

# WERTHEIMER, Meier

17 Radstrasse

Translation by: Richard Oppenheimer

*ROLF EMMERICH*

**Maier Wertheimer**, was born July 1, 1868 in Kippenheim, murdered on January 6, 1943 in Theresienstadt, and married to Lina Wertheimer née Weil, born May 5, 1875 in Laupheim, murdered on January 31, 1943 in Theresienstadt.

- **Rosa**, born October 30, 1897 in Kippenheim, married Alfred Samuel Erlebacher on April 4, 1932, died October 13, 1956 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA (She was the mother of Prof. Dr. Albert Erlebacher)

- **Ernst**, born March 24, 1899 in Kippenheim, died December 30, 1977 in Tel Aviv, Israel

- **Hermine**, born June 6, 1900 in Kippenheim, married Alfred Schay, died February 2, 1984 in London, Great Britain (mother of Eva Mayer)

- **Selma**, born July 27, 1902 in Kippenheim, single, deported on August 22, 1942 to Theresienstadt, was murdered on May 16, 1944 in Auschwitz,

- **Heinrich (Naftali)**, born October 6, 1906 in Laupheim, died September 7, 2000 on the kibbutz Hazorea, Israel.

A sister of Maier Wertheimer, Emilie Wertheimer, resident in Laupheim since 1940, at Kapellen Street 62, single, born May 1, 1879 in Kippenheim, deported from Laupheim on August 19, 1942; murdered in November 1942 in Theresienstadt.

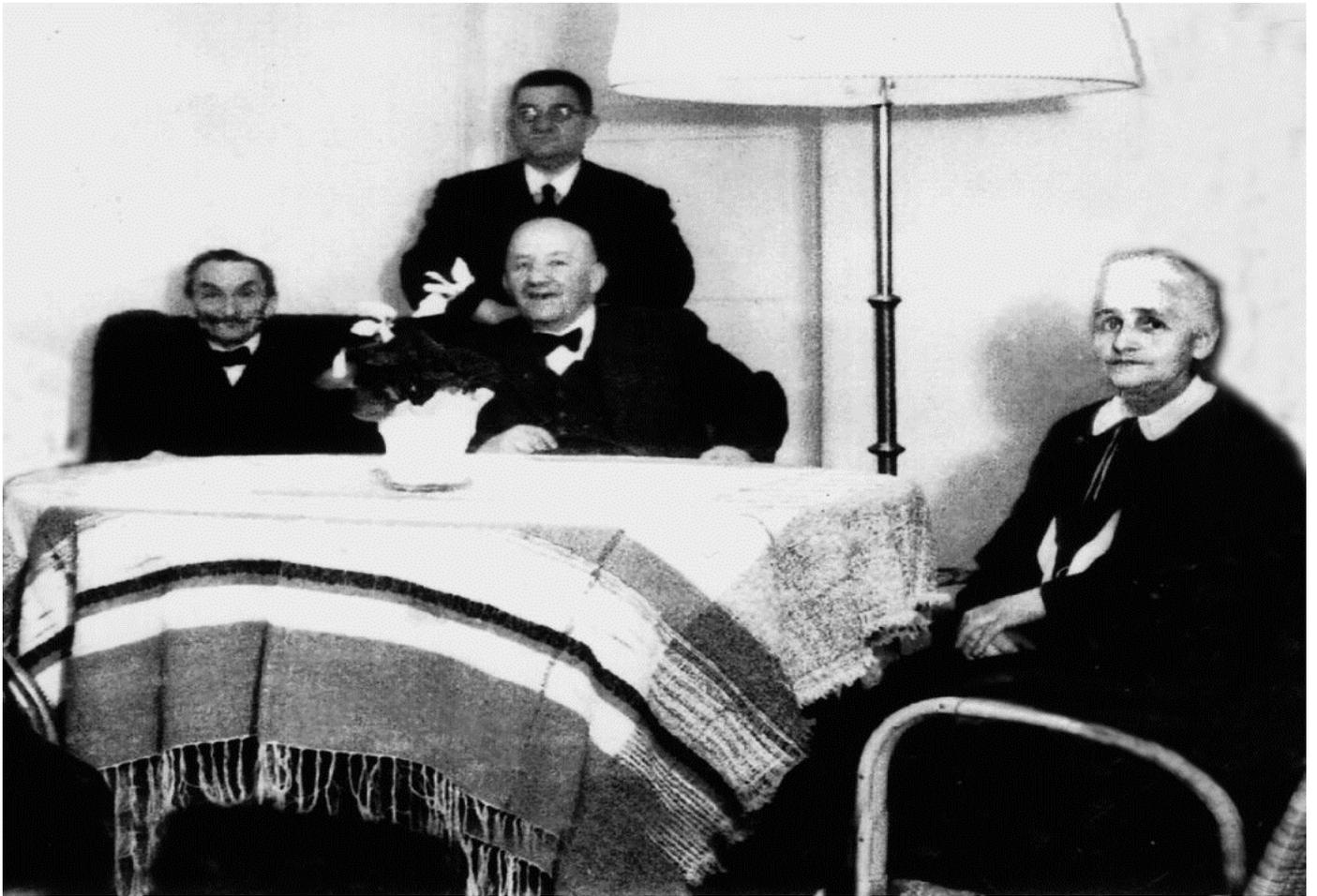
## **Maier and Lina Wertheimer**

Up to the year 1906, the family lived in Kippenheim, Baden, where the first four children were born. Then they moved to Laupheim and lived at 17 Rad Street, which was owned by the Bergmann Company. The business was originally located at 18 Rad Street, at that time 18 Rad Street, which was owned by the Bergmann Company. Maier Wertheimer worked as a travelling salesman, and possibly as a partner, in the business of Jonas Weil, his brother-in-law, which had been founded in 1899 (Page 556). Presumably, the economic success of the business was the reason for his relocation.

In October 1939 they were forcibly moved to the former rabbinical school building which had been converted into an "old people's home". There they lived with many Jewish Laupheim citizens in a confined space; in total there were 28 people.

In May 1940, Lina Wertheimer wrote to Gretel Gideon in Winterthur, Switzerland, that Maier Wertheimer "conducted the Passover Seder, and that everyone enjoyed it".

"Unfortunately, nothing more" was heard from their daughter Hermine living in South Africa, or their sons Ernst and Heinrich living in Palestine/ Israel. Over a year later, the first sign of life from relatives living overseas was received via Gretel Gideon living in Switzerland.



*At the assembly center at the "Jewish old people's home" 1940: Far left Maier, far right Lina Wertheimer. In the center, standing Julius Einstein, sitting Max Rieser. Lina Wertheimer's letters to Gretel and Emma Gideon very cautious reports about their life in the enforced accommodations. (Photo: Bilderkammer Museum)*

On August 19, 1942 Lina and Maier Wertheimer were deported in the fourth and last transport from Laupheim to the concentration camp of Theresienstadt.

## **Rosa Erlebacher**

Ran a soap factory in Laupheim moved to Laupheim with her husband Alfred, who worked for a soap factory; both belonged to the Zionist "Youth League -White Blue". They emigrated in October 1937 to the United States. Her son, Prof. Dr. Albert Erlebacher, born in 1932, visited Laupheim in May 1988, at the invitation of the municipality. He came with his son Seth.

## **Ernst Wertheimer**

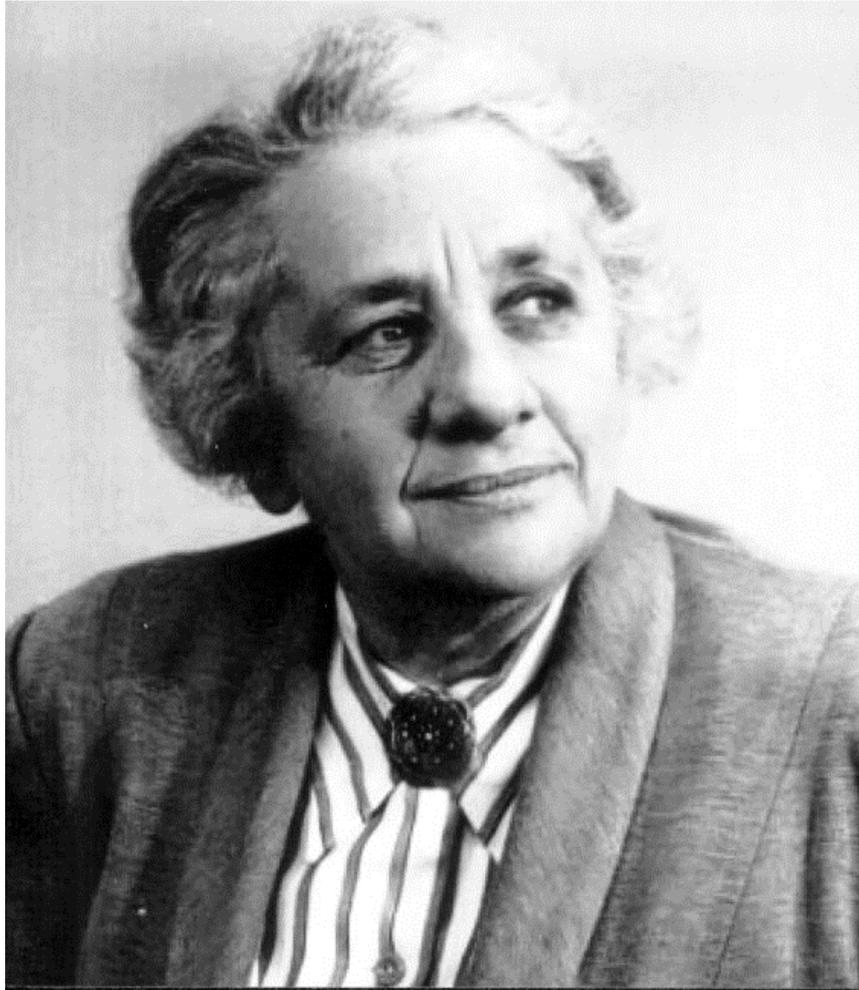
Emigrated to Israel in 1937. He tried to save his parents by bringing them to Israel, but this attempt failed.

## **Hermine Wertheimer**

She married Alfred Schay in 1926. In 1931, her daughter Eva was born. The flight from the Nazis led the three-member family around the world: First, they emigrated to Majorca, at the end of the Spanish Civil War they fled to Italy, and finally to South Africa. In Johannesburg they operated a fish restaurant during the war.

After the death of Alfred Schay in 1945, Hermine and her daughter Eva, returned to Europe and lived in London.





Hermine Wertheimer, married Schay: as a student of the Israelite Elementary School Laupheim, 1909; and at the age of about 60 years.

## **Selma Wertheimer**

After her schooling, Selma trained as a kindergarten teacher, which she successfully completed in 1930, as seen in the notice published in the "Laupheimer Verkündiger". Then she moved away from Laupheim, probably because she got a job elsewhere, but in 1933 she returned to Laupheim and lived at 42 Kapellen Street.

Selma Wertheimer in 1909 as a student at the Israelite Elementary School, Laupheim



# Aus Stadt und Bezirk

Laupheim, 3. März 1930.

**Staatsexamen im Kindergärtnerinnenseminar  
Ulm.** Die am 27. Februar im Kindergärtnerinnenseminar  
St. Maria in Ulm abgeschlossene Staatsprüfung, bestanden u. a.  
Irma Marquardt, Bihlafingen, Selma Wertheimer, hier.

In letters from her mother Lina to Gretel Gideon in Winterthur, we read about the time Selma spent working in the Jewish old people's home in Heidehof Street, Stuttgart, since 1939: "She has become very slim, more than I would like. (...) Selma has been unlucky. Neither of the two affidavits sent from the United States several months ago have reached her. Whether they ever will arrive is doubtful". Selma and her mother wrote countless letters to relatives in the United States filled with hope and desperation.

On October 8, 1940, the mother wrote: "Selma has received her affidavit, but whether all goes well, one does not know". The affidavit was then rejected as "insufficient". In April 1942 she was assigned to a work camp in Dellmensingen. When a further affidavit for the USA arrived, the 40 year old was not allowed to emigrate. The deadly consequence: she was deported via the Theresienstadt concentration camp in April 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was murdered.

The last sign of life of the Wertheimer Family is shown in a telegram shown on the following page. It was sent through the Red Cross, the day of Selma's deportation to Theresienstadt, August 19, 1942, to her nephew Alfred Erlebacher in the U.S., to congratulate him on his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Naftali (Heinrich) Wertheimer

The deportation of his relatives from Laupheim, and their violent deaths in the concentration camps, has deeply hurt and depressed Naftali Wertheimer. Despite various invitations and offers he has never again visited Germany or Laupheim. "That would kill me," he said to me on such an occasion.



October 1988: Naftali Wertheimer (second from right) receives a visit from Laupheim. Sitting in a wheelchair: Ernst Levy, born in 1915 in Laupheim (Photo: R. Emmerich)

In October 1988, we visited the kibbutz Hazorea in the Jezreel Valley, east of Haifa, for the first time. Besides Naftali Wertheimer, Epharim Levy was living there, who had previously visited Laupheim in May 1988.

The then 82 year old Naftali, joined us, straight from the workshop, dressed in blue overalls. He proved to be a very knowledgeable guide through the successful kibbutz, in the great Asian Art Collection of the kibbutz and in a special way in the various technical devices of this

settlement. Naftali Wertheimer turned out to be almost a Swabian tinkerer, and the kibbutz had to thank him for his original technical solutions. When we wanted to visit the Kibbutz again in 1996, the 89-year-old told me on the phone, that we should arrive in the afternoon, because he was always in the morning in the workshop in the mornings. His technical creativity was still is an important element.

After several requests over a period of years, he was willing to give me an interview. He was overly concerned that perhaps he would say something negative about Laupheim. Although we had already exchanged letters for eight years he requested that I provide him the interview questions in advance. So in October 1996, we finally took a trip to Israel and hired a taxi from Jerusalem. The Arab driver took us through Haifa to Kibbutz Hazorea. Naftali, as we called him, received us in his modest house after his afternoon nap. In Arabic he offered our Arab driver, who had driven through the midday heat, his own resting place. This was the driver's first time to see a kibbutz from the inside

## **Memories of Germany**

"We lived at 17 Rad Street. My father and my uncle Jonas Weil ran a business selling oil and fat products. I had three sisters and a brother. In Laupheim I had one uncle and two grandmothers. My parents and my sister Selma died in the extermination camps.

My schooling consisted of three years in Jewish elementary school in Laupheim, then five years in secondary school in Laupheim and also a year in Stuttgart. During these years I have read French and English literature with the Rabbi's wife, Rebekka Treitel.

Then I did a commercial apprenticeship and was later employed by a tax consulting company in Cologne. As of November 1933, I worked as a translator for a German company in Calais, France. During this time I made the decision to emigrate to Israel. In preparation, I decided to work in Cologne with a Jewish locksmith as a volunteer. Here I met people from Israel. I lived in a Jewish youth center as the residence supervisor; during the day I worked in a locksmith's shop. When this home was disbanded in 1936, I took over a similar position in Berlin. I worked during the day as a locksmith at Cottbuser Gate. Every month I had to report to the Gestapo in Alexanderplatz, where I was always confronted with senseless accusations. The harassment and threats were endless until we closed the home in March of 1939.

# New Home Israel

In a small port in Croatia we were stowed away on a cattle van aboard a barge. As the English would not have let our van go off board, we were transferred to another barge at sea. I found shelter in a small kibbutz. For 26 weeks I worked up to ten hours a day. In the laundry, clearing stones in the fields, planting cucumbers and tomatoes, and tending them until harvest-time. After that, I worked for four years as a fitter in a shipyard in Haifa. During this time I married. My wife died at the age of 26 of typhoid fever, shortly after the birth of our son Meir. At that time there was no cure for it in Israel. Alone with my two month old child I joined the kibbutz Hazorea in the Jesreel Plain. At that time, the children lived in the children's dormitory; I was often called there to attend to my little son; my second marriage took place at that time.

Professionally, I was trained as a design engineer; for many years I was the head of locksmith's shop. Even today (at 90 years old!) people come to me with construction issues.

In the kibbutz I received a lot of mental stimulation and attended many courses. Against all reason, I have been learning Arabic for 18 years. I am satisfied with life", he concluded our last conversation.

Visitors from Laupheim are gladly received at the kibbutz and are entertained in the dining room by Naftali Wertheimer. There have also been visitors from the Laupheim rabbinical family Treitel. "Erich Treitel has visited me here three times, and when I was a child he had made me a toy," reported the ninety year old. Shortly before his 94th birthday Naftali Wertheimer died, while still having full mental acuity.

Paris unbanquet

+  
Deutsches Rotes Kreuz  
Präsident / Auslandsdienst  
Postfach SW 61, Büchelerplatz 2

10. SEP. 1942 406023

ANTRAG  
an die Agence Centrale des Prisonniers de Guerre, Genf  
— Internationales Komitee vom Roten Kreuz —  
auf Nachrichtenvermittlung

REQUÊTE  
de la Croix-Rouge Allemande, Présidence, Service Etranger  
à l'Agence Centrale des Prisonniers de Guerre, Genève  
— Comité International de la Croix-Rouge —  
concernant la correspondance

1. Absender Albert Felsenthal Stuttgart-S. Hauptstätter 198  
Expéditeur beauftragt von Familie Wertheimer  
Laupheim. Wtb.

bittet, an  
pri de bien vouloir faire parvenir à

Verwandschaftsgrad: deren Eltern & Schwester als Absender  
Empfänger Schwiegersohn Tochter & Enkel

2. Empfänger Alfred Erlebacher  
Destinataire 620 N. 10 Street Aptmt 5  
Milwaukee Wisconsin United States  
of North-America

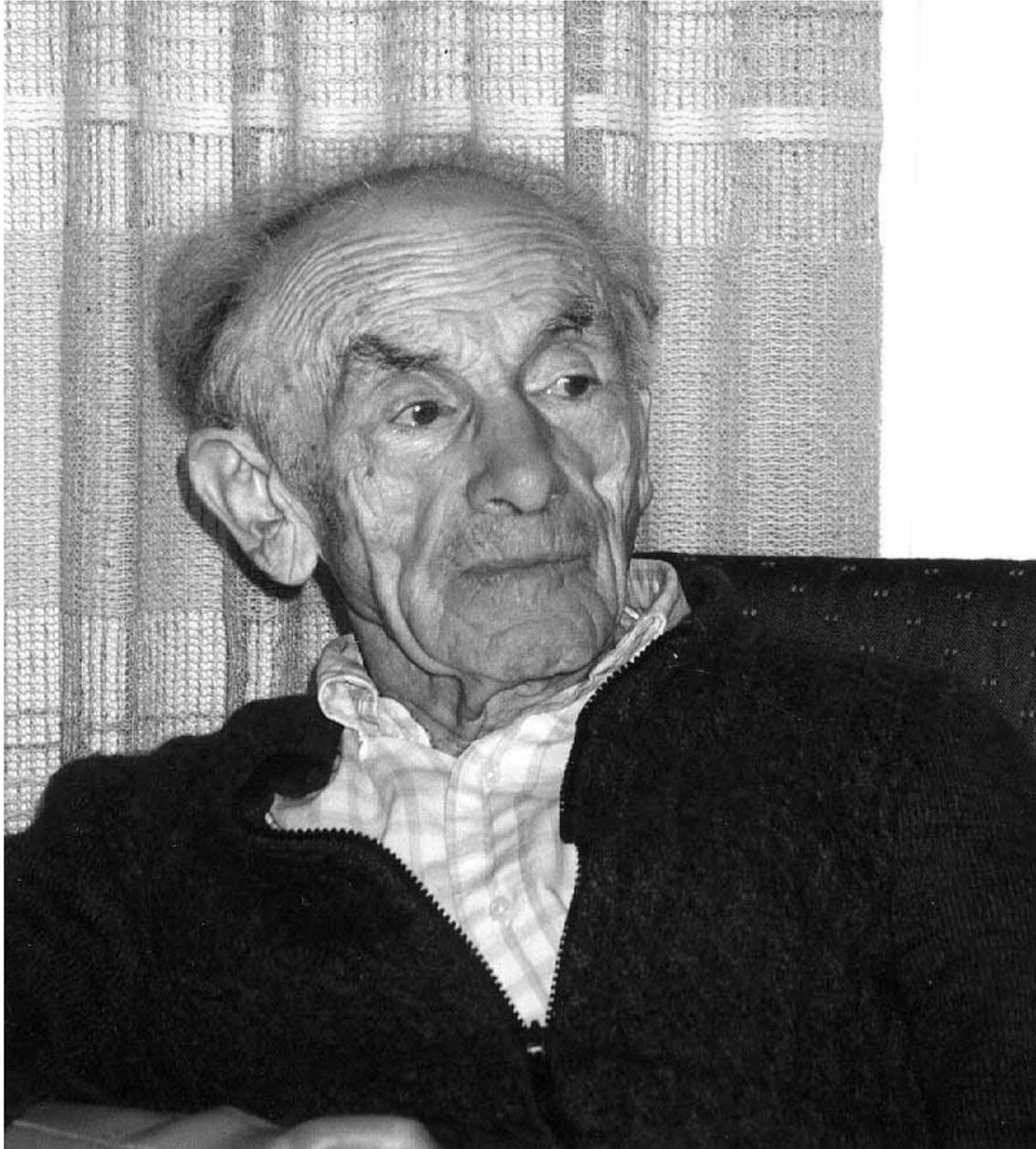
folgendes zu übermitteln / ce qui suit:  
(Höchstzahl 25 Worte!) Meine Lieben gratulieren Alfreds,  
(25 mots au plus!) Albertleins Rosas Geburtstag alles Gute. Nur heute  
näch Heim. Lebt wohl alles Glück grüßt die Lieben  
insgesamtherzlichst.

14 OCT. 1942

(Datum / date) 19. August 42.  
Abgangsort nach Berlin 25/9/42  
3. Empfänger antwortet umseitig  
Destinataire répond au verso

Unterschrift / Signature  
Albert Felsenthal

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE  
ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT



*91year Naftali Wertheimer on Kibbuz Hozarea,  
Israel. Born 1906 in Laupheim, Radstraße 17,  
nee Heinrich Wertheimer, died 2000  
(Foto: Bilderkammer Museum)*