

Interviewee:	<u>FRANK</u> , Rabbi <sup>1</sup> Helmut	Date:	February 19, 1982
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
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## SUMMARY

Rabbi Helmut Frank, born April 15, 1912 in Wiesbaden, Germany, talks about his early interest in Judaism, details pre-war Jewish life including religious education, relations with Gentiles and sporadic antisemitism. He describes education at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin from 1931 to 1937. He also studied at Berlin University and received his Ph.D. from the University of Bonn in 1935. He gives his impression of Leo Baeck and his role in the *Reichsvertretung*. He explains why many Jews still felt they could survive in Germany.

He was ordained in 1937 and was appointed as a Rabbi in Worms. He provides a history of the synagogue. His vivid, detailed eye-witness account of *Kristallnacht*, November 9, 1938 includes several vignettes, the burning of his synagogue, damage to his apartment, and lack of reaction by the fire department. He was arrested, along with other Jews. They were compelled to clean the debris in the streets, then transported to Buchenwald. He describes brutality, organization of camp life, lack of medical treatment, effect of incarceration on prisoners' physical and mental health and religious observance. He mentions Aktion Jews and Jehova's Witnesses and that Nazis warned released prisoners never to talk about Buchenwald. He worked in a labor squad but was released after his parents got him a visa for China.

Rabbi Frank returned to Worms where he opened a House of Prayer and a school with permission from the German authorities. He describes the extent of the damage in Worms and the continued persecution of the Jewish community. He left for the United States in August, 1939. He discusses the immigration process, postwar conditions in Worms, and restoration of the Worms synagogue in 1961.

Note: the Collateral Material files available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library include:

- Melodies used in Worms Synagogue pre-WWII handwritten by Edith Lebrecht, age 11, and given to Dr. Frank
- Personal documents of Dr. Frank
- Photographs and negatives of Worms Synagogue pre-*Kristallnacht*

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Frank/Dr. Frank was the last Rabbi of the Worms Synagogue. He also holds a PhD from the University of Bonn.

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#### SUBJECT HEADINGS

Jews - German  
Religious education - Germany  
Germany - History - *Kristallnacht*, 1938  
Jews - Persecutions  
Buchenwald (Germany: Forced labor camp)  
National socialism and religion  
Synagogues  
Worms, Germany