See [http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/villes/metz/index.htm](http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/villes/metz/index.htm) for information and photos in French. Capital of the Moselle d'arrondissement in northeastern France, Metz is situated at the confluence of the Moselle and the Seille rivers about 40 km (25 mi) west of the German border. This strategic communications and transportation center in Lorraine with iron-mining and industrial region was under Roman rule until the fifth century. According to ancient chronicles, Jews had settled in Metz in the year 221; they enjoyed municipal freedom, and lived on very good terms with the Christians. It is stated also that when St. Eucaire, Bishop of Toul, had undertaken to convert the Jews, the emperor Julian, who was at Metz at the time condemned the bishop to prison for his untimely zeal. Under the Merovingians and Carolingians, there were Jews at Metz engaged as agriculturists, merchants, artisans, and especially as goldsmiths and physicians. Jews and Christians formed intimate friendships. Clergy dined in the homes of the Jews. More than one intermarriage resulted from this friendly intercourse. The cordiality of these relations was increased by the efforts made by the Church councils to disturb it. At a council held at the monastery of St. Arnould at Metz May 1, 888 at which Balbodus, Archbishop of Toul, presided and which was attended by Dadou, Bishop of Verdun; Arnold, Bishop of Toul; and Robert, Bishop of Metz on the complaint of the dean of the cathedral, Jews were forbidden to drink or eat with or to marry Christians. These vexations lasted but a short time because under the successors of Charles the Bald, Jews could own real estate and therefore probably had other municipal rights. Bishop Adalberon in 945 commanded David, a Jew of the diocese of Metz, to restore a vineyard of which he had secured possession to the monastery of St. Glossinde. Jews revered this Adalberon, who occupied the episcopal see until 984 and was very favorable to the Jews. According to the chronicles, at his death "the Jews wept aloud; and mourned and lamented." Some years later they showed similar feeling about another archbishop-Mattard. The dukes of Lorraine also took them under their protection and treated them with the greatest consideration. Thanks to this peace, they devoted themselves to study. Persecutions, especially during the Crusades, scattered the Jews of Metz. Those who returned afterward found refuge there, for which paid thirty-four deniers levied on them when they entered the city. Nevertheless, in 1365 they were expelled by the magistrates who blamed them for the destruction of twenty-two houses by lightning. The three bishopric cities (Metz, Toul, and Verdun) annexed by France in 1552 were military garrisons. The King of France, allowed four Jewish families to settle in Metz in 1567 with the consent of the marshal of Vieilleville because they were useful for his military needs. Less than thirty years later, they were organized into a community. In 1595, they met in general assembly and elected a
communal board, to which they delegated all power and all authority in everything concerning administration and police, and the jurisdiction of civil cases. Of the six men composing this council the following three were rabbis: Isaac, son of Lazare Levy; Joseph Levy; and Solomon, son of Gershon Zay. The proceedings of this assembly, as well as those of the election, were submitted for the approval of the higher authorities, who on July 12, 1595, "by the grace of God, and with the consent of his majesty, and of Monsieur, the Duke of Epergnan," recognized those elected as the official representatives and the regularly appointed intermediaries of the Jewish community of Metz. The community developed in influence and numbers; in 1614 it numbered 500. In 1624, 120 families consisted of more than 600 individuals. The rabbi at that time was Moses Cohen of Prague. His position was confirmed by the Duke de Valette, peer and colonel-general of France and commanding general of the citadel of Metz, "to undertake the above-mentioned charge and functions of rabbi." (A fact that should be noted: throughout the Middle Ages, the nomination of the rabbi required ratification by the state.) In 1650, the rabbi was Moses Nerol; contrary to custom, and for some unknown reason, the council of the community did not ask the government to confirm his nomination. Louis XIV, during his visit to Metz Sept. 25, 1657, visited the synagogue and gave audience to the council of the trustees of the community as well as to the rabbi. The same day he signed letters patent for the privileges of the Jews, in which he warned them that in the future they would not be allowed to choose a rabbi without obtaining his consent. The letters patent granted by Louis XIV and Louis XV were ratified and registered by the Parliament of Metz (Sept. 3, 1718). Those of May 7, 1777, gave the Jews still greater liberties and spoke of them as citizens of the land. In 1782, when the Count of Provence, afterward Louis XVIII went to Metz, he visited the synagogue and the chief rabbi, Lion Asser (Aryeh Loeb ben Asher), and in the name of the community assured him of his homage and bestowed upon him the priestly benediction. This made a profound impression upon the count, and those about him were astonished to hear him praise the Jew. "Jew or Christian," he said, "what is the difference? I honor virtue wherever it is found." From this began a community that developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, reaching 2200 in 1790. The early eighteenth century Jewish population was 2200. The registration of births, marriages, and deaths were kept rather regularly from 1717 to 1792. The French Revolution was greeted with enthusiasm by the Jews of Metz. In 1792 the chief rabbi himself, Uri Cohen, already advanced in years, offered an example of patriotism by tendering his services for the defense of the city. After the victory of Valmy, he set out at the head of the defenders of Thionville and, with Rolley, mayor of Metz, led them before the Ark, where, in an enthusiastic speech, he extolled the bravery of the Jews and declared the country had the right to count upon the cooperation of all its citizens. During the Reign of Terror the synagogue was closed, the sacred utensils used in the services put under seal, and the courtyard used for a pasture. The tombstones were taken from the cemetery and used for building purposes. In 1792 Lafayette, commanding the army at Metz, assured religious freedom of Jews, which later was suspended during the Reign of Terror (1794). By the decrees of 1806 and of March 7, 1808, Judaism was officially recognized, and in the creation of the seven consistories and grand rabbinates the district of Metz and the community of the city of Metz are mentioned. By the decree of 1824, the rabbinical school that was transferred to Paris in 1859 was established at Metz. The first chief rabbi was Mayer Charleville, who was followed by Joseph Gougenheim, Wittersheim, Aaron Worms, Lyon Lambert, and Lippmann. The synagogue was rebuilt in 1850. After the War of 1870 Lippmann, who was unwilling to surrender his allegiance to France, resigned his post. He was subsequently made chief rabbi at Lille. During this period, Louis
Morhange, formerly professor at the rabbinical school in Metz served as chief rabbi until the installation of Bigard. In 1885, the latter was succeeded by Isaac Weill, who in 1890 succeeded Arnold Aron as chief rabbi at Strasbourg. His successors at Metz were Adolphe Ury and in 1904, Nathan Netter. The synagogue was erected in 1840 and dedicated in 1845. 1902 population was 58,462, including 1,451 Jews. In 1904, the community possessed communal schools, an nursery school, a hospital, a matzoh bakery, and numerous charitable societies, including a society of young people, recognized by the state that gives aid without distinction as to creed.

Sources: <em>Jewish Encyclopedia</em> and others. [January 2008]  

Glatigny blood libel: French Jew who was executed for blood libel is exonerated 350 years after his death and declared a martyr.[January 2014]  

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