



Geschichtswerkstatt Geschwister Scholl:

**A student's role play on the ceremonial re-erection
of the headstone of Hannchen and Moses Wolf at
the Jewish Cemetery in Alsbach on June 24, 2026**



**GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT
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1. Preliminary Remarks

The following texts were presented by students from the Geschwister-Scholl-Schule at the memorial event organized by the Geschwister-Scholl History Workshop in Bensheim on June 24, 2026, at the Jewish Cemetery in Alsbach. They are the result of in-depth research and represent an examination of the fate of the Wolf family from Bensheim, based on the available sources. To supplement and expand upon this contribution, the Geschwister Scholl History Workshop in Bensheim is also compiling an academic documentation. In addition, a “Stolperstein” (stumbling stone) is planned to be laid for the Wolf family next year at their former residence and business building at Hauptstraße 58 in Bensheim.

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2. Fictional Monologue: Moses Wolf

My name is Moses Wolf. I was born on April 5, 1860, in Bickenbach. My parents' names were Isaak and Sara. We lived together in a house on Erbsengasse. There, my parents ran a very successful retail business that they had taken over from my grandfather. His name was also Isaak, and in 1808, together with his brother Moses, he was the first in our family to adopt the last name Wolf. This was during the time of Napoleon, when all Jews were required by decree to adopt a last name in order to be entered into a registry of names.

I have another sister. Her name is Mina, and she is a year younger than I am. I also have four half-siblings from my father's marriage to his first wife, Elisabeth (Elise), though only two of them reached adulthood. Their names are Wolf, Abraham, Ester, and Elise. When Elise was born in 1857, their mother, Elisabeth (Elise), died at the age of 33 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach. My father was now left on his own with two surviving children and the store. So he married my mother, Sara Fränkel, who was from Biblis and was eight years younger than my father.

At the time of my birth, there were about 40 Jews living in Bickenbach. They were allowed to live there, but only as long as they paid “protection money” to the Grand Duke in Darmstadt. When the German Empire was founded, we Jews were also allowed to move about freely and engage in trade anywhere in the empire. Since then, almost all of the Jews have moved away from Bickenbach to the cities.

My parents also left Bickenbach and moved to 10 Schlinkengasse in Bensheim. There, my father founded the company “I[saak] Wolf II.” But as early as 1877, my mother died at the age of only 48 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach. My father then married for the third time. His bride's name was Emma Schmidt. She was only seven years older than me and came from Kleinkarlbach in the Palatinate.

On November 11, 1886, at the age of 26, I married my bride, Hannchen Rosenthal, who was the same age as me, in Beerfelden, and shortly thereafter, on July 1, 1887, I became an equal partner in my father's business.

But just one year later, on July 1, 1888, I left my father's company again and founded my own business in Bensheim under the name “Moses Wolf I.” I had just become the father of our first and only child: Jakob was born on March 14, 1888, in Bensheim. I opened a store selling flour and local products,

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and just three years later—in 1891—I bought my own house, where I had been living with Hannchen since 1886. It was located on the other side of the Mittelbrücke (today: Hauptstraße 58), on the outskirts of what was then downtown Bensheim. 1893 stieg der Bruder meiner Frau, der Viehhändler Feist Rosenthal, der in der Mathildenstraße 34 und später Mathildenstraße 40 wohnte, als Teilhaber in meine Firma ein. Wir führten nun das Geschäft gemeinsam unter dem alten Firmennamen weiter.

On July 4, 1901, my brother-in-law Feist left the company again, and on the same day I granted my wife Hannchen power of attorney.

In 1902, I leased my store to Ludwig Schreiner and began selling wheat flour, bread flour, bran, and all kinds of animal feed from my apartment on the second floor.

My father, Isaak, died in 1911. He was 90 years old, making him the oldest resident of Bensheim! He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Alsbach. My stepmother, Emma, then moved back to her hometown of Kleinkarlbach in the Palatinate in 1912.

On June 26, 1925, my wife Hannchen and I retired from the company and handed the business over to my son Jacob and his wife Henny, who had been married in Babenhausen on February 15, 1925.

Two years later, after a long and painful illness, I died on May 28, 1927, at the age of 68. In my final days, I was cared for at the newly founded convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Heppenheim. My body was laid to rest on May 30 in a double grave at the Jewish Cemetery in Alsbach. The Bensheim Veterans' Association, of which I was a member, conducted the funeral procession. Until my death, I served as a volunteer for more than two decades in the Jewish religious community of Bensheim, most of that time as its leader.

My Hebrew tombstone inscription reads:

Here lies: An irreproachable and upright man who lived a blameless life, a man of righteousness. He feared God all his life. He was righteous in his faith. Here lay: Moses, son of Isaac. He died at an advanced age on the 22nd day of the month of Iyar and was buried with a good reputation on the 28th day of the year 5687 [1927]. May his soul be bound up in the covenant of life.

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3. Fictional Dialogue between Jacob and Moses Wolf

Jacob Wolf (Leandra): Father, I still remember that sad day when we buried you here in a large funeral procession, led by the Bensheim Veterans' Association. How do you look back on your life?

Moses Wolf (Evelyn): I had a wonderful childhood in Bickenbach and then in Bensheim. Until the day I lost my mother far too soon. I was only seventeen at the time when the serious side of life began for me. My father introduced me to the world of business and turned me into a skilled merchant. I ran my own, very successful business and was able to provide my dear wife Hannchen and our son Jakob with a carefree life.

Jacob: Tell me about Mom. How did you two meet?

Moses: Your mother, Hannchen Rosenthal, was from Beerfelden. We were married on November 11, 1886. She was intelligent, warm-hearted, and had a strong character. She was always a great support to me, both personally and in business, and I could always count on her.

Jacob: You ran the family business for many years. What did that mean to you?

Moses: A great deal. The business brought together several generations of our family. My father and I worked together for a long time. Later, your uncle Feist Rosenthal also became a partner. We dealt in flour, grain, animal feed, and seeds. We supplied many mills here in the area and were well-respected people. People called me "Flour Moses."

Jacob: And then I was born.

Moses: Yes. On March 14, 1888. You were our only child. I still remember well how proud I was when I held you in my arms for the first time. And I'm still proud of you today. You've become a successful businessman, just like me, and you served on the board of the Jewish community, just like me.

Jacob: You won't believe this, Dad, but shortly after you died, I was even elected to the city council in Bensheim!

Moses: That doesn't surprise me, my boy. I always knew you'd go far. How proud I was when you were commissioned as an officer during the war and awarded the Iron Cross! That's when I realized that we Jews had finally found our place in society.

Jakob: It's a shame that Grandpa Issak wasn't around to see it.

Moses: Oh yes, my father was also very proud of you. He saw with his own eyes how we Jews were finally able to settle freely throughout the Reich and feel like ordinary Germans. Even though many people still looked down on us.

Jacob: That makes what I'm about to tell you all the more painful: You won't believe it, Father, but shortly after your death, all hell broke loose for us Jews. Hatred was unleashed upon us, just as in the worst times of persecution. The new government did everything it could to harm us Jews. On April 1, 1933, a nationwide boycott took place, during which we were harassed and threatened by SA members. The posters they stuck on our storefronts read: "Germans have only one duty: don't buy from the Jews." We were treated like lepers. And more and more neighbors, acquaintances, and

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business partners suddenly began to give us a wide berth. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 also made us second-class citizens in the eyes of the law.

Moses: No, I wouldn't have thought that was possible. How did you react to that?

Jacob: Sales soon dropped significantly. I realized that the business was no longer viable. We had to sell everything for far less than it was worth, and then Henny, Marion, and I emigrated to America. We had to leave our mother behind; she couldn't get the necessary papers. I'd rather spare you the rest of her story.

Moses: You did the only right thing! Our family has always had the courage to blaze new trails. If you've built a good life for yourself in America, then it was the right decision. The only important thing is that you don't forget your roots. Never forget where you come from. Success is valuable, but family, decency, and compassion are even more important. That's what you should base your life on.

Jacob: Thank you, Father. It was good to be able to talk to you one more time. Rest in peace!

4. Fictional Monologue: Hannchen Wolf

My name is Hannchen, Hannchen Wolf. I was born on June 11, 1860, in Beerfelden, as the twelfth and last child of Jakob Hirsch Rosenthal and Adelheid Rosenthal (née Kaufmann). My siblings' names are: Leah, Feist, Chaya, Moses, Amalie, Zerel, Jettchen, Sophia, Isaac Loeb, Mayer, and Zandel. At the time of my birth, there were just under 200 Jewish residents in Beerfelden. We lived at Brunnengasse 12. My parents ran a livestock business there. Most of my siblings remained in Beerfelden for the rest of their lives.

I myself married the merchant Moses Wolf in Beerfelden. That was on November 11, 1886, and I was 26 years old at the time—the same age as Moses. My brother Feist also lived in Bensheim with his wife. Her name was Hannchen, just like mine. The two of them lived at Mathildenstraße No. 34, and later at No. 40.

After the wedding, Moses and I lived together at 58 Hauptstraße in Bensheim, and Moses joined his father Isaak's business. Two years later, on March 14, 1888, our only child, our dear Jakob, was born, and Moses started his own business dealing in flour and agricultural products. In 1893, my brother Feist, who was actually a cattle dealer, temporarily joined Moses's firm as a partner. When Feist left the firm again on July 4, 1901, Moses granted me power of attorney and let me run the business as I saw fit. However, we downsized and moved our business operations to the second floor. We rented the ground floor for four years to the grocer and fishmonger Ludwig Schreiner, who closed his shop in 1906.

In 1925, at the age of 65, Moses and I retired from the business and handed the company over to Jacob and his wife, Henny. The two of them had been married on February 15, 1925, in Babenhausen.

Two years later, on May 28, 1927, my husband Moses died at the age of 68 after a long and serious illness. He was buried on May 30 at the Jewish Cemetery in Alsbach. I chose a double grave for him, as I wanted to be buried next to him later on. This had only become customary in Alsbach a few decades earlier; originally, burials took place strictly in order of arrival. Unfortunately, however, as it turned out later, we were not granted a shared resting place.

I'm just glad that Moses didn't have to witness what eventually befell us Jews. When the business stopped doing well, Jakob made arrangements for our emigration. We wanted to go to the U.S. because we had relatives there who would vouch for us. We had to sell our house and the business to finance our life in the U.S. The proceeds were quite meager. Jakob and Henny now had to vacate their apartment on the first floor and lived as tenants with the Jewish widow Betty Hochschild until their emigration. I myself had to give up my apartment on the second floor and moved into a small apartment in the annex of our property. Unfortunately, at first only Jakob and Henny received entry permits to the U.S., and I had to let my son and his family go. Of course, I hoped they would bring me over soon. I will never forget our farewell in the winter of 1937. We were all so despondent. And yet I thank the Lord that the three of them were spared what was to unfold in their old homeland after their departure.

5. Fictional dialogue between Marion and Hannchen Wolf

Marion (Felina): Grandma, where are you? And how are you? I've asked myself these questions over and over again ever since we emigrated to the U.S. in December 1937 and had to leave you behind. I'll never forget the moment we boarded the train in Frankfurt and left everything behind. I was devastated. I had such a wonderful childhood! I had you!

Hannchen (Kassidy): Yes, we spent many happy hours up at my apartment on the second floor. You always came up to my place for dinner when your parents were at the store. I would often make you potato salad—that was your absolute favorite.

Marion: Yeah, that was just heavenly. I always missed that when I was in the U.S. And do you remember how you used to make your delicious pasta and then let it dry on the down comforters? That looked so funny!

Hannchen: Yes, my love, no one can take this time and our wonderful memories away from us.

Marion: But then we just walked away and left you all alone.

Hannchen: Dear Marion. Please believe me: Your parents had no choice. They did the right thing—for all of us. What mattered most to me was always that you were all doing well and that you had a bright future. Saying goodbye was one of the saddest moments of my life. It broke my heart to see my son Jakob, his wife Henny, and especially you, my angel, leave. At the same time, I hoped that you would be able to start a new and safe life in America. I tried to appear strong, even though I was terrified that I would never see you again.

Marion: But what became of you? How did you manage, all by yourself? You wrote us letters, saying that everything was fine, and then the letters suddenly stopped coming. We were so worried. What had happened?

Hannchen: Dear Marion, what I'm about to tell you is something I never mentioned to your parents. They had enough to worry about and had to build a new life in America, so I didn't want to burden them. But I want to be honest with you:

Life in Bensheim became even worse for us Jews than we could ever have imagined. It was early in the morning on November 10, 1938. At 6:30 a.m., the fire alarms suddenly went off. They had set our synagogue on fire! By the time the fire department arrived, there was nothing left to save. Our beautiful house of worship, which had been dedicated just 46 years earlier, was gone. Then the doorbell rang at our house, and the SA men were standing at my door. They ransacked the place, smashed my belongings, and threw my furniture out onto the street. I could hardly believe this blind fury of destruction and was shocked. If only they had given our beautiful furniture to the poor instead!

Marion: That's awful! Didn't anyone help you?

Hannchen: Did it help? A large crowd had gathered on the street, but no one protested. Some even shouted, "Down with the Jews!" while others laughed. As the slashed feather beds came flying down, someone shouted, "Now they're playing Frau Holle!" It was just horrific! Later, I learned that all the Jews in Bensheim had suffered terribly. Many were arrested; I heard that an acquaintance of mine even slit her wrists out of desperation. The cemetery in Alsbach was also desecrated, and your grandfather's gravestone was smashed to pieces.

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Marion: And you had to keep putting up with it in this city and this country?

Hannchen: I continued to hope that I would receive the necessary papers from the U.S. authorities, but there was no progress. Slowly, my money was also running out. We had to pay what was known as a “Jewish property levy” to cover the damage the SA had inflicted on our property. What a mockery! But I had already given you all my savings. And none of the urgently needed proceeds from the sale of the house had come through since December 1939. It took what seemed like an eternity for the authorities to approve the purchase agreement.

Marion: Your last letters were from Frankfurt. Why did you leave Bensheim?

Hannchen: In April 1939, a new law was enacted that was intended to prevent Jews from continuing to live under the same roof as neighbors of “German descent.” As a precaution, I initially moved to Offenbach, where Else, the sister of my daughter-in-law Henny, took me in temporarily. A year later, however, she was able to leave for the United States, and I had to find a new place to live. I was able to return to my small apartment in Bensheim with the Eberles, but I no longer felt safe there and began moving from place to place frequently. In November 1940, I moved temporarily into a Jewish boarding house in Frankfurt, but then had to move to a Jewish retirement home in Frankfurt. I still desperately hoped to be able to travel to the U.S. to join my loved ones and looked around for a suitable travel companion. But to no avail! In August 1942, the Gestapo came to take me away. I was crammed into the basement of the Großmarkthalle along with over 1,000 other deportees and transported in cattle cars to the Theresienstadt ghetto in the Protectorate of Bohemia, where I died just under a month later, on September 10, 1942. Only 17 people from my transport train survived the horror.

Marion: Grandma. It breaks my heart. All these years, you kept quiet to protect us. Your love was stronger than anything they did to you. I love you and will always cherish your memory.

Felina: Cassidy, I can't go on. The story is just too sad. How is anyone supposed to come to terms with the fact that people do things like this to other people? I wonder what Hannchen would say about this?

Kassidy: You're right, Felina—I feel the same way. I can't give you an answer to that. But maybe we should draw our own conclusions from the story.

Felina: And what would those be?

Kassidy: Maybe something like this:

Never judge others based on their background, religion, or appearance. Stand up for humanity, respect, and freedom, and do not remain silent when people are marginalized or persecuted. Only in this way can we ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.