

# HERMANN ROSE

\* 1870 – OBERWALDBEHRUNGEN, WÜRZBURG, HOMBURG AM MAIN, ALTENSTADT



My name is Hermann Rose. I was born on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1870 in Oberwaldbehrungen, a small community in Lower Franconia. I can hardly remember my childhood or adolescence. But one important part of my life was my training to be a teacher, which I really wanted to do. At the age of 20, I was trained as a teacher at the seminary in Würzburg.

Then I worked in several Franconian villages and towns. During this time I also met my future wife Ida Freimark. I married her in April 1899 in Würzburg. And soon my professional career started: I was so happy when I heard that on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1900, a position as main teacher for the Jewish elementary school in Altenstadt became available. Of course I applied immediately and got the job. In September 1900, I moved to Altenstadt with my wife Ida and our firstborn child Albert.

Altenstadt has always been the biggest Jewish community in the region, so I was hoping to get a job in my hometown!

Altenstadt always had – like I told you before – a lot of Jewish inhabitants. Of course some of them, especially younger ones emigrated to countries abroad. I am sure though that they only hoped for better living conditions rather than disliking our nice village. We also have an astonishing synagogue<sup>1</sup> in Altenstadt. When it was renovated the last time, it was equipped with colourful windows for a synagogue and painted in a beautiful way. I like it very much.

Life in Altenstadt is very harmonious. Almost half the population here is Jewish, the other half Christian of course. The strict separation of the two religions has fortunately loosened up a bit in the last century. We Jews don't have to live anymore in separated areas like in other cities or towns. Everyone is involved in a cultural life in our town. My wish for the future is that all religions not only in Germany but all over the world can live together in peace – although it doesn't look like it at the moment. This is what I try to tell everyone in Altenstadt every single day. I believe as a teacher I do have some influence.

I finished my training as a teacher and stayed in Altenstadt. In 1899 I married my wife Ida. And shortly after that I was also lucky with my job: I was so happy to hear that there was a job opening at the Jewish school in Altenstadt starting on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1900. Obviously, I applied right away and I got the job! Since then I was employed as a school teacher, a religious education teacher and as cantor<sup>2</sup> by the Jewish community. The Isrealit school had 12 week day pupils<sup>3</sup> and three Sunday pupils<sup>4</sup>. Of course, this wasn't a lot of pupils but I was happy anyway. I take my job very seriously and besides the ones mentioned I am taking over other tasks within the Jewish community. Furthermore, I am very involved in the things happening in Altenstadt.

Besides my teaching I think history is very important so I am writing down the history and all stories of my community. For many years I have been collecting a lot of information about Altenstadt and its surrounding Jewish communities. These records are meant for the generations

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<sup>1</sup> Building, which is used for gatherings and church services for Jewish people

<sup>2</sup> Choir leader during church service, applicable to Judaism as well as Christianity

<sup>3</sup> The workday school corresponds to the compulsory school attendance for children today. At that time, however, there were only seven years of compulsory schooling.

<sup>4</sup> Young people who finished the seventh grade of weekday school were expected to attend Sunday school once a week for another few years.

to come. I am particularly proud of my publication "Vorgeschichte der israelitischen Volksschule Altstadt" which was first published in 1929.

My children bring a lot of happiness into my life. My wife Ida and I, we have four kids: Albert, Berta, Norbert and wee Leo. We are almost an extended family. Although the salary as a teacher was sometimes too small, when the children were still living at home, we always made it. All of us were contact persons for the Jewish population in Altstadt but also Non-Jews appreciated our work and came forward to us. I had already realised then that I made myself a name in my small community and I really appreciate it.

It happens a lot that I am asked to give a speech at community celebrations or other festivities. I always receive recognition and appreciation from my fellow citizens. Additionally, I am a member of many associations, which also welcome Jews. I am involved in the association „Harmonia“, which is our local choral society, in the savings bank and loans association and in the association for fruits, bees and fowl breeding. I try to be as engaged as possible in all of them. However, I am also active professionally: Since 1900 I have been a member of the district association for teachers Illertissen<sup>5</sup> and in 1931 I have been appointed honorary member due to my long and loyal membership. I am so happy about that.

When 1914 the war began, Jews from Altstadt also went to war. Unfortunately, not everyone came back... I have to admit, I didn't think everything would happen this quickly. Because I had a disease concerning my throat, I went to get a treatment at a health resort in Ems. But when the situation got more and more serious, I tried everything to get back home to my family as fast as possible. For a short time, I was really scared that I wouldn't be able to go back home due to blocked routes and relocations of the troops. Fortunately, I was able to make it back home safely into the arms of my family. We kept up to date by watching the news fearsome the remaining time of the war. Other than that we were not affected by the war.

As a consequence of the war and the partly antisemitic atmosphere, a lot of Jews moved away. This is why there were less children in our community and the numbers of my pupils were drastically reducing. In 1924, only three kids were left in the elementary school. On April 1, 1924, the school was officially closed, what a pity. I tried to fight it but I cannot change orders that are given from higher officials. It seems like I am the last teacher to ever lead this elementary school.

In the end, the only thing left to do was to retire by receiving Wartegeld<sup>6</sup>. Everything I ever wanted was to teach though. This is why I am still cantor and why I am giving religious education lessons. In 1931 I was appointed honorary member of the association of teachers in our region. I was very pleased about it as I have been a member for over 30 years.

My wish that people with different religions that are resident in the German Reich can live in peace and harmony together won't be fulfilled. Everywhere are antisemitic riots...

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<sup>5</sup> Town in the Bavarian-Swabian region close to Neu-Ulm

<sup>6</sup> A kind of pension for someone who retires ahead of time

## LITERATURE

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## CREDITS

Hermann Rose, 1928 in Bad Mergentheim. The picture is located in the archives of the town Altenstadt. It is the only existing photograph of him and unfortunately, the quality is poor and the picture is cropped. The picture is printed in: Römer, Gernot: Er konnte sein Altenstadt nicht vergessen. In: Augsburgener Allgemeine. 1.6.2010. Online: <https://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/illertissen/Er-konnte-sein-Altenstadt-nicht-vergessen-id7924711.html> (zuletzt 23.06.18).