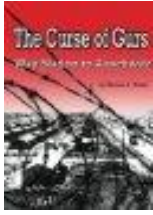


# The Curse of Gurs by Werner L. Frank

by [Erika Dreifus](#) on Sunday, October 28, 2012



Werner Frank, who emigrated from Germany as a child in 1937, has recently published a book focusing on a specific strand of this research: the story of the October 1940 deportation of Jews from the Baden region of Germany to Gurs, an internment camp in France. From Gurs, many of these Jews were eventually deported to Auschwitz. This helps explain the book's full title: *The Curse of Gurs: Way Station to Auschwitz*.

The story is particularly painful because so many of Werner's relatives were among these Baden Jews. Moreover, Werner remains acutely aware of his good fortune in having left Baden before 1940.

As an historian, Erika Dreifus was wowed from the outset by [Dr. Michael Berenbaum](#)'s introduction:

Frank does three things remarkably well. He explores the towns of the Baden regions where Jews had lives for centuries, often in the same house, generation after generation, and describes the institutions of these towns, their synagogues and community life, their leaders and rabbis. He also conveys the narrative of the Jews who were deported, name-by-name, family-by-family. A genealogist through [and] through, he knows how to research community records and documents, and to create family trees. Because of this work, he depicts the extended members of his ancestors and their descendants in a network of relationships to the Frank family. It is a significant achievement.

Yet above all, he has entered the inner courtyard of Gurs and portrayed a sense of life in the camp, the spiritual life of German Jews who were exiled to a French internment camp where they were detained in horrific conditions until their fate was decided. He brings forth to the reader documents and letters, telegrams and artifacts, pictures and images, all of which enable us to enter with him into the camp's brutal gates.

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**Life in a French concentration camp whose inmates ended up in Auschwitz.,**  
December 14, 2013

By [Kurt S. Maier](#) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: **The Curse of Gurs: Way Station to Auschwitz (Paperback)**

Werner L. Frank's book, *The Curse of Gurs*, is the first study in English of the French concentration camp housing German-Jewish refugees and political prisoners. This camp is all but unknown to people familiar with Auschwitz and Birkenau. The author brings the book alive with his thorough knowledge of families and communities in the state of Baden, Germany. This area was the first to deport its Jews most of whom eventually ended up in the death camps of Poland.

There are more biographical details of people in this book than in a dozen Holocaust works put together. What did these men and women do for a living? How many children did they raise? Family photographs, weddings, births, all are recorded in this book. What are in the letters they wrote from Gurs pleading for help?

We have almost no documents from people inside Auschwitz. Here is a chance for readers to see what life was like in another concentration camp that became a funnel for the death camps.