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# The History of the Jews in Pilsen

(Plzeň, Czech Republic – 49°45' 13°22')

The Work of Rabbi Professor Dr. Max Hoch, Pilsen

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The royal mining city of Pilsen (*Czech: Plzeň*) was originally located on the site of what is known today as the township of Starý Plzenec (*Alt Plzenec/Old Pilsen*). For a long time, our city was known as Nová Pilsen (*Latin: Pilsna, Plzna or Pelsina/New Pilsen*). According to the chronicle of Martin Hruška, Pilsen was of historical significance as early as 976 AD, and its castle stood where today you will find Hůrka - a pile of stones or a ruin. Pilsen first expanded in the time of King Ottokar II (second son of King Wenceslaus I)<sup>[1]</sup>.

There are no officially certified reports about the early history of Pilsen, but it began to grow significantly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when, in 1272, Ottokar accorded it the status of a city. In 1310, Johann, the son of Emperor Heinrich from Luxemburg, was recognized in opposition to Heinrich from Kärnten and was accompanied to Prague by an armed procession. A citizen is said to have opened the city gate with a cleaver. By way of thanks for this action, he was later made a counselor.

At this time, Pilsen was at the centre of the Hussite Wars<sup>[2]</sup>, although the majority of the citizens were against the Hussites. You need to understand that Pilsen was always strictly Catholic, which also explains why Jews both in early and later times were only of minor significance. As Josef Strnad describes in his “Listář” (“*Notebook*”), the city archives were maintained very carefully. However, in the fire of 1507, the whole city burned down and the archives were reduced to ashes.

Again, during the Thirty Years War<sup>[3]</sup>, Pilsen was occupied by Mansfeld from 1618 to 1621, and a great deal of valuable material was lost. The City Privileges<sup>[4]</sup> are available even today. However, the city books were sold at public auction as wastepaper between 1848 and 1850, this fact being quoted with regret by all chronicles. The last wills of citizens and a complete set of the City Privileges were preserved in the “Cista civitatis” (*the municipal safe box*). The last wills can no longer be found, but the Privileges have been preserved. The parish church handed over its documents to the city in 1546, when the city became patron of the church. This is of linguistic interest as 1450 is a transition date, because we find no German documents after that year.

The court record (*liber iudicii*) in the regional museum, at file number 3D 19 from 1407, contains, at the conclusion, a list of items and clothing given to Jews as security for loans. The amount of each loan is also shown. The majority of records in the city books are in Czech instead of Latin. In the year 1338, Karl the Margrave of Moravia<sup>[5]</sup>

gave strict orders to the Reeve<sup>[6]</sup> and to members of the Council not to torment the Jews and, if anyone should do so, to punish him severely.

It is recorded on 17 September 1375: 'Dominus Zyfridus habet potestatem eandem pecuniam inter Judeos sive Christianos conquirere'. (*The Lord Zyfridus - a Knight of the Cross from the German order of knights □ has the right to gather this money among Jews or Christians*). The same form of words is found rather often: 'inter Christianos vel judeos obligandi vel vendendi' (*of distraint or sale among Christians or Jews*). Two-thirds of all records for the period 1450-1526 are missing; according to rumor, they were later used for wrapping matches.

On 6 January 1432, the Jewish aldermen and the Jewish community in Pilsen bought from the Town Council a piece of land in the škvrner suburb on which to establish a cemetery. They paid 12 schock<sup>[7]</sup> of Prague coppers<sup>[8]</sup>. Aldermen Ladman, Muse and Michal as well as the whole community of the city of Nová Pilzen committed themselves and future generations to pay to the Council and to the citizens two schocks immediately, and the remaining 10 by way of one schock annually on St. George's Day without any delay. This means that the Jews bought land for a cemetery at the most dangerous time<sup>[9]</sup>.

In 1457, King Ladislav gave to the community of Nová Pilsen all Jewish annual payments and taxes that were paid into the royal coffers so that they could use the money to repair the city fortifications. The heading of the document is literally "List na židy" (*Letter to the Jews*).

In 1461, a mortgage was set on the house of the Jew Zalman to the value of 50 schocks in good silver to be repaid over 3 years. The amount of interest due was 9 schocks. The agreement was signed by Tomášek, the parish priest in Nová Pilsen, and by Jontoff, a Jew from Pilsen. The deal was closed by the old Reeve, Mrs Maretka. The Jews were also to pay to the Reeve for each household on St. Martin's Day one corn-fed goose, at Christmas a pound of pepper, and at Easter one guilder plus one pound of pepper. The same requirement is also found in a document dated 1 July 1462, where King Georg (Jiří) confirms the Reeve's rights. In the same document, it is also confirmed that the Jews are obliged to register their pledges<sup>[10]</sup> with the Reeve. Anyone who sells a pledge or fails to register it shall lose the pledge or the income from the pledge. However, this shall be without damage to our royal rights, as we heard from trustworthy people that such benefits (*usufruct*<sup>[11]</sup>) were due and belonged.

On 20 February 1495, the Jew Mekl, son of Jontoffa, gave a mortgage of 60 schock of Meissen thalers<sup>[12]</sup> on his Jewish house at number 263, on the corner of what are today Solní Road and Sedláčková Road in Pilsen, to his stepmother Lea, giving her the right to live there before gentiles and Jews.

In a final will dated 18 July 1494, there is a reference to a string of beads given as a pledge by the testator to the Jew Mekl for a loan of 4 schocks.

On 16 November 1500, Kaspar Bernášek is shown to owe 100 Meissen thalers or 50 Bohemian coppers to the Jew Mekl and his son Turek. In the event of non-repayment, they had the right to sell his possessions and hereby to avoid damages, although without having the right to any interest payments. The Weavers Guild had the first right of purchase, so the pledge could not be sold in the first year.

The following are found in the court register:

On 28 May 1501, the councilors together with the aldermen decided on matters concerning those Jews living in the city. These matters included: interest rates, the loan of clothes, not loaning money on yarn and bed linen, not selling certain types of clothing, overdue pledges, stolen items, not to wash themselves in gentiles' baths, not to buy clerical items, not to house foreign Jews without the permission of the city mayor, that foreign Jews can stay in the city for a maximum of three days, and not to melt coins. The following interest rates were agreed: two deniers per schock per week, one denier per half schock, and 20 coppers or less for one heller<sup>[13]</sup>.

On 2 September 1503, the councilors and aldermen decided about the following: about hops, about Jews, about women selling geese etc; that all Jews both local and visiting must wear Jewish coats so they can be distinguished from other people, and that Jewish women must wear a veil with a broad yellow and white ribbon. If Jews were found without such clothing, the penalty would be five coppers for each offence. It was emphasised that Jews must not manufacture veils or undertake any other gentile business.

The most important and unfortunate decree was that made by King Vladislav on 1 November 1504: “...and we grant to the citizens the favour that neither we nor future kings of Bohemia will bring more Jews into this city, as the Jews have been given to your city by our forefathers for your benefit. We therefore confirm in writing and with our royal powers in Bohemia that your city and its citizens have the right to expel the Jews from your city whenever you like without any hindrance from our side or from future kings of Bohemia.” In 1504, the citizens of Pilsen took this ‘glorious privilege’ literally and expelled all Jews from the city without taking account of the income they would lose from the Jewish taxes.

On 9 February 1509, the Jew Zalman Turck (*Turek*) from Pilsen took Kaspar Bernášek from Zebnie to court. He accused him of fraud in connection with a draft on 20 Rhenish florins<sup>[14]</sup>, where Bernášek put on the draft not his own seal but that of someone else, and then lied about the loan and refused to pay it back to the Jew. The Jew therefore demanded payment of seven schocks of Bohemian coppers plus interest and costs. The plaintiff also appealed to the conscience of citizen Václav, the city scribe.

The Jew Mekl handed over all his possessions to his son Zalman (also known as Turek). The document is entitled: “Handing over of all possessions of the old Jew Mekl to his son the Jew Turek”. The document states: “We the Mayor and Council of the city of Pilsen confirm, that the old Jew Mekl living in our city declared before the Council together with his son Zalman that he hands over all his movable and immovable possessions together with all pledges to his son Zalman on the condition that Turek and his children will care honorably for all his needs until his death and will care for all the needs of his daughters until they marry.” Turek promised to fulfill these conditions.

On 15 April, a report reached Pilsen from Nürnberg that it was not possible to interrogate Ochsenfelder on the question of a debt of 30 guilders to the Jew Turek, because he was not at home, and his mother refused to pay on his behalf because the money was loaned for gambling and the son was still under age. In the appendix it was added that Ochsenfelder was interrogated and gave a similar statement, namely that he did not owe any money to the Jew, as the loan was just for gambling and that he would

also refuse repayment at court. This same Turek also took a nobleman to court because of a loan.

In the last wills, the word Jew sometimes appears as a nickname: eg 'Ondrášek the Jew' or 'Jew the Cobbler', where cobbler or shoemaker might have been a family name.

Around this time, the Jews from Hostouň - with the help of some godless person - hid the Holy of Holies, the Body of Jesus Christ (*the host*) together with a monstrance (*the receptacle in which the host is held*). The villains were captured by Burghard from Válec and put in chains; the arrested Jews from Hostouň declared that Jews from Pilsen also participated in this deed. The citizens of Pilsen were unhappy about this and, after punishing the guilty Jews, expelled the rest of the Jews from the city according to their royal privilege from King Vladislav. Some years later, the Jews from Prague were brave enough to claim a right to the plot on which the Jewish cemetery had stood, declaring that they had been forced out of the city. However, the former Jewish cemetery had already by then been changed into a garden and was in the possession of a certain Jílek. In addition, after careful consideration the public officials rejected the Jewish application. The official document is still held in the local archive.

There were no Jews in Pilsen for some centuries after that time. They first appear again in documents at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Jews were, of course, living in nearby villages but they were not even allowed to stay overnight in the city. We can read that, in Bušovice<sup>[15]</sup>, the following Jews were under the protection of the city and were obliged to pay taxes to the authorities: Isak Lederer was paying a tax of 30 florins, Isak Kantor of 12 florins, Samuel Kodl of 30 florins, Moses Herzl of 20 florins, Isak Roder (Roth) of 10 florins, and Phillip Schack of 20 florins.

Otherwise, štenovice<sup>[16]</sup> was the origin of the local community. Even after many years there were burials. As elsewhere in Bohemia, there were nearby the remains of royal and mining towns or ruins of earlier Jewish settlements.

In 1821, in connection with a complaint concerning Jewish professions, a very important decision appears about tolerating Jews in Pilsen. This decision of the city Council, which is written in German, is quoted in full: "In a session concerning the application of Pilsen traders on 28 June 1820 in connection with the administrative order of 21 December 1820 journal No. 64.710 on the basis of highest chancellery of 31 November 1820 brought to the attention of the provincial administration". It is in reality a complaint about a decision of the city Council on 15 May 1818 against allowing Jews to live in Pilsen. At this time, the Royal and Imperial administration, on the basis of an investigation of complaints received and reports from 27 December 1821, journal No. 6182, found as follows: "The complainants claim in their complaint and in the later application of 28 June in the same year on the basis of the enclosed registry, that 32 unauthorized Jews are living in the city. They argue that the royal privilege from November 1504 gives the city the right not to permit Jews to live inside the city walls. As this privilege only covers Schutzjuden or Familianten<sup>[17]</sup> and as, according to the monarch of any time, this is not against actual or future laws, it can be confirmed that, according to '36 of the Jewish Law from 3 August 1797 and the higher order of 1 April 1719 (should read 1819), those Jews who are leasing a tobacco outlet, distillery, retail shop or potassium factory shall be allowed to live at the site during the period of their lease without obtaining the right to the status of a Familiant or Schutzjude. According to the advice of the Magistrate, it is therefore possible to permit

the following six Jews, while the others shall be expelled. Those permitted to remain are the following:

1. Abraham Levit, a Schutzjude from štenovice, who is leasing the distillery of Johann Eisenkohl in the Prague suburb
2. David Lob or Daniel Leopold Lövit, a Schutzjude from štenovice, who is leasing the distillery of Johann Tuschner
3. Joachim Lederer who is leasing the distillery of Wenzel Satisch in the Empire suburb
4. Henirich Hochhauser the Jewish tax collector
5. Phillip Schack who is leasing the potassium factory of Johann Tuschner in the Saxon suburb
6. Karl Lederer who is leasing the potassium factory of Emanuel Davidschen in the Prague suburb.

These permits cannot be refused as the leasing agreements have been permitted by the Magistrate and confirmed by this office. The Magistrate shall, however, ensure that the above-mentioned are employed in leased trade and do indeed live at the distilleries and tanneries and that, as per the administrative directives of 10 February 1785, 31 September 1786 and 1 April 1819, they are not involved in any other business, which would be punished with confiscation. It shall be further ensured that after the leasing period these Jews are expelled to their villages of origin.”

In connection with a complaint concerning Jewish peddling, it is clear that this could not be forbidden, even according to the decree of 9 July last year, on a house-to-house basis provided that they acted properly and appropriately. It is also stated that the Jews were not permitted to open a formal place of business, because this was allowed only to properly licensed trades people, and such places could only be rented to the peddlers during the four markets. Outside the market days, the Jews were not allowed to use such places or to live in them. Both the claimants and the citizens were informed about this decision in the appendices, and it was the duty of the magistrate to take the necessary steps and it was expected from the citizens that they contribute to such steps.

From the Council of Pilsen:

21 July 1837: Until now it was forbidden for Jews to buy a house or a piece of land in the city or the suburbs. It was allowed solely for the purpose of construction and only for the lifetime of the factory. The Jew David Leopold Levit received such a permit for the establishment of a tannery. This states:” His royal and imperial Majesty has, by the enclosed permit of 22 April 1837, permitted the Jew David Leopold Levit to buy and own houses No. 23 in the city and No. 15 in the suburb of Pilsen for the production of leather for which he has a nationwide license. This is on the condition that, should this production be stopped or reduced, he is obliged to bring one or both houses back into the ownership of suitable persons. His Majesty further decrees that the magistrate shall ensure the implementation of this decree and the lawyers and the Tanners Guild will be informed about this decision □ Magistrate of Pilsen, 21 July 1837”.

From a book by the previously mentioned Josef Strnad<sup>[18]</sup> - “Místopis do válek husitských” (“*The Topography of the Hussite Wars*”) - we learn some interesting details on the fortunes and possessions of Jews in Pilsen in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Jewish Street was part of the 5<sup>th</sup> quarter of Pilsen, and several houses were in the possession of Jews. The Jew Juda bought house No. 238 and, in turn, it was bought

from him by the previously mentioned Jewish Doctor Israel. (We know also from the community in Prague that the first Jewish house there was bought by Doctor Angelus).

The neighboring house, No. 254, was in the possession of the Jew Goy and later of the Jew Abraham. Numbers 256 and 255 were in the possession of gentiles; they already adjoined the city wall which was at the end of the Jewish Street. House No. 249 at the city wall was in the possession of the Jewess Dobrá who left it in her will in 1410 to the children of her daughter Dina. One of these □ Musche - is still described as the owner in 1423. This same Musche bought house No. 245 in 1416; after him, it was in the possession of the Jewess Pipka. It is not clear whether she was his daughter or his widow.

In 1409, house No. 260 is described as the Jewish school or synagogue. The history of this house can be followed until 1533, at which point it came again into private ownership. In 1409, the neighboring house was in the possession of the Jew Hesl, who sold it to the Jew Dobrý. In 1433, the corner house No. 267 was bought by the Dominican Order, which sold it in 1445 to the Jew Zalman. Roughly at the place where the inn “Zum englischen Hofe” (“*The English Garden*”) stands today, there was a large garden which was in the possession of the Jewish community. They had bought it in the years 1424, 1432, and 1445, partly from the city and partly from private owners in order to establish there a cemetery. (‘Pro sepulture judeorum in civitate habitantium’ (‘*for the burial of Jews living in the city*’) I. 313 year 1432, 6 January.) Alongside the cemetery was a street which led down to the river. (‘Reihna platea reihna penes hortum judeorum’. ‘*Reihna Street at the garden of the Jews*’).

Today's city archivist, Dr. Fridolin Macháček, whom we thank cordially for his assistance, provides in his leaflet “O stare Plzni” (“*About old Pilsen*”), a great deal of useful information about the Jews. We quote it here in part:

“In the year 1869, the Pilsen community demolished the house known as “V kleci” (“*In the Cage*”) in Solná Street □ an earlier Jewish street - and where today stands the post office that was once the Jewish synagogue or school

Between the house “V kleci” and the synagogue, a narrow street led into Katovská Street (*Executioner Street*), which was enclosed on one side by the city wall and on the other by the synagogue. Immediately behind the synagogue, there were some small houses and behind them was the house of the executioner. The houses were not in a straight line, a fact which causes confusion when investigating the actual location of the houses in this area. It is possible that the synagogue, which formed a corner of the street, stood on its own without connection to any other houses in Solná Street.

According to Macháček<sup>[19]</sup>, Katovská Street is a run-down part of the city, inhabited only by beggars. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these houses were in the possession of Jews; however, they were expelled 10 years later. Thereafter the houses were in the possession of poor people and, when the rich bought a house here, it was intended to be occupied by their servants. Also the monastery at Plass (Pleče) had a house in the city. When Josef II dissolved the monastery, the monastery house also came into secular possession, namely into the possession of those people who received their citizen rights first under the rule of Josef II.

On 31 May 1790, rich merchants from Prague - Joachim von Popper and Dusensy (probably *Duschenes*) - bought house No. 281 from the administrator of government property. They bought it, together with its yard, stables and all furnishings, for 4,188 florins. Later the house was inherited from Popper by Abraham Dusensy. It is possible



that they were father- and son-in-law. According to Dr. Macháček, this was the first time that a middle class house came into Jewish possession and it was the only one to do so for a long time. The first time that similar cases arose was not until after 1820. Popper's heirs sold the house in 1817 to a former regional mayor.

House No. 258 was owned in 1515 by the Jewess Roza (Růža). She sold it for 7 Meissen schock to Jakob Klima, so it was certainly a miserable house. The same is true of house No. 259 owned by the Jew Leo and sold by him to Nicolaus Prinzipal in 1518 for 7 = shillings.

Strnad writes: in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Jews had their own community, administered by aldermen; they had a prayer room in house No. 260 and their own cemetery. The synagogue was used as such probably only until 1507 as at that time the Jews were expelled from the city and were not permitted to have any possessions. The synagogue is mentioned for the last time in 1533, when the neighboring house No. 261 was sold.

In the magazine "Památky arch. a místopisné" ("Archival and Topographical Heritage") for the years 1887-1889, we can read the following about Jews from Pilsen; "And then there is a third type of person in Pilsen, namely the Jews. There are no accounts concerning Jews from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Such evidence is first available in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, where it appears in court records. The Jews had their own community in Pilsen, where they owned a relatively large number of houses, especially in today's Solná Street (*Salzgasse*) and Sedláček Street. The Jews had their synagogue midway between the city wall and the tavern known as "Zum blauen Stern" ("The Blue Star"). Furthermore, they had their own cemetery in the škrvín suburb near today's inn known as "Englische Hof" ("The English Castle"). In the court registers, there is reference to a total of 35 Jewish persons, 19 males and 16 females. Among these we find the previously mentioned Doctor Israel."

The court registers for 1411-1449 are kept in the Pilsen Museum. They contain contracts for the purchase of houses and a register of pledges. Various household items given by the citizens as security for loans are detailed in these registers, and the amount of the loan is always mentioned. Until 1420, these registers were written in Latin; later they contain a range of Czech words. Also the naming of the pledges is linguistically curious. This confusion presumably originates from the fact that, whenever the scribe did not know or was unsure of the Latin name, then he used the Czech name or added the Czech designation to the Latin name. In 1507, there were several fires in the city □ on 7, 10 and 29 May and 5 June. During these fires, all the houses burned down.

According to Strnad in a supplement (*feuilleton*) to "Plzeňské listy" ("The Pilsen News") in 1894, issue 6, in an article "Ein interresanter Process aus dem XVI Jahrhundert" ("An interesting trial from the 16<sup>th</sup> century"), during the fires those living close to the synagogue hid their movable possessions in the cellar of the synagogue. Later, a certain Tomec claimed that some of his money was missing. He was the owner of house 261, while house 262 □ located between the synagogue and the corner house - was owned until 1472 by the Jew Michal, and was then acquired by the Jew Mekl with his wife Bele. Tomec now accused Mekl of taking his money, as he was the only one who had the key to the cellar. We will not quote the interrogations, but the judgment was as follows: "Mekl shall together with two credible witnesses - Jewish and Christian - swear in accordance with our right, that he did not take the money as is claimed by Tomec. If he does not do this within two weeks, then he must pay the

claimed amount to Tomec.” Both parties accepted the ruling and thanked the authority for its work. As regards the execution of justice, it is to be noted that in Pilsen, as in all royal cities, German law was valid. The councilors sought advice in Prague (‘Privilege of the Butchers Guild: *quia ipsa civitas pylzneum jure Majoris civitatis Pragensis locata est*’). (‘*The city of Pilsen is within the same jurisdiction as the greater city of Prague*’).

Before we move to the second period in the history of our Jewish community, we should note that it is strange that we have not been able to find anything about Jews in Starý Plzenec (*Alt Plzenec/Old Pilsen*). In the small places where Jews lived, no records were kept.

The most important evidence about our Jewish community, which has today some 4,000 members, comes from the matriculation registers which were kept until 1867/1868 by the Archdeaconry in Pilsen. The name of the oldest register is: ‘*Matricula Israelitum natorum ad territorium Archidiaconatus Plsnensis spectantium ab anno 1802 usque 1840*’ (‘*Register of the Jews that were born in the Archdeaconry of Pilsen from the year 1820 to 1840*’). In these registers, births, marriages and deaths are recorded in the same book. The first registrations date from 6 November 1799 and they concern Rosalia, daughter of Philip (*Filip*) Schack, merchant in Pilsen, and Anna, daughter of Isak Lederer, merchant in Bušovice.

The first recorded marriage is that which took place in 1811 between Joakim Lederer, merchant and tenant in Dobraken (*Doubrava*) and son of Salomon Lederer of Bušovice, and Josefa Gerson, daughter of Jakob Gerson, a merchant from Auval in the Principality of Lichtenstein. The ceremony was carried out by Josef Mandel, the second rabbi in Vossek (*Osek*). Later the ceremonies were carried out by different rabbis from the surrounding towns, including those from Janovic (*Janovice*), Kosolup (*Kosolupy*), Všeradice and Pestchau (*Bečov*), all of which had their own rabbis. The first recorded marriage in Pilsen was celebrated on 16 November 1836 by Angelus Kafka, the regional rabbi for the Pilsen and Klattau (*Klatovy*) region. The first recorded burial is on 14 June 1804 (in Bušovice). Subsequently, the records show one burial each year in 1811 and 1816, two burials in 1819, one in 1822, and none in 1824 and 1826. In the year 1844, four burials are recorded.

Otherwise, we have the first report from the year 1854 which records that there were 41 Jewish families in Pilsen totaling 249 souls □ 118 males and 131 females. In 1834, the city sold the synagogue at No. 55 in Bušovice. On 23 March 1854, the city administration decided to follow the request of the royal and imperial regional administration of 29 December 1853 to abolish the tax of 9 kreutzers<sup>[20]</sup> for each horse brought to the market. The yield of this tax was leased by the Jew Nathan Bloch for a yearly lease of 6 guilders and 18 kreutzers. In December, the Jewish community received from the Ministry a permit to build a synagogue and to set up a school. At the same time, they received a permit to collect money for this purpose among their co-religionists.

On 5 February 1856, the local Jewish community received a permit to establish a Jewish cemetery on the hill at Boleves. Until now the Jews had been buried either in štenovice or in Tushkau (*Touškov*). This last named old cemetery has now completely disappeared. Until recently, there were some reserved burial places, but today these just contain the ashes. The (*Boleves*) cemetery is very impressive with strong trees and small paths between the graves.



The foundation stone of the new synagogue was laid ceremonially on 17 June 1857 in the yard of house No. 80 on Stephan Square (today, this is No. 5 Smetana Street). The old synagogue that was built in a beautiful gothic style has stood for several years without being used and is decaying. Perhaps one day we will see its rebirth as a Jewish club house. House No. 80 was bought by the community with the aim of building a synagogue. The laying of the foundation stone was witnessed by the heads of the administration and by eminent persons representing the city's important clubs and associations. The ceremony was carried out by regional rabbi Angelus Kafka. (He is buried in the old cemetery.)

The document engraved in copper includes the date on which the foundation stone was laid, the names of the rulers of the country and all members of the imperial family, as well as of the leaders of the city administration, of the community and of the architects who made the drawings (Mr. Stelzner and Mr. Wiesner). At the conclusion of the ceremony, the rabbi prayed and the royal and imperial regional mayor shouted "Sláva" ('Hurrah') for His Majesty the Emperor. The synagogue was opened officially on 8 April 1859. In the Memorial Book of the city it is written: "It is our duty to underline that the small local Jewish community, without any support from outside and solely based on contributions from co-religionists, arranged in Pilsen the provision of a synagogue, a cemetery and a community house, all of which required a minimum expenditure of 30,000 silver florins". There then follows a detailed description of the opening ceremony.

On 10 March 1860, a thanksgiving service was celebrated in the synagogue for the granting of the authorization of ownership. At this occasion, the regional rabbi Kafka delivered an excellent sermon, in which he encouraged members of the community to be loyal to the Emperor and to the throne.

1861: In view of the long and hard winter, the Jewish community donated to the local poor a considerable sum of money, and also 300 zentners of coal<sup>[21]</sup> which was distributed to 100 poor people.

On 17 March 1861, the heads of guilds requested the masters to keep their journeymen and apprentices at home at night in order to avoid them breaking Jewish window panes, which could bring the city into bad repute, and to inform them that such acts are punished by law with heavy prison sentences of between one and five years. This was signed by the city mayor, Dr. Maschauer, m.p.<sup>[22]</sup>

At each meeting of the city Council, a record is now kept of all who have received civil rights in the city, and Jewish names can be found there. According to our investigation, the first name - and for a long time the only one - was that of Sigmund Hofmann on 1 April 1861. (He was the leader of the Jewish community and founder of a bank, known later as Hofmann & Kottlarzig. Today this is a filial of the Anglo-Czechoslovak Bank.)

On the Feast of the Resurrection, it is recorded that the inhabitants of Jewish houses on the Ring Square also showed lights in their windows, a fact which was appreciated by the Council.

On 22 August 1858, it is recorded that the Jewish community also in its own way celebrated the birth of the Prince<sup>[23]</sup>, arranging a collection that totaled 20 silver florins which they gave to the royal and imperial regional administration to divide among the poor.

In that year there were 192 Jews in Pilsen. It is recorded that on 4 January 1859, there was again a fire in the match factory of Neuburger & Ekstein. (There had previously been a fire in the factory in 1854, at which time the factory was not insured.)

On 15 June 1859, the Jewish community donated to the royal and imperial administration 500 yards of linen for shirts for the royal and imperial soldiers. Charitable ladies sewed shirts for military officers from this linen.

In June 1859, in the local synagogues as well as in all Jewish prayer houses in the area, a prayer was said for His Majesty the Emperor, also a public prayer for victory and an early end to the war<sup>[24]</sup>. In 1861, the first Jews claimed their voting rights; some succeeded and others were turned down owing to their late application.

Sigmund Hofmann had to pay a tax of 80 florins to obtain citizen rights. He is mentioned among the benefactors as the contributor of 50 florins in Austrian currency; David Leopold Levit made the same contribution to the army.

On 28 January 1862, Joachim Kohn and his son from švihov received a permit to build a leather factory (today this is the establishment Bruml, Bloch & Waldstein). The factory is today closed down. The building of the factory began immediately. In this connection, they were also obliged to construct at their own cost a well for the inhabitants of the newly-made street, as the citizens complained that the water in the river was polluted.

The factory owners Neuburg & Ekstein sent a triumphal arch beautifully decorated with matches to an exhibition in London<sup>[25]</sup>. The top was decorated with an eagle; on the right side was the Bohemian coat of arms and on the left side was the English coat of arms.

In 1834, there were 20,000 inhabitants in Pilsen, of which 234 were Jews. The Jewish community is mentioned as the largest tax payer (58 florins, 155 crowns).

In the list of election candidates, no Jewish names are to be seen.

The year 1866 saw the worst event occur for the Jewish community, and one which led to the proclamation of martial law. The reason was the great theft of Příbram silver which was discovered in February. Silver from the mines at Příbram was sold to the Jews, especially to the Prague goldsmith Taussik, who bought it from his co-religionists Urban and Feigl, who in turn bought it from the Příbram miners.

There was great fury against the Jews and, during the workers' uprising on 25 February 1866, the Jews were attacked. During this attack, nine Jewish families lost all their possessions. The number of the rioters was as many as 500, and it took two days before the military from Prague reached Pilsen and the surrounding area. The unrest broke out in several places. In Pilsen, on the evenings of 2 and 3 March, the middle class people also turned out because they harbored grudges against the Jews. However, the city mayor and the police inspector managed to pacify the people by good words and explanation of the consequences<sup>[26]</sup>.

In the secondary school in this year, two thirds of the pupils were Czechs and the other third were Germans. Among the Germans were many Jews, who spoke Czech but considered German to be their mother tongue. They attended this school for two or at most three years. In this year (1866), there were 37 students in the first German

parallel class, of which 15 were Jews; in the second, there were just 11. On 23 October 1866, the city Council decided to declare the school to be Czech, which caused great indignation among the Germans, especially the Jews. At the end of a petition, it was stated: "Below are the signatures of many who today would be ashamed to see their names among the greatest enemies of the Czech nationality".

At the country elections in 1867, there are once again no Jews listed as candidates.

On 24 January 1868, Ekstein and Hirsch, the owners of the match factory, sponsored the supply of 10,000 kg of pit-coal to the forces of the army in the area.

On 31 August, Elise Herz, neé Edle von Lämmel, established a foundation of 40,000 florins for respectable craftsmen who wished to start up their own business. The charter of this foundation was deposited with the Pilsen City Council, which in addition was made responsible for the administration of the foundation's funds. The City Council was also made responsible for dividing the yearly interest into four grants and to distribute these to respectable traders regardless of their religion. (From that we can see, the founder was Jewish as it is written in the appendix: "Firstly, the maternal heirs of Duschenes, secondly, the paternal heirs of Lämmel, and that those from Pilsen shall be preferred to those from Prague".)

In 1868, Heinrich Fürth and Leopold Gellert built a factory for the production of paper from straw.

In 1869, the chamber of commerce sent Josef M. Fürth from Strakonice as its elected representative to the state parliament.

According to the registration records in 1870, there were 1,056 houses, 22,681 inhabitants and 1,207 Jews in Pilsen.

In the city museum, there are annual reports from the German ecclesiastical college and, as far as these have been made available to the author, it can be concluded that the number of Jewish students first showed an increase in the 1870s. However, back in earlier times – as far back as 1851 - Jewish students were regularly to be found among those designated as 'excellent'. It is possible to note this because they are always clearly designated as Jews.

A decree by the country school authority in 1851 required Jewish religious education to be treated in the same way as other subjects. In the school year 1851/52, there were 18 Jews at the school. In 1864, there were already 41, and in 1865/66 - for the first time – there is reference to a teacher of Mosaic religion, the regional rabbi Angelus Kafka. In 1867, there were two teachers, and in addition the regional rabbi Dr. Moritz Deutsch is mentioned. In 1871/72, the teacher is shown as Dr. Vogelstein and there are 79 Jewish students at the school.

In the annual report for 1873, there is an article by the priest B. Bayerl based on the handwritten record by J. Tanner: 'historia semper catholicae semperque fidelis civitatis Plznae in regno Boemiae' (*The history of the always catholic and always faithful city of Pilsen in the Kingdom of Bohemia*). However, there is no reference to the Jews. In that same year, there were 157 Christians, three Protestants and 80 Jews in the school.

In the 1890s, anti-Semitism was also growing among the Germans in Pilsen. The newspaper Plzeňské listy (*"The Pilsen News"*), issue 15, reported: "Anti-Semitism is growing among the Germans at the speed of a spring wind. The apostles of the anti-

Jewish doctrine are growing like mushrooms after rain. Who would have believed two years ago that within the German brotherly community such 'kind' remarks would be made. At that time, when a Jewish caricature was shown in the Casino, many members threatened to resign. A well known Jewish lawyer analyzed the statistics and proved that, without the Jews, the Pilsen Germans would be insignificant, the schools would be empty and the same would be true of the Casino. And now an officers' ball has been arranged at the Casino and not even one Jew is invited. The officials have raised the banner of anti-Semitism." From this time onwards, anti-Semitism also grew within the various associations. A second Aryan gymnastics club was founded. Only the local school association led by Dr. Graf, a Jew, resisted this development. Not a single Jew was elected onto the board of the choral society. The Plzeňské listy (*"The Pilsen News"*) wrote: "it is interesting to observe that the Jews now regret bitterly giving up their confessional school and instead, in order to support the German element in Pilsen, made it open to the public." It would certainly be very interesting to read in this newspaper about the old times, but it was impossible to read everything. Also after 1893/1894, even this newspaper became anti-Semitic.

Having gathered together the information available from the magistrates' reports, we now take up the evidence from the minutes of the Jewish community and show how what was in the beginning an insignificant community has reached today's important status.

These minutes began in the year 1868. From that year onwards, they were kept on a regular basis, and this year seems therefore to be the starting point of an upturn, surely because of the constitution. Before this time, there were only individuals in Pilsen working as merchants or industrialists, but historically the community is now coming forward for the first time. Inevitably, the majority of records are about the taxes, corporate matters and the applications by community employees for an increase in wages.

In 1868, the leader of the community was Sigmund Hofmann, the first Jewish citizen. The other board members are Kohn Naftali, Klein Löwy, Raumann Moritz and Tanzer Moritz. No fewer than 23 men applied for the post as preacher.

The representative of the Pilsen region at the Bohemian Jewish Council was Karl Lederer, who was also an enthusiastic member of the local (*Pilsen*) Board, as his name is often mentioned at every meeting. Dr. Heinrich (Heinemann) Vogelstein from Lippe (*Lipina*) was called to deliver a trial sermon. He was warmly recommended by Dr. Zacharias Frankl and unanimously elected by all the trusty people (*experts*). He was to take up his duties on 1 September, although he was able to undertake functions before that day if needed. On 15 April, the police made a register of all the Jews in Pilsen. According to this register, there were 161 families in Pilsen with a total of 676 people. For this work, the police received a payment of 5 guilders.

In this year, the proceeds from the Schechita<sup>[27]</sup> came to a total of 1,276 florin and 52 coronas.

The contract with the new preacher contains a curious paragraph (*Number 4*): "He shall participate in each burial, but only deliver a speech at the graveside when required by the council of the community."

Paragraph 5 is also interesting: "He must not resist any changes in the synagogue or modifications to the service requested by the community council so long as they are

not against the religion, especially as the rabbi has already today accepted the installation of an organ in the synagogue.”

The rent of synagogue seats brought in 1,558 guilders and 95 coronas during this year. The organization of a synod was turned down in order not to increase conflict within the community. (The issue at the heart of this is certainly the organ in the synagogue.)

On 21 January 1869, an application was made for the establishment of a kindergarten. One member of the board was elected as keeper of the register of matriculation. There was a notable application that the organ should not be played on High Holydays as it was causing distress to many members. After a long debate, the vote was tied, for and against. The chairman decided in favor of playing the organ.

On 17 May 1870, the regional rabbi Angelus Kafka died. Dr Vogelstein became Head of the Jewish Private School.

On 3 January (1871), Jakob Löwith was elected unanimously to the community board. At the meeting of the board on 8 June 1871, it was noted that there had been a large influx of Jewish families into Pilsen, but the number of seats in the synagogue was insufficient as it provided a total of 113 seats for males and 122 seats for females, although there were 143 tax payers<sup>[28]</sup>. It was decided to fit out the lower part of the school building as a prayer house with pulpits and a separate female section.

On 10 September, it was decided, owing to the weekly market, to combine the Sabbath morning and Musaf<sup>[29]</sup> services and to read the Haftara<sup>[30]</sup> in Hebrew again.

The job of Secretary was advertised and 35 applications were received. J. Bloch was elected once again. He had previously been the scribe, but had been discharged on 14 July owing to a refusal to fulfill his duties.

On 8 December it was recorded: “Anyone who applies for membership of the community shall be obliged to become a member of the charitable Chewra Kadisha (*Holy Society*), as otherwise the association will be not valid”<sup>[31]</sup>.

On 30 December Mr. Armin Freisinger from Pressburg (*Bratislava*) was called for a trial service. This trial took place on 10 May, and on 11 May Mr. Freisinger was appointed as senior Cantor.

The community resolved to find a suitable place on which to build a synagogue. It was decided to start a register in which all plenary decisions should be recorded. The chairman of the community was Leopold Gellert. There were discussions concerning the establishment of a provisional prayer house in 1872. The estimated cost was 4,600 florins but, in the event that roofing boards were used, it would be 4,200. There was also discussion as to whether this prayer house, which would be behind the old synagogue, would be integrated with it. Orders of the board concerning services were issued in the prayer house. Lederer from Marienbad (*Mariánské lázně*) was appointed as Cantor for the autumn Holydays. On 2 September, the new provisional synagogue was officially opened. The Prokop plot of land<sup>[32]</sup> (on which our new synagogue stands) was a large area with a garden and a building. It was offered as a site for the building of a synagogue at a cost of 39,500 florins, and the offer was accepted unanimously. The purchase was declared to be ‘perfect’ at the meeting held on 15 March.

In 1877, the elections were for the first time made by acclamation.

After a long debate, it was decided not to give Dr. Vogelstein a lifelong contract, but instead to make a contract for a number of years. Already by that time there had been many discussions about how to regulate the affairs of the poor. (This painful subject was still a difficult one to resolve even after many years, as can be documented by our welfare organization.)

The first person appointed to be responsible for welfare was Moritz Massarek, and the first treasurer was Leopold Auer.

In the summer of 1877, a seminar for rabbis was held in Pilsen. The community board established a committee responsible for arranging accommodation for the guests and the board arranged a dinner.

On 30 November, it was decided that gifts at the call to Torah could only be given for Zedoko<sup>[33]</sup>, for Chewra Kadisha, for the Free Board Association<sup>[34]</sup>, and for the synagogue and school trust.

Further sessions dealt with the building of the synagogue, taxes etc. We are here quoting just the rabbis and the community board members, as the individual phases of the development of this flourishing community are of general public interest.

In the period 1880-1882, Dr. Nathan Porges was the rabbi. He was followed until 1891 by Dr. Caro, then by Dr. Adolf Poznanski until 1907, then Dr. Ludwig Golinsky until 1925, and since 1919 (first as Czech preacher, from March 1925 alone) Dr. Max Hoch.

The list of community board members is not very long. The community of Pilsen always chose the right leaders, who then led the community to its great benefit for decades. Until 1896, the board chairman was Mr. Markus Sabat, after him JUDr. Josef Schanzer was elected until 1919, and since then the board has been led by JUDr. Max Hutter.

The large number of philanthropic associations supported by the community shows the busy life and welfare activities of our community.

The oldest association is the Chewra Kadisha, which has existed only since 1864 and has now been led for 20 years by Mr. Adolf Hofmann; the Free Board Association has been led by Mr. Schanzer; the Orphan Association<sup>[35]</sup> (Copper Association ) by Director Alois Wotizky; the Women's Association by Mathilde Kussi and then by Mrs Paula Stein; the Association of Jewish Women and Girls by Mrs Kamilla Eckstein; the local Welfare Department by Mr. Hugo Weisl; the Women's Association for Cultural Work in Palestine by Mrs. Lotte Liebshtein; the Czech-Jewish Union by Mr. Jiří Steinschneider; the Women's Branch of the Czech-Jewish Union by Mrs Růžička; the Gymnastics Club Maccabi by Dr. Münz; the Zionist People's Union by Professor Dr. Vlastimil Kraus; in addition a Lodge of the IOBB (*Independent Order B'nai B'rith*) Union<sup>[36]</sup>, and also of the Kindergarten and the Society<sup>[37]</sup>.

It only remains to hope that there will come again a time that brings a powerful upswing after the war<sup>[38]</sup> that will remove its consequences, especially in terms of the shortage of housing.

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## Glossary:

**Chewra Kadisha** = burial brotherhood/society

**Haftara** = a series of selections from the books of *Nevi'im* ("Prophets") of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanach*) that is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice.

**Mussaf** (also spelled Musaf) = an *additional service* recited on Shabbat, Yom Tov,, Chol Hamoed, and Rosh Chodesh.

**Schechita** = the kosher/kashrut slaughtering of animals.

**Zadoko** = Tzedakah (righteousness, charity or charitable giving).

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## Translators' Footnotes:

1. **Ottokar II** (Czech: *Přemysl Otakar II.*) (c. 1233 – 26 August 1278), known as 'The Iron and Golden King', was King of Bohemia from 1253 until 1278. Ottokar was the second son of King Wenceslaus I of the Přemysl dynasty, and through his mother, Kunigunde of Hohenstaufen was related to the Hohenstaufen family, being a grandson of the German king, Philip of Swabia. Kunigunde of Hohenstaufen or Kunigunde of Swabia (German: *Kunigunde von Staufen* or *Kunigunde von Schwaben*; Czech: *Kunhuta štaufská* or *Kunhuta švábská*) was the second daughter of Philip, Duke of Swabia (Southwest Germany). [return](#)
2. **The Hussite Wars** (1419-34). The Hussites were followers of the reformist cleric, Jan Hus, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Jan Hus was the first Czech Rector of Prague's great University (founded by the Emperor Charles IV). He objected to the corrupt practices, opulence and wealth of the Catholic Church. He was excommunicated, forced out of Prague and eventually declared a heretic and burned at the stake in 1415. (See also Footnote 32.) The Hussite armies were a formidable force which, though with simple weapons, achieved legendary success against the Emperor's Catholic crusades. They owed much to their religious fervor and to the discipline of their brilliant leader, Jan Žižka, who invented mobile artillery. (Žižka died of the plague in 1424 at the town of Přebyslav.) [return](#)
3. **The Thirty Years' War** (1618–1648) was fought primarily in what is now Germany and Bohemia/Moravia, but at various points involved most countries in Europe. It was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history. It lasted for 30 years, without break, making it the longest continuous war in modern history. Its origins and the aims of the participants are complex. It began as a religious war between Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire in Bohemia with the Battle of the White Mountain near Prague (1620), which the Protestants lost. Over time it became a more general conflict involving most European powers and was therefore a continuation of the long struggle for European preeminence between the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs. By the end of this war, whole regions had been destroyed, stripped by foraging armies, among whom there were many mercenaries who were expected to take their payment in the form of looting or tributes paid by those whose lands they occupied. Famine and disease had a major impact on the populations of the German states, Bohemia, the Low Countries and Italy. The war also largely bankrupted the participating powers. [return](#)
4. **A privilege** is a special entitlement to immunity that is granted by the state or by another authority to a restricted group, either by birth or on a conditional basis. It can be revoked in certain circumstances. In modern democratic states, a *privilege* is conditional and granted only after birth. By contrast, a *right* is an inherent, irrevocable entitlement held by all citizens or all human beings from the moment of birth. In a broader sense, 'privilege' can refer to special powers or *de facto* immunities held as a consequence of political power or wealth. Privilege of this sort may be transmitted by birth into a privileged class, membership in a particular group, or achieved through individual actions. [return](#)
5. **Karl the Margrave of Moravia**. A Margrave is the person in charge of a 'Margraviate', a frontier region or county. The English term 'March' is the equivalent (eg The Welsh Marches) and the English term 'Marquess' derives from this original by way of the French 'Marquis'. Karl/Karel are

- the German/Czech forms of the name 'Charles'. The reference here is presumably to Charles IV, as he was King of Bohemia (which included Moravia) in 1338. [return](#)
6. **Reeve.** In Anglo-Saxon times, a Reeve could be a senior official or even a Magistrate. But elsewhere and in later periods, the Reeve was simply an appointed official. Today we would consider the Reeve to be the highest public servant, with both administrative and policing responsibilities. He or she (*note later reference to 'the old (or possibly 'former') Reeve, Mrs Marketa'*) executed the decisions of the Town Council and kept public order. [return](#)
  7. **Schock** is a term that has caused the translators much difficulty. It is understood to be the equivalent of 'three score' (ie 60). [return](#)
  8. **Copper** is in the same group (11) of the periodic table alongside silver and gold, but it is usually thought of as having a lower value when used in coinage. (See **Kreutzer** below.) (See also Footnote 35.) [return](#)
  9. **'at the most dangerous time'**: St George is of great renown, celebrated in both western and eastern Christianity and the source of the legend of George and the Dragon. Perhaps the writer refers to a perception of the significance of this day that was famously mentioned by Bram Stoker in his book *Dracula* (1897), where evil things are said to occur on St George's Day, beginning at midnight: "Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was the fourth of May. She shook her head as she said again: "Oh, yes! I know that, I know that! But do you know what day it is?" On my saying that I did not understand, she went on: "It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway?" [return](#)
  10. **A pledge** is a legal agreement that transfers title of property owned by a debtor (the *pledgor*) to a creditor (the *pledgee*) to secure repayment for some debt or obligation and to the mutual benefit of both parties. [return](#)
  11. **Usufruct** is a right of enjoyment enabling a holder to derive profit or benefit from property that either is titled to another person or which is held in concurrent estate, as long as the property is not damaged or destroyed. It is not the same as legal title. The term comes from civil law, under which it is a subordinate real right of limited duration, usually for a person's lifetime. The holder of a usufruct, known as a usufructuary, has the right to use (*usus*) the property and enjoy its fruits (*fructus*). [return](#)
  12. **Thaler** (or *Taler* or *Talir*) was a silver coin used throughout Europe for almost four hundred years. Its name survives in various currencies including the dollar. "Thaler" is an abbreviation of "Joachimsthaler", a coin from the city of Joachimsthal (*Jáchymov*) in Bohemia, where some of the first such coins were minted in 1518. (*Tal* is German for "valley". A "thaler" is a person or a thing "from the valley".) [return](#)
  13. **Denier**: The denier is said to have been introduced by Charlemagne in the Early Middle Ages. In the accounting system, 12 deniers were equal to one sou, and 20 sous equalled one livre. The symbol for both the old denier and the old penny as used in the UK prior to decimalisation was "d". (Coins such as the denar, dinar and denaro □ still found in various countries □ are linked to the original denier.) **Heller**. Originally a German coin valued at half a pfenig (and first appearing in the 13<sup>th</sup> century), the term was used in the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for 1/100<sup>th</sup> of the Krone (Crown), which was the currency from 1892 until after the demise of the Empire in 1918. The term continued to be used in Czechoslovakia and in the Czech and Slovak Republics but the coins are no longer in circulation, although hellers (*halíře*), are still used in the Czech Republic as a means of calculation as fractions of the Krone. [return](#)
  14. **Rhenish florin**. The term 'Rhenish' refers to, the Rhineland, a loosely defined region embracing the land on either bank of the River Rhine in central Europe. [return](#)
  15. **Bušovice** is a village and municipality (*obec*) in the Rokycany District in the Pilsen Region. It lies approximately 13 km (8 mi) east of Pilsen, and 72 km (45 mi) south-west of Prague. [return](#)
  16. **Štěnovice** is a village and municipality (*obec*) in Pilsen-South District in the Pilsen Region. It lies approximately 9 kilometres (6 mi) south of Pilsen and 87 km (54 mi) south-west of Prague. [return](#)
  17. **Schutzjuden or Familianten**: These terms are well known to those researching Jewish history, but for any new to the term, 'Familianten' or 'Familianten Gesetz' was the term commonly used for

- the laws and the related record books which regulated the number of Jewish families in the Austrian lands in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19th centuries. The term *Schutzjuden* is German for ‘Protected Jews’. [return](#)
18. **Josef Strnad** appears several times as a source for the writer, but the translators have been unable to trace him. He is shown as the author of “Listář” (*Notebook*) and as contributor of a supplement to “Plzeňské listy” (literally “*The Pilsen Newspaper*”, but translated as “*The Pilsen News*”) in 1894. [return](#)
  19. **Macháček**: The source referred to here was earlier described as “*Today's city archivist, Dr. Fridolin Macháček*”. [return](#)
  20. **Kreutzer** is a former copper coin of Austria, the 100<sup>th</sup> part of a florin. The term was also used by various German states for minor coins. [return](#)
  21. **Zentner**: one zentner is equal to 100 kilograms (220 pounds). [return](#)
  22. **m.p.** = *mano propia* (ie *in or by his own hand*). [return](#)
  23. **The Prince** referred to is Rudolf (21 August 1858-30 January 1889). Archduke of Austria, Crown Prince of Austria, Hungary and Bohemia, he was the son and heir of Emperor Franz Joseph I. Rudolf apparently committed suicide at his Mayerling hunting lodge alongside his mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. Next in line to the Crown, the Archduke Karl Ludwig, renounced his succession a few days after Rudolf's death, and so his older son Archduke Franz Ferdinand became heir presumptive. (He was described by The New York Times of September 2, 1889 as: “good natured, gentle and indolent”.) The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his Bohemian wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, by the Bosnian Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo in 1914 sparked a chain of events that led directly to the First World War. [return](#)
  24. **The war** to which this refers is the Second War of Italian Independence (also known as the Franco-Austrian War). The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, having been defeated by Austria in the First War of Italian Independence, needed allies and managed to engineer a situation in which Napoleon III of France joined forces against Austria. Contrary to the loyal wishes of the Jews of Pilsen, Austria was defeated, although full Italian independence was not achieved until a third war, in which Prussia fought alongside the Italians. [return](#)
  25. **Exhibition**: although no exact date is given here, it is possible that this was in 1851, which was the very year in which the international exhibition in London's Hyde Park, known as The Great Exhibition (or in full: *The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations*) which was also sometimes described as the Crystal Palace Exhibition in reference to the temporary structure in which it was held. [return](#)
  26. **Silver riots**: More about the riots following the theft of silver is to be found in ‘The History of the Jews in the Royal Town of Sušice’ (*Yizkor Books Project, Bohemia*). [return](#)
  27. **Schechita** means the kosher/kashrut slaughtering of animals. [return](#)
  28. **Taxpayers** refers to families, hence the apparent numerical inconsistency. [return](#)
  29. **Mussaf** (also spelled *Musaf*) is an *additional service* recited on Shabbat, Yom Tov, Chol Hamoed, and Rosh Chodesh. [return](#)
  30. **Haftara** is a series of selections from the books of *Nevi'im* (“Prophets”) of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanach*) that is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice. [return](#)
  31. **‘be not valid’** suggests that otherwise there would be too few members. [return](#)
  32. **The Prokop** plot of land presumably refers to the previous ownership of this land. ‘Prokop the Great’ succeeded Žižka (*see Footnote 2*) after his death. He led an army of Taborites (ie one of the radical Hussite sects) in a siege of Pilsen. The Taborites had taken control of Prague's New Town, but eventually the forces from Prague and from the Pilsen siege were defeated by an army of nobles at the Battle of Lipany (30 May 1434) where both Prokop the Great and his successor as commander of the siege army (Prokop the Lesser) were killed. [return](#)
  33. **Zedoko** (Tzedakah) literally means ‘righteousness’, but it is often interpreted as ‘charity’, because Judaism views giving as the ultimate act of righteousness. Whether it is teaching a skill, donating goods, or giving money, Tzedakah is an integral part of living a Jewish life and is in fact required of all Jews. [return](#)
  34. **ree Board Association** provided free meals to the poor. [return](#)

35. **Copper Association.** Either the support given was on a small scale (ie in coppers or pennies) or the contributions to the Association were small (again, coppers/pennies). The 'Copper Association' is therefore understood as a nickname. [return](#)
36. **Independent Order B'nai B'rith** is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world, and committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and to combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life; broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens; and advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world. [return](#)
37. **Society:** the writer provides no explanation of what kind of a Society. However, the same expression has been discovered elsewhere in the 1920s, where what is meant is rather like a Masonic Lodge for 'notable' people. [return](#)
38. **The war** referred to here is the First World War which ended in 1918 and led to the creation of the new country of Czechoslovakia (comprising Bohemia, Slovakia and Moravia). As part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, all three had been on the 'losing side' in the Great War, but the creation of the new country not only satisfied growing nationalist expectations (as elsewhere in Europe) but helped to create a nation that became renowned for its contribution to many fields of art and culture. The nation was torn apart again after the Nazi invasion of 1939; was reborn in post-liberation 1945; then became part of the Soviet bloc; was liberated again in the Velvet Revolution of 1989; and finally took its own decision to separate into two republics (Czech and Slovak) in 1993. [return](#)

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**Note on Languages:** From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, German was the official language in Bohemia and was used for all official documents. This is because, after the defeat of the Czechs at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Habsburgs became the rulers of Bohemia. It stayed this way until 1918. (This chapter on The Jews of Pilsen was written in German, even though it was published in the 1930s.) In the formal educational system, secondary school pupils also learned to use Latin. It was not an official language nor used in day-to-day communication. But it was a language that educated people knew and could use. Latin was also the official language of the Catholic Church, a dominant religion in Hungary since Stephan I (King from 1001-1038) made it a state religion.

**Useful links on Pilsen:**

Jewish community of Pilsen: <http://www.zoplzen.cz/pamatky.html>

City of Pilsen: <http://www.pilsen.eu/en/>

Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plze%C5%88>

Golden map: <http://en.goldenmap.com/Plze%c5%88>

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