



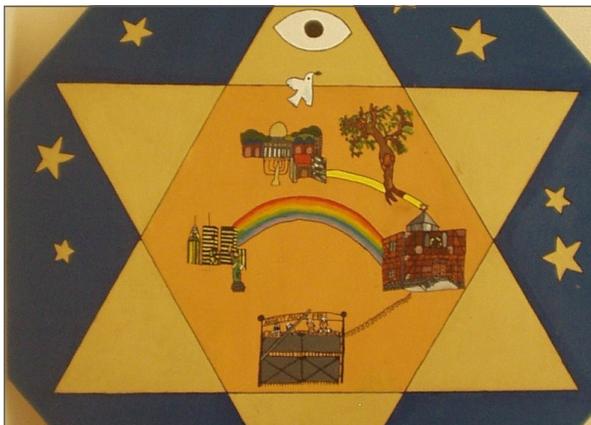
# Past

The earliest attestations of a Jewish community in Wetter date back to the 14th century, where we find Jewish names in different tax rolls. The Jewish population continuously grew up to about 9% of the whole population in the 19th century.

As a consequence, the Jewish community decided to build a synagogue of their own. In 1897, the building was consecrated, a Rabbi lived in it and the community flourished.

Jews played an important part in public life: A department store was run by a Jewish family, Jewish cattle-dealers worked together with Christian farmers in the rural society of our small town, and even a member of the communal parliament was Jewish.

All this peaceful and fruitful coexistence ended immediately after the takeover of the Nazi-Regime in 1933. Like everywhere in Germany, the Jews were forced to suffer from law enforcements and social exclusion. This led to the destruction of the Synagogue in 1938. Finally, in 1942 Jewish life in Wetter came to an end: Most of the Jewish citizens of Wetter emigrated to America or Israel, but at least 27 of them were killed in concentration camps.



# Present

After the devastation in 1938, the synagogue of Wetter was sold to a local farmer who used it as a barn. After the war, the building was resold, but, as there no longer existed a Jewish community in Wetter, it remained private property.

The town of Wetter, namely the Parliament and the Mayor, deeply felt the responsibility to take care of the building. After several attempts to buy it, the former Mayor Dieter Rincke was able to municipalize the former synagogue in the year 2000, indicating that the town of Wetter also took over the political responsibility for what happened two generations before.

It took five years and an exhaustive amount of money to refurbish the building and open it to the public. A non-profit organization, the „Trägerverein“, was founded taking care of the activities that should take place in the historical building. On Holocaust Memorial Day 2005, the citizens of Wetter could visit their former synagogue for the first time after Second World War, some of them also noticing for the first time, that Wetter once had a synagogue at all.

Since then, our organisation presents a great variety of events throughout the year: Concerts, contemporary art, lectures, and together with pupils of our highschool, a ceremony on Nov. 10th, commemorating the killing and devastation.



# Future

Remembering the heavy past is important, but also very difficult: How can we explain the reasons for killing so many people, for all the kinds of violence and ferocity that took place in our country and in our hometown as well? How can we make sure, that the next generation will not make the same mistakes again?

Our organisation decided that the probably best way to prevent us from a recurring past is to help establishing a better future. The former synagogue, therefore, should not only be a place of commemoration, like a museum, but a vivid place of cultural interaction and social gathering.

We put a plague on the wall, on the place where the Torah once was stored. It is an adaption of the famous saying of Rabbi Hillel: „If not you, who?“

By doing so, we want to make sure that every person entering the former synagogue is reminded of the responsibility for what is happening in his or her area of life. Talking about „we“ and „they“ is the beginning of social exclusion, and this happened not only in the past but also in our times, everytime. To help stopping this beginning of exclusion is the main task of our organisation.

