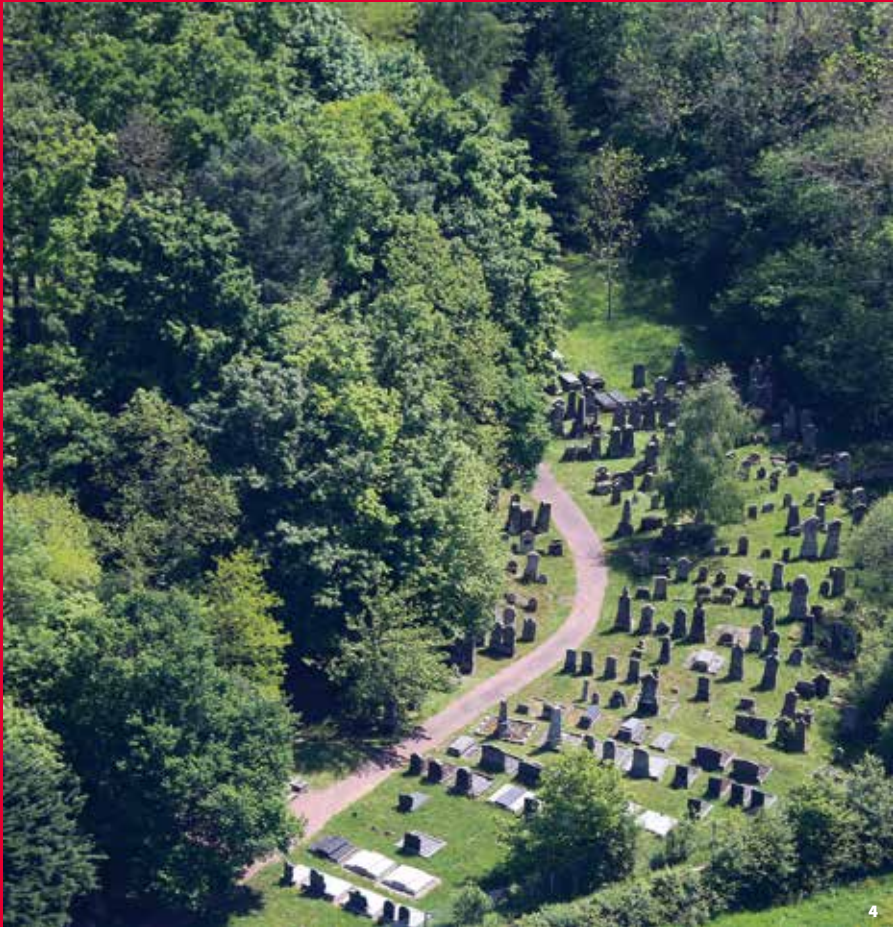
Strasbourg, Alsatian Museum, depot of the Society of Israelites History of Alsace-Lorraine.

**3. Synagogue of Guebwiller.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.

**4. Israelite cemetery of Jungholtz.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.



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# THE COMMUNITY DOWN THE CENTURIES

**THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ESTABLISHED ITSELF IN ALSACE FROM THE MIDDLE AGE. THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER HAS HOSTED SEVERAL COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE DEVELOPED IN SPITE OF THE REPRESSIONS.**



## **A DIFFICULT DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

The arrival of Judaism in Alsace is controversial. Did the first Jews arrive with the Roman legions? Their installation is more certain from the eleventh century, although few vestiges of this period remain.

Thus, the Jewish community of Guebwiller was first mentioned in 1270 in an act of the abbot of Murbach. The community with some 60 individuals is one of the largest in Alsace.

The persecution of Jews following the Black plague of 1349 represents some reserval of the development of the Alsatian community. With little affected by the disease, certainly thanks to their hygiene, the Jews are accused of poisoning the wells. Persecuted and massacred in many communes, they rejoined the countryside.

The rural lords find an economic interest and exchange the protection and authorization of settlement for the Jews.

The community is developed from the seventeenth century, following the Thirty Years War. The King of France granted them relative protection in exchange for high taxes. In 1681, the creation of a rabbinate of the Jews

of Alsace allows a centralized organization of the Jewish religion.

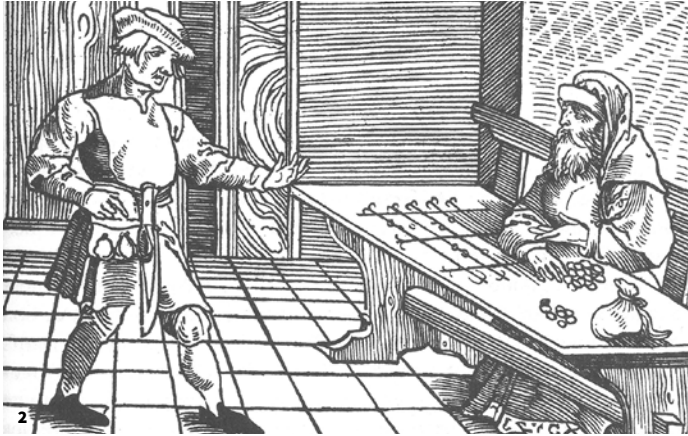
Communities are present in Guebwiller, Hartmannswiller, Issenheim Sultz-Jungholtz and Sultz matt.

## **REPRESSIVE MEASURES**

In 1521, the Emperor Charles Quint gave the Abbey of Murbach a privilege of *non-tolerandis Judeis*, a right to exclude the Jews which lasted nearly a century. The sermons of the Dominicans, settled in the center of Guebwiller, against the community contribute to exacerbate the situation.

In the eighteenth century, repressive measures continued: prohibition of public cult, high taxation and only the eldest was allowed to settle in town in order to limit the number of households.

In 1613 the bishop of Strasbourg also set up measures on his land with the *Judenordnung*, which was dropped in 1784. Thus, it is forbidden for Jews to build schools or synagogues or to purchase land. The marriage is subject to the authorization of the bailiff and tolls for accessing cities are established. However, the Haut-Mundat, of which Rouffach,



**1. Representation of a theological dispute between Christians and Jews, from *Seelen-wurzgarten* by Conrad Dinckmut, 1488.**

Colmar, Library of the Dominicans, XI 10713.

**2. Discussion between a peasant and a Jewish lender behind his table of calculation. Woodcut published in *Officia of Cicero*, published in Augsburg in 1531.**

Right reserved.

Soultzmatt and Soultz belonged, is far from the influence of the bishop. The small local lords circumvent the law by renting property to the Jews.

Jewish communities remain therefore limited. In 1784, 20 families were registered in Soultz and 40 Jews in Guebwiller. Synagogues often take place on the upper floors of dwelling houses.

In the countryside, tolerance is interested. It's seen as a financial resource for the small lords. Jewish families then lived on livestock trading, slaughter, iron trading, and pawnbroking. Contrary to preconceived ideas, they do not develop great wealth, overwhelmed by the many taxes and entrance fees in cities and markets.

## **THE TURNING POINT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

In 1791, under the initiative of the Abbé Grégoire, deputy to the Constituent Assembly, the Convention grants French Jews the same rights as Christians. They become French citizens who can do any kind of job and live where they wish. Special taxes are abolished. An additional step was taken in 1808 thanks to the Napoleonic decrees covering the

Consistories. It accords Judaism a status and a centralized organization. From 1831, the rabbis were paid by the State. The nineteenth century was the beginning of the immense development of Jewish communities in Alsace. From 1791 to 1914, 173 synagogues were built like in Guebwiller, Soultz, Hartmannswiller or Jungholtz.

## **THE WORLD WARS**

The Alsatian communities grew up until the early Twentieth century. The entrance of Alsace-Moselle in the German Empire in 1870, reduces their progress. Many Jews chose to settle on the other side of the Vosges and remain French.

World wars, and especially the second, have stalled the development. The communities consequence of the Shoah and forced exile. The Nazis also attacked the Jewish heritage by ransacking synagogues and cemeteries.

# FROM A PLACE TO ANOTHER

**DESPITE THE DESTRUCTIONS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE WEAKENING OF THE COMMUNITY, THE WITNESSES OF ITS HISTORY ARE STILL PRESENT IN THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER: SYNAGOGUES, CEMETERIES AND OBJECTS OF WORSHIP.**



## THE ISRAELITE CEMETERY OF JUNGHOLTZ

Jungholtz, located on the Ban de Soultz, belongs to the Haut-Mundat, land of the bishop of Strasbourg. Despite the *Judenordnung*, the Jewish community settled its cemetery there from the seventeenth century. The rural areas are in fact less subject to repression, the influence of Strasbourg being distant. The family of Schauenburg, a vassal of the bishop, in financial difficulty following the Thirty Years War, sees in the Jewish community is a financial resource to run.

### THE HISTORY OF THE CEMETERY

The Jewish community obtains the right to bury its dead in a part of the Schauenburg castle ditch in 1655. The compensation of the lords is the price of the land ceded in usufruct and a fixed tax for each funeral. New land-grants in usufruct were made in 1670, 1716, 1738 and 1767 in order to welcome the deceased of an ever larger community. In 1779, 41 communities depended on the jurisdiction of the Jungholtz cemetery, such as the communities of Turckheim, Issenheim, Uffholtz, Bollwiller, Guebwiller, Hartmannswiller, Wattwiller, Soultzmatt, Soultz, Thann, Jungholtz,

Cernay, Rixheim, Husseren and Horbourg. Following the French Revolution, the cemetery was divided into 5 lots between the State and the Schauenburg brothers. From 1790 to 1804, the community bought the whole parcel, lot by lot. At the end of the nineteenth century, the cemetery was in financial troubles following the decline of the community of Jungholtz and the creation of new burial sites.

### DESTRUCTIONS

The French Revolution is marked by an anticlerical and anti-semitic wave which affected the Jungholtz cemetery. About ten graves remain, there were 2,000 before 1789. During the Second World War, the Nazis corrected the road to Thierenbach bypassing the cemetery, cutting it in half and pulling out about 400 tombs. The wooden stelae of the burials of the most modest families have now disappeared. However, the prohibition to move tombs contributed in the conservation of the cemetery.



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**1. Lithography depicting the castle and the cemetery.**

Strasbourg, Alsatian Museum, depot of the Society of Israelite History of Alsace-Lorraine.

**2. Grave of the founder of the cemetery, one of the oldest, that dates back to the eighteenth century.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.

**3. The sculptured jug on the grave markers of the Levi family reminds their function as a servant of the priest.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.

**4. These two hands mean that the Cohen, descendant of the priests of the Temple, bless the people.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.

**5. Memorial to the deportees, erected in 1952, presenting 56 names of victims of the Shoah.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.



## THE SYNAGOGUE OF GUEBWILLER

A *Judeorum synagoga* is mentioned in 1330 in Guebwiller, without any other information. In 1774, a synagogue is mentioned in a dowry as a landmark for locating a house. It was certainly near the *Judenhof* in the lower town. In a report of 1827 of the Consistory, it is specified that it measured about 6 meters and included 21 small places. The actual synagogue dates back to the nineteenth century, a growth period of the Jewish community following the recognition of their rights. Intended to be used by a population of 350 members, it was erected in 1872 at the site of the former hospital. Behind the synagogue was also the Jewish school, now transformed into a house. During the Second World War, the synagogue of Guebwiller was wrecked by the Nazis. It was renovated in 1957. Its stained-glass windows and roof were restored in 2016 to keep it weathertight. The rabbinate was transferred from Soultz to Guebwiller in 1910. Due to the decrease of the community, the cult ceased in Guebwiller since the end of the 1950s.

## ARCHITECTURE

The project was entrusted to the architect Auguste Hartmann. From neo-Romanesque and neo-Byzantine styles, it was registered as a Historic Monument in 1984. This pink sandstone building is oriented towards the east, the faithful praying towards Jerusalem. It is composed of a central nave and two aisles with an upper gallery for women. A wooden roof covers the entire building. 39 transparent or colored stained glass windows, with geometric forms, illuminate the building. The decor is sober, decorated with two levels of round arches. No human or animal representation is allowed, but many inscriptions in French and Hebrew adorn the walls. Since 1994, the facade is again crowned by the Tablets of the Law referring to the Ten Commandments.

## FURNITURE

Facing the entrance door is the Holy Ark containing the *Torah* and the pulpit hosting it during the ceremonies. On the right of the *bimah* are the seat and the pulpit reserved for the rabbi or officials. At the back, a red hanging, with gold embroidery, is adorned with the crests of the twelve tribes of Israel.





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**1. The facade of the synagogue with the Tablets of the Law.**  
Photo CCRG-Pah.

**2. The Holy Ark, with the Tablets of the Law and an oculous, and surrounded by inscriptions in French praising God.**  
Photo CCRG-Pah.

**3. Stained-glass windows and gallery for women.**  
Photo CCRG-Pah.

**4. Wall hanging representing the 12 tribes of Israel.**  
Photo CCRG-Pah.

**5. The Torah scrolls in their mantle.**  
Photo CCRG-Pah.



## OTHERS SYNAGOGUES

### ORATORY AND SYNAGOGUE OF SOULTZ

In the Middle Ages, a first place of cult was installed in the house «auf der Hölle», also called the old beguinage. Located on the ramparts, it recalls the configuration of the synagogue of Rouffach. This building is used by the Jewish community several times for their departures and returns to Soultz. In the seventeenth century, the Jews build an oratory, a school, an accommodation for the minister and even the bath for women. The synagogue of the nineteenth century was built aside in 1838. At that time, the community of more than 300 people, required the construction of a new adapted place of worship. The synagogue is rectangular in shape and decorated in a sober style. Traditional elements of the synagogues were present: the place reserved for women, the Holy Ark and the *bimah* or *almemor* (platform for the rabbi). Unused since the Second World War, it was sold and converted into a house in 2001, as the same time as the old beguinage. These two buildings are registered as Historic Monuments in 1984.



### SYNAGOGUE OF ISSENHEIM

The Jewish community of Issenheim developed from the end of the seventeenth century, after the Treaty of Westphalia. Supplying horses to the army, they enjoyed relative protection. The presence of the Post Office of the Royal Road also supported their trading. In spite of the hostilities of the other inhabitants, the community reached 147 souls in 1809. Jewish families lived mostly in the heart of the village near their place of worship, in the *Judengasse*, the current street of the Synagogue. The community declined following the arrival of the railway. Sold to individuals in 1921, this synagogue is probably earlier than the eighteenth century. The ancient *mikveh*, the ritual bath, is also found on the private property.

### DISAPPEARED SYNAGOGUES

A synagogue was certainly established in Jungholtz, near the Talmudic school and the cemetery. However, its former location is unknown. In the nineteenth century, the communities of Hartmannswiller and Soultzmatt also had synagogues. They have now disappeared; the synagogue of Soultzmatt was destroyed by the Nazis.



**1. The old synagogue of Issenheim.**

Photo CCRG-Pah.

**2. Interior view of the synagogue of Sultz. It shows The Holy Ark with an *oculus* and the oval *bimah*.**

Photo by Louis Wiederkehr. 1982. Museum of Bucheneck.

**3. Torah scrolls and accessories.**

Museum of the Bucheneck.

## THE MUSEUM OF BUCHECK

This medieval castle presents, on six floors, the history of Sultz and a rich collection of objects dedicated to the Israelite cult. They evoke the history of the community of Sultz and its surroundings.

The majority of these objects come from the old oratory, entrusted to the museum by the Jews Consistory of Haut-Rhin. The collection has been enriched thanks to numerous donations in particular by the Consistory and acquisitions such as lithographs of the illustrator Abel Pann.

### THE ROOM MOSES GINSBURGER

The collection is exhibited in the room Moses Ginsburger named after rabbi of Sultz (1891-1910) and Guebwiller (1910-1921). Theologian and historian, author of many publications on the history of the Jewish community in Alsace, including the Jungholtz cemetery.

### DEVOTIONAL OBJECTS

A showcase of the museum is devoted to the *Torah* or Pentateuch, containing the five books inherited from Moses. Central object of the Jewish cult, it is made of a parchment hand-written and with a quill pen. Written in Hebrew, it must be read from right to left.

The *yad* allows following the reading without touching the parchment during the Saturday ceremonies and celebrations. This gesture reinforces its sacred nature and preserves it from the friction and acidity of the skin. The *Torah* is preserved in the Holy Ark, wrapped around two wood handles. It is then covered with a mantle, in velvet or brocade, embroidered with gold or silver, representing the Star of David or the crown. The handles are topped with crowns, the *Torah kether*, in silver or silver-gilded. They represent the pomegranate and its 613 seeds, symbols of the 613 commandments of the *Torah*.

A pectoral collar, the *tass*, adorned with precious stones can be attached on the mantle. It reminds the *tass* of the High Priest of Israel.

The *shofar* is a ram's horn recalling the sacrifice of Isaac. It is used during the ceremonies in *Rosh Hashanah* and in *Yom Kippur*.



The bench of circumcision visible at the Museum of Bucheneck comes from the old oratory. The godfather holds the child on his lap during the ceremony. The second place is left free, symbolically reserved for the prophet Elijah. During this ceremony the Hebrew name of the child is pronounced for the first time. A girl is named at the Synagogue during the first *Shabbat* following her birth.



A register of gifts of the Soultz Synagogue is a rare piece preserved at the museum. Each red leather page is dedicated to a family of the community. During the ceremonies, it gave people an enumeration of the donations made by each family without writing, prohibited action on *Shabbat* and on certain religious celebrations. The tab corresponding to the correct amount was simply folded.

## LITURGICAL GARMENTS

The Marckolsheim *mappa* of the seventeenth century, preserved at Bucheneck, is one of the oldest in Alsace. The blanket under the child during circumcision is cut into four strips sewn together to form the *mappa*.



The embroidered text is always expressed in the same way: it begins on the right by the Jewish name of the child, his father's, if necessary the nickname or the surname, then the date of birth calculated according to the Jewish calendar. In addition, there are always wishes for a life in conformity with the recommendations of Judaism: the study of the *Torah*, marriage and good deeds. It is customary that the boy offers his *mappa* and wraps it around the *Torah* as part of Saturday service following his third birthday. The *mappa* could also be painted. This technique develops from the eighteenth century.

Decorative patterns are numerous. They evoke plants forms and animals, but above all objects of worship such as the *Torah* or the nuptial canopy. After 1870 and the annexation of Alsace by the Germanic Empire, patriotic motifs appeared, in particular the colors of the French flag, symbol of their attachment to France.

From the age of 3, men wear the *kippah* to cover their heads in the synagogue, a symbol of their humility before God. Their liturgical costume is completed by the *talith*, a rectangular prayer shawl decorated with fringes (*tsitsith*). Made of wool, linen or white silk, it is drawn with blue, black or multicolored stripes. It is worn by men during prayers and religious ceremonies. *Tefillin* are also worn during these occasions. These black cubic boxes with straps contain four passages of the *Torah*. The men, with their religious majority, put them on their forehead and their left arm during the prayer.

### THE DOMESTIC CULT

Objects of worship, used by Jews during prayers and ceremonies made at home, are also exhibited at the Bucheneck Museum.



The *hanukkah*, a candlestick with its eight branches, is found both in the synagogues and in the homes of the Jewish families. It commemorates a miracle which occurred following the wreckage of the Temple. Only one phial of oil barely sufficient for one day, burned for 8 days. The 8 lights are lit on from right to left during the festival of *hanukkah*, the festival of lights. The collection also includes a *hanukkah* twin oil lamp from the nineteenth century that could be used by two people at the same time.



During *Shabbat*, ceremonies are performed within the home and require ritual objects. *Shabbat* is the seventh day of the week, marked by the work stoppage from Friday evening to Saturday evening. You can discover at the museum the objects and the dishes necessary for the ceremony of the *Havdala*, the exit ceremony of the *Shabbat* realized on Saturday evening: a candleholder containing a candle with braided strands, a cup to contain the wine and a fragrance diffuser.



**Crédits photos:** Museum of Bucheneck.



## GUEBWILLER

- 1** The synagogue of Issenheim - 3 rue de la Synagogue  
7°15'5"E 47°54'10"N
- 2** The synagogue of Guebwiller - 7 rue de l'Ancien Hôpital  
7°12'38"E 47°54'30"N
- 3** The Jewish school - 7 rue de l'Ancien Hôpital  
7°12'39"E 47°54'31"N
- 4** The Museum of Bucheneck - Rue du Kageneck  
7°13'40"E 47°53'12"N
- 5** The synagogue of Soultz - 6 rue de la Synagogue  
7°13'38"E 47°53'5"N
- 6** The Oratory - 7 rue des Bouchers  
7°13'37"E 47°53'5"N
- 7** The Jewish school - 2 rue de l'Usine  
7°11'51"E 47°53'7"N
- 8** The israelite cemetery - rue des Tuiles  
7°11'49"E 47°53'2"N

## JUNGHOLTZ

- 7**
- 8**



ISSENHEIM

1

SOULTZ

4

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Meters

# « PLACES ARE ALSO LINKS AND THEY ARE ALSO OUR MEMORY. »

Philippe Besson, Les jours fragiles, 2004

## **Let us tell you the Region of Guebwiller, countries of art and history...**

...With a guide-lecturer approved by the Ministry of Culture and Communication. The guide welcomes you. He knows all the facets of the Region of Guebwiller and gives you the keys to understand a place, the development of the city throughout its neighbourhoods. The guide is at your disposal. Do not hesitate to ask him questions. If you are in a group, the Tourist Office of Guebwiller offers tours all year round on reservations. Brochures designed for you are sent on request.

## **The animation of architecture and heritage department**

Coordinates the initiatives of the Land of Art and History of the Region of Guebwiller. It offers all year-round activities for the local population and for schoolchildren. It is at your disposal for any project.

## **The Region of Guebwiller belongs to the national network for Towns and Countries of art and history**

The Ministry of Culture, Direction of Architecture and Heritage, attributes the label Towns and Countries of Art and History to the local authorities that animate their heritage. It guarantees the competence of the guides-lecturers and the animators of the heritage and the quality of their actions. From ancient vestiges to the architecture of the twentieth century, towns and countries depict heritage in its diversity. Today, a network of 187 cities and countries offers you its know-how throughout France.

## **Nearby**

Mulhouse, le Val d'Argent, Sélestat and Strasbourg benefit from the label « Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire » (Towns and Countries of Art and History).

## **Informations**

Communauté de Communes de la Région de Guebwiller  
1 rue des Malgré-Nous  
68500 Guebwiller  
Tél. : 03 89 62 12 34  
[www.cc-guebwiller.fr](http://www.cc-guebwiller.fr)

## **Guided tour for groups**

Office de Tourisme  
Intercommunal des Pays du Florival  
45 rue de la République  
68500 Guebwiller  
Tél. : 03 89 76 10 63  
[www.tourisme-guebwiller.fr](http://www.tourisme-guebwiller.fr)

## **Château du Bucheneck**

Rue du Kageneck  
68360 Soultz-Haut-Rhin  
Tél. : 03 89 76 02 22  
Open from May 02<sup>nd</sup>  
till October 31<sup>st</sup>,  
Every day except Tuesday  
From 2:00 pm till 5:00 pm.

Booklet produced in partnership with the Consistory Israelite of the Haut-Rhin and the Museum of Bucheneck.

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