

## **SIMSON FROM REINSBRONN**

*“...have allowed the following mercy, freedom and safety ...”*

### **Writ of protection for the Jew Simson**

July 9, 1618

Ludwigsburg State Archive

As requested by the writ of protection, the “trade Jew” Simson from Reinsbronn was one of the first Jews since the Middle Ages to receive permission to settle with his family and his servants in Creglingen and to carry on commerce within the margraviate. The local residents and their representatives protested in vain against the settlement. Simson, from then on, was under the protection of the margrave and was supposed to enjoy equal rights with Christian subjects, also regarding taxes and other duties. The protection money was due each year on June 24, the Day of St John (midsummer). The margrave reserved the right to nullify the writ of protection at any time.

*„... We, Joachim Ernst, margrave of Brandenburg ... acknowledge and publicly proclaim by this letter ... that we have promised, granted and allowed the following mercy, freedom and safety ... to the Jew Simson, ... who most humbly requested and begged that he, along with his wife and his unmarried children and his unwedded servants, in principal may live at his home in our town, where he and his family will be under our special protection ... But Jew Simson and his family may not fix any profit or usury, except the duly generally accepted six percent by our subjects or relatives, secular or clerical alike ... all to avoid our punishment and disgrace. Apart from that at all places of our principality, country and area he may carry on commerce, business and trade everywhere in an honest and reputable way.”*

### **Floor plan of the house Badgasse 3**

January 13, 1865

Measuring record, Surveyor’s Office Tauberbischofsheim

Branch Office Bad Mergentheim

In July 1618 Simson bought a house with an underground level, a first floor of stone and two upper stories of wooden framework. On this very spot today is the Jewish Museum. His widely extended family was related to almost all other Jewish families in Creglingen. The status of the family was evidenced by the fact that one of the first prayer rooms, which also was used as assembly room, was in their house. Until the inauguration of the synagogue on Neuen Str. in 1800, the house at Badgasse was the religious as well as the social center of the early Jewish community. Until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the house frequently was referred to as the “old Judenschul” (Jew School = Synagogue). Until its demolition in 1879, the house remained in Jewish possession.

*“...hereby we graciously command and urge all Jews who are behind with the payment, to settle the debt readily without own delay or excuse ... otherwise withholding funds will result in imprisonment at the appointed time as previously commanded”.*

Decree by Margrave Johann Friedrich

April 30, 1678

Ludwigsburg State Archive

### **The son and grandson of Simson on a list of letter of protection recipients in Creglingen**

October 10, 1662

Ludwigsburg State Archive

After Simson's death in about 1635, the house on Badgasse was handed to his son Isaac, later to his grandson Moses Isaac. Of all the families residing in Creglingen at that time, both had to pay the highest taxes corresponding to their properties. Back then there were only eight Jewish families living in Creglingen. However, as was usually the case, only the oldest son got his own letter of protection. Younger siblings were forced to live in neighboring places and to lead there a pitiful and insecure life as a "beggar Jew".

### **"Monetary invoice and collection of fees for protection and refuge"**

1623

Ludwigsburg State Archive

The required amount of the protection monies related to the financial circumstances of the families of the "protected Jew". Simson has to pay 12 guilders 3 Kreuzer and 13 Pfennig. In a period of looting and burdens of war it was a considerable sum. For the patrons "Jew protection" was a quite profitable business. It helped to improve the finances of the principalities, which were debt-ridden from expenditures for wars and extravagance. In about 1700, the margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach took protection money amounting to some 5,500 guilders from roughly 400 Jewish communities in his territory.

*„...Lazarus has a quite beautiful two-room house, wherein the Jewish school (synagogue) is ... he and his family stay on good terms with their neighbors and conduct trade with Maennlein from his brother's store..."*

Report by Kastners, 1706

Ludwigsburg State Archive

### **Joachim Ernst, Margrave of Brandenburg- Ansbach**

*about 1620*

Oil on canvas, Residence Ansbach

G. Schuhmann 1980

From 1448 until 1791 Creglingen was part of the very fragmented principality of Brandenburg-Ansbach. Margrave Joachim Ernst of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1583–1625), who issued the letter of protection for Simson, also profitably granted privileges to other Jews.

### **Purchase contract for the house Badgasse 3**

December 20, 1670

Ludwigsburg State Archive

Isaac Simson bequeathed the house at Badgasse to his sons Lazar, Mayer and Moses. In 1670 Moses bought out his brothers and thus became the legal owner. Under his son and him, Lazar Moses' house experienced prosperity. The house on the opposite side, Badgasse 2, now serves as a warehouse.

## **RAFAEL & JUDLE BLUMENFELD**

*“...God let him grow up to Torah...”*

The Torah, detail from the Torah wimpel of Raphael Blumenfeld

In 1781 Raphael became Bar Mitzvah; the celebration likely took place in the prayer room of the house. A thirteen year old boy on this occasion is called for the first time to read the Torah on the day he formally obtains admission into the community. From this time on, everyday life gets a solid structure from the 613 positive and negative commandments. They also deal with the relationship to fellow human beings. Public and private life are determined by religious laws, traditions and beliefs.

### **List of family names adopted by Jews of Creglingen**

Mergentheimer Intelligence Newspaper

Oct. 23, 1824

In 1824 the district department of Mergentheim lists of family names were issued, although in 1828 the “education law” required Jews to adopt family names. Raphael and his brother Isaak chose the name Blumenfeld (flowerfield).

### **A view of Hauptstr., at the left house no. 32**

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century

photo according to Heuwinkel 2001

Raphael Blumenfeld, after the death of his father Lazar Jakob, grew up in a house on Hauptstrasse that belonged to his "cousin" Moses Maennlein. This house has been in Jewish possession since 1655. Moses Maennlein, as *parnas* or chairman of the Jewish community, played an important role. In his testament he established a charitable foundation. In 1786 Moses gave the "interest and field bearing" house worth 1800 guilders to young Raphael, who in 1790 got a protection letter. After the large fire of 1822, with financial support from his oldest son Lazarus Blumenfeld, Raphael established the remaining building.

### **Detail from the Torah wimpel of Raphael Blumenfeld**

1768

Arthur S. Obermayer, USA

According to the family register, on February 13, 1790 Raphael married Judle Ostheimer, the daughter of Moses Samson from Welbhausen. Jewish weddings took place in front of the synagogue. The ketubah, the marriage contract written in Aramaic language, only governs the responsibilities of the spouses. It is read while the couple stands under the chuppah, the canopy traditionally used in Jewish weddings and representing the home the spouses will build together.

*“...since his way of earning a living is solely limited to a peddler and he is no longer able to do other work, ... considering his old age of 72 years and poverty only ... the department is asked to extend his permission for another year...”*

Statement by the village mayor's office regarding Blumenfeld peddler permission from April 22, 1840

Creglingen City Archive

**Letter of thanks**

Mergentheimer Weekly Newspaper

January 26, 1844

After Raphael Blumenfeld, 76 years of age, got lost at night on the way home from peddling, inhabitants of Muenster assisted him. A few days later Blumenfeld publicly thanked his rescuers and drew up his will.

## **ABRAHAM & ESTHER AMSON**

*“...his house was wealthy and his table was set for all...”*

### **Inheritance agreement of the couple Abraham and Esther Amson**

January 3, 1833

In 1797 Abraham Amson married Esther, the daughter of the wine merchant Isak Bandaff from Marktbreit. Amson, a son of the second marriage of Amson Asher Salomon from Oberndorf and a stepbrother of Raphael Blumenfeld, had a dowry of 450 guilders. The bride brought another 1000 guilders into the marriage. Like many Jewish women of that time, Ester did not use German handwriting and therefore signed in Hebrew

### **Grave marker of Abraham Amson at the Jewish Cemetery of Creglingen**

After 1834

Inscription and symbols of the grave marker indicate the wine merchant as a highly honored person who held important offices and was very beneficent. The knife and the vial denote a mohel (circumciser). From 1819 until his death in 1834, Amson also was *parnas*, i.e head of the community. On the high holidays he acted as the cantor. In addition, he was in charge of the award of financial support from charity organizations. As a member of the Chevra Kadisha, the “holy society”, he cared for sick and dying persons and prepared for burials. Supporting the poor and people in need and promoting social justice are duties of devout Jews. The obligation to help thereby increases with one’s affluence. The Jewish community housed itinerant “beggar Jews” and supports them. Charitable societies also provided the dowry of poor brides.

### **The house of the Amson family, Rothenburgerstr. 235**

about 1900.

The wealthy wine merchant Abraham Amson lived with his family in the still-standing large house on the thoroughfare from Rothenburg to Weikersheim. Only a few members of the Jewish community of Creglingen rose to the affluence of the Amson family. In 1834 Abraham’s son Salomon received from his widowed mother one-half of the house as dowry for his wedding. In 1863 Salomon acquired the other half from his brother, David Amson, for 3,200 guilders. After most members of the Amson family emigrated to Paris, London and the United States by 1900. In 1907 the house became the possession of the Christian family Pfannkuch.

*“...the well-known, respectable wine store of the Amson brothers is a great establishment. As pretty as the building is, the double basement underground supposedly is even more beautiful. Beati possidentes (Latin: blessed are those who possess ).”*

Ottmar F. H. Schoenhuth, pastor of Wachbach, 1846

*“Here lies and rests the trustee and leader. His soul is there in His hand. He was a shield for his generation. His house was wealthy and his table was set for all. He saw hidden secrets and he was wise. His kept his purse not away from their hands. He practiced charity towards the living and the dead. He was also cantor at the high holidays for several years. He, Chaver, Mr. Abraham, son of Mr. Asher, who brought into the covenant and filled hands passed away on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> of Elul and was buried on Sunday the tenth of Elul 594 according to the minor era. May his soul be bound up in the bond of eternity.”*

Inscription at the grave marker of Abraham Amson.

German translation by Michael Antmann