

Worms, July 16, 2020

Assessment and measures

Desecration of paint on the Holy Sand in Worms

Thursday, July 9, 2020, around noon. Gravestones at the oldest surviving Jewish cemetery, the “Heiliger Sand” in Worms, have been smeared with paint.

The shock was unlimited. The dismay was great within the Jewish Community of Mainz, the city of Worms and all those involved in or responsible for the World Heritage application for the *ShUM Sites of Speyer, Worms and Mainz*.

One week later, July 16, 2020: A group of restorers, monument conservators, experts in stone conservation and municipal representatives intensively examined and inspected the smeared stones.

First conclusion: there are far fewer gravestones affected than initially assumed. The number is around 18 stones. Unfortunately correct: the gravestone of Maharam, the admired Rabbi of Rothenburg and that of Solomon von Wimpfen, who is buried next to him, are mutilated.

All gravestones distorted with paint are now documented. Currently, experts are examining how to proceed with the cleaning of the affected stones. There is already considerable optimism that this can be totally successful.

However, for these measures to happen, the “Heiliger Sand” cemetery must remain closed for few weeks’ time.

Further information can be found on the website of the SchUM-Städte e.V.

<https://schumstaedte.de/en/>; <https://schumstaedte.de/en/shum/tourism/>)

and the Tourist-Information Worms

<https://www.worms-erleben.de/erleben/planen-und-buchen/service/>)

Information on the suspected committer and her motives is not given due to ongoing investigations.

ShUM is an acronym from the first letters of medieval Hebrew city names, which go back to Latin.

Shin (Sch) = ShPIRA = Speyer

Waw (U) = Warmaisa = Worms

Mem (M) = Magenza = Mainz

In the middle Ages, the Jewish communities in the cities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz on the Middle Rhine formed an alliance that deeply influenced the architecture, culture, religion and Halakha of the Central and Eastern European Jewish diaspora and continues to do so today. Monuments - synagogues, women's shuln, teaching houses, ritual baths - and the unique cemeteries in Worms and Mainz, together with religious traditions, bear witness to the immense importance and innovative power of the ShUM communities.

The ShUM Sites shall become UNESCO World Heritage. The decision will be made in 2021.