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FIELD GUIDE TO

Jewish Warsaw and Krakow

WARSAW: NOŻYK SYNAGOGUE • GRZYBOWSKI SQUARE • LITERARY WARSAW OF PERETZ & SINGER • THE RINGELBLUM ARCHIVE • GHETTO MEMORIAL ROUTE • MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS **KRAKÓW:** OLD TOWN • KRZYSZTOFORY PALACE-CITY MUSEUM • MAIN MARKET SQUARE • FEINTUCH FAMILY • ŚW. ANNY (JEWISH STREET) COLLEGIUM MAIUS • KAZIMIERZ • PODGÓRZE • SCHINDLER'S FACTORY MUSEUM

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Design by LaserCom Design, San Francisco

ISBN 978-83-62887-04-0
Printed in USA

Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw and Kraków

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TAUBE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND FOUNDATION
WARSAW

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Welcome


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Dauga
Dvina
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Vilnius
Minsk
BELARUS
RUSSIA
Hrodna
Pinsk
Gdańsk
Kaliningrad
Warsaw
Poznan
Lódz
POLAND
Lublin
Berlin
Prague
Cracow
SLOVAKIA
Bratis
Leipzig
Dresden
CZECH REP.
Vienna
AUSTRIA
Graz

Welcome to Jewish Poland.

The experience of coming to Poland to learn about the Jewish past, and to think about the present and future of Polish Jewry, is a transformative journey. More than half a century after the Holocaust and two decades after the fall of Communism, a visit to Jewish Poland is filled with a multitude of questions and myriad surprises. It brings to life complex emotions, from profound sadness to deep connections, that may throw our preconceptions into startling relief. It invites us to deeply examine our past, both personal and communal, and to consider what it is we care most about in Jewish culture, history, and traditions.

There are many paths into Jewish Poland. Each offers unique opportunities for discovery and engagement, along with its own challenges and experiences. Jews visit Poland for many reasons: to see the towns where their families lived and perhaps touch their homes and gravestones; to visit the concentration camps where family members tragically died; to learn about European Jewish culture, or to enjoy the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, the world's largest festival of its kind. But all visitors discover things they did not expect, and find their understanding of Jewish culture in Poland permanently transformed.

Many readers have probably encountered some version of a conversation that runs: "I'm planning to take a Jewish heritage tour of Poland."

"A tour of what? There's nothing left."

Not so! History doesn't move. Poland is the birthplace of Ashkenazi, or East European Jewish, culture. To explore your Jewish roots in Europe means to return to the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which are now today's Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine.

It is also true, however, that while history cannot be moved or changed it can be forgotten, intentionally or unintentionally. At every moment it is being recreated and reinterpreted. So it is with the history and heritage of the Ashkenazi civilization that developed over nearly a millennium on Polish lands. While Polish Jewish culture has found new life in many parts of the world, the appreciation of its roots is on its way to being lost or forgotten. The discussion about the relevance of Poland as a site for Jews to visit, or for those interested in Jewish culture and Jewish education to visit, raises questions about how we understand our own history and how we envision our role in constructing meaningful connections to Polish Jewish heritage and transmitting them to our children.



Crowd in Szeroka Square at closing night concert of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

Reconnecting with Our Heritage

Our combined experience during the past two decades suggests that not only is it possible to reconnect with Jewish history and culture by visiting Poland in ways not possible in America or Israel, but that such visits are transformative. They have a deep and lasting impact on how individuals relate to their own European Jewish heritage and on the ways that they will explain and transmit their Jewish identity to their children and their friends.

Philosopher and rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke to the same conviction over half a century ago, in a public lecture that he gave at YIVO, a great repository of Jewish historical documents from Central and Eastern Europe, in New York City in 1945. "The Eastern European era can become a source of inspiration for all of us," he told his American audience. "A day will come in which the hidden light of the Eastern

European era will be revealed. This era was the Song of Songs (which according to the rabbis is the holiest of Holy Scripture) of Jewish history in the last two thousand years. If the other eras were holy, this one was the holy of holies."

During the half century after Heschel gave this speech the political realities of the Soviet-dominated People's Republic of Poland made it very difficult to explore and maintain a connection with the Jewish heritage in Poland and to uncover the treasures that lay beneath the postwar surface of a rebuilt Poland. Between 1945 and 1989 the Jewish culture and Jewish heritage and history of Poland were not even discussed in public. Today, however, two decades after the transition to democracy, Jonathan Ornstein, the Director of the Kraków Jewish Community Center, argues that there is no country in Europe where citizens are more knowledgeable about Jewish culture or more welcoming to Jews than Poland, no European city where it is more comfortable to be a Jew in public than Kraków.



Visitors to the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw.

Visitors find two elements of this process particularly surprising. First is the fact that Jewish communities exist and are growing in many Polish cities, and that young people are growing up in Poland comfortable with their identities as Polish Jews. Museum exhibits, publications, and tour guides in English make it possible to immerse yourself in Polish Jewish heritage in ways that were impossible two decades earlier. Second is that scores of Gentile Poles have embraced their role as stewards of Jewish heritage and history. Visitors often take tours led by non-Jewish Poles who are committed to teaching about the Jewish past of their towns and cities.

Why Is This Guide Different from All Others?

We based our guidebook on the model of the Passover haggadah, which relates the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The haggadah begins by setting the scene with a brief introduction and then poses four questions, which in turn, help shape the direction of the narrative. For each question there may be many answers, or perhaps the question will lead to more questions. The purpose is to engage each person in the journey from Egypt, offering insights into the story and illuminating the paths, both physical and spiritual, that may be followed.

Our guidebook, like the haggadah, tells a story, a tale of two great cities and their Jewish communities, and it too begins by setting the scene, in an opening section entitled "Poland's Jewish Revival." Our story contains dramatic moments and describes many remarkable people. Like the haggadah it poses questions that hold our attention and help move us to reflection.

To tell our story we travel across nearly a thousand years of history, but our goal is not to write history. We are storytellers, and we seek to provide a contemporary haggadah of the tale of Jewish Poland, an experiential journey framed by unique narratives, commentaries, and questions. We hope that our haggadah will enable you to journey with us and to explore more deeply the long and amazing tale of Jewish Poland.

Our walks offer an opportunity to engage with Polish Jewish heritage and to gain a sense of ownership of the Jewish past of Eastern Europe. Throughout our guide we speak of the Polish cityscape as a layered

text, a palimpsest, to use an old expression, with hidden layers of history and a complex, multicultural past invisible on the surface. We imagine looking down on Warsaw today and seeing two grids, pre-war and postwar, layered one over another. Warsaw becomes a city whose functional, "uninspired" surface hides layers of the Jewish past and of the shared Polish-Jewish past. The remarkable underground levels of Kraków's Old Town offer a metaphor for defining elements of Poland's past—including its rich Jewish heritage—that are being reaffirmed today. Our narrative moves downward and upward fluidly through layers that reflect the drastic political changes of the past century.

We are storytellers, and we offer a contemporary haggadah of the tale of Jewish Poland.

Even during your first encounter, you may begin thinking, What layers of that palimpsest do we choose to emphasize? Monolithic narratives of antisemitic Poland after World War II played an important part in helping to build unity in the Jewish community and support for Israel as a Jewish homeland. In recent decades, however, the fall of Europe's Communist regimes has brought a climate of democracy and intellectual openness, while attitudes within the Jewish world toward both East European Jewish heritage and the centrality of the Holocaust to Jewish identity are undergoing a generational shift. Many individuals and educational institutions are beginning to explore new ways of visiting Poland in their search to explore Jewish heritage, history, and identity.

As associates of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, we seek to advance the new narratives of Jewish Poland. We represent different religious and cultural backgrounds, as well as different professions, and each of us brings our personal perspectives to the tours. Several of us were born and raised in Poland, others are more recently minted or honorary citizens. We invite you to explore Warsaw and Kraków with us as we raise questions about the past and present and offer, if not definitive answers, at least new ways of thinking about the issues.

Discussion Topics and Questions

Throughout this guide we pose questions that visitors often raise, as well as some of our own. We offer them as opportunities for discussion and reflection and for challenging assumptions.

If your tour offers time for discussion, individuals or group leaders may ask these questions of your guides. For educational tour groups, these questions may serve as the basis for group discussions, and for the sharing of opinions, after participants have learned basic information during their tour. For student groups and educator tours, these questions may be used as potential essay topics, as encouragement to further research or interviews, and as material for discussion within communities once participants return to their home countries.

We encourage you to formulate your own questions and to share them with us via the Taube Center's website www.centrumtaubego.org.pl or by email: centrumtaubego@centrumtaubego.org.pl.

Poland's Jewish Revival

Yes, there are Jewish communities in Poland today!

Not only in Warsaw and Kraków but in Gdańsk, Wrocław, Łódź, Bielsko-Biała, Poznań, and Katowice. This may be one of the world's best-kept secrets. After all, who expects to find a living Jewish community in a country defined by so many after the Shoah as the world's largest Jewish cemetery? Maybe you visit Warsaw to see the remains of the ghetto or the grave of a rebbe, but the option to chat with a young Jewish journalist or a Polish-born rabbi may shake up your preconceptions and sensibilities. You expect to find a semi-functional synagogue, the minyan made up of seniors. But to find a day school? Summer camps? A Jewish student organization? An adult education center? Jewish magazines? A Yiddish theater? A Jewish academic institute and university-level Jewish studies programs?



ZOOM, the Polish Jewish Youth Organization. The sign reads, "Get to know the Jew," a parody of the title of a contemporary antisemitic pamphlet.

Open the *Yellow Pages* or Google "Jews in Warsaw" and you will find listings from A to Z: everyone from an artist who makes exquisite paper cut-outs to a Zionist who coordinates the Polish Taglit-Birthright Israel program; from those who are as orthodox in their secularism as others are Orthodox in their religious practice; from those who are cultural Jews to those who are Jews only by dint of family history. Some are defined as Jews by others, and others define themselves as Jews. There are Jews who live in Poland and there are Polish Jews. A few are American and foreign ex-pats, including the current Chief Rabbi of Poland, but most were born and raised in Poland. There are those who were raised in Yiddish-speaking homes and those who were raised in what is often derogatorily called *żydokomuna*–Jewish Communism. There are those who always knew they were Jewish and those who are just finding out. Then there is a growing list of many who are not Jewish but who passionately and thoughtfully support, promote, and contribute to Jewish life and culture in Poland.



First issue of *Midrasz*, a Jewish monthly magazine published in Poland, April 1997.

How did this happen? This is a good moment to look at the historical roots of the Jewish presence in Poland. And at its rebirth after the Shoah and decades of Communist repression.

Why Did Jews Come to Poland, and Why so Many?

There is an ancient legend that the name Poland is derived from two Hebrew words, *Po-lin* (Here abide), which were inscribed on a note that descended from heaven and was found by Jewish refugees from Germany at the time of the Black Death (ca. 1350 C.E.) and the attendant massacres of Jews. The earliest firm evidence of a Jewish presence on Polish lands, however, is a description left by Ibrahim ibn Yakub, a Jewish merchant and diplomat from Spain in the mid-10th century.



Zamość Synagogue, renovated by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland.

Persecution in Europe—connected with the crusades and outbreaks of plague (for which Jews were blamed), and during the Spanish Inquisition in the late 15th century—caused many Jews to migrate to the Polish Kingdom, where they

could find safety. Originally most of them came from Bohemia (now in the Czech Republic) and from German lands along the Rhine River known as Ashkenaz. These migrants are referred to as Ashkenazi Jews, but a small number of Sephardic Jews came as well.

The Polish kings and the nobility, who represented two separate spheres of economic power, invited Jewish settlers to help them develop almost every aspect of their country's feudal, farm-based economy. By the turn of the 13th century Jews were hired to run the first mint in Poland. One of the coins minted under Duke Mieszko the Elder actually bore both Hebrew and Polish letters! The largest wave of Jewish immigration came under the reign of Kazimierz the Great (1333-70), when Jews gained an important role as bankers and money-lenders and helped develop real estate in Kraków, then the royal seat of the Kingdom of Poland. One of the greatest bankers under Kazimierz was a Jew, Lewko of Kraków, who ran both the royal mint and the Wieliczka Salt Mine in Bochnia.



Early Polish coin with Hebrew inscription.

Jews played a special role in the development of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was created by the union of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1569. They were important contributors to this vast new realm in financial services, crafts, commerce, and the management of great estates and farms.

Jews were granted exclusive or monopoly (arenda) rights over many aspects of production and tax collection on the privately held lands of the nobility. They became responsible for most aspects of the feudal economy besides farming itself, such as managing the estates of Polish lords, cutting timber, engaging in commerce in raw materials like grain and furs, and collecting taxes or in-kind payments from the peasants.

The union of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania opened up vast territories in the East, on lands that are today Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. From the 15th through the 16th centuries waves of Jewish immigrants moving east would pass through Kraków, which became a hub of cultural life and influences from Western Europe. Jews became



Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

indispensable to the nobility in settling and developing the economies of their new towns and landholdings further east.

Jewish Privileges and Government

The Commonwealth had one of Europe's first parliamentary governments, owing to the Polish nobility, which took part in the Parliament *(Sejm)*, elected the king, and was fiercely committed to preserving its rights

and freedoms. This tradition of Golden Freedom also included religious tolerance, at a time when it was largely unknown in the rest of Europe. Poland in the 16th century became a haven not only for Jews but also for Protestants, anti-Trinitarians, and early Unitarians (the progressive intellectuals of their age), all of whom were considered heretics by Catholic Europe and even burned at the stake in Italy or Spain.

Jews found more freedom and personal security in the Polish lands than elsewhere in Europe.

The kings extended privileges to Jewish communities and passed laws ensuring their protection. They also granted the kingdom's Jewish communities considerable rights of self-government, in the form of the Council of the Four Lands (Va'ad Arbà Aratsot), which consisted of representatives from some 50 districts of the kingdom. The Council was established in 1580 to manage the collection of taxes from Jewish communities throughout a vast territory, but it quickly became a full and separate representative body, or state within a state, that acquired judicial functions in addition to its fiscal responsibilities. This remarkable system, unique in Europe, lasted until 1764, when the Crown abolished the Council as no longer necessary for tax purposes. Also, in 1623 the Lithuanian Jews decided to create their own council and withdrew from the Va'ad Arbà Aratsot.

Throughout the feudal period Jews were permitted to organize their communal life as they wished. Each community council, or *kahal*, received an official charter that provided for establishment of a synagogue, a cemetery, and other basic institutions. The kahals regularly sent representatives to Jewish regional councils, which deliberated over matters of common concern and held various kinds of regional law courts.

Jews had a significant presence in Warsaw, Kraków, and other cities. Polish urban centers were Jewish towns, not Polish towns in which Jews *also* lived, somewhere off to the side. Typically the Jews lived around the main square, the *rynek*, and owned the surrounding buildings and shops, while the bulk of the ethnically Polish, Ukrainian, or Lithuanian population lived in villages and on the agricultural lands surrounding the town. To live in a Polish town was to live in a Jewish shtetl. For example, Jews lived in Ger, while non-Jews lived in Góra Kalwaria, which was the same town with a different name. Each group led a largely separate existence, with its own traditions and memories. Yet their lives intersected daily in the market square, in the local inn and other establishments, and in the homes of Jewish residents, whose children were often cared for by Polish, Belorussian, and Ukranian women who themselves spoke Yiddish. As we travel through Poland today we will find the Polish towns, but the shtetls are no longer there.



Page of an early Hebrew text printed in Poland.

Polish urban centers were Jewish towns and cities, not Polish towns in which Jews also lived, somewhere off to the side.

Jews found more freedom and personal security in the Polish lands than elsewhere in Europe, but even there they might experience resentment and even hostility. Christian communities could petition the crown for permission to exclude or expel Jews, the right *de non tolerandis Judaeis* (not having to tolerate Jews). In some cases it is likely the king made the grant as a way of separating and thus protecting the Jews from their Christian neighbors. Kazimierz, now a district of Kraków, began as a separate Jewish town, granted the royal privilege *de non tolerandis Christianis* (not having to tolerate Christians).

If we look for the cause of the antagonism we can find many possibilities, including purely religious ones. But there were also other causes, tied to the economic system. In the feudal period, which lasted

until the second half of the 19th century in most of the Polish lands, Jews had a privileged place as the middlemen, the mediators, between the landowners and the peasants who tilled the land. For example, Jews were often granted the sole right to run the local tavern and to produce alcohol. Thus developed a system in which Jews helped the landlords to exploit their own peasants: collecting grain grown by the peasants, turning it into alcohol, and selling it back to the peasants, often on credit. It was easier for the peasants to resent the Jews than the lords themselves, with whom they did not have direct contact.

The Three Polands of the Partitions

The Commonwealth ended in the late 1700s when it was divided among the newly dominant powers in Eastern Europe. During the late 18th century the rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Prussia, and Russia agreed to divide the lands of a weakened Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth among themselves. By that time, too, Jews residing within the borders of Russia were legally restricted to the empire's western regions, known as the Pale of Settlement, which embraced much of today's Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and parts of the Baltic states.



The Partitions of Poland.



Portrait of Berek Joselewicz by Juliusz Kossak. Joselewicz recruited a Jewish cavalry regiment during the Kosciuszko Insurrection, 1794.

The "partitions" carried out between 1772 and 1795 put an end to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Polish culture, and also the culture of Polish Jews, would begin to develop distinct characteristics, depending on which of the three empires a given region had been incorporated into. The experiences within each partition were very different, and the Polish and Jewish communities living in each would enter the period of modernization and industrialization in different cultural and political environments.

Millions of Poles chose to leave their homeland for more freedom and economic opportunity elsewhere in Europe and in the New World. In the Russian Pale of Settlement, a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms from 1881 to 1884, following the assassination of Czar Alexander II, and again in Kishinev in 1903, spurred mass emigration to the United States. Despite the emigration, however, Jews retained an especially large presence in what would become interwar Poland. During the early 20th century Jews made up approximately 11% of the Polish population. Consider that in Germany at the time Jews were about 1% of the population, though very influential within letters, philosophy, and culture. In Hungary the figure was 5%. In the United States today Jews make up 2% of the population. New York City, which many think of as a city that feels very Jewish, has a population that is 12% Jewish. Imagine that *most of Poland*, including the small towns, was far more Jewish than New York. In the major Polish

Table 1

City	Number of Jewish Residents	Jewish Proportion of All Residents
Warsaw	352,659	30.1 %
Łódź	202,497	33.5 %
Białystok	39,165	60 %
Lublin	38,537	34.7 %
Pinsk	20,220	63.4 %
Kraków	56,515	25.8 %

Adapted from Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), and Jewish Virtual Library (www.jewishvirtual library.org, accessed April 2012).

Table 2

Profession	Number of Jews	Proportion of Jews in the Profession
Medicine	4,488	56 %
Law	6,454	33.5 %
Journalism & Publishing	1,315	22 %
Education	13,320	43.3 %

Adapted from Rafael Mahler, *Yehude polin ben shte milhamot ha-olam* (Tel-Aviv,1968), p.159.

cities in the 1920s and 30s Jewish populations ranged from 35%, in Warsaw and Lwów (now Lviv), for example, to 60% in Białystok. Polish towns, especially those in the eastern half of the country and Galicia, were from 50% to 80% Jewish (see Tables 1 and 2).

The End of Multicultural Poland

Jewish life and culture flourished during the interwar period (1919-39), in spite of economic hard times and high unemployment, growing antisemitism, and rising tension between proponents of a multicultural Poland and the ultra-nationalists who favored an ethnically homogeneous population. Jews created their own schools, summer camps, youth movements, sports clubs, theater, cinema, literature, and a press in three languages: Hebrew, Polish, and Yiddish. On the eve of World War II Poland was home to about 3.5 million Jews.

Jewish life and culture flourished during the interwar period (1919-39) in spite of economic hard times and high unemployment, growing antisemitism, and rising tension between proponents of a multicultural Poland and the ultra-nationalists who favored an ethnically homogeneous population.

During World War II, more than 5 million Polish citizens perished. Of these almost 3 million were Jews. For much of Poland's history, until the Holocaust, about two-thirds of the population consisted of ethnically Polish residents and the other third of Jews (11%), Ukrainians (16%), Belorussians (6%), Gypsies, or Roma, and Germans and smaller numbers of other ethnic groups (4%). The loss of 90% of Polish Jews meant the end of the Ashkenazi civilization that had developed and thrived on Polish lands for almost a millennium. Another major change came after the war with the redrawing of Eastern Europe's borders, which placed Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine in the Soviet Union, and the forceful resettlement of many Germans and Ukrainians to the west or the east. As a result, Poland lost its ethnic and religious diversity.

Poland's postwar Communist government, brutally installed with Soviet support against the wishes of the majority of the population, made ethnic homogeneity part of its program of claiming that the nation was entirely Polish, and enthusiastically committed itself to establishing a socialist/communist worker's state. Using Warsaw as a template of a new socialist Poland, the Communist government did its best to level differences, whether ideological, religious, or cultural. Yet an estimated 300,000+ Polish Jews survived the war, most of them in the former

Soviet Union. There were additionally Jews who managed to survive in ghettos and camps or fought with the partisans. Others survived hidden by non-Jewish Poles or, adopted as children, were raised as Catholics and may not have remembered their Jewish parents once the war ended. What happened to these Jews?

> *"I have always believed that our work in Poland is to revive the Jewish identity of individuals. I want to give people the chance to decide to be Jewish."*
>
> —Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland

One result of the Communist regime's official government policy was to make Jewishness and Jewish identity detriments for anyone who wanted a public career. The many Jews who assumed high positions in the government disavowed or disregarded their Jewish identities in public and even in private. Others chose to remain under the false identities that had protected them during the war and created entirely new lives and new families. Many simply left Poland for then-Palestine, Australia, Argentina, or the United States. Postwar violence and pogroms, such as one in Kielce in 1946, where 46 Jews were murdered, certainly did not encourage Jews to stay.

The Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain effectively put an end to outside contact with Polish Jewry. Families maintained contact with those who emigrated as best they could, but aside from occasional letters and packages and support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), connections with Jews outside of Poland were tenuous. It is not surprising that Jews and others outside of Poland commonly believed that no Jews or Jewish life remained. In truth the numbers fell during the postwar period, in particular 1946, 1956, and 1968, but even then thousands of Poles with Jewish roots remained in Poland.

So much for the "official" view, but we know that in Polish history there is always something bubbling under the surface, underground, whether clandestine patriotic groups opposing the Czar or so-called Flying Universities teaching and discussing politically or ideologically touchy issues.

A Golden Age

As philosopher and rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel described it in a paper he delivered at the annual YIVO conference in New York City in 1945:

"In Eastern Europe the Jewish people has come into its own. It does not live like a guest in somebody else's house that must constantly keep in mind the ways and customs of the host. The Jews live their own life without disguise, outside of their homes no less than within them. The people itself becomes a source of Jewishness. To appraise properly the meaning of the Eastern European era in Jewish history, we must not merely dwell upon its contribution to literature, science and the arts, but upon its life-feeling and life-style…. From that point of view we are justified in saying that it was the golden period in Jewish history, in the history of the Jewish soul."

It was so for Poland's postwar Jews. Those who remained in Poland began quietly to reconstruct their lives as Jews, in the narrow space permitted by the authorities. In Warsaw Jews might attend the Nożyk Synagogue, if only as a place to congregate, participating in the activities of the Socio-Cultural Society of Jews in Poland (TSKŻ). By 1950, only two organizations headquartered in Warsaw were allowed to continue functioning, the Jewish Religious Union of Poland, which ran a kosher canteen and provided for the community's religious needs, and the TSKŻ, which offered cultural and social activities that were the last visible links to Jewish life.

Nevertheless, some communities, with the help of the JDC and private donations, managed to provide the basic Jewish needs of their members. Many parents raised their children in Yiddish and sent them to the city's Jewish school, while others chose the path of the Jewish intelligentsia, undeniably Jewish but fiercely secular and adamantly Polish. After the government launched a so-called

Discussion Topic

The beginnings of the Jewish revival in Poland.

[I]n 1979, we were among the founders of an intense underground seminar, the 'Jewish Flying University.' Its Jewish and non-Jewish participants were equally ignorant. For the Jews the first aim was therapeutic....This meant the beginning of a real Jewish identity, one not imposed from outside but derived from a sense of connection. Not in fear but with pride; not an unfortunate ancestry but a fascinating heritage.

Some of us began to recreate rituals. We mostly used American books, and occasional contacts. At the first Passover *seder*, conducted in my home by a friend who was more experienced because of his trips abroad, I asked the four questions; I really was like a child. The following year I conducted the *seder* myself....However the satisfaction from accomplishments was greater. We learned a lot from books, especially *The Jewish Catalogue: A Do-It-Yourself Kit,* and later from educational activities under the auspices of the Lauder Foundation. Because we could always choose our pace, and our interpretations, there was no need to rebel.

As the president of the Jewish Forum in Poland I initiated a Jewish identity telephone hotline. We offered hidden, insecure Jews an opportunity to talk about their problems relating to their Jewishness. Then we helped create support groups, in the hope that among thousands of people with Jewish ancestors some will begin the uneasy journey into Jewishness.

—Stanisław Krajewski, *Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew* (2005)

Questions

How has the experience of discovering or embracing one's Jewishness in Poland changed from those early days described by Professor Krajewski?

Is it likely that young Poles who learn that they are of Jewish background feel problems or stresses created by this identity?

How might the experience of discovering one's Jewishness differ between individuals living in major Polish cities and those living in small towns without any known Jewish population?

anti-Zionist campaign in 1968 at least 15,000 Jews were forced out of the country. Those who still didn't know their true identities remained invisible, and those who did know burrowed further underground.

> *"Among the younger generations of educated Poles, including high school youth, the percentage of those declaring anti-Semitic attitudes has declined markedly, while that of respondents expressing hostility to anti-Semitism is on the increase."*
>
> —Honorary Consul Tad Taube, Chairman, Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

Renewing Poland's Diversity

The seeds of today's vibrant Jewish community were sown by the children of the survivors, especially the intellectuals and children of highly placed party members who later became anti-Communist dissidents. Some grew up in Yiddish-speaking homes, perhaps devoid of religious observance but steeped in a form of Polish yiddishkeit. Many, especially those involved with the growing Solidarity movement and underground activities, created the illegal Jewish Flying University in 1979.

Meanwhile both Jews and Christians were suffering repression from a Communist regime that was trying to enforce its authority amid mounting popular discontent. In 1981 a military junta seized power and ruled without even the pretense of democratic window dressing. For the next few years, as the world watched in astonishment, Poles began to organize quite openly against the regime under the banner of the Solidarity movement, a mass phenomenon that had the support of Jews and Gentiles alike. Communist regimes in Europe and elsewhere had never allowed such open defiance, but in Poland the regime was unable to respond effectively. Michael Schudrich, now Chief Rabbi of Poland, watched "in amazement as the country's democratic movement, crushed by the tanks of the military coup of 1981, refused to die. I observed with even more amazement as the

few Jews who remained fought tooth and nail for their Jewishness, long concealed or denied by their families, and treated with outright hostility by the regime." This led him to the realization that "these Jews were often personally part of that former, wider struggle: it was, in fact, the same struggle."

> *"Free Poland has given us the freedom of self-description. Today we can place accents on our identity as we choose. All the options are possible: you can be a Pole who follows Moses' teachings, a Polish Jew or a Jewish citizen of Poland."*
>
> —Jan Śpiewak, Co-Founder, ZOOM Polish-Jewish Young Adult Organization

With the end of the Communist regime in 1989, Poles could reconstruct a democratic government and begin reorganizing civil society in the context of their thousand-year history, a history inseparable from that



Friday night dinner at the JCC in Kraków.

Discussion Topic

New models of "Jewishness" and of Jewish community.

How Jewish-non-Jewish cooperation in Poland is transforming the ways we understand Jewish community and peoplehood.

One of the first questions that most visitors to Poland ask is: How many Jews are there in Poland? If you ask this question of your hosts you may find it interesting to compare the answers. Many will say "no one knows exactly," or "estimates for the entire country range between 5,000 and 30,000."

They may also say "that depends on what you understand Jewishness to be." The question of how to define Jewishness (religion, culture, or ethnicity?) and whether by oneself or others has been debated for almost two centuries, since the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment. (Perhaps the very fact of asking oneself what it means to be Jewish serves as a marker, as some have proposed.)

On a personal level, the variety of ways in which individuals in Poland negotiate their paths into or back to Jewishness challenges existing definitions. In a communal sense, the range of forms of cooperation between Jews and Gentiles, who are together building Jewish institutions and programs, calls into question any attempt to determine what institutions are "really Jewish." Many who are taking part are themselves changed and moved to reflection by a type of cooperation and mutual engagement in Jewish life by Polish non-Jews, Jews and new Jews, and also non-Polish Jews (American, European, Israeli) that is probably unprecedented in history, and was certainly unforeseen.

Question

Do we need a new vocabulary to describe the communal landscape of Jewish Poland today? If so, why, and what would be addressed?

of the Polish Jews. The post-Communist era opened up broad spaces for Jews. As early as 1988 a courageous and determined handful of parents established a Jewish kindergarten, the first in Warsaw since World War II.The kindergarten led to the opening of a primary school and a middle school and also paved the way for the opening of youth clubs and summer camps, and then the creation of a student organization and eventually Birthright Poland (Taglit). Synagogues around the country, barely used since the early 1970s, reopened their doors. A new Jewish intellectual magazine, *Midrasz*, was born, and an adult educational center began operating.

Today 240 children attend the Lauder Morasha School, and the summer camps are filled with children, families, and seniors learning about and living a Jewish life. Jewish community centers have opened in Kraków and Warsaw. Jewish studies programs flourish in universities nationwide. The Jewish Historical Institute is opening its treasured archives via the Internet, and the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, scheduled to open in 2013, will provide entrée to a thousand years of Polish Jewish history. The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, having celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2008, is attracting more and more visitors annually. Perhaps most significantly, the communal Judaism of the early revival period has given way to home-based Jewish life. Mezzuzot are reappearing on doors, Hanukkah menorahs are in the windows, and more people celebrate Passover at home than at one of the many communal celebrations throughout the country.



Wedding ceremony in Kraków.

(Krakow JCC)

Many of today's Poles regard pre-war Poland, with its multiethnic and multi-religious society, as the authentic Poland, one of which they are proud. Public discourse has seen renewed interest in exploring the complex, multicultural history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and of independent Poland between the world wars. School textbooks, museum exhibits, and narratives of Polish identity are being rewritten to integrate Jewish experience.

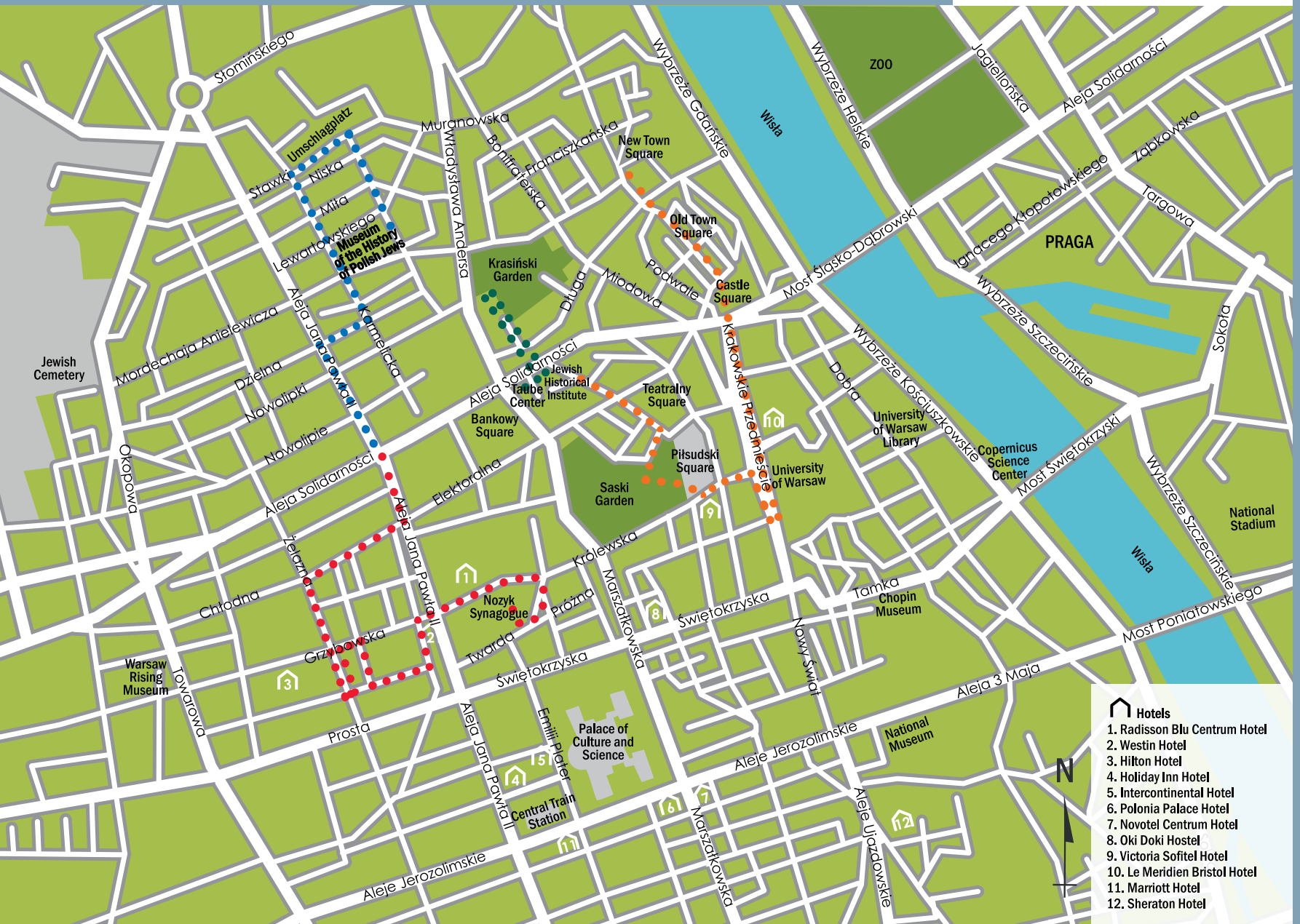
Many of today's Poles regard pre-war Poland, with its multiethnic and multi-religious society, as the authentic Poland, one of which they are proud.

Embracing a multicultural heritage in Central Europe today is also very much linked to embracing membership in a multicultural European Union, as well as in a democratic, cosmopolitan, and globalized world. The last two decades have witnessed the birth of a new generation of Polish Jews who are prepared to build on an extraordinary and complex past, and to create and contribute to Polish Jewry and to a democratic Poland. This guide will help you understand the history of the Jews and of their non-Jewish neighbors over that vast timespan, in two cities that have come to symbolize Poland: Warsaw, the Paris of the East, for its modern Jewish and Polish literature and arts and its key role in national politics and international affairs; Kraków for its scholars, its religious leaders, and the magnificence of its architecture, which miraculously survived so many wars. To make your tour easier we have included a glossary of common acronyms and terms, many in German, Hebrew, Polish, or Yiddish.



Leilah Broukhim, inspired by her Jewish and Persian roots and by her experience with the flamenco art form, performed "Dejando Huellas — Traces" at the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

Warsaw Walking Routes: An Overview



Warsaw

Warsaw became a place of leading importance after Poland united with Lithuania to create the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. The new Jagiellonian dynasty ruled at first from Kraków, but King Sigismund chose Warsaw as the capital of his huge realm. The first secular monument erected in Poland is the column of King Sigismund (1644), in Warsaw, commemorating the king's decision to move the capital. Jews had been living in the Warsaw area since the 14th century and were already important to the King and the nobles as estate managers, collectors of taxes, merchants, and financiers.

Warsaw grew into a major center of Jewish culture during the 19th century. But it is better to speak of Jewish cultures, in the plural, for as Poland entered the modern period Jewish writers and intellectuals began producing works in Yiddish, modern Hebrew, and Polish. Like their non-Jewish counterparts Jews were exploring an increasingly urban and educated Polish society. Some Jews became wealthy and influential enough to count as major public figures. Jewish philanthropy advanced the arts in Poland as well as important social services like hospitals and schools. Banker, industrialist, and philanthropist Hipolit Wawelberg, buried in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, is only one example of a wealthy Jewish resident who contributed richly to the city's institutions, both Jewish and Gentile. His endeavors included financing the Warsaw Polytechnic institute and building housing for poor workers.



Poster of the Tarbut educational network.

In Warsaw, the Paris of the East, Jewish culture between the two World Wars enjoyed an unparalleled richness and diversity.

Significant changes came with the outbreak of World War I, when fighting between the Germans and the Russians led to a German victory in 1915, and the end of Russian rule in Poland. Warsaw's Jews suddenly gained new opportunities, and with the defeat of Germany by the Entente Powers in 1918 Poland regained its independence. The era saw famous writers like I. B. Singer, poets like Julian Tuwim, and musicians like Artur Rubinstein. Jewish theater and films flourished.

And then life in the Paris of the East changed forever. On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and quickly overran the poorly prepared Polish army, 10% of which was Jewish. The Soviet Union invaded from the

How to Use the Guide

We have divided a visit to Warsaw or Kraków into four routes, each identified by its own color and with its own map. The routes are coordinated so that the end of one walk leads easily into the beginning of the next, but you should feel free to take as many walks as you like, in whatever order seems best. The individual route maps note the primary sites described along the route, as well as hotels, major city venues, and sites that may not be described in the text but might be of interest.

Sidebar images and texts provide additional information about the places you will see as you walk, as well as about themes and topics of more general relevance. The Discussion Topics and Questions add yet another dimension to your explorations of Jewish Warsaw and Kraków.

At the back of this guide is a glossary that explains terms, phrases, and organizations with which you may not be familiar.



Lili Liliana in "The Dybbuk," a film version of the story by Polish Jewish writer An-sky. (Photo courtesy of YIVO.)

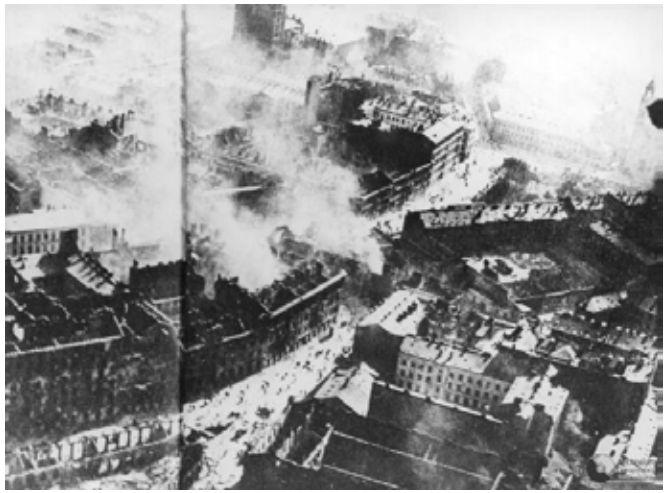
east, on September 17, according to a secret agreement made with the Nazis, and cut the country in half. Warsaw fell to the Germans on September 28, having suffered a great loss of life and the destruction of much of its infrastructure. The Polish government fled to London and established a government-in-exile, and the German occupiers began concentrating Jews into only a part of the city, the newly created Warsaw ghetto.

Jewish Warsaw is a multilayered text and a multidimensional puzzle. There is a city within this city, its telltale signs still visible to the trained eye.

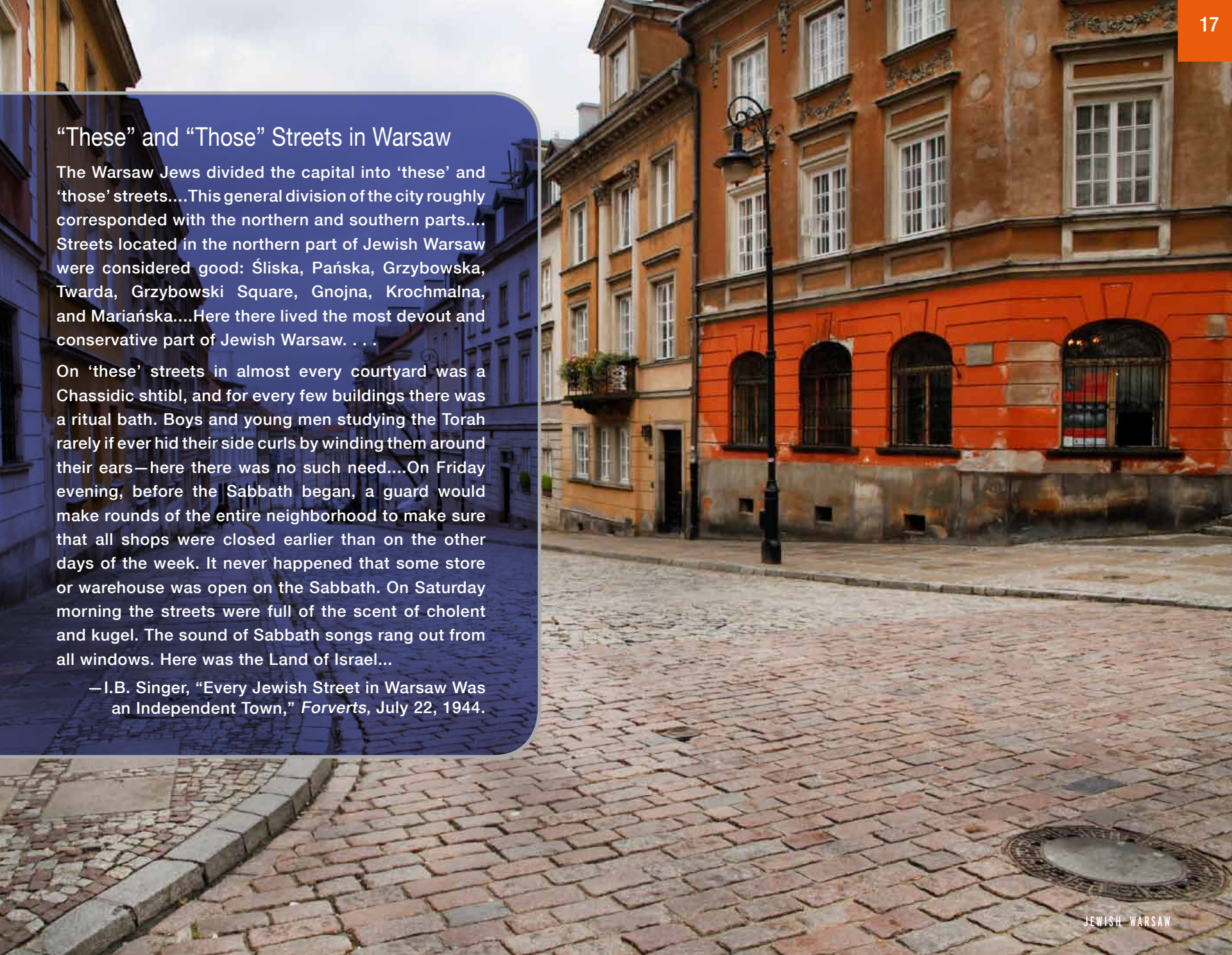
For most first-time visitors Jewish Warsaw has become synonymous with the ghetto. The overwhelming imagery of the ghetto has consigned the Warsaw of Y. L. Peretz and I. B. Singer to fiction and the romanticized classics of interwar Polish Jewish films. It has compressed the 500-year history of Jewish Warsaw and the lives of Warsaw's Jews into six years, and the ghetto itself has been reduced mainly to monuments and some fragments of the original walls. With so few physical remnants, it is a challenge to tell the complex story of the ghetto. Our walk will introduce you to its dimensions, both physical and human, and consider how its inhabitants managed to live from day to day, not only how they died.

Today the horrors of the ghetto seem far away if we gaze down on Warsaw from one of its many sleek high-rise buildings. Yet if we look carefully we can see odd signs that something is not right. The city seems to have two street grids, one superimposed on top of the other. Pre-war streets, their traces visible through the facades of a few surviving houses, lead nowhere. Modern thoroughfares cut a building in half. How to navigate this puzzling terrain?

Jewish Warsaw is a multilayered text and a multidimensional puzzle. There is a city within this city, its telltale signs still visible to the trained eye. We invite you to walk Warsaw with us, through the city inside the city. We have provided entry points, different places, events, and personalities, chosen because they are familiar or particularly thought-provoking and intriguing.



Aerial view of Warsaw after the German bombardment in September 1939. (Wikimedia Commons)



“These” and “Those” Streets in Warsaw

The Warsaw Jews divided the capital into ‘these’ and ‘those’ streets....This general division of the city roughly corresponded with the northern and southern parts.... Streets located in the northern part of Jewish Warsaw were considered good: Śliska, Pańska, Grzybowska, Twarda, Grzybowski Square, Gnojna, Krochmalna, and Mariańska....Here there lived the most devout and conservative part of Jewish Warsaw. . . .

On ‘these’ streets in almost every courtyard was a Chassidic shtibl, and for every few buildings there was a ritual bath. Boys and young men studying the Torah rarely if ever hid their side curls by winding them around their ears—here there was no such need....On Friday evening, before the Sabbath began, a guard would make rounds of the entire neighborhood to make sure that all shops were closed earlier than on the other days of the week. It never happened that some store or warehouse was open on the Sabbath. On Saturday morning the streets were full of the scent of cholent and kugel. The sound of Sabbath songs rang out from all windows. Here was the Land of Israel...

—I.B. Singer, “Every Jewish Street in Warsaw Was an Independent Town,” *Forverts,* July 22, 1944.

Warsaw Walking Route 1

Route 1
1. Nożyk Synagogue, Twarda 6
2. White Building
3. Ester Rachel and Ida Kamińska Jewish Theater
4. Church of All Saints
5. Nożyk's Apartment House (Próżna 9)
6. Site of the pre-war Jewish Community Building (Radisson Blu)
7. Pre-war tenement (Waliców 10)
8. Władysław Szlengel's home (Waliców 14)
9. Ghetto Wall
10. Gerer Rebbe's Prayer House (Żelazna 57
11. Ghetto Marker at Grzybowska/ Żelazna street
12. Krochmalna Street
13. Ghetto Marker and commemorative installation (Chłodna Street)
14. Adam Czerniakow's home (Chłodna 20)
15. Ghetto marker
16. Hala Mirowska
17. Intersection

Route 2 begins at No 1.
See map No. 2 for complete route.

Other Sites of Interest
A. Ghetto Marker on the Palace of Culture and Science
B. Monument to Janusz Korczak
C. Chavura Ec Chaim (Al. Jerozolimskie 53)
D. Former Jewish Nursing School
E. Former Bersons and Baumans Children Hospital
F. Fragment of Ghetto Wall (Sienna 55)
G. Fragment of Ghetto Wall (Złota 62)
H. Monument to Those Who Survived the Ghetto Uprising (Prosta 51)
I. St. Charles Boromeus Church
J. Femina Cinema K. Courthouse
L. Carmelite Church
M. Warsaw National Philharmonic
N. Zachęta National Gallery Of Art
O. Grand Theater / National Opera

Hotels
1. Radisson Blu Centrum Hotel
2. Westin Hotel 3. Hilton Hotel
4. Holiday Inn Hotel
5. Intercontinental Hotel
6. Polonia Palace Hotel
7. Novotel Centrum Hotel
8. Oki Doki Hostel 9. Victoria Sofitel Hotel
10. Le Meridien Bristol Hotel
11. Marriott Hotel



Warsaw Route 1

A walk into centuries of vibrant and varied Jewish life, literature, worship, and politics, and the first steps to the edge of despair.

Nożyk Synagogue / Grzybowski Square
Warsaw of Peretz, Singer, and Szlengel / The Gerer Rebbe in Warsaw / Edge of the Ghetto

Nożyk Synagogue: A Door into the Past and Present

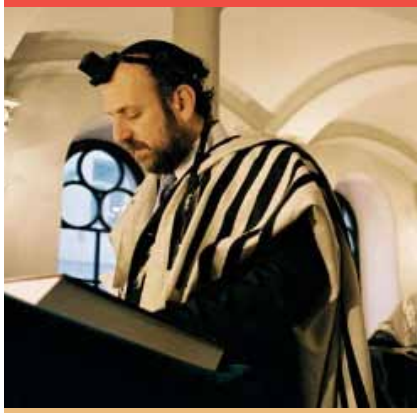
Our walk begins on the front steps of the canary-yellow Nożyk Synagogue, which is the synagogue of many of Warsaw's Jews today. **No. 1, Map 1** If we were to walk through its huge wooden doors (opened on High Holidays and special occasions), we would cross a threshold into pre-war Jewish Warsaw. Zalman Nożyk, a successful businessman, built the structure in 1902 and donated it to the Warsaw Jewish community with the request that it always remain an Orthodox synagogue and that Yizkor, a prayer recited on the anniversary of a person's death and on special holidays, be said for him and his wife. The synagogue was built to serve Warsaw's middle-class, traditional Jews rather than the more assimilated, affluent congregants in the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie. Less opulent in style, it was still relatively modern for its day, with a choir loft added above the aron ha-kodesh (the ark) in 1923.

Karol Kozłowski, the architect who designed the Nożyk, could not see it as we can today. When it was completed, the Nożyk stood inside a courtyard closely surrounded by residential buildings, a mere remnant of which survives. Only now, after the city's almost total destruction during World War II, can we actually appreciate the building in its full, elegant grandeur. The Jewish neighborhood around it was once a warren of narrow alleyways and tenements in which each family often had only one or two rooms. By the end of the 19th century, the district straddled two worlds—Jewish and Christian—teeming with small factories and commercial trades and crossed by a tramline connecting the district to one of the city's main train stations.

The synagogue survived the war because the Germans used it as a stable for their horses. On Rosh Hashanah in 1941, the Germans allowed the Nożyk to open for a very brief period, a ray of hope which was then quickly extinguished. The sermon was given by the renowned Jewish historian, Dr. Meir Bałaban.

After the war the badly damaged synagogue was returned to Jewish use, one of only two synagogues and several shtiblekh to survive the war from among the more than 400 shuls, shtiblekh, and synagogues in the Polish capital barely six years earlier. The synagogue attracted few worshippers, though many would gather in the immediate postwar years, perhaps out of habit or in the hope of finding surviving family or old friends. Throughout the Communist period a small group of elderly would attempt to make a quorum of 10 Jewish men required for the daily and holiday prayers of Orthodox observers.

Although available for Jewish use, the building belonged to the Communist government, which in 1945-46 had



Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, leading services in the Nożyk.
(Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture)



View of the Nożyk sanctuary, from the women's section, 2011.
(Jan Zamoyski, Taube Center Collection)

nationalized all real estate in Warsaw. The Nożyk shul finally reverted to Jewish ownership in the years after the democratic transition of 1989. The other surviving synagogue, the Round Synagogue, in Praga district on the other side of the river, had also been badly damaged during the war, but it lacked an active Jewish community to urge and fund its restoration and was demolished in 1966 by the city authorities.

Repairs made to the Nożyk immediately after the war could not, unfortunately, prevent its physical deterioration. The government permitted a full renovation during the early 1980s with the goal of rededicating the site for the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. During reconstruction, which included the addition of an annex, workers broke into the compartment behind the aron ha-kodesh, which is now the children's playroom, and discovered stacks of Hebrew books. Not knowing what to do, they started dumping the books outside, when a group of young Jews rushed to the rescue and carried them to a room in the White Building next door. Stamps on the cover pages indicated that the books were the property of small Jewish communities around Warsaw, probably collected for safekeeping just before the war, as no one imagined that the shul itself might be in danger.

A contemporary view of the Nożyk Synagogue from the main entrance.
(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



When taken out of the cache and exposed to the air, the books started to become moldy. The only way to save them was to kill the mold with gas, the standard technique used by libraries all over the world. An urgent search revealed that the equipment at the National Library had a long waiting list. Luckily, someone knew someone who worked in a grain silo outside of Warsaw. Grain, like books, is often treated to protect it from mold. The silo could not officially accept this unorthodox request from a group of private individuals and, were the community to apply officially, the supervisors would surely take forever to weigh the political pros and cons. A practical and unofficial solution provided adequate treatment for most of the books.

The Nożyk is a powerful symbol of Jewish continuity and represents the freedom of Jewish religious expression and communal affiliation after years of repression. Its sacred space offers a daily minyan and shi'urim (learning sessions), Sabbath and holiday services, and a venue for large communal events and concerts. The nearly 600 dues-paying congregants are an eclectic mixture of Jewish religious observance. You may see a Bobover Hasid sharing the bimah with the Chief Rabbi of Poland (born in the United States), a congregant sporting dreadlocks and a black suede yarmulke, and another wearing a baseball cap. The synagogue preserves the

Orthodox separation of men and women, the women being either upstairs in the ezras noshim (women's gallery) or downstairs behind the mechitzah (partition), but some women wear head coverings while others do not. Children race in and out of the synagogue, eagerly awaiting the candies given out by the rabbi just before the congregational kiddush.

As Polish Jews seek options for affiliation and Jewish learning, new congregations have been added to the map of Jewish Warsaw, including Ec Hayim and Beit Warszawa, both Reform communities, a congregation of Georgian Jews, and a Chabad center. **Point C, Map 1**

The Nożyk is a powerful symbol of Jewish continuity and represents the freedom of Jewish religious expression and communal affiliation after years of repression.

We enter the building through the nondescript annex, which was added in the 1980s. It houses community offices, including the social welfare committee, as well the Chief Rabbi and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. As we leave the building we stop in the synagogue's small parking lot and find more signs of Warsaw's Jewish life: the entrance to the community mikveh and a small kosher food and wine shop. The parking lot, too, has its role in Jewish community life. On different occasions throughout the year it becomes the place for the communal sukkah and for dancing on Simchat Torah, for the annual Jewish Book Fair, for the community's Open Twarda program, and for the I. B. Singer Festival.

On the side of the parking lot stands the White Building, sometimes referred to by locals as the White House. **No. 2, Map 1** If the Nożyk represents the spiritual rebirth of Warsaw's Jewry, the White Building embodies its structural renaissance. The building, originally housing the community's kosher canteen, has served as the first home to many organizations and institutions which have since found other quarters. It now includes Beiteinu (Our House), a cozy center for seniors funded

Discussion Topic

Finding a vocabulary for Polish-Polish Jews and non-Christian, non-Jewish Poles.

Among organizations and initiatives dedicated to improving and furthering "Polish-Jewish relations," meaning mutual understanding and "reconciliation" between non-Jewish Poles and Jews both in and outside of Poland, the terminology commonly used puts Jews and Poles, or "Jewish" and "Polish," on opposite sides of a seemingly impassable hyphen. The language itself serves to push these two kinds of identity apart, leaving no space for Polish Jews who feel entirely Polish and affirmative about their Polish identity.

Professor Stanisław Krajewski addresses this question directly in *Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew* (2005).

> "Thus to be a Polish Jew living in Poland today is to differ from most Polish Jews who live elsewhere and are Polish only because of their origins. Many of us are *Polish* Polish *Jews*; Polish Jews who live in Poland, and who treat Poland as our homeland rather than just a place of origin. Most of us want to remain Polish. We need complete rather than [be content with] schematic views of Poland....Now—let me repeat, most of us *are* Polish."

Krajewski describes an identity similar to that of Jews in America, who feel fully American, yet without challenging their sense of Jewishness. Some academics have introduced the distinction "Polish Jews and non-Jewish Poles."

Questions

What kind of language should we use when speaking about the permutations and combinations of Jewishness and Polishness?

What terms do we find ourselves wanting to use?



Poster from the third annual festival *Otwarta Twarda* (Open Twarda). The festival was established in 2009 by the Jewish Community of Warsaw to promote Warsaw's Jewish life and heritage. The program is co-sponsored by the city of Warsaw.

(©Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Warszawie)



Second-grade class of 1938 in National School Number 171 at 13 Hoża Street, a district which attracted assimilated Jews. There were numerous Jewish schools in pre-war Warsaw, representing the spectrum of religious and social movements.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

with the assistance of World Jewish Relief and the Claims Conference, and the Moses Schorr Adult Education Center, which offers lectures, classes and a unique e-learning program for Hebrew language instruction. The ground floor also offers a small gym. Various Jewish institutions still call it home, including the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland, *Midrasz* magazine, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). In the early 1990s the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation had its offices here along with Warsaw's first post-Communist Jewish youth and student club. The club became a focus for Jewish life and a first "Jewish home" for many, offering Sabbath dinners each week, holiday celebrations, and educational programs.

Though architecturally and historically undistinguished—in fact, it looks rundown—the building is a witness to history. Its original wooden staircase, though repainted several times, still bears the imprints of residents like Mosze Dawid Bursztyn and the Melchior family, who lived in the building's pre-war apartments. The building also housed a Jewish outpatient clinic before and during the war. You can see a barely legible sign in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish on one of landings. After the war it housed a small prayer room as well as a kosher soup kitchen managed throughout much of the Communist period by the JDC.

Renovations in 1994 uncovered a trove of documents under the floorboards of the attic. The papers, photos and documents, including those belonging to the Melchior family, were being used as insulation. The haphazard collection gives us a glimpse into pre-war Jewish Warsaw and life during the early years of the Warsaw ghetto: copybooks in Polish and Hebrew, family photos, half-used ration cards, medicine vials, Szmul Melchior's third-grade report card from 1936, and a Hanukkah speech by Mosze Dawid Bursztyn written in eloquent Hebrew at the beginning of the war. The documents helped us trace a surviving member of the Melchior family in Israel in 1994. Nothing is known for sure, but it is most likely that all of the others whose lives were somehow preserved in the accidental archive shared the fate of the Warsaw Jews murdered by the Germans.



Children from the Lauder Morasha School in Warsaw.

(Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture)

In the mid-1990s, the White Building's ground floor housed Warsaw's only Jewish kindergarten, which young families with children had been operating since 1988 in a rented apartment until the number of children outgrew the space. Jewish tourists would often stop between the shul and the White Building, just as we are standing here

now. They would listen to their guide explain that they were “witnessing the last, sad remnants of Polish Jewry, a nearly empty synagogue with its handful of elderly worshippers.” One of the authors of this guide once saw some two dozen Jewish kids emerge boisterously from the building, enjoying their midday break, while a tour group listened to such a doleful speech. The kindergarten has since moved into its permanent home in the Lauder Morasha School.

Now let’s follow the Route 1 map, threading our way through the building site, and walk to Grzybowski Square.

Grzybowski Square

Stand in the middle of the square, turn around slowly, and take in a remarkable vista. To the east, on Próżna Street behind construction barriers, you can see the top floors of half-ruined, crumbling red-brick buildings with their windows barred, some covered by extraordinary photos of pre-war Jewish life. To the west, a typical postwar building houses the Yiddish Theater, which bears the names of the mother of Yiddish theater, Ester Rachel Kamińska, and her daughter Ida. **No. 3, Map 1** The theater, which still offers plays in Yiddish, shares the space with the Socio-Cultural Society of Jews in Poland (TSKŻ), the Shalom Foundation, the Association of Children of the Holocaust, several restaurants, and private offices including, at one time, Deutsche Bank. To the south stands the Church of All Saints. **No. 4, Map 1** In the middle



Pre-war postcard with view of Grzybowski Square from the front of the Church of All Saints. On the right is the corner of a building on Próżna that is still standing and is now adorned with pre-war photos from a collection entitled “And I Can Still See Their Faces.”

(Wikimedia Commons)

Discussion Topic

Jewish festivals as celebrations of Poland’s multicultural past, of a shared Polish-Jewish history, and of a European future

Annual Jewish festivals are an important part of cultural life in Poland. Warsaw has the I.B. Singer Festival and Kraków hosts the world’s largest festival of Jewish culture each July. Small towns far removed from any major urban cultural center, in which there are no Jewish residents left, also host festivals. Consider Chmielnik, a town that was 80% Jewish before the war. The annual June festival “Encounters with Jewish Culture” has become the most important celebration of the town’s history, and of its future, and is attended by most of Chmielnik’s residents. Students learn Jewish dances in the public school and perform them, and stage Yiddish plays in translation. The cemetery and the synagogue have been renovated, and former Jewish residents of the town are invited (in this case from Israel) and hosted as honored guests. The city of Drohobych, now in Ukraine near Lviv (formerly Lwów), hosts a Bruno Schulz Festival that explores the multicultural past of the city and brings together artists and writers from Poland and Ukraine.

Question

Why does the celebration of Jewish heritage and culture have vital relevance for the Polish “and Ukranian residents of these towns and cities?



Grzybowski Square. The square is the site of the annual Singer festival and the communal Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony. The building on the extreme right is the same one featured in the postcard view on page 23.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



of the square is a modern urban space, with water jets and benches. To the north we take in drab but functional postwar apartment blocks, erected to house the city's growing population.

The square and its surroundings are full of subtle and not so subtle ironies. The crumbling brick apartment buildings were built in the latter half of the 19th century, when Próżna Street was a bustling Jewish thoroughfare. Próżna in Polish means "empty" or "a void." Here Jewish memory has been all but obliterated and denied.

The buildings stand in ruins because more than a decade ago investors bought one side of the street with the intention of turning it into a Jewish center, but the renovation has just begun. On the other side of the street the buildings stand empty, crumbling in neglect, because the city is still trying to ascertain ownership. The Nazis, and then the Communists, did a fair job of destroying records and denying all rights, including personal and communal property claims. Yet, today all Varsovians, Jews and Gentiles alike, agree that the street must be preserved and revived, and so the complicated search for heirs continues.

Before World War II the street was in what was then downtown Warsaw and bordered on one of the city's most elegant districts. There was no ghetto, and the heavily Jewish districts often merged imperceptibly with the rest of the city. As one walked east or south the neighborhoods became increasingly affluent. A major center for small business and commerce, the neighborhood was traversed by one of the main tram lines. Located between the poorer Jewish districts of Isaac Bashevis Singer's Krochmalna and the more assimilated areas that were home to the wealthy Kronenbergs, Próżna was full of merchants and family businesses.

A new investor has recently begun work on the south side of Próżna Street, and there is hope that the north side will eventually be sorted out as well. Zalman Nożyk, who lived on the first floor of the corner building, would no doubt be satisfied. **No. 5, Map 1** The huge church practically next door would not have surprised him a bit. It stood there in his time, the Catholic part of Warsaw blending with its Jewish counterparts. In the 1930s its parish priest was Marceli Godlewski, a well-known antisemite. The same Godlewski risked his life during the ghetto to smuggle Christian Jews—there were several thousand of them—to the "Aryan" side. He was motivated more by religious solidarity than by general humanity, but the Germans would not have cared, for to them a Jew was a Jew, no matter how many times dipped in the baptismal font. In fact the Germans invaded the parish office in July 1942 and took away all who had found shelter there. One of those saved, the renowned hematologist

Ludwik Hirszfeld, in his memoirs describes his escape from the ghetto through the church. The same church, in the 1990s, used to house an antisemitic bookstore. The bookstore was eventually removed after a non-Jewish high school student organized a protest.

In another layer of irony, or maybe we should say a stratum of complexity, the church was the site of extremely moving penitential prayers in 2001 on the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne pogrom. Poland's Catholic bishops asked divine forgiveness for the crimes their coreligionists had committed against Polish Jews. On the church's east side a plaque commemorates Gentile Poles—more than 6,000 honored and recognized by Yad Vashem—who saved Jews during the war.



Plaque honoring Poles who saved Jews during World War II. It is on the east side of the Church of All Saints. More than 6,000 Gentile Poles have been recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, representing the largest such group in occupied Europe. (Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

On the modern plaza are two large stones. One, its top partially removed to reveal what looks like a bullet, is a monument to the arms-makers of the Polish underground in World War II. The arms they produced were used in the struggle against the Germans that culminated in the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944.

Another, smaller stone marks the site of a great socialist demonstration against the Czar in 1905, when Poland was part of the Russian Empire. The stone hints at another story. In the same year Jewish socialists, members of the Bund (the Yiddish name of the Jewish socialist party formally called the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland and Russia), engaged in a major battle here. Grzybowski Square was one of the city's red-light districts, and many of the brothels as well as many of the women who worked there were Jewish. The Bundists, whose socialism was based on a fundamental belief in human dignity, considered the situation outrageous and attacked the brothels to free the women and disrupt the trade. Pimps and their associates, Jewish and Gentile, fought back and soon a gun battle was raging. The police faced a dilemma. Should they side with the criminals or with the subversives? The answer was obvious: the cops joined forces with the crooks, many of whom had served as police informers. The Bundists were defeated, but the brothel trade on Grzybowski Square never recovered.

Ironies persist as we move to a more recent period. What of the Deutsche Bank in the Yiddish Theater? The answer is almost disappointingly straightforward: the bank simply rented space from the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association, which owns the building. Built under Communism in the late 1960s to house the Yiddish theater and other Jewish institutions, it was completed just as the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968 was getting underway. As some 15,000 Jews were forced to leave the country, the building on Grzybowski Square became the refuge of diehards, who were ready to try anything, even questionable compromises with the regime, to maintain a Jewish life and presence.

The Jewish newspaper and the Jewish publishing house were closed down, but the theater played on, even though most of the Jewish actors fled and had to be replaced by young Poles who knew no Yiddish and learned their roles by rote; even when most of the audience had fled and theater-goers were handed headphones through which they would listen to a Polish translation. Yet the theater endured, and today there are



"PW" emblem of Polska Walcząca (Fighting Poland). It has become a powerful symbol of the Uprising and of the decades of repression under the Communist regime. (Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



Aerial view of the Church of All Saints in 1944. Note the surrounding destruction. (Wikimedia Commons)



Buildings on west side of Grzybowski Square, 1938. These buildings still exist.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Warsaw Jewish Community building at Grzybowska 26/28 in 1937. It was destroyed after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

a few Jews among the actors and even in the audience. Under Communism the theater relied on subventions from the same government that had expelled its audience. After the democratic transformation in 1989, faced with the need to generate its own income, the theater had for some time rented vacant offices to eager tenants which included Deutsche Bank.

Let's walk northward on Twarda Street, past a row of renovated pre-war buildings that contribute to the square's confused character. You will see as we walk through the city that very little of central Warsaw's former self exists. The Germans demolished it, and the Soviets rebuilt it with block-style apartment houses and utilitarian buildings lacking decoration or distinctive features. Only photos and diaries reveal the vitality of the pre-war city, with the exception of a few buildings and streets that survived the war and the postwar socialization process.

The Warsaw of Peretz, Singer, and Szlengel

In search of literary Warsaw we turn left on Grzybowska, a street lined with modern office buildings and apartments interspersed with greenery, and find ourselves in front of the Radisson Blu Hotel. It stands on the site of what once was the headquarters of Warsaw's Jewish community and, under German occupation, of the Judenrat (Jewish Council), the ghetto's administrative arm. **No. 6, Map 1** The council ran the everyday affairs of the ghetto under the control and primarily in the interests of the German occupation authorities. Its Jewish police, widely reviled as collaborationist, criminal, and corrupt, played an ignominious role during the roundups for deportation. On the other hand, its social services tried to alleviate the unspeakable misery of the inmates of the ghetto. Most of the Judenrat staff, including its chairman, Adam Czerniaków, who committed suicide rather than deliver the children of the ghetto to the Germans in July 1942,



Three Jewish literary luminaries. Isaac Leib Peretz (center), known as Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, was born in Zamość in 1852 and died in Warsaw in 1915. He is flanked in the photo by Yankev Dinezon (left) and Sholem Aleichem (right).

(Wikimedia Commons)

were decent people doing their best under the worst of human conditions.

We cross Aleja Jana Pawła II (John Paul II Avenue) at the intersection. Just past the Westin Hotel, we turn left onto Ciepła Street and follow it to the end. Turning right onto Pereca Street we walk to the intersection of Waliców Street. Stepping out of the shadows of recently built skyscrapers we find ourselves in a neighborhood caught between the past and the future. The few surviving pre-war buildings are in very poor condition but many are still inhabited.

The street takes its name from Y.L. Peretz (d. 1915), one of the leading proponents, together with S. Abramovitz (Mendele Mokher-Sforim) and Solomon Rabinowitz (Sholem Aleichem), of a vital Yiddish-language literature and culture in Poland, and a "diaspora Nationalist" who celebrated Jewish life and culture in Eastern Europe. Through his stories he elevated the *mame-loshn*, or mother tongue, of Jewish men and women, described as an ugly "jargon" by the assimilationists, into a literary language. His literary salon, Hazomir (Nightingale), named uncharacteristically in Hebrew, was the center of Jewish literary life in Warsaw before World War I. Peretz advocated the socialist realist style characteristic of late 19th-century European fiction. Unlike many Jewish

modernists, however, Peretz retained respect for traditional Hasidic communities. His play "A Night in the Old Marketplace" is a staple of contemporary Jewish theater, both in the original Yiddish and in translation. We can see a line of inheritance between modern secular writers and the Hasidic storytelling tradition, for Hasidic tales, particularly those of Nachman of Bratslav, had been written down and published in Yiddish since the early 19th century. The devout and the atheist agreed on one thing: the vernacular of the street should be the language of literature.



Pre-war photo of poet Władysław Szlengel (1914-43).

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Those who belonged to the Jewish socialist party, the Bund, established in 1897, adopted Yiddish over Russian as the only proper means of spoken and written communication with the Jewish masses. For most Zionists, by contrast, Yiddish was the living embodiment of galut, or Jewish exile, a deformed "jargon" laden with memories of suffering and displacement. Jewish literature, they asserted, must be written in Hebrew, historically the native language of the Jews. But to the Orthodox, such use of the lashon kodesh, the holy tongue, for secular purposes, was blasphemy, while for the socialists the rejection of the language spoken by the masses was tantamount to aristocratic disdain for the common people and therefore politically untenable.

For a small but rapidly growing elite, however, the answer to the Yiddish vs. Hebrew debate was simple: Polish. From the second half of the 19th century onwards, but especially in the interwar period (1919-39), a dazzling constellation of Jewish poets and writers transformed the Polish literary scene. The poets Bołeslaw Leśmian (formerly Lesman), Antoni Słonimski, and Julian Tuwim (Towim), modernist prose writer and graphic artist Bruno Schulz, and psychologist and writer Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit) are but the most well known, whose legacy is commemorated in street names and public spaces from Warsaw to Drohobych, now in Ukraine, as well as in every Polish high school classroom.

Discussion Topic

The relevance of pre-war Jewish life in Poland to the development of Jewish identity today.

Poland and the former lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth are the birthplace not only of Ashkenazi Jewish culture but of Jewish modernity. In Poland of the late 19th and early 20th centuries Jews posed questions that we continue to ask ourselves today. Today's younger generations are often attracted to movements like Diaspora nationalism or the Yiddishism of the Bund, which affirmed Jewish life in Poland before the war and viewed Ashkenazi Jewish culture and the Yiddish language as native European developments.

Question

How does the study of the Polish Jewish world when it was in the process of creating these diverse and competing modern movements help to deepen our understanding of the identities we have embraced today and the choices we make about our own forms of Jewish expression?





Photo of Waliców 10 taken from the courtyard during the ghetto.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Contemporary view from the courtyard of Waliców 10.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Naming a street in memory of Peretz is indicative of the important role Jews have played in Warsaw's cultural history, and vice versa. With its intense literary and artistic life, publications in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish, a thriving Yiddish stage, where Peretz's plays among others were staged, Warsaw was the pre-war capital of Jewish culture. Or, rather of Jewish cultures, as the choice of the language in which one wrote was as much a choice of worldview as the ideas expressed in that language. "Language wars" marked Eastern Europe's Jewish communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with extensive reports and comments by the local press. The intensity of emotion and commitment to give voice to the modern Jewish experience would produce an explosion of Jewish expression in modern Jewish languages, Yiddish and Hebrew, and a myriad of other languages, including Polish, German, and of course English.

We walk north up Waliców and stop in front of one of the last remaining fragments of the walls surrounding the ghetto. **No. 9, Map 1** The ghetto walls that kept people in and out were not made uniformly of brick as we might imagine. They were constructed rather haphazardly using makeshift fences, barriers, the sides of buildings, and courtyard walls. The spaces were filled in by the Jews themselves as the ghetto changed its size and shape during the three years that it existed.

Władysław Szlengel, the poet of the ghetto, lived at Waliców 14. **No. 8, Map 1** All but unknown outside Poland, and not widely read even here, he wrote powerful poems about the isolation and despair of the ghetto dwellers, imprisoned in their own homes, trapped inside their own neighborhoods. He was one of those Jewish writers born at the turn of the century for whom Polish, not Yiddish, was their mother tongue. Szlengel's poems survived mainly in the underground Ringelblum Archives. But, years after the war, a resident of suburban Warsaw



Construction of the ghetto walls and barriers in August 1940.

(Wikimedia Commons)

discovered copies of the poems concealed under the surface of an old table he had started chopping up for firewood. There is no way of knowing what has been lost in tables long destroyed, or what is still waiting to be discovered in tables that survived.

Small metal half-domes gracefully fill in two corners of the building's gate at Waliców 10. **No. 7, Map 1** Rising about a foot above street level, they ensured that carriages entering the gate were sufficiently clear of its walls to avoid damage. The half-domes at Waliców 10 can also be seen in a photo from the ghetto period. It shows two men loading a corpse on a handcart. Another human body, so emaciated that it hardly rises above the pavement, lies across the gate. Szlengel could easily have seen these daily scenes from his window before he was killed in the ghetto uprising in 1943.

The Gerer Rebbe in Warsaw

We walk a short distance and turn left onto Żelazna as we make a brief detour.

Halfway before the next intersection, at 57 Żelazna, is a gaudy modern high-rise. We enter the courtyard and find a curious red-brick building covered by a Plexiglas roof. **No. 10, Map 1** The building may remind you of the ruined

buildings on Próżna Street, but it is much smaller and well-restored. Still, there is nothing remarkable about it.

After all, why should the prayer house of Isaac Meir Alter be special? Just because he was the first Gerer rebbe?

Ger, known in Polish as Góra Kalwaria (Calvary Hill), is a small town near Warsaw. Like many other Polish towns it was also home to a Hasidic dynasty. Isaac Meir Alter, or as he is sometimes fondly referred to, Reb Itche Meir, was its founder. Those acquainted with Itche Meir's immense learning refer to him, more reverently, as the Rim, our teacher (Rabbenu) Isaac Meir. His commentaries on classical halakhic texts continue to be studied. He spent his life in Warsaw; only his grandson and successor actually settled in Ger.Tradition associates this shtibl with Itche Meir, although it cannot be established that he actually prayed there. In any case, the building was used as a Gerer house of prayer from the second half of the 19th century and housed a heder (religious elementary school) during the interwar period.

Ger, known in Polish as Góra Kalwaria (Cavalry Hill), is a small town near Warsaw. Like many other Polish towns it was also home to a Hasidic dynasty.

Ger grew to become one of the biggest Hasidic movements before the war, attracting a following of some 100,000. After the German invasion the then-Gerer rebbe, Simcha Bunim, fled to Palestine. Ger continues to be one of the most important Hasidic traditions, mainly in Israel and the United States. The first Chief Rabbi of Poland after the fall of Communism was Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz, a Gerer Hasid from Łódź who had survived Auschwitz-Birkenau. Ger is now a popular site for pilgrimages by Gerer Hasidim and those studying Hasidut and Polish Jewish history.

We retrace our steps and continue walking north on Żelazna to the next intersection with Grzybowski Street. On the northwest corner of the intersection we find a plaque with a bas-relief map of the ghetto and,

Discussion Topic

Understanding non-Jewish Poles as stewards of Jewish heritage.

Many Gentile Poles want Jewish life to return to their cities and to their communities, a complex phenomenon that preoccupies Jewish visitors to Poland. Suspending judgment and listening to the motivations and the narratives of many individuals in a range of contexts may be a good way to begin to develop your own understanding of it.

Questions

Do Gentile Poles think of Jewish culture and history as part of their own Polish heritage?

Would Gentile Poles be interested in celebrating Jewish culture if a large population of Jews moved to Poland, or is the celebration of Jewish culture easier or less conflicted because few Jews remain in Poland?

When Gentile Poles and Jews from outside of Poland become involved in supporting Jewish festivals and museum exhibits, how might their ideas and assumptions compare about how to present and portray Jewish culture?



Ger mandolin orchestra, 1920s. As in many pre-war Jewish communities in Poland, Ger was home to a Jewish mandolin orchestra, which played Jewish music from around Europe. Three of these musicians survived the Holocaust. Today's Ger Mandolin Orchestra, created by Avner Yonai, a grandson of the conductor Berl Rybak, is a memorial cultural project dedicated to reviving the mandolin orchestra tradition.

(Ger Mandolin Orchestra Collection)



Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866-1948)

(Wikimedia Commons)

embedded in the sidewalk, a sign reading "Ghetto Wall 1940-1943/Mur Getta 1940-1943." **No. 11, Map 1** This is one of 21 markers erected around the city indicating specific sites in the ghetto. The project was undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the city of Warsaw, and the Jewish Historical Institute.

We are standing at one of the ghetto's entrances. **No. 11, Map 1** Sealed by the Germans on November 16, 1940, the ghetto enclosed 759 acres and a population of more than 400,000. Some 100,000 died of hunger and disease; at least 300,000 were deported to the Treblinka death camp. The few who survived the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943 found their way to other parts of the city and to partisans fighting outside of Warsaw.

We continue our walk up the street. The buildings on the eastern corners of Krochmalna and Żelazna are jarring, much taller than the apartment houses on Próżna. **No. 12, Map 1** A century ago, as income-producing tenements, they were the bane of penniless renters and the source of landlords' fortunes. I.B. Singer lived in such a tenement, which no longer stands, further down Krochmalna at No. 10. If Próżna was the more commercial neighborhood of the city's northern district, then Krochmalna was its beating Jewish heart.

Tenement courtyards were worlds unto themselves. A courtyard could house, for instance, two separate shtiblekh of two different Hasidic dynasties; a synagogue for mitnagdim, the opponents of Hasidism; numerous workshops, shops, and stores. Sometimes there were heders or batei midrash. The tenements on Singer's Krochmalna, as described in many of his books, were populated by Hasidim and communists, mystics and prostitutes, socialist students and pious shoemakers. The courtyard was the crossroads where the Jewish worlds mingled, if only to return to their own private spheres at the end of the day.



Entrance to the ghetto at Grzybowska and Żelazna Streets. The modern plaque marking the ghetto, pictured below, is on the low white wall.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Ghetto marker at Grzybowska/Żelazna.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

As we walk up Żelazna we pay closer attention to the buildings. The old ones seem to belong here, barely tolerating the newer interlopers. The historical distance between them is immeasurable.



The corner of contemporary Krochmalna and Żelazna Streets. The pre-war buildings, though quite dilapidated, offer an example of what the district looked like before the war.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

Edge of the Ghetto and Chłodna Street

We stop on the corner at Chłodna Street. The place looks familiar. Perhaps you have seen an image often reproduced in history books, a photo showing a high wooden bridge packed with people. Under the bridge runs a city street, not a river, a ravine, or a railroad line. The street is for the people who don't have to wear white armbands with blue Stars of David. The people on the bridge have been condemned as Untermenschen, subhumans. They are not permitted to cross the street but must use the bridge, which offers only a brief glimpse of life outside the confines of the ghetto walls.

A defining moment in Warsaw's history occurred in October 1940, when the Germans began to round up Jews from the city and its suburbs, forcing them into the "Jewish Residential District," the ghetto, an area of just 1.3 square miles. The largest of the ghettos in occupied-Europe, it was sealed one month later.

Creation of the ghetto was the end of a process that had begun almost immediately after the Germans occupied Poland. They introduced laws prohibiting Jews from holding public office or having bank accounts, and then increased the restrictions, over time, until the Jews of Warsaw, who numbered more than 380,000, approximately one-third of the city's population, found their lives becoming ever more precarious. In December Jews above the age of twelve were required to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David. By the spring schools and synagogues were closed, some to be reopened briefly in 1941 before being officially closed for good.

The Jews brought into the ghetto whatever personal and family possessions they could. Those with more money, at least in the first years, fared somewhat better, but this often brought acrimony and jealousy. The Judenrat, the Jewish Council, had been established in October 1939 as the "recognized" Jewish community under the Germans. Jewish educational, communal and religious institutions were reestablished within the ghetto in the belief that it was only a passing phase. Jews established houses of worship, with leaders such as Rabbi Szapira, known as the Piaseczno Rebbe, who gave weekly drashot (sermons) and responded to questions about how to apply halakhah. A collection of his writings was recovered after the war and published as *Eish Kodesh* (Holy Fire).

Stores, workshops, hospitals, and orphanages remained open, managing as best they could. Residents published dozens of illegal newspapers and reconstituted their political parties, also illegally. The post office and the telephone service continued until the end of the Ghetto Uprising in May 1943.

We can find a clue to an all-but-destroyed city in the four-story apartment building with the rounded sweep that still stands on Chłodna's southwest corner. Down the street is the Chłodna Café, a popular meeting place that hosts speakers and musicians presenting Jewish and multicultural Warsaw. Further down, at what would have been number 38, was the home of the Anuszewicz family. Zalman Meir Anuszewicz, known as Max, ran a



Bridge on Chłodna Street connecting the two halves of the ghetto, 1942. Visible in the background is St. Charles Church, still standing today.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Footbridge on Chłodna Street from the apartment of Adam Czerniaków, director of the Judenrat. In the background the building with rounded corner balconies still stands.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Discussion Topic

Antisemitism in Poland past and present.

Visitors to Poland are often more interested in Poles and their attitudes toward Jews than in learning about Jewish history or culture in Eastern Europe. A central part of the process of visiting Poland is to ask about the nature of Polish antisemitism and whether it is still a dominant factor.

After World War II Poles who had inherited or moved into "post-Jewish" property in towns and cities worried that their ownership might be challenged. Also, the Catholic Church was a potential reservoir of antisemitic attitudes. Here it is important to consider too the cynical and politically motivated "cooperation" between Polish nationalists and the Communist party leadership and the fact that, because Jews held many positions within the party leadership, the anti-Zionist "purges" of 1956 and 1968 made room for advancement within the party hierarchy.

Journalist Ruth Ellen Gruber has described the process by which attitudes began to change:

> It took changing conditions and several postwar catalysts to enable the development of the non-Jewish embrace of the Jewish phenomenon. One of these was distance, first marked most vividly by the coming-of-age of the student generation of the 1960s and then marked by degrees as living memory became history....Another catalyst was the opening of the Christian world—particularly the Vatican—to Jews and Judaism, which also was initiated in the 1960s and gained momentum as the postwar student generations came of age. The landmark *Nostra Aetate* declaration issued in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council, with its call for mutual respect and understanding between Catholics and Jews, formally initiated an interfaith interaction that has by now become so routine that in some countries it is often taken for granted. Pope John Paul II, who saw the effects of the Holocaust and of communist anti-Semitism firsthand in his native Poland, made improving relations with the Jewish world one of the cornerstones of his mission after he was elected to the papacy in 1978.... John Paul demonstrated a vivid appreciation of Jewish heritage, history and values to the Catholic world and to the world at large.
>
> —Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Judaism in Europe* (2002)

Questions

How widespread is antisemitism in Poland today?

What role did Pope John Paul II and members of the Polish clergy under Communism play in turning the public discourse about Jews toward respect, admiration, and even remorse?

Has the Polish government done enough to make up for the antisemitism that Jews experienced in Poland before and after the war?

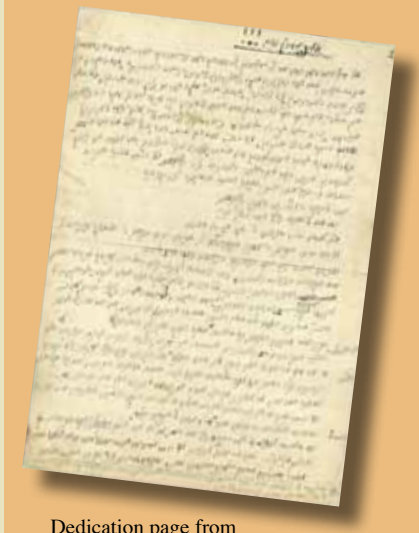
Does antisemitism constitute an important element of Jewish identity?

Many non-Jewish Poles have become interested in learning about and preserving Jewish heritage. Is there something invasive about this degree of interest, or about Poles as caretakers of Jewish culture?



Antisemitic demonstration by Polish students in Lwów (now Lviv) in the 1930s. The banner reads, "A day without the Jews. We demand an official ghetto." The ghetto here refers to demands that Jewish university students have separate seating.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Dedication page from Rabbi Kalonymos Kalman Shapira's collected Sabbath sermons.

(Ringelblum Archives, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Contemporary view of the rounded-balcony building, including a new skyscraper, and the commemorative installation on Chłodna Street.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

clothing shop on one side of the entrance to No. 20, the home of Adam Czerniaków, **No. 14, Map 1** and a fish shop on the other. A coffee shop at No. 26 gave Max a social haven among its tables and customers before returning home. Max's brother Samuel was an owner of the Atlantic Cinema (still a movie theater) and a partner in the Femina Cinema, which we will see later on in our walk.

We turn right onto Chłodna and stop at the new multimedia installation "Bridge of Memory," created by architect Tomasz Lec, who also designed the "Ghetto Wall 1940-1943" installation. **No. 13, Map 1** Above the street a laser installation reintroduces the bridge into the city's landscape. Imbedded in the sidewalks on both sides of the streets are signs with "Ghetto Wall 1940-1943" as well as slabs that represent the stairs and bricks outlining where the pre-war buildings stood. You can see several wartime photos through viewers placed at different heights with music playing in the background.

Walking eastward on Chłodna we see St. Charles Boromeus Church. **Point I, Map 1** During the ghetto period it stood almost at the thin end of a wedge which, starting from the Saxon (Saski) Garden, bisected the ghetto into its large northern and small southern parts. The wedge ended where you now stand. Originally, traffic between the two sectors was regulated by a system of gates which would first block Chłodna on both sides of Żelazna to admit ghetto traffic between the two areas, and then Żelazna on both sides of Chłodna to allow the "Aryan" traffic to flow. The bridge, which we just left behind, was built in 1941 when the hinged-gate system proved to be inefficient.

We take the left fork, passing yet another marker **No. 15, Map 1**: a former entrance of the Supreme Court, located between the two sides of the ghetto until mid-1942. Its position, with one entrance in the ghetto and the other outside, made it a natural route for smuggling and for escape. Many owe their lives to the Court building. If you look from the "ghetto side," as we will in a few minutes, you will understand the building's importance during the war.

We walk to Aleja Jana Pawła II (John Paul II Avenue) and cross the street and turn left. On your right, looking much like the famous Les Halles of Paris, stands the Hala Mirowska, one of Warsaw's fresh food markets, in business for over a hundred years. **No. 16, Map 1** Before the war Jews would gather outside the hall after Yom Kippur to buy and sell the traditional lulav and etrog sets for Sukkoth. Now the sidewalks are lined with vendors selling vegetables and fruits from their gardens.

We walk north, surrounded by Soviet-era buildings, to the busy corner of Aleja Solidarności (Solidarity Avenue). **No. 17, Map 1**



Ghetto marker on Chłodna Street.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



Post office on Ciepła Street within the ghetto, May 1941. The telephones also worked. A 1942 phone book, published by the Germans, includes the telephone number and department extensions of the Judenrat.

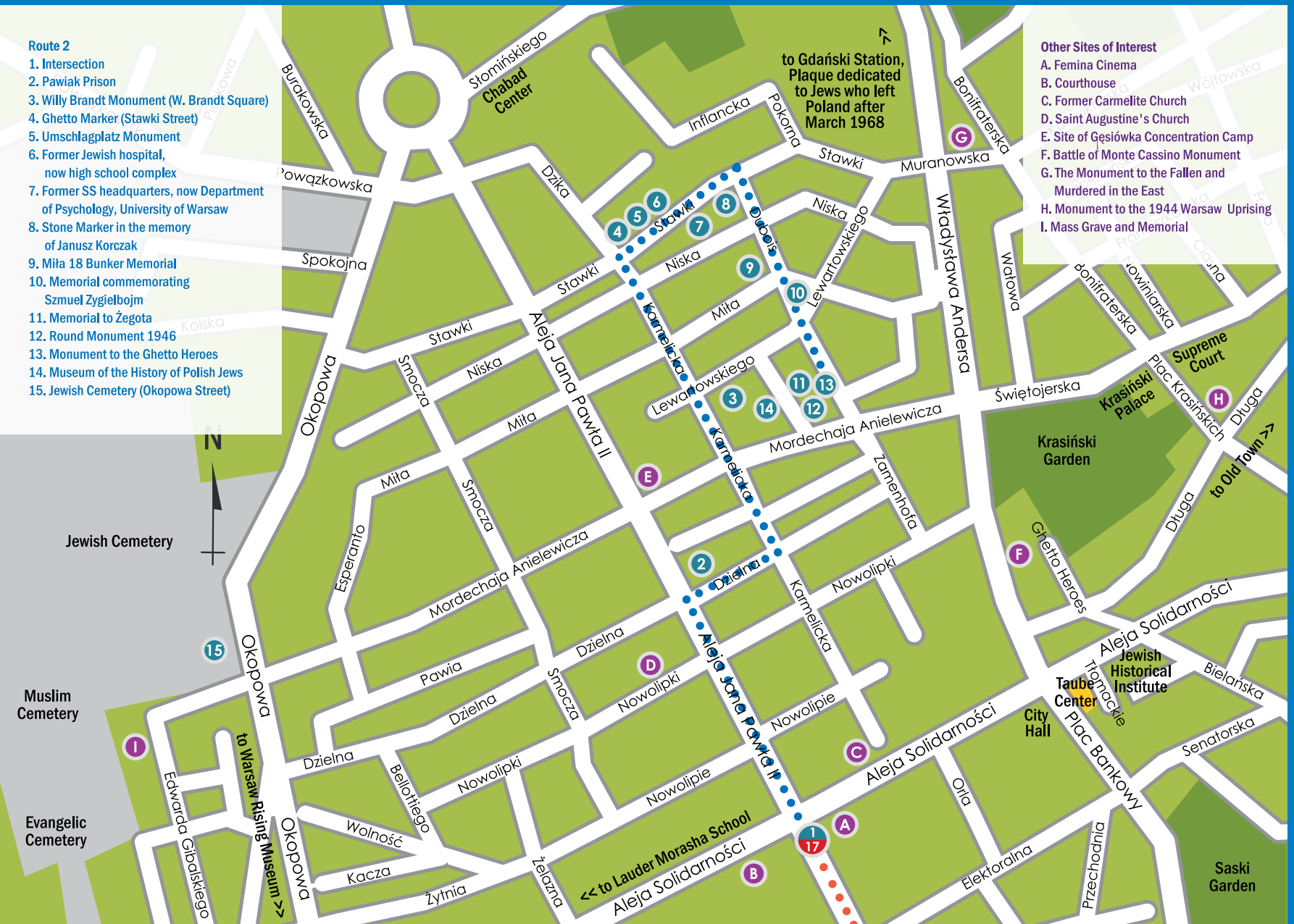
(Wikimedia Commons)



In front of Hala Mirowska in 1940.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Warsaw Walking Route 2



Warsaw Route 2

A path into the heart of darkness and despair, if only briefly, to remember and honor those we have lost, those who survived, and those who dared to save others.

The Intersection / Karmelicka Street
Route of Memory and the Memorial
Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Cemetery on Okopowa Street

The Intersection

Standing on the northeast corner of the intersection of Aleja Solidarności and Aleja Jana Pawła II, you might think that there is nothing here of Jewish interest. **No. 1, Map 2** Billboards advertising cars and fast-food restaurants compete with electronic signs promoting a local "gentlemen's club" and do little to alleviate the overpowering drabness of the area's Stalinist architecture.

But there is another city within the visible one.

You are standing in Muranów, formerly the heart of one of Warsaw's largest and most vibrant Jewish districts. There were fewer avenues then. A maze of small streets and alleys overflowed with humanity and claimed the attention of passersby through signs in Yiddish, with Polish a distant second. Solna Street took up the eastern half of what is now Aleja Jana Pawła II, but did not continue north of the intersection as it was too densely populated. Another important thoroughfare, Leszno Street, now Aleja Solidarności, was smaller than it is today.

We look south across the street and see the Femina Cinema **Point A, Map 2** on the ground floor of a rather nondescript apartment block. When the Femina opened in 1941, six months after the Warsaw ghetto was sealed by the Germans, it was one of the most modern theaters in Warsaw. During the early months of the ghetto, Jewish theaters, music halls, cabarets, and cafés offered



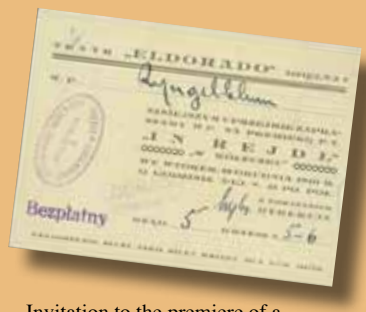
The opening of the Femina Cinema on June 20, 1941, was announced in *Gazeta Żydowska*: "Jewish Warsaw has obtained another institution of high cultural significance. In the elegant, modern and tastefully designed Femina, at 35 Leszno Street, a new theater will open in the very near future, playing in Polish and Yiddish. The program of this theater, in which the best Jewish talents of the Jewish and the Polish theater will appear, will achieve a very high standard. This is guaranteed by first-rate writers, who have been harnessed to the literary wagon of this theater, as well as acting aces who have also been engaged for the stage." *Gazeta Żydowska*, written in Polish, was the official newspaper sanctioned by the Germans in the ghetto (1940-42).

Leszno street facing east during World War II. The Femina Cinema is on the right and the Carmelite Church on the left. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Outside the Eldorado Theater on Dzielna 1. The printed concert and theatrical programs of the Eldorado and other theaters during the war were collected by Oneg Shabbat and are preserved in the Ringelblum Archives.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Invitation to the premiere of a play at the Eldorado Theater on December 10, 1940.

(Ringelblum Archives, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Discussion Topic

Contemporary uses of land on which Jewish wartime tragedies occurred.

Housing in Warsaw's Muranów neighborhood was built in the 1950s on the site of the former ghetto and its rubble. That is upsetting to many visitors. Visitors are likewise upset when they realize that Auschwitz is the name of Oświęcim, a town where people live normal lives today.

Questions

Should the land beneath Muranów have been left undeveloped?

Are the spaces and rubble of the Warsaw ghetto qualitatively different from other devastated areas of Warsaw in which Warsaw residents fought and died?

Can we appropriately compare sites of Jewish tragedy in Poland to land in the United States where slaves were traded, or African Americans lynched, or where massacres of Native American Indian residents took place?



The Carmelite Church being moved in 1962 to permit widening of the street now called Aleja Solidarności.

(Wikimedia Commons)

those who could afford it a brief escape from the increasingly difficult conditions. If you step into the Femina's entrance and look to your right you will find a plaque in Polish, "In memory of the murdered actors and musicians of the Warsaw ghetto on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Femina theater and concert hall. The Umschlagplatz Museum Foundation. 20 June 1941-20 June 1991."

Shifting our focus to the east and down the street we notice the Church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, formerly the Carmelite Church. **Point C, Map 2** Like the Church of All Saints on Grzybowski Square the Carmelite Church served the needs of Catholic Jews in the ghetto. Of the approximately 400,000 ghetto inmates, about 12,000 were apostates. After the war the church was moved 20 meters to make way for the broader avenue we see today.

On the southwest side of Aleja Solidarności (Solidarity Avenue) stands the impressive Supreme Court Building **Point B, Map 2**, a major monument of interwar Polish architecture. The main entrance, which we can see from this vantage point, was within the ghetto, so Gentiles having business with the courts, which did not cease to operate during the war, would access the building through its back entrance on Biała Street. Open on both sides, the building offered a major escape route for inmates of the ghetto. Often a child would be left by a family member at the entrance on Leszno with explicit instructions on how to pass through the building's vast hallway by attaching themselves to any adult so as to look as if they belonged. On the other side a designated person would wait to take them to a safer haven. Such a moment on the courthouse steps was the last time many would ever see their parents and siblings.

Turn back and walk a few steps north up Aleja Jana Pawła II (John Paul II Avenue). You will notice a gap between the 1950s-vintage buildings and the small commercial pavilions across the street. Through the gap, if you look closely, you can see what seems to be the ground floor of the corner building continuing, but instead of a window you see only a wall. It is not the ground floor but rather the remainder of the piles of rubble from the destroyed ghetto on which the district of Muranów was built after the war. The remainder of the ghetto, even the buildings that managed to survive both the 1943 Ghetto Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944,



Ghetto-side entrance to the Supreme Court Building, now a district court, in 1940-42. The other entrance was outside the ghetto on Biała Street.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

was bulldozed and the new district was built on top. Today's ground floors are on top of the pre-war second-floor level. The foundations of today's Warsaw stand on the ruins of what was once an extraordinarily vibrant central European capital. None of this is apparent at first glance, yet it is important to appreciate what lies beneath today's sidewalks and roads.

Karmelicka Street

Walking north on Aleja Jana Pawła II to Dzielna Street we notice the spire of St. Augustine's Church. **Point D, Map 2** In the archival photos of the destroyed ghetto the church with its spire is one of the few buildings left standing. Today it is surrounded by a district rebuilt. We turn right onto Dzielna Street. The remains of the notorious Pawiak prison, which took its name from the street on which it stood, Peacock Street, now serves as a museum and a memorial to the more than 100,000 prisoners executed there or sent to German death and concentration camps. **No. 2, Map 2** A branch of the Warsaw Museum of Independence is now housed in the remains of the prison, which was blown up by the Germans during the Warsaw Uprising.

After the war people began affixing plaques to a tree which had survived to commemorate those who had been murdered in Pawiak. The tree died in 1984, but the trunk stood for another 20 years. In 2004 it was cut down (a section is still preserved in the Pawiak museum) and a metal cast of it was made. In 2005 the tree's replica was put up on the same spot, with copies of the plaques affixed again.

We come to Karmelicka Street, now a quiet, almost demure residential neighborhood filled with blocks of postwar apartments. In the old days, with a major tramline running down its outdoor markets and shops offering the latest couture, the street was elegant and rather uptownish. As late as the end of 19th century the neighborhood was overwhelmingly Christian. Then, as it became more Jewish, it left stranded the churches we have seen. Today, as with most of central Warsaw's streets, the street follows a different route and looks quite



Pre-war postcard of the market on Plac Muranowska. (Wikimedia Commons)



St. Augustine's Church in 1945, viewed from the south, not far from the Intersection.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Reconstructed tree outside the former Pawiak prison, now part of the Museum of Independence.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



Karmelicka Street in 1941. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Karmelicka Street in 1943, during the Ghetto Uprising. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

different than its pre-war namesake. If you look carefully you can see mounds, remains of the ghetto, now covered with grass and flowers.

Karmelicka Street was also the main link between the notorious prison on Pawia Street, located inside the ghetto, and Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Street downtown, which in another irony is now the Polish Ministry of Education. It was also a very busy artery inside the ghetto, always teeming with passersby and with a tram running down the center.

Nazi propagandists used photographs and staged movies in the Shultz Restaurant on Karmelicka to illustrate the alleged luxury and debauchery of "rich Jews" in the ghetto, supposedly oblivious to the suffering of others. Theaters like the Femina and cafés and cabarets managed to provide a brief respite from the daily struggle. The Sztuka at Leszno 2, an artistic café and cabaret, featured well-known artists, among them pianist Władysław Szpilman. Poet Władysław Szlengel recited his works, and Marysia Ajzensztadt, a 19-year-old singer dubbed Nightingale of the Ghetto, performed in the summer garden to rave reviews. Szlengel, as we have learned, was killed during the ghetto uprising. Ajzensztadt was killed at the Umschlagplatz.



Intersection of Karmelicka (with a view to the north) and Leszno Streets in 1941.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

A few residents managed to leave the ghetto briefly as members of harshly treated and closely guarded work details. Some smuggled in food, goods, and arms. Other residents escaped to hiding places or partisan groups. For some who escaped, living on the "Aryan" side proved too difficult, partly because of the fear of being identified or turned in by a szmalcownik (blackmailer). They chose to return to the relative security of the ghetto. Yet other Jews, who had not been herded into the ghetto when it was created, lived clandestinely and fearfully. In his book *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945* Dr. Gunnar Paulsson takes us through the "secret city" populated by the Jews living in hiding.



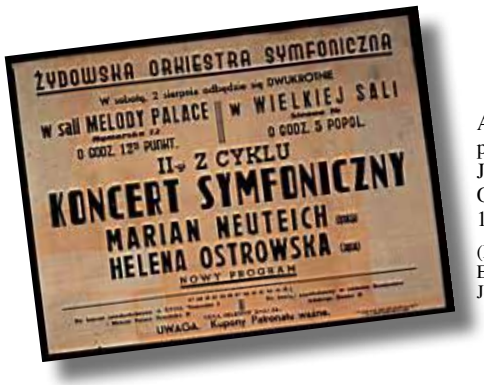
The Polish Ministry of Education, Aleja Szucha 25, used by the Germans as Gestapo headquarters during the war.

(Wikimedia Commons)

A Jewish school on the southwest corner of Karmelicka and Dzielna, run before the war by the Bund, educated children in Yiddish and in a spirit of atheist Jewish Socialism. Marek Edelman, future deputy commander of the ghetto uprising and a well-known activist in the Solidarity movement, learned his Yiddish there. In 1941 the Germans briefly authorized the reopening of Jewish schools. One survivor recalled the frustration she felt one day when German soldiers interrupted her chemistry experiment and then closed down the school.

Route of Memory and the Memorial

We cross Mordechaja Anielewicza Street, named in honor of the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. It was formerly Gęsia Street. We can see the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews to our right. **No. 14, Map 2** The park, surrounded by postwar apartment buildings, is another reminder of central Warsaw's renewal. If we walk east just a few steps on Lewartowskiego Street, named for Polish Jewish communist Jozef Lewartowski, born Aron Finkelstein, we reach a memorial to Willy Brandt. **No. 3, Map 2** On a state visit in December 1970 the then Chancellor of West Germany knelt in front of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in an unscripted symbolic gesture of contrition. "Under the weight of



Announcement of two performances by the Jewish Symphony Orchestra on August 2, 1941.

(Ringelblum Archives, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Jewish prisoners in the Gęsiowka Concentration Camp, located within the borders of the ghetto on Gęsia Street, liberated by the Polish Underground Battalion Zośka on August 5, 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

German history, and carrying the burden of the millions who were murdered," he later recalled, "I did what people do when words fail them."

We return to Karmelicka and follow it northward, to the corner of Stawki and Dzika Streets. We find another "Ghetto Wall 1940-1943" marker and gain a better understanding of how big the ghetto was. **No. 4, Map 2** The understated Umschlagplatz memorial stands on what is now the north end of Karmelicka Street, the site of the rail platform from which trains would take Jews to Treblinka, one of the five death camps built by the Germans in occupied Poland. In just six weeks, during the summer of 1942, the ghetto was emptied of most of its inhabitants. The memorial is engraved with the first names, from A to Z, in Polish, Hebrew, and English, of those who perished. **No. 5, Map 2**

Stawki Street was in the northern, poorer end of the Jewish district of Warsaw. It was an area of small artisans, cheap boarding-rooms, run-down buildings, and slums. Rather out of place, two modern buildings



Miriam "Marysia" Ajzensztadt, known as the Nightingale of the Ghetto, was a popular singer in the ghetto.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Pre-war photo of members of HaShomer Hatzair, a Socialist-Zionist youth movement. Mordechai Anielewicz is standing at right.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Memorial marker, one of 21 on the Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews 1940-1943. This marker, on the corner of Stawki and Dubois, is dedicated to Janusz Korczak. He and his colleague Stefania Wilczyńska accompanied the children of the Krochmalna orphanage to the Umschlagplatz and to the Treblinka death camp.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



The Umschlagplatz in 1942. Mass deportations of Jews from the ghetto to the Treblinka death camp had begun on July 22, the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the Exile. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

served as schools, an indication that the district was looking toward a brighter future. During the ghetto, the building on the north side was turned into a Jewish hospital, **No. 6, Map 2** while the one on the south side became the SS headquarters. **No. 7 Map 2** A wall blocked off Stawki Street and made an enclosure. Beginning on July 22, 1942, Tish'ah be'Av on the Jewish calendar, thousands of people would be forced into this space and then on to the trains to Treblinka, in the Grossaktion, or Great Deportation.

Initially people volunteered to go, believing the German lies about resettlement and often deceived by assurances of receiving bread. Soon the truth came out thanks to a survivor who managed to smuggle himself back into the ghetto. From then on, people were herded into the Umschlagplatz by force. Five to six thousand were then taken daily to Treblinka, the numbers limited only by the capacity of the gas chambers. The roundups were conducted by the Jewish police (OD), created by the Germans as part of their administration of the ghetto. The Jewish policemen distinguished themselves by their brutality, but had to meet a German daily quota. Failure to do so meant that their own families would be loaded on the trains, which eventually happened once the Jewish police were no longer needed.

In other buildings in the area the Germans temporarily lodged about 100,000 Jews forcibly removed from small towns around Warsaw and from western Polish territories incorporated into the Reich. The former hospital is now a high school complex and the former SS headquarters is the Department of Psychology of the University of Warsaw. Both now bear the plaques of the Memorial Route.

Until 1983 the site of the former Umschlagplatz was all but unmarked. A gas station was built there with only a small plaque in Yiddish (replete with spelling mistakes) and Polish. In 1983 the junta authorities under General Wojciech Jaruzelski decided to play up the 40th anniversary of the ghetto uprising by organizing a series of events and inviting Jews worldwide to attend, including some from Israel, the first such invitation since Poland broke off relations in 1967. This was done in the hope of attracting Western goodwill.

The Communist regime had banned independent commemorations of the ghetto uprising but they were held anyway beginning in the 1970s, led by Marek Edelman. Young Jews active in the opposition and in the Jewish Flying University joined him. The independent ceremonies took place undisturbed, but in 1983, the authorities clamped down and physically prevented participants from laying flowers at the Umschlagplatz Monument. This generated outrage among non-Jewish onlookers as well, and a spontaneous protest demonstration began. A young Solidarity activist, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, read a letter of support from Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, who

had been detained by police to prevent him from participating in the ceremonies. Onyszkiewicz was jailed for six months for this offense. After the fall of Communism in 1989, he became independent Poland's first minister of defense.

The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, which is the iconic symbol of the Warsaw ghetto, was unveiled in 1948 on the fifth anniversary of the uprising.

The gas station was finally torn down in 1987, and in 1988 the existing Umschlagplatz Monument, designed by Władysław Klamerus and Hanna Szmalenberg, was dedicated in commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the ghetto uprising. In the 1990s, protests notwithstanding, developers seized plots of land around the Umschlagplatz, including buildings which had been part of the deportation complex, and leveled them to build the high-rise apartment blocks which now dominate the area.

The Umschlagplatz Monument was part of a wider undertaking commemorating the memory of the Shoah.



Yitzhak Zuckerman, a commander in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, testifying during the trial of Adolf Eichmann, May 3, 1961, in Jerusalem.

(Wikimedia Commons)

The Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews 1940-43, designed by the same architects, runs from the Umschlagplatz Monument to the ghetto. It is an attempt to preserve memory and to insert a physical presence of the Jewish past into a city preserving hardly any trace of its former Jewish inhabitants. The plaques and the stone markers commemorate leading personalities in the ghetto and organizations which participated in the uprising.

The stone marker on the corner of Stawki and Dubois is dedicated to the educator Janusz Korczak, né Henryk Goldszmit, known for having chosen to accompany the children from his orphanage to Treblinka in spite of having been offered the opportunity to escape the ghetto. **No. 8, Map 2** Poles remember him as a beloved author, an extraordinary educator, and a child advocate, whose books are mainstays of children's libraries and whose pedagogical writings are part of every educator's college curriculum.

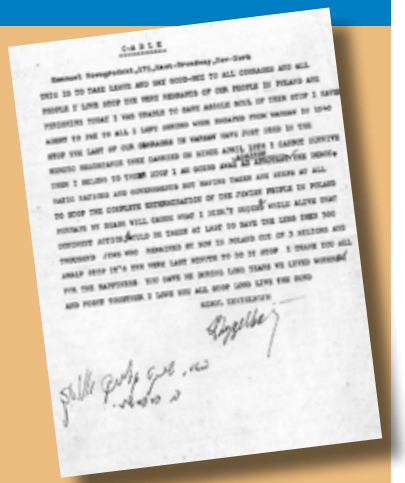
As we walk, we pass other markers: a Bundist, a rabbi, members of youth and political organizations, Fruma Plotnicka (who trained Jewish self-defense units in the ghetto). Sosnowiec and Będzin and Arie "Jurek" Wilner, a liaison between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) and the Home Army (AK), are among those remembered.

In January 1943 the Germans encountered the first organized armed Jewish resistance when they entered the ghetto to expedite its liquidation. The real battle began on the eve of Passover 1943 (April 19), when members of the ŻOB (organized by the Bund), HaShomer Hatzair, Dror, and other "left leaning" groups, and the ŻWW (Jewish Military Union, organized by Betar and factions on the "right") launched the biggest act of armed resistance to date in Nazi-occupied Europe. A plan to launch simultaneous uprisings failed but triggered acts



Marek Edelman, a commander in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, at the 50th anniversary of the Bund, 1947.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



The last statement of Szmuel Zygielbojm before he committed suicide in London in May 1943. (Wikimedia Commons)



Copy of the Polish government-in-exile's formal presentation to the United Nations in December 1942. (Wikimedia Commons)

of resistance and uprisings in ghettos in Białystok, Będzin, Częstochowa, and Kraków.

The ghetto fighters held off the Germans for several weeks in spite of the great odds they faced. The memorial on Miła 18, in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish, rises at the site where on May 8, 1943, the Germans besieged the bunker of the headquarters of the Jewish Fighting Organization. Those inside, among them the uprising commander, Mordechai Anielewicz, decided to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the enemy. Their bodies were never recovered and the memorial mound was built on the site. The incident may be familiar to English-speaking readers through Leon Uris's novel *Mila 18*. The postwar apartment building at Miła 18, shown in Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah," stands some 100 meters away. **No. 9, Map 2**



Zivia Lubetkin (1914-76), known by her nom de guerre, Celina. The only woman in the high command of the Jewish underground in occupied Warsaw, she married Antek Cukerman and together they moved to Israel in 1946.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Sporadic fighting continued into early June, and the few who survived the uprising made their way through the sewers to the "Aryan" side. Many, including Marek Edelman, Antek Cukerman, and Zivia Lubetkin, managed to escape to fight again in the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 or with partisan groups.

Jews taken from Auschwitz, mainly Greeks and Hungarians who could not communicate easily with locals, were brought to Warsaw to clean up the remains of the ghetto. They were interned in the Gęsiówka concentration camp, a former women's prison located in the center of the ghetto on what was then Gęsia Street (now Mordechaja Anielewicza Street). In early August 1944, during the first days of the Warsaw Uprising, Polish underground fighters liberated the camp. Many of the liberated prisoners who joined the unit and fought in the uprising were later killed in action.

We continue on Zamenhofa Street, named for the Jewish creator of the language Esperanto, invented to promote a truly multicultural Europe through a common language. On the left side of the street a dramatic plaque of shattered black marble and stone lies on the sidewalk. The memorial commemorates Szmuel Zygielbojm, a Bundist who was a member of the Polish government-in-exile in London. In May 1943, Zygielbojm committed suicide in protest against the world's inaction in the face of the extermination of Europe's Jews. **No. 10, Map 2**

Walking just past the Ghetto Heroes Monument, you will see a stone marker commemorating Żegota (Council to Aid Jews). **No. 11, Map 2** A cooperative effort of the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish underground, it was the only government-sponsored agency that rescued Jews in occupied Europe. Żegota provided hiding places and false papers for thousands of Jewish men, women, and children. Its leaders have been awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal by Yad Vashem, but often were denied recognition in Communist Poland.



Irena Sendler as a young nurse, before 1941.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Third-anniversary commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1946. Professor Władysław Bartoszewski, an activist in Żegota, sits third from the right. Bartoszewski was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations in 1965 and accepted the medal on behalf of Żegota in 1966. A former political prisoner in Auschwitz, Bartoszewski served in several Polish governments and has worked on behalf of Polish Jewish and Polish German relations throughout his long and distinguished career. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Irena Sendler, head of Żegota's children's section, was responsible for saving over 2,500 lives by smuggling children out of the ghetto for placement with Polish families or in convents. During the war Polish fascists threatened her for allegedly being a Communist, and when she was arrested after the war she was threatened by Polish Communists for not being one. Recognized by democratic Poland very late in her life (she passed away in 2008), after her story became known in the United States, she was later nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. The Taube Foundation gives a yearly award in her name. In 2011 it went to Magdalena Grodzka Gużkowska, a teenager during the war who smuggled Jewish children out of the ghetto, and only learned late in life that she was Jewish.

An agent of the Polish government-in-exile was the first person to give the Allies eyewitness proof of what was happening in the concentration camps. Jan Karski had been smuggled into the Warsaw ghetto and, dressed as a Ukrainian guard, then into the Izbica Lubelska "sorting

More of "These" and "Those" Streets

"Those'" streets included the following: Dzielna, Pawia, Gęsia, Miła, Niska, Stawki, Muranowska Square and first and foremost Nalewki and Franciszkańska. Those Jews traded before the First World War with Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk and even China. They had their stores packed up to the rafters with merchandise. The rents in that area were high, because every apartment was a little business. Truly, no one could count all the little factories that fit in here. The racket of the frenziedly bargaining voices did not let up for even a moment in the course of the day. There were also houses of study and Chassidic shtiblech, but they were invisible among the stores, workshops and factories that surrounded them. On 'those' streets people rushed about and took a tram even if they were not going far. Thousands of door-to-door salesmen set out from there with goods to distant points....There were enormous mercer's emporia, where customers from all over Poland stocked up. It was here people discussed the rise and fall of share prices, commented on exchange rates for foreign currencies, it was here that people racked their brains whether the price of the pound sterling would go up. Here the Chassids put on stiff collars and ties because it helped in doing business. In this neighborhood the people dreamed of building Israel and of a socialist revolution.... It is hard to imagine that all of that pulsating and glittering life has been extinguished, that this gigantic collection of human singularities was wiped off the face of the earth."

—I.B. Singer, "Every Jewish Street in Warsaw Was an Independent Town," *Forverts,* July 22, 1944.



Building the first memorial, amid the ruins of the ghetto, to the victims of the Holocaust in Poland in 1946.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



March in memory of the victims of the Holocaust in 1946.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Discussion Topic

Changing Narratives of Jewish Poland.

The curators of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews have chosen to blur the narrative boundaries between Jewish history and Polish history. In the exhibits Jewish culture and communities will be portrayed as an integral part of Poland's thousand-year history, and Poland will be treated as the land in which European Jewish culture flourished. This raises very interesting questions about changing Jewish narratives.

Questions

For whom are these exhibits designed, and how will they influence the way that Jewish visitors and Gentile Poles understand the Jewish past in Europe?

Who would favor such an approach, and who might not?

Does the museum have the chance to become as important a Jewish heritage site as Auschwitz, worthy of pilgrimage by Jews from the United States and Israel? Why?

Which stories of the Jewish past in Poland should younger Jewish generations be told, as they grow into their Jewish identities? What is gained, and what is lost, in the choice to tell or neglect certain narratives?



Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, dedicated in 1948 and designed by Natan Rapoport.

(Wikimedia Commons)

camp." He brought information to the British and the Americans in fall 1942, but his news met with disbelief at the United Nations and in London and Washington.

A few paces from the Żegota monument, through a break in the bushes, we see the first Ghetto Uprising monument. **No. 12, Map 2** A humble structure of red sandstone in the shape of a sewer cover, it was officially dedicated by leaders and members of the Jewish community in April 1946. It is said to stand on the site where the uprising began. On the ground is the Hebrew letter *bet* and a branch. The inscription in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish reads: "To those who fell in the unparalleled heroic struggle for the dignity and freedom of the Jewish people, for a free Poland and for the liberation of mankind."

The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, which is the iconic symbol of the Warsaw ghetto, was unveiled in 1948 on the fifth anniversary of the uprising. Hewn from Swedish labradorite obtained by the Nazis for the construction of monuments to the victory of the Third Reich, it was designed by Polish-Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport. **No. 13, Map 2** A version of the monument stands in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The main façade of the sculpture is a rendering of the heroic fighters. On the other side of the monument, a bas-relief depicts the deportation of Jews, bent and broken under the guard of German soldiers.

The plaza in front of the monument is the site of official and unofficial ceremonies commemorating the ghetto uprising and all the Jewish victims of the Shoah. Twice under Communist rule, in 1983 and 1988, the unofficial ceremonies were transformed into anti-regime demonstrations. The 50th anniversary of the ghetto uprising was attended by Polish President and former Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Deputy Commander of the Uprising and former Solidarity activist Marek Edelman.

The memorial route is walked by thousands of visitors to Warsaw, who pay their respects at the monuments and hold ceremonies and memorials in Hebrew and in all the languages spoken in the Diaspora. In front of the monument they lay wreaths and light candles, recite the Kaddish, and incant the "El Male Raḥamim." Here, memories of the most tragic half-decade in Jewish history pass from generation to generation.

Museum of the History of Polish Jews

What of Jewish life in Poland during the 800 years before the Shoah? And what about Jewish life after the war under Communism and in Poland today?

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews will present this compelling narrative. **No. 14, Map 2** The museum's striking building faces the Rapoport monument, on land donated by the city of Warsaw and with funds from the Polish government totaling around $70 million. The museum is scheduled for completion in 2013 with support from the German government, other national governments, individuals from around the Jewish world, and philanthropic organizations and foundations such as the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Koret Foundation. It is a joint venture of the Polish state, the city of Warsaw, and the Jewish Historical Institute Association, a Jewish NGO that also oversees the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Staffed by museum experts, scholars, and educators from Poland, Israel, and the United States, it will be the first museum to narrate the millennium of Polish Jewish history. Interactive displays will show Jewish history as an integral part of Polish history, and the history of Polish Jewry as an integral part of the history of the Jewish people. They will trace the history of Jews on Polish soil from the early feudal period through the Golden Age, and through partitioned Poland into modernity, interwar Poland, World War II and the Shoah, to the postwar reconstruction and the rebirth of Jewish life. The museum will underscore that it is difficult to understand Polish history without knowing its Jewish history, and it is almost impossible to understand Jewish history without knowing Polish history.

The building was designed by Finnish architect Rainier Mahlamaki, winner of an international contest in 2005. Its most striking feature is the central hall, open to the outside through a passageway that for some symbolizes the parting of the waters of the Red Sea and for others the chasm of the Holocaust in Polish Jewish history. In a fortunate if unintended coincidence, the passageway also looks like the Hebrew letter *tav*, as in *Teyva*, the ark in which Noah saved life from the Flood. Young Poles who know very little about their Jewish past, and young Jews from abroad who know next to nothing about the history of the country which was the Jewish homeland for almost a thousand years, will be able to gain from the ark that which their educational experiences did not provide.





Part of the hand-painted ceiling of a reconstructed 18th-century wooden synagogue, being built by an international group of volunteers using only 18th-century tools and techniques. Destined to be a centerpiece installation in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.



Grave of Ester Rachel Kamińska (1870-1925), the Mother of Yiddish Theater.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Cemetery on Okopowa Street

If you have the time, go to the cemetery. The more than 200 years of Polish Jewish history sheltered among its tall trees and dense alleyways make it truly a beit haim (house of life), the Hebrew term for cemetery. **No. 15, Map 2**

The necropolis, with roughly 250,000 graves, is the second largest in Europe. Its rabbis and educators, writers and actors, philanthropists and doctors, Bundists and Communists, craftsmen and small shopkeepers, are Jewish Warsaw. The monuments differ in language (Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, and Polish) and in style and design, offering visuals and scripts from which to learn about personal lives, but also about the life of Warsaw's constantly evolving Jewish community.

While it is the best known, it is not Warsaw's only Jewish cemetery, nor even its oldest. Both titles belong to the huge cemetery in Bródno, in the city's Praga district on the other side of the Wisła (Vistula) River. During the war, the Germans pulled all of the matsevot for construction material and destroyed the cemetery's records. Though many of its matsevot survived, some in the Warsaw Zoo, we no longer know where they were originally placed. They stand therefore by the cemetery walls, while the entire expanse has been all but overrun by bushes and grass, waiting for the funding needed for restoration.

The Okopowa cemetery, founded in 1806, was overgrown and neglected after the war. Plans of building a highway over the cemetery were blocked, and in 1981 a civic committee to preserve the cemetery was set up. It started to chop down trees, clear bushes, and protect matsevot of historical and artistic value. Increased interest and funding since 1989 has hastened the pace of clearing the cemetery, and databases are being created to record and catalogue each headstone.

As we enter the cemetery, in front and to your right you will see "the Hill," the most desirable burial site from the late 19th century onwards. Some of Warsaw's most respected Jewish citizens are buried there: Hipolit Wawelberg, the industrialist and philanthropist; lawyer and diplomat Szymon Aszkenazy, one of the Polish delegates to the Versailles conference in 1919; Ludwik Zamenhof, creator of the artificial international language Esperanto; Ester Rachel Kamińska, known as the mother of Yiddish theater; Meir Bałaban, one of the greatest Jewish historians; and Adam Czerniaków, chairman of the Judenrat, who committed suicide rather than participate in the deportations to Treblinka. Most Jews from the ghetto were buried in anonymous mass graves, one of which can be visited directly behind the Hill. During the first years of the ghetto funerals were permitted and sometimes offered an opportunity to escape. The ongoing restoration of the cemetery uncovered a bunker that offered temporary shelter to those fleeing the ghetto.

Recent graves are rare in this section, since there is no space left. We can, however, see the grave of Abram Grynberg, the father of Polish Jewish writer Henryk Grynberg. Father and son hid in the Polish countryside during the war. The father was murdered, a few months before the end of the occupation, by a peasant who was concerned he



Grave of Professor Meir Bałaban (1877-1942), eminent historian of Polish and German Jewry and founder of Jewish historiography. He died in the Warsaw ghetto on December 26, 1942.

(Wikimedia Commons)

would have to return a cow Grynberg had entrusted to him for safekeeping. Henryk became a writer and fled to the United States after the so-called anti-Zionist campaign in 1968. In the 1990s he started visiting Poland. He managed to locate the site where his father was buried and exhumed his remains, together with the bottle Abram had taken with him for the cow's milk he had wanted to bring back to his son. Abram's remains have been reinterred on the Hill.

If we continue straight from the gate and walk up the path we will pass on the left some of the oldest graves, from the early 19th century. Among them, almost next to the cemetery wall, is the 1822 ohel of Ber Sonnenberg, the founder of the cemetery, with its impressive bas-reliefs. The northern side displays the panorama of a city, probably Warsaw, with a very prominent Jewish cemetery in the middle—and a very prominent ohel, clearly that on which the bas-relief can be found, in its center. On the other side the relief is more complicated. A river, flowing into another, larger one, seems to divide a city in two. Some elements are familiar: the tower of Babel and musical instruments hanging from trees ("By the rivers of Babylon…" says the Psalmist). The meaning of other scenes, like the shipwrecked boats on the river, is lost to us but seems to have been obvious to those visiting the cemetery before the war.

Continuing down the path, we will reach a newer part of the cemetery, with burials from the 1960s and 70s on our right, and from the 1980s onwards on our left, at the spot where the paved path ends. The newest graves are to be found off the main alley toward the northern section of the cemetery. The men's or the women's ḥevrah kadisha is called to prepare and accompany the body. A minyan is assured so that the Kaddish can be said. Some of Warsaw's Jews who choose not to lead public Jewish lives want to be buried in the cemetery. Loved ones often discover their own long-hidden Jewish roots only when a parent or grandparent has a Jewish funeral.

Among those buried there is the Polish Jewish writer Julian Stryjkowski. Still further down the path, you will see the monument to Jewish soldiers killed in 1939, as well as symbolic graves of Polish Jewish military personnel buried elsewhere, including one commemorating the Jewish victims of the Katyń massacre. In 1940 the Soviets murdered some 21,500 Polish officers taken prisoner after the Soviet invasion of September 17, 1939. Of those murdered at least 5% were Polish Jews. While it was practically impossible for Jews to be promoted to officer's rank in the pre-war Polish army, all medical graduates automatically became reserve officers. More than half of Poland's doctors were Jewish, which accounts for their presence among the victims of Katyn. Jews were drafted into the army like anybody else and made up some 10% of the Polish Army's battle losses in 1939. A powerful monument with a matseva among crosses stands near the former ghetto. **Point G, Map 2**

If we walk back to the entrance and make a right at the bottom of the Hill we will enter Honors Alley, where some of Warsaw's most prominent Jews are buried. On the right we will encounter an oddity, a monument of a fighting man in red sandstone. Human representation is forbidden by halakhah and therefore cannot be seen at the cemetery—except for the Italianate grave of Paulina Landy, on the left at the beginning of the alley, which was smuggled in at the insistence of Paulina's husband, who argued his wife's love for Italy and his own hefty contributions to the Jewish community. The cemetery board approved two small putti on top of the neo-Renaissance tombstone, but the stonemason who made the matseva had them hide their faces in shame.

The red sandstone monument marks the collective grave of the fallen ghetto fighters of the Jewish Fighting Organization. The grave was made in the 1950s, but more burials came later, as survivors passed away. The last to



Grave of Abram Grynberg. (Wikimedia Commons)



Grave of Ludwik Zamenhof (1859-1917), creator of the international language Esperanto. (Wikimedia Commons)



Grave of Marek Edelman, Polish Jewish political and social activist, cardiologist, and last living leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He died in 2009 and was buried in Warsaw with full military honors.

(Wikimedia Commons)

be buried there was Marek Edelman in 2009. Before being interred, his body lay in state in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Uprising, the coffin covered with the last flag of the Bund, brought from Paris for the occasion. President Lech Kaczyński showed up unexpectedly and asked to be allowed to speak. Edelman's family refused, citing the very critical position the deceased had taken on the President's policies. Kaczyński acquiesced and stood there, a mourner among other mourners, to pay his respects to the last surviving commander of the ghetto uprising.

As we walk down the alley, notice on the right side an impressive funerary monument consisting of three boulders one on top of the other. This is the grave of Henryk Wohl, minister of finance in the Polish insurgent government during the 1863 uprising against Russian rule. The uprising was defeated and Wohl, like thousands of other Poles who had been part of it, was exiled to Siberia. He returned to Warsaw after 30 years. The monument was placed on his grave at his request: it symbolizes Poland, divided by the partitions, and yet remaining one. On the left side you will have passed the graves of the founders of both the Jewish Workers Party (the Bund) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS).

If we follow the routes that lead to the left from Honors Alley we will be able to visit ohels of distinguished rabbis, especially of prominent Hasidic leaders, such as the rebbes of Vurke (Warka), Radzymin, Amshinov (Mszczonów), and Modzhitz (Modrzyce), as well as of other prominent Jewish religious leaders. Toward the end of the alley, on the left, you will see a large funerary monument in the shape of a semicircular structure topped by a half-dome. This is the grave of three great Yiddish writers: Y. L. Peretz, Shimon An-ski, and Yankev Dinezon.

Many graves are overturned or collapsing, the constant conservation effort notwithstanding. Many, too, are



Grave of Dow Ber Sonnenberg-Berek Szmulowicz Sonnenberg (1764-1822), philanthropist and banker.

(Wikimedia Commons)

pockmarked with bullet impacts. These date mainly from the uprising of 1944, when the cemetery became a battlefield.

Finally, in the area between Honors Alley and the wall on Okopowa Street we will encounter monuments that commemorate victims of the Shoah, often set up by family members. They include a semi-realistic monument representing the great educator Janusz Korczak and the orphans whom he accompanied to Treblinka. And on the cemetery wall you will see a long row of plaques, to the memory of Warsaw Jews who died elsewhere, put up by family members and friends.

Inquiries about finding graves of relatives can be made at the office by the entrance to the cemetery.

Before leaving, you are invited to wash your hands, as Jewish tradition requires, without saying a blessing. A reconstructed cast iron pump has been placed for that purpose by the entrance. Pumps of this kind had been a fixture of the Polish landscape, from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. It is therefore not surprising that one has been immortalized in a bas-relief on the matseva of a woman named Rachel. After all, the Biblical matriarch whose name the deceased carried first met Jacob at a well.

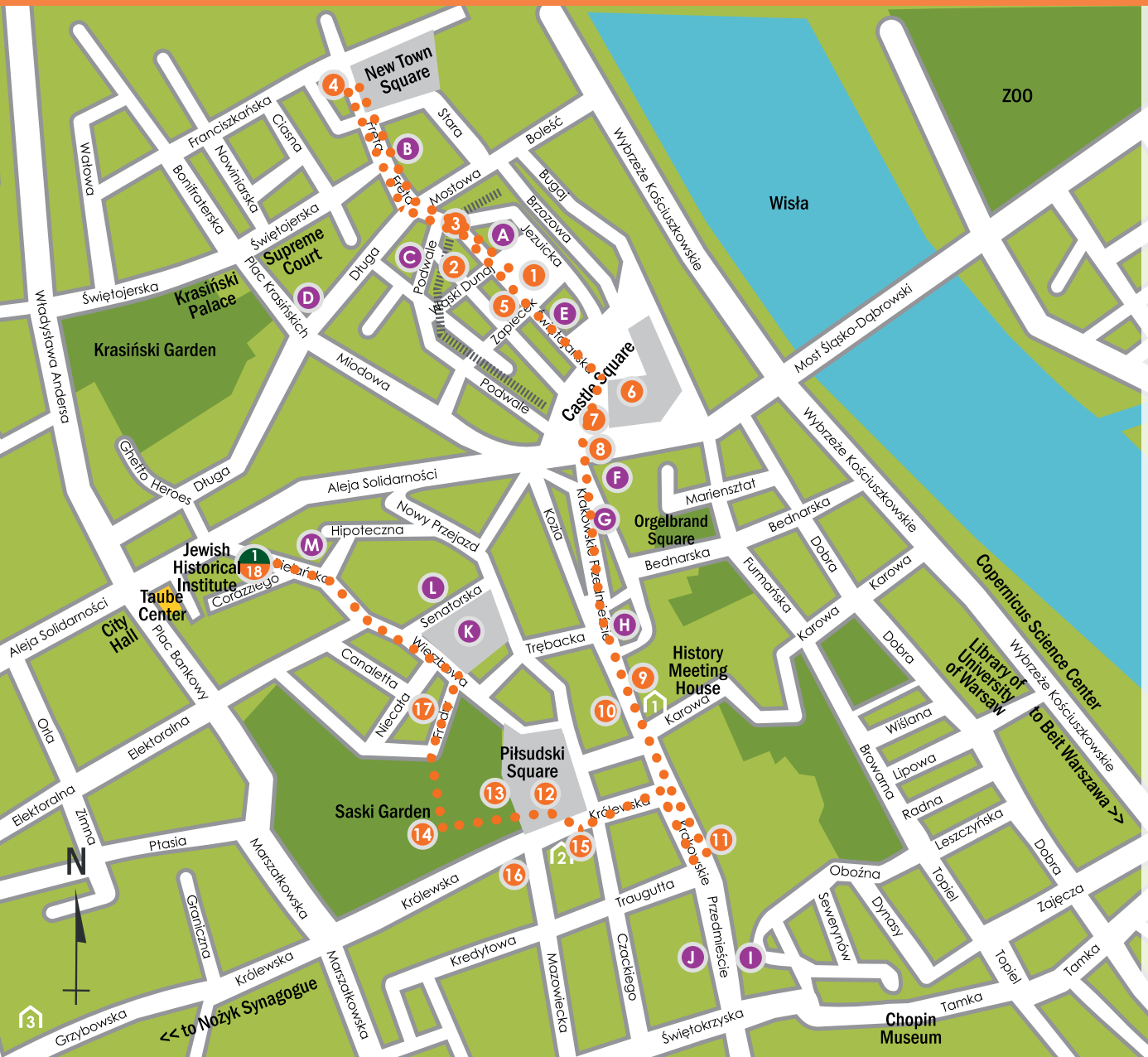
ROUTE 2



Mausoleum of the Three Writers in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery: S. An-ski (1863-1920), Yitskhok Leybush Peretz (1852-1915), and Yankev Dinezon (1856-1919).

(Wikimedia Commons)

Warsaw Walking Route 3



Route 3

1. Old Town Square
2. Site of the first Jewish settlement (Wąski Dunaj Street)
3. Barbican
4. Ghetto Marker (corner of Freta and Franciszkańska Street)
5. UNESCO Plaque (Zapiecek Street)
6. Royal Castle
7. King Sigmund's Column
8. View od Śląsko-Dąbrowski Bridge and Praga
9. Presidential Palace
10. Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
11. University of Warsaw Main Gate
12. Piłsudski Square
13. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
14. Saski Garden
15. Site of former Kronenberg Palace
16. Zachęta National Gallery of Art
17. Hipolit Wawelberg's Bank building (Fredry 6 Street)
18. Ghetto Marker (Bielańska Street)

Route 4

Route begins at No 1.
See map No. 4 for complete route.

Other places of interest

A. Historical Museum of Warsaw
B. Birth place of the Maria Skłodowska-Curie
C. Little Insurgent monument
D. Monument of 1944 Warsaw Uprising
E. St. John's Cathedral
F. St. Anna Academic Church
G. One of Canaletto pictures
H. Adam Mickiewicz Monument
I. Nicolaus Copernicus Monument
J. Holy Cross Church
K. Grand Theater National Opera
L. Former City Hall M. Reduta Bank Polski

Hotels

1. Le Meridien Bristol Hotel
2. Victoria Sofitel Hotel
3. Radisson Blu Centrum Hotel

Warsaw Route 3

A stroll through reconstructed lost times, some ancient and others quite recent, which raise questions about renewal, authenticity of place, and the importance of cultural icons and continuity.

Old Town and New Town / Castle Square Praga District / Royal Route / University of Warsaw / Piłsudski Square / Saxon Garden

Old Town and New Town

A visit to Old Town may evoke an odd feeling. It is almost as if you are walking onto a film set, with houses that are too colorful, made with bricks that bear no signs of weathering. It's charming but lacks historical authenticity. **No. 1, Map 3** As almost everywhere in the center of the city, we must solve the puzzle by looking beyond what is, to what was.



The Old Town Square in Warsaw, contemporary view.
(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

We begin our walk through the Old Town in what was the heart of old Warsaw on the Rynek (Market Square). As in most medieval towns, the first settlement was built around a market square and surrounded by fortified walls. Guilds, craftsmen, and merchants filled the square. Communal celebrations and proclamations, as well as public executions, took place in front of the town hall, which unfortunately no longer exists.

As we stand on the corner of Wąski Dunaj and the Rynek we find ourselves on the site of the earliest recorded Jewish settlement in Warsaw. **No. 2, Map 3** By the beginning of the 15th century, Jews had already established a small community. Jews lived on what was known as the Jewish Street, located between today's Wąski Dunaj and Piekarska Street, one of the busiest and most densely populated areas of the city. The synagogue stood on a corner of Dunaj, but the cross street is not known.

Documents indicate that in 1423 ten Jewish families paid taxes and ten were exempted from paying them. A mikveh and a synagogue, or rather a prayer house, stood in the neighborhood, but there is a dispute about where the cemetery was located. The majority of Jews were involved in trade and crafts and served in religious capacities and as physicians. A royal decree permitted Jews to serve as bankers and moneylenders.

We walk north on Nowomiejska toward the Barbican and quickly reach the fortified gate. **No. 3, Map 3** You can see that the original town was very small. New Town (Nowe Miasto), located right outside the city walls, was



Corner of Old Town Square and Wąski Dunaj.
(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)



Night view of the Barbican and Holy Spirit Church taken in the mid-1950s. The signs of reconstruction are evident from the scaffolding.
(Wikimedia Commons)



A scene from Brzozowa, one of Old Town's streets. Though rebuilt after the war it lost much of its authentic character.

(Wikimedia Commons)

considered to be the outskirts of Warsaw. There the more affluent Jews were recognized as citizens, an unusual status for Jews at that time. As in other places, Jewish involvement in commerce and trade was intense, but often caused rivalry and resentment with their Christian neighbors.

This rivalry was reinforced by tensions caused by what was often perceived as cultural foreignness and a reluctance by many of the Jews to fully acculturate. Combined with hostility from the Church, these sentiments led to a series of expulsions from the city. In 1570 Warsaw obtained the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* (not having to tolerate Jews), which remained in force until 1797. Jews were forbidden to live within two miles of the city limits except when the Parliament was in session. Many settled on the outskirts of the city on lands called *jurydyki*, owned by aristocratic families and the nobility, which were excluded from royal or municipal jurisdiction and had separate laws and privileges. Jewish merchants and tradesmen in the *jurydyki* were the economic core of Warsaw. Jews were also major purveyors and suppliers of goods, which enabled them to live in Warsaw for at least a month during the parliamentary sessions and to open stores and rent property within the city limits. Many of the magnates and parliamentarians would bring "their Jews" to Warsaw. Those who served as the king's bankers and physicians, assistants, and advisers, were also able to reside in Warsaw.

After the feudal period Jews began returning gradually to the city center as permanent residents. But Old Town of the 19th and early 20th century was not what you see now. Old Town square had ceased to be an administrative center and had become a place of abject poverty. Poor Jewish traders and street peddlers, among them some truly dubious characters, created Old Town's unsavory character. The area of Kamienne Schodki had a particularly bad reputation and was definitely not a place where respectable people would stroll in their Sabbath or Sunday best. Only during the brief interwar period did the authorities attempt to revitalize the area.

Before World War II the now quiet Franciszkańska was a vibrant street and boasted seven shtiblekh representing various Hasidic dynasties, among them Ger (Góra Kalwaria), Kotzk (Kock), and Vurke (Warka).

As we continue walking north on Freta Street through New Town Square we come to the corner of Franciszkańska Street, where the idyllic streetscape ends abruptly. This corner was the northernmost border of the ghetto. By 1941 it was excluded from the ghetto as you can see from the sign embedded in the pavement, "Mur Getta 1940-1943—Ghetto Wall 1940-1943." **No. 4, Map 4** Twenty-one similar monuments delineating the ghetto were set up in 2008 by the Jewish Historical Institute in cooperation with the city of Warsaw and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. By then the ghetto had been all but erased from the city's maps, with remains only of a few buildings and sections of the wall and the Umschlagplatz Monument, Rapoport Ghetto Heroes Monument, and the Route of Memory and Martyrdom. The markers provide a stark reminder of how big the ghetto had been and how much of the city it included.

Before World War II the now quiet Franciszkańska was a vibrant street and boasted seven shtiblekh representing

various Hasidic dynasties, among them Ger (Góra Kalwaria), Kotzk (Kock), and Vurke (Warka). Later it became a center for smuggling much-needed goods into the ghetto. One of the most ingenious methods was the use of drainpipes to serve as secret conduits for milk, flour, and groats.

We retrace our route on Freta Street and walk to the southwest corner of Market Square and turn right onto Zapiecek Street. Our retracing moves us into the immediate postwar period, as we read the words on the UNESCO plaque. In September 1945 General Dwight Eisenhower, then Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, visited Warsaw and said, "I have seen many towns destroyed, but nowhere have I been faced with such destruction." **No. 5, Map 3**

The destruction of the city began with the initial bombardment of the city by the Germans in September 1939 but was mainly a result of the Warsaw Uprising, which began on August 1, 1944, when the Polish underground began to fight the German occupiers.



Old Town Square, captured in a colorized photo from circa 1900. It is still used as a marketplace. (Wikimedia Commons)

The underground was an anti-Soviet network of, among others, the Polish Army, members of the Polish government-in-exile, and hundreds of thousands of civilians. The Soviet Army, which had already taken Lublin, Majdanek, and much of the eastern part of the country, camped out and watched the insurrection from the other side of the Wisła (Vistula) River.

Old Town became a huge insurgent fortress, fiercely attacked by the Germans and heroically defended by the makeshift troops, assisted by Jewish veterans of the 1943 Ghetto Uprising. The 63-day-long battle produced almost 180,000 casualties and left the city's center in ruins. Most of the surviving residents were deported to a special camp in Pruszków, not far from Warsaw. Soviet and Polish troops finally "liberated" what was left of the city, following the retreat of the Germans, on January 17, 1945. Those residents who managed to survive the war, little more than half of the city's pre-war population of 1 million, returned to find vast piles of rubble and burned and bombed-out buildings.

Many doubted that the city would ever again serve as the national capital. But, true to its moniker,"The Invincible City," Warsaw began rising from the ruins—though under the Red banner. At the 1945 Yalta Conference, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Premier Stalin had consigned Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence.

The Communists were eager to rebuild Warsaw as a model socialist city. They demolished many buildings that managed to survive the war, often shaving "bourgeois" decorations off the remaining buildings to align them with the socialist vision. A spontaneous outcry from residents forced the authorities to rebuild Old Town and part of the Royal Route and New Town. Architects, conservators, artists, and workers undertook a visionary project to reconstruct not just single buildings, but entire parts of



Allied Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower with General Marian Spychalski, Polish Chief of Staff, in the destroyed Old Town Square, September 21, 1945. (Wikimedia Commons)



Ruins of the Royal Castle in 1945. The building, burned during the bombardment in 1939, was completely destroyed during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. (Wikimedia Commons)



The Royal Castle in Warsaw, bombarded by the Germans on September 17, 1939.
(Wikimedia Commons)



"Krakowskie Przedmieście Street as Seen from the Kraków Gate" (1767-68), by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto) (1720-80), Italian-born artist and court-painter of King Stanislaw August Poniatowski.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Warsaw. Warsaw's Old Town is now listed on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage Register as an example of a comprehensive reconstruction and a tribute to the strength and determination of its people.

Now you can better understand why the houses are too colorful, the streets too charming, and the bricks with few signs of wear. Old Town is an almost complete reproduction. However, its reconstruction has helped preserve national memory and treasures of the city's material heritage, and it has restored Warsaw to its place as a Central European capital.

Let's walk south along Świętojańska Street to Castle Square.

Castle Square

No. 6, Map3

Standing on the plaza next to the Column of King Sigismund **No. 7 Map 3** , the first secular monument erected in Poland (in 1644), which commemorates the decision to move the capital from Kraków to Warsaw, we see the Royal Castle, the Zamek Królewski. It may not look like a typical royal castle, but it was the king's primary residence during the 16th through 18th centuries and was also once the seat of Parliament. Blown up by the Germans and then meticulously rebuilt, the castle was reopened to visitors in the 1980s.

Here, in 1791, Europe's first national constitution was promulgated. It formalized democratic developments in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, introducing political equality and granting protection to the peasants who had been living as serfs until then. The movement toward democracy also acknowledged a need to reform the status of Jews and grant them equality and citizenship. This progressive agenda was halted abruptly by the invasion of Poland's neighbors, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Prussia, and Russia. The three governments gradually divided Poland among them, placing the future of the Polish people under foreign control. Many Poles resisted. Tadeusz Kościuszko, a veteran of the American Revolutionary War, was among those who sought to restore independence and democracy. He led a national insurrection against Russian rule that included many Jews, who offered financial support. Berek Joselewicz, a young Jew from a village near Warsaw, formed and led a Jewish cavalry unit.

The Russian Empire's harsh rule of Poland led to patriotic demonstrations. In April 1861 Michael Landy, a rabbinical student in Warsaw, was killed during a demonstration after having picked up a cross that a slain Catholic protester had been carrying. The incident had great influence on both Jews and non-Jews and on their relations and ensuing cooperation in the fight against the Russian regime. Rabbi Ber Meisels, then chief rabbi of Warsaw and a major political activist, was expelled from the city several times by the Russians for his role in supporting the insurrections.

Just over a century later, in December 1981, Castle Square witnessed violent pro-democracy demonstrations, not against the Russians but against the nation's military government, which had imposed martial law.

Looking east toward the river we see the first major investment in postwar Warsaw, the Śląsko-Dąbrowski Bridge linking east and west and the two sides of the Wisła (Vistula) River. **No. 8, Map 3** The construction became famous in Poland for its efficiency and speed, with the newspapers enthusiastically reporting on its progress. Given that the first metro line in the city took more than 50 years to build, the construction work was an extraordinary feat. The authorities promised that the most productive laborers would receive an apartment in a new housing

district. This method of "encouragement" was also applied to the building of a new sport stadium in Praga, using bricks from the former ghetto and other ruined districts.The stadium has now been replaced by a modern structure, dressed in patriotic red and white panels, which opened for the Euro 2012 soccer games.

Praga District

As long as we are at the bridge, if time permits we might consider visiting Praga district, an integral part of Warsaw's Jewish story. From this vantage point, we can see the district on the eastern side of the Wisła (Vistula) River. Praga was originally a separate city but was incorporated into the city of Warsaw in 1791. Exempted from the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* in 1760, Praga was known for its generally peaceful Polish-Jewish relations. Its Jewish community had a synagogue, mikveh, and cemetery. It developed into a place of trade, with affluent merchant Shmuel Zbytkower as one of its most famous Jewish residents.





A renovated building that preserves its pre-war architectural style. It is on Zabrowska Street, which was Praga's version of Nalewki Street.



The Round Synagogue in 1923. Construction of the synagogue in 1835 was funded by Ber Sonnenberg.



Samuel Orgelbrand Square seen against the background of the Royal Castle. (Wikimedia Commons)



Title page of a 1902 version of the *General Encyclopedia* printed by the Orgelbrand publishing house. The Orgelbrands also published a 20-volume edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

Praga survived World War II damaged but largely intact. Here we can best gain a feel for pre-war Warsaw. A visit to the zoo highlights the extraordinary story of non-Jewish Poles who risked their own lives to save Jews during the German occupation. The tale of how the zookeeper and his family, the Zabinskis, hid Jews on the grounds of the zoo is immortalized in Mrs. Zabinska's diary and in Diane Ackerman's *The Zookeeper's Wife*.

The Round Synagogue, on Kłopotowskiego Street, was one of two that survived World War II in Warsaw. Its unique architectural design became a victim of an unfriendly Communist regime, and the lack of Jewish communal funds led to its demolition in 1961. The old mikveh on Kłopotowskiego Street, which stood just next door, is now the Jacek Kuron Multicultural High School. A former Jewish dormitory and orphanage as well the Michal Bergson Education Center of Warsaw's Jewish community are now an apartment building and a theater respectively. Debates about reconstructing the synagogue come and go, though there are serious efforts to save several former shtiblekh in the district.

Praga was long ignored and neglected. A growing criminal element and a large flea market, the Różycki Market, made the district a colorful part of the city's less attractive folklore. Many Varsovians living on the other side of the river used to regard Praga as another city, almost another world, where you didn't go after dark if you could avoid it. However, it has been gentrifying in recent years and has become a trendy district with cafes, concert venues, and cultural activities.



Statue of Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855), Poland's best-known poet and author, creator of a national ethos and a symbol of the struggle for Polish independence from the Russian Empire. The statue was unveiled in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in 1898. (Wikimedia Commons)

The Royal Route

We leave our river view and walk down the Royal Route, which begins on Krakowskie Przedmieście, and continues south on Nowy Świat, all the way to the Wilanów Palace with its lovely grounds and world-famous poster museum.

We continue south along the Krakowskie Przedmieście, which for centuries has been the city's most important thoroughfare. We pass St. Anna's church and the Tyszkiewicz Palace and a row of boutiques and art galleries that add visual flavor to our stroll. Visiting heads of state and other dignitaries take this route. The Presidential Palace and the Ministry of Culture are here too. **Nos. 9 & 10, Map 3** The Communist regime had its own avenue of triumph, Marszałkowska Street, which runs from Constitution Square past the Palace of Culture and Science.

The stories of Jewish inhabitants appear at almost every spot along the Royal Route. Former residences, some dating from the 17th century, were home to Warsaw's most influential and affluent Jewish families, who shaped the city's architectural, intellectual, and social development.

If we go down Bednarska Street we'll reach a little square named after Samuel Orgelbrand, a well-known member of the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia and a major contributor to Polish literature and culture. After attending Warsaw's Rabbinical School, which never produced a single practicing rabbi, Orgelbrand became a leading publisher of books in Hebrew and Polish. A major philanthropist, he was involved in promoting Polish writers and culture. He

began with a used bookshop and soon turned to printing and publishing. He published the first Polish multivolume encyclopedia in the mid-19th century, as well as a 20-volume edition of the Talmud. His modern publishing house, equipped with a steam engine, was located nearby.

University of Warsaw

The University of Warsaw, **No. 11, Map 3** established in 1816, must yield in seniority to Kraków's Jagiellonian University, established in 1364. But, Warsaw's is Poland's largest university, and also its best according to recent e-rankings. Since its establishment the University of Warsaw has influenced the intellectual, political, and cultural life of the country. It has also played a significant role in shaping the assimilated and acculturated Jewish intelligentsia. A register from the academic year 1929/30 shows that Jews constituted almost 20% of the student body in Polish universities, with some faculties—law and the political sciences—having an even higher proportion. Jews represented more than 50% of the doctors, 43% of the teachers, 33% of the lawyers, and 22% of the journalists in Poland.

An increase of antisemitism, particularly in the interwar period, brought appeals for a formal limit on the percentage of Jewish students or their total exclusion. "Bench ghettos," which forced Jewish students to sit in the back of the lecture halls, were instituted, and there were sporadic attacks on Jewish students. Despite these conditions Jewish students graduated from the university in significant numbers. One of its most famous graduates is Menachem Begin, who became Prime Minister of Israel and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient. A plaque dedicated to Begin was unveiled in one of the major university buildings in 2001.

In March 1968 student strikes in support of democratic values erupted in Poland. Many of the activists were identified as Jews. The Communist government's so-called anti-Zionist campaign led to the emigration of more than 15,000 Jews and a significant number of the university's faculty. Today, however, interest in Polish Jewish history and in Jewish studies is on the rise. The University of Warsaw offers several programs: the Hebrew Studies Division in the Department of Oriental Studies, the Mordechaj Anielewicz Center for the Study and Teaching of the History and Culture of Jews in Poland in the Faculty of History, and the Center for Research on Contemporary Israel in the faculty of journalism.



University of Warsaw, main gate.

Excellent Jewish studies departments are also offered at universities in Kraków, Lublin, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, Gdańsk, and Toruń. Most of the students are not Jewish, but the interest has encouraged dialogue and discourse about Polish Jewish heritage among a new generation of students and scholars. Graduates have increased the extent of research and the level of scholarship within the country and have connected Polish academics with those abroad. They have begun to contribute significantly to documentation and to commemoration, as well as to a growing number of publications, which have expanded the public forum and the revitalization of Jewish culture in Poland.



University identification document of a Jewish student with a "bench ghetto" stamp 1934.



Student protest at the Main Courtyard of the University of Warsaw, March 1968.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Reproduction of one of several paintings by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto) (1720-80) in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

If we have the time, we should walk south to the statue of Toruń-born Nicolaus Copernicus, Renaissance astronomer **Point I, Map 3**. On the sidewalk you can view a reproduction of a painting by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto) depicting a northern section of the Royal Route. Across the street is Holy Cross Church **Point J, Map 3**. It is said that on Christmas Day 1881 a false fire alarm in the church sparked panic and the deaths of 29 parishioners. A rumor that Jews caused the panic started a pogrom. In 1882 an urn containing the heart of Frederic Chopin was set into one of the church's pillars.

We retrace our steps and turn left onto Królewska Street.

Piłsudski Square

At the end of the first block we find ourselves at the edge of an immense plaza. **No. 12, Map 3** Piłsudski Square is another of Warsaw's puzzles, a vast empty space located in the very heart of a capital city. To unravel this puzzle we must step backward one hundred years. The aerial photo (right) shows what the square looked like before World War I. You can hardly miss the big Russian Orthodox cathedral in the middle. Until the end of World War I in 1918, Poland was partitioned by the Austro-Hungarians, Prussians, and Russians. Warsaw fell under Russian control, which became less tolerant as the Russians became more entrenched. As a symbol of their domination, the Russians built a monumental cathedral.

Other important buildings on the square were the Saxon (Saski) and the Kronenberg Palaces **No. 15, Map 3,** the latter built in 1871 by Leopold Kronenberg, one of Warsaw's Jewish bankers and industrialists. A railway magnate, Kronenberg was involved in a range of commercial endeavors, establishing the Polish branch of the Bank of Commerce, one of the first banks in Poland, and publishing the daily *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette).



Aerial view of Saxon Square in early 1919. The photo was published in the magazine *Światowid* in 1933. (Wikimedia Commons)

Like many affluent Jews he was also a philanthropist, establishing and financing the School of Commerce in 1875, which is today's Warsaw School of Economics. Kronenberg's palace served as an important meeting place for Warsaw's most prominent residents—Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians. His son, Baron Leopold Julian, was one of the main financial supporters of the Warsaw Philharmonic, which in 2001 commemorated him with a plaque.

Let's focus on the photo for a moment. The Russian Orthodox Cathedral, regarded by Poles as a symbol of Russian domination, was demolished in 1924, leaving an empty space in the middle of the square. In 1925 the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was unveiled in the colonnade of the Saxon Palace. The ceremony took place in the presence of the President of Poland, Stanislaw Wojciechowski, and representatives of the clergy, including the chief rabbi of Warsaw, Abraham Perlmutter. In 1940 the Germans renamed it Adolf-Hitler-Platz, and

in December 1944 they demolished most of the Saxon (Saski) Palace. The only part of the palace to survive was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. **No. 13, Map 3** Today the tomb stands alone as a symbol of national honor and defiance, dedicated to the sacrifices of Polish soldiers. The important battles in Polish history are engraved on its walls including the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The square was named in honor of Józef Piłsudski in 1928. A statue of Piłsudski stands to your left at the end of the square. A hero in World War I and the Polish Soviet War of 1919-21, he led an army credited with halting the Soviet advance into Western Europe and later become head of state until his death in 1935.

Piłsudski is one of Poland's great figures, equal in stature to Frederic Chopin, Pope John Paul II, and Lech Wałęsa. A promoter of a multicultural Poland, he was beloved by Polish Jews. Roman Dmowski, his main political opponent and a respected negotiator at the Paris peace conference in 1919, represented a staunchly nationalist trend. More hostile toward minorities, he preached antisemitism, including calling for an economic boycott of Jewish businesses. Piłsudski, on the other hand, envisioned Poland as a great federation of different ethnic and religious groups. Early on, Piłsudski had invited Jewish parties to participate in his government.



Kronenberg Palace circa 1871. (Wikimedia Commons)

When the Communists took power after the war, they renamed the space Victory Square. After the fall of the regime in 1989 the name reverted to Piłsudski Square. Dmowski, a figure who plays a significant role in the conflicting narratives of national memory, has a statue across from Łazienki Park and a roundabout named after him in the city center.

Early in 1945, when Polish and Red Army troops entered the city, they found that 84% of its center was flattened, with only a few of the buildings in our photo still standing. The new Communist authorities had to build housing for more than 200,000 people flooding the city and were determined to implement their new vision for a communist Poland. The Kronenberg Palace had survived the war in relatively good condition. It housed the Yiddish theater, which operated there until the early 1960s, before being moved to its present venue on Grzybowski Square. The authorities, having already deprived people of the right to own property and finding no institution with the financial wherewithal to renovate the palace, razed it in 1960. **No. 15, Map 3** Across the street stands the Zachęta National Gallery of Art. **No. 16, Map 3**

The square hosted the public papal mass held during the first visit of John Paul II in 1979, a seminal moment in Poland's return to democracy. A half million participants gathered to hear his now-famous words: "Let your spirit come and renew the face of the land, this land." His historic visit helped inspire what would become the Solidarity movement and the downfall of both the Polish Communist government and the Warsaw Pact.



Ruins of the Saxon (Saski) Palace and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, 1945.

(J. Bułhak, Wikimedia Commons)



Postcard with view of Fredry Street before 1908. During the Russian partition the thoroughfare was called Kotzebue Street.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Reduta Bank Polski during the war. The surviving portion of the building was incorporated into a new structure.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Saxon Garden

Warsaw has many beautiful parks, well worth a visit. Ujazdowski Park and Łazienki Park just south of the city center offer green respites from the increasingly fast-paced life in the country's capital. Another green island, Saxon (Saski) Garden **No. 14, Map 3**, lies in the very heart of the city. Created by a Saxon prince elected king of Poland in the 18th century, it became a place where the affluent Polish and the most assimilated Jewish worlds met. Among the prominent Jewish families who might have enjoyed the garden were those we have met along our routes: the Kronenbergs (banking and publishing), Wawelbergs (banking), and Orgelbrands (publishing).

The Saxon Garden had an implicit, if not explicit, dress code. Those wearing traditional Jewish garb, which did not conform to the upper-class fashion, were encouraged not to stroll through the gardens. Many of Warsaw's less affluent Jews would opt to take their *shabbes shpatziren* (Sabbath walks) in Krasiński Park, which we will visit later. Those who chose to stroll in the Saxon Garden on a Saturday afternoon would eventually return to their own neighborhood, having staked out the ground but, in spite their success, despairing of ever really owning it. Sundays in the gardens belonged almost exclusively, by dint of custom, to the Gentiles.

> *The Saxon Garden had an implicit, if not explicit, dress code.*

The garden was a contested area. While Jews and Gentiles often shared neighborhoods, sometimes living side-by-side, and friendship might blossom and tolerance prevail, it was not always an amicable coexistence. Rising nationalism in the 1930s created an atmosphere which fostered a rise in antisemitic behavior. Antisemites would complain that Jews spoiled the beauty of the Saxon Garden with their vile looks and jarring voices. Young non-Jewish thugs would sometimes attack Jewish



Saxon Garden.
(Wikimedia Commons)



View of the Saxon (Saski) Palace from the Saxon Garden, 1935. (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)

passersby and then be attacked in turn by Jewish posses that also roamed the garden.

One of the first regulations imposed after the Germans conquered Poland was to ban Jews from entering any public gardens. The ghetto contained little greenery, and whatever there was soon became food or firewood. Children grew up without knowing the meaning of tree and flower, let alone forest or field. In Yael Hersonsky's film, "A Film Unfinished," a survivor comments about German propaganda footage showing a ghetto woman arranging flowers in a vase: "What nonsense. Flowers in the ghetto? We would have eaten them."

We walk north of the gardens and the plaza to Fredry Street No. 6. **No. 17, Map 3** This building was once Hipolit Wawelberg's bank, and its architectural remnant gives us another glimpse into Warsaw's past. We turn left onto Wierzbowa Street and pass the National Theater on our right. **Point K, Map 3** Inaugurated in 1833 with Rossini's opera, *Barber of Seville*, the theater barely survived World War II. Rebuilt and reopened in 1965, it offers world-class productions of opera, theater, and ballet.

At the junction with Senatorska Street we can see the Citibank complex, built to look like Warsaw's pre-war City Hall, which stood on the site. **Point L, Map 3** Again we confront the debate about national memory, authenticity, and reconstruction. How should Warsaw's past be presented or represented in its contemporary landscape? The current City Hall is located a few blocks away on the corner of Aleja Solidarności and Marszałkowska. As we learn through our walks, nothing is where it was, and not everything that exists now is what it seems.

Walking north on the west side of Bielańska Street we pass the former Bank of Poland **Point M, Map 3**, with a prominent memorial to the Warsaw Uprising, and find ourselves at another ghetto marker, a reminder of the many layers of Warsaw's Jewish history. **No. 18, Map 3**

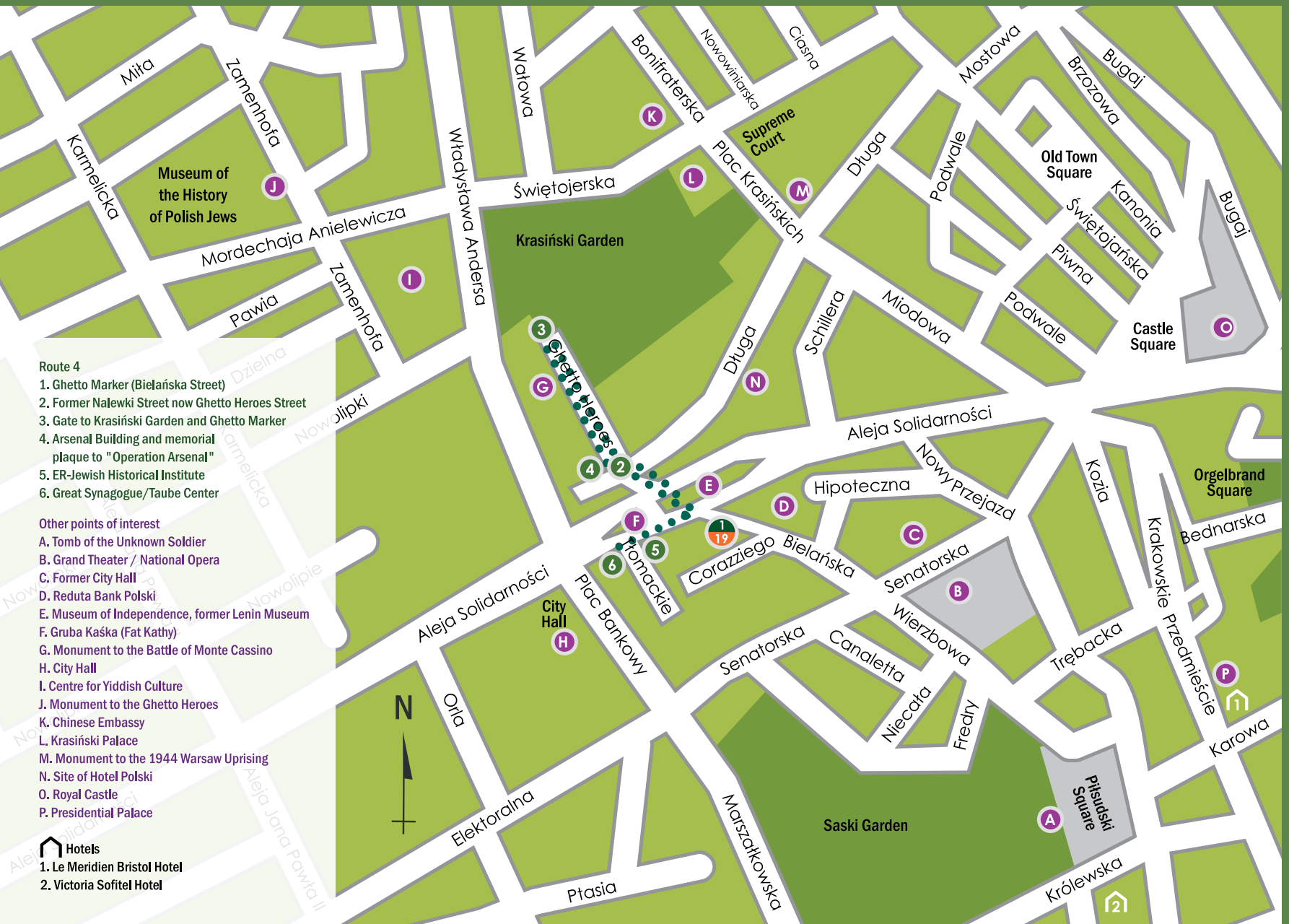


Former Warsaw City Hall circa 1900. During the German invasion in 1939 the building was the headquarters of Warsaw's civilian defense office. German forces destroyed it during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. The building that stands on the site was constructed based on the original structure. (Wikimedia Commons)



Ghetto marker in Bielanska Street. (Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

Warsaw Walking Route 4



Warsaw Route 4

Encountering past physical spaces and remembering human experiences, to help us imagine what no longer exists and to frame what has survived and thrived.

Nalewki and Tłomackie Streets
Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute
Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street

Nalewki and Tłomackie Streets

We leave the ghetto marker **No. 1, Map 4** and cross Aleja Solidarności and the tram tracks on the path, passing the former Lenin Museum (now the Museum of Independence), and cross to the corner of Długa and Ghetto Heroes, formerly Nalewki, Street.



A branch of the Museum of Independence, formerly the Lenin Museum and originally a Polish nobleman's palace. (Wikimedia Commons)



Corner of Ghetto Heroes Street (former Nalewki Street), including the Arsenal Building. (Taube Center Collection)

We find ourselves on an almost abandoned cobblestone street with a long-unused tram track running through it. **No. 2, Map 4** It ends abruptly at the gate of Krasiński Park. **No. 3, Map 4** Often referred to as Warsaw's "Jewish park" before the war, the Jewish alternative to the Saxon (Saski) Garden, it offered a green space for neighborhood residents, an escape from the tenement courtyards and the hubbub of the packed streets.

Pre-war Nalewki Street was an iconic Jewish street. Photos, films, telephone books, and press clippings conjure up images and sounds of a bustling urban thoroughfare: Hotel Londyński, crowded sidewalks and trams, crammed courtyards, shops, brush makers, banks, and ice-cream parlors. Boys selling Yiddish, Polish, and Hebrew dailies and weeklies shouted out the day's headlines. Billboards advertised the latest Yiddish films, concerts, and plays. Jews in traditional garb and those sporting the latest fashion mixed in the tumult of the district's central artery. On Saturday afternoon, with all of the shops closed, the street filled with people taking Sabbath walks.

Nalewki Street today now runs east to west and bears no resemblance to its forebear. The renaming and redirection of many of the city's streets, as we have already seen,



Postcard view of Nalewki Street with Krasiński Park and gate on the right circa 1908.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Intersection of Nalewki Street (now Ghetto Heroes Street) and Długa Street. A corner of the Arsenal Building, which still stands, is on the left. A portion of the tram tracks also remains.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

A Street Grows in Warsaw

Nalewki Street was becoming longer and longer. An artificial border between this district and the streets which went further to the south was disappearing. At the end of Nalewki Street towered an edifice with lots of offices, elegant shops and stores, exactly as in Bielańska and Marszałkowska Streets. Wealthier merchants from Nalewki Street moved to the new Simons Arcades. At the same time they were moving to the flats in Marszałkowska, Nowosenatorska, and Kotzebue (today's Moliere and Fredro Streets). On Saturday shops were closed but at 2 p.m. Nalewki Street was filled with people. The crowd walked from Muranów, Miła and Dzika Street through Nalewki, Bielańska and Niecała to the Saski Garden. Men wearing coats walked round the garden along Marszałkowska Street and Saski Square. Garden gates were closed to the ones in "non-European" clothes. A linguistic transformation took place for a few hours. The couples on Muranowska, Miła and Nalewki spoke only Jewish. On Bielańska Street the same people mixed Jewish with Polish and in the Saski Garden and Marszałkowska Street they were speaking only Polish.

—Bernard Singer, "Moje Nalewki," *Czytelnik* (1993)



Pre-war view of Nalewki Street. Signs identify a shop offering fashions, a furniture store, and a hat shop.

(Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)

raises interesting questions about the nature and extent of the preservation of pre-war memory. We walk to the end of the tram track and find a marker indicating that one of the entrances to the ghetto stood here. We can well imagine those who lived at the edge of the ghetto, looking out at the Krasiński gardens as a constant reminder of life before the war.



Nalewki Street in 1938. (Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

We retrace our steps, passing the monument to the Polish soldiers who fought at the Battle of Monte Cassino in spring 1944. **Point G, Map 4**

We stop in front of the Arsenal Building and a monument to Operation Arsenal. **No. 4, Map 4** Now a museum, the Arsenal once served as the city's archive and as a prison. During the late 1920s through the mid 1930s it also housed a small synagogue for the Jewish prisoners. The Polish underground army (PW) marker and the plaque on the building commemorate Operation Arsenal in which a group of Polish scouts liberated political prisoners being transferred by the Gestapo, on March 26, 1943.

If we were to walk down Długa Street to the east we would find the Hotel Polski. **Point N, Map 4** After the ghetto uprising in 1943 the Germans announced that Jews still in hiding would be given travel documents to leave occupied Europe if they appeared at the Hotel Polski. Lured into the trap, more than 2,500 Jews were sent to the concentration camps, 300 were executed in the Pawiak prison, and the 350 who had Palestinian affidavits survived.

We recross the tram tracks and turn right, walking toward a large glass office building, and turn onto Tłomackie Street. Tłomackie, too, has been reconfigured from the square it was before the war. Standing in the narrow alleyway with our backs to "Fat Kate," a pre-war water-pumping station **Point F, Map 4** that stands as a silent historical witness, we are



A news vendor displaying offerings of the pre-war Jewish press, which flourished in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

(Taube Center Collection)

caught in another of Warsaw's Jewish time warps. Flanked on one side by a glass office tower, on the site of what was once the Great Synagogue, and on the other by the world's largest repository of Polish Jewish historical documentation, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, we can almost feel the tension between Warsaw's Jewish past and present, between absence and presence, between destruction and preservation.

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

There is no better place to explore the original sources for Jewish Warsaw's past than the Jewish Historical Institute (JHI). **No. 5, Map 4** It is filled with archival materials, including the Ringelblum Archive, thousands of photos of pre-war Warsaw (organized street by street), volumes of Polish Jewish literature, copies of the Jewish press, films, recordings, collections of arts and Judaica, survivor records and testimonies, and a cadre of historians and researchers.

We enter through large wooden doors, noting a mezuzah affixed to the right-hand doorpost, and find ourselves in a building that exudes history. The exhibit draws us into the Institute, but it is the large map outlining Poland's shifting geographical borders and illuminating its pre-war shtetls and communities that attracts our attention. We locate



The front of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. (Wikimedia Commons)

Warsaw and then look for other places that we may know of or may have heard about: Łódź, Kraków, Ger, Lublin, Białystok.

Those of us who grew up listening to stories about the "old country" heard the names of family towns, passed down in Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, or Yiddish, and also perhaps in Hebrew, English, French, or Spanish. By the time the name reached us it may have been so corrupted that we struggled to identify the name with a town on a map. Or maybe we had the correct name and were told that the town was in Poland, but try as we might we could not locate it. We began to wonder if the town really existed or was simply part of the family folklore.

With assistance from a JHI historian we can now "transliterate" the name of our shtetl back into the original form and, to our great surprise, find that it is indeed on the map. Today it is in Ukraine, or Belarus, or Lithuania—or perhaps still in Poland but with its Polish (not Yiddish) name.



Monte Cassino monument, erected in 1999, dedicated to the Polish soldiers who fell fighting the Axis in 1944.

(Wikimedia Commons)



One of many entrances to the ghetto. This one was located near the gate of Krasiński Park.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Plaque commemorating Operation Arsenal and the scouts who freed a group of Polish prisoners being transferred by the Gestapo in March 1943.

(Magdalena Matuszewska, Taube Center Collection)

The borders of the Polish territories have been drawn and redrawn many times, most recently after World War II, as empires and occupying armies came and went. Our Jewish ancestors might have lived in the same shtetl for generations but under different regimes, speaking different languages, absorbing different cultures.



Yale Reisner, director of the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center, points at a map of Poland with its shifting borders.

(Taube Center Collection)



Rabbi Moses Schorr laying cornerstone of the Main Judaic Library and the Institute of Judaic Studies, now the Jewish Historical Institute, April 22, 1928.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

We are intrigued, our own personal history drawing us into the story of Polish Jewry. We begin to expand our search, looking for well-known centers of Jewish learning and scholarship, the homes of Hasidic dynasties and yeshivot, the birthplaces of Jewish writers and artists. Here is Chełm, near the current Polish-Ukrainian border! It's astonishing to discover that it was a real place, not a fictional village made famous by the stories of the wise men and the wonderful stories of solving their worries and woes.

Many of us have been told that a shtetl or town was obliterated during the Shoah. More often than not the shtetl was erased from the Jewish map, but the towns and cities themselves remain. The borders of the Polish territories have been drawn and redrawn many times, most recently after World War II, as empires and occupying armies came and went. Our Jewish ancestors might have lived in the same shtetl for generations but under different regimes, speaking different languages, absorbing different cultures. When our grandparents shared their meises (stories) they may have told us that they lived in three or four different countries yet had never left their front porch!

The predecessor of today's Jewish Historical Institute was the Central Jewish Historical Commission, established in Lublin in 1944, when the Soviet army's westward advance freed eastern Poland from the Germans. Those fortunate enough to have survived could begin their lives anew. A Central Committee of the Jews in Poland was set up in Lublin and immediately created welfare and support services, as well as taking on the task of collecting survivors' testimonies and helping them search for relatives and friends. The Central Jewish Historical Commission also began systematically to gather evidence of war crimes and collect the material remains of Polish Jewish heritage.

As we look up the main staircase to the first landing, we see a photo of the Great Synagogue and, on the left, the building in which we are now standing, the former Main Judaic Library of the Great Synagogue and Institute of Jewish Studies, dedicated in 1936. The two institutions embodied progressive trends in pre-war Jewish Warsaw: the synagogue as an expression of a "liberal" religious affiliation and the Institute of Jewish Studies as a representative of the newly expanding field of Jewish academic inquiry and research.

Co-founded by Rabbi Dr. Moses Schorr and Professor Meir Bałaban in 1928, the Institute of Jewish Studies was one of the first academic and educational institutions to offer both religious and secular Jewish studies. Its mission was to train rabbis, Jewish educators, and communal professionals to meet the growing needs of Europe's largest Jewish community. The Institute's building was dedicated in 1936. Just three years later, soon after the invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Germans confiscated the institute's library and collections. A year later the synagogue and the institute were incorporated temporarily into the ghetto. For a while the Institute served as a home for the Jewish Self-Help Organization (active in Poland under the occupation) and as one of the meeting places of Emanuel Ringelblum's Oneg Shabbat (Joy of the Sabbath), of which we will learn more below.



Main Judaic Library and Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street circa 1937.
(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Determined to hold the Nazis accountable for their crimes, Ringelblum's secret group documented Jewish life and Nazi atrocities in the ghetto.

The Institute today is full of treasures and is itself a treasure. As one of Warsaw's few pre-war Jewish buildings that still serves as a Jewish institution, it links us to the past while remaining an integral element of contemporary Warsaw's Jewish topography. Among its vast collections we find the Ringelblum Archives; a register of roughly 300,000 Holocaust survivors; 7,300 testimonies and more than 330 diaries; a vast collection of Jewish press and publications; more than 11,000 pieces of artwork and Judaica; and over 60,000 volumes, as well as manuscripts, some dating from the 10th century. While its academic seminars, educational programs, publications, and exhibits bring the Polish Jewish heritage to the broader public, its staff members are contributing to the growing body of international research on all facets of Polish Jewish life and history.

Emanuel Ringelblum was a respected community activist, social worker, historian, and employee of the JDC. In 1940 he decided to document Jewish life and suffering and began to collect materials to be published after the war as testimony to the Nazi atrocities. He created Oneg



Still photograph from a film about the recovery of a cache of the Ringeblum Archives in 1946.
(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Discussion Topic

Memorialization and memory-work.

The absence of a significant commemorative memorial on the site of Warsaw's Great Synagogue (currently the blue skyscraper on Tłomackie) is an opportunity for us to ask more general questions about the postwar processes of Jewish memory in Warsaw and throughout Poland.

Questions

For whom, and by whom, should elements of Warsaw's Jewish past be commemorated publicly? By the Warsaw Jewish community? By Polish local and national government bodies? By and for Gentile Poles or Jewish communities outside of Poland?

Where should funding come from for such efforts?

Should Jews in the United States and other countries be concerned with the manner in which Ashkenazi Jewish culture and history are presented and memorialized in Poland?

What kinds of stories about the Jewish past should be told in public spaces throughout Poland?



Emanuel Ringelblum.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Title page from a publication of *Tzena U'Rena*, a commentary on the five books of Moses for women, printed in Lublin in 1899.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Postwar registration card collected by the Central Committee of Polish Jews.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

Shabbat, a clandestine network of writers, journalists, historians, artists, and others, to collect all forms of documentation about Jewish life and death during the war. During the next three years the initiative gathered and hid personal diaries, poems and stories, academic articles, underground newspapers, theater programs, posters and photos, and works of literature and art, as well as ration cards, German decrees, and Judenrat proclamations.

Knowing that their fate was sealed, the members of the group hid the first cache of materials in ten metal boxes on August 3, 1942. They secreted the second cache, in two large metal milk canisters, beneath a school at 68 Nowolipie Street in February 1943. The third collection of materials was hidden the night before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, on April 19, 1943, in a workshop at 34 Świętojerska Street. After the war, the first cache was found in September 1946 and the second in December 1950. The third cache, in spite of a two-week search on the grounds of the present-day Chinese Embassy, has not yet been unearthed.

The archives are now housed in a climate-controlled room with limited access, in preparation for perma-

nent display. In 1999, the archive of almost 6,000 documents was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. The documents—beautifully handwritten accounts, mainly in Polish and Yiddish with water damage and ink smudges, oil portraits, half-used ration cards, academic treatises, a written commitment to promote cultural life in the ghetto, announcements of concerts and playbills—vividly bring to life daily existence during the war and the struggle to survive.



Milk cans and metal boxes in which Oneg Shabbat stored and then hid its collection of ghetto documents, photos, and paintings.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

The Institute's flame-damaged marble floor arouses curiosity, as the rest of the building seems to be under renovation, and offers testimony to the building's tenacity. Miraculously the building survived when the Germans demolished the Great Synagogue on May 16, and in somewhat damaged condition it also survived the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944. It even withstood the Communist regime's architectural plans for rebuilding the city. After the first renovation, made possible by the support of the JDC, the building became the home of the Jewish Historical Institute in 1947.

The Jewish Historical Institute is the only academic institution in Poland dedicated to the research of Polish Jewish history. Working in cooperation with YIVO and Yad Vashem, as well as with other international and national institutions, it advances academic scholarship and inquiry through seminars, educational programs, publications, and exhibits that draw on its extraordinary collections.

The Former Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street

Crossing the alley we find ourselves standing in the Great Synagogue, although except for a small plaque there is no indication that it ever existed. **No. 6, Map 4** We enter a gallery used by the Jewish Historical Institute as an event space in addition to serving as the home of the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center and the office of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland.

Discussion Topic

The return of property to Jewish communities after 1989.

The collapse of the Communist regime in 1989 opened the way for the emergence of a truly democratic Poland, but it also reopened issues related to the vast wartime losses of property suffered by individual Jews and by Jewish organizations and institutions. The Polish government has assumed certain responsibilities for the restitution of communal properties, with more than 5,500 claims having been formally filed by Polish Jewish communities and various representative organizations.

Questions

After 1989, once it was decided to return property to the Jewish community in Warsaw and to communities throughout Poland, what criteria should have been applied to decide which properties were returned and who would have control of them?

Should Polish residents be protected against Jewish claims for the return of property?

How might the fear of Jewish claims, or possibly even guilt, affect the psychology of those involved, and of contemporary Polish society as a whole?



Portrait painted in 1907 by Polish Jewish artist Leopold Gottlieb, brother of famous painter Maurycy Gottleib. Many of their paintings are in the collections of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Interior of the Great Synagogue. Few photos and artifacts remain. This one appeared in the newspaper *Kłosy* in 1888.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)

If we overlay the rare images of the synagogue, which was almost the size of an American football field, on this modest and unassuming space we can begin to imagine where we stand. Perhaps we are in the cloakroom or the ante-room, or standing in the men's section. Close your eyes and imagine pews packed with congregants and the courtyard full of students. One of the rabbis of the Great Synagogue passes by on his way to the library in search of material for his weekly sermon. The ḥazan (cantor) hurries into the building to meet with a group preparing for their bar mitzvah.

A proud icon of Warsaw's assimilated Jews, the synagogue was a magnificent edifice that seated 2,200 people. The wealthiest of the who's who of Warsaw Jewry worshipped here. Mounted police restrained the throngs who came on the High Holidays, not only to hear the eloquent sermons delivered in Polish and the magnificent cantors and choir, but to see the top hats and elegant gowns of the elite as they arrived in their horse-drawn carriages and, later, in their automobiles.

The Great Synagogue was a symbol of "Poles of the Jewish Persuasion," adherents of an Enlightenment philosophy that promoted social progress as a means to greater equality. They saw themselves as equal citizens of Poland. Yet, the synagogue was exclusive. You could not attend a service without a ticket: only members, invited



The Great Synagogue, ca. 1930.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Ceremony in front of the Great Synagogue commemorating Jewish soldiers who fell in the Polish wars of independence (1919-21). Rabbi Baruch Steinberg, who presided, was killed by the Soviets at Katyń in 1940. (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)

guests, visiting dignitaries, and opera singers were allowed to participate. The exceptions were Purim and Simchat Torah, when the general public was invited to attend.

The Great Synagogue, seating 2,200 people and almost the size of an American football field, was a proud icon of Warsaw's assimilated Jews.

The building was designed by one of the most sought-after architects of the day, Leandro Marconi, descendent of a line of architects who had come to Poland from Italy. No expense was spared in the construction. The thoroughly modern design and details included a built-in cloak room, gas lighting, large windows, and even central heating. The main sanctuary, with its massive arch nearly four stories high and soaring ceilings, conveyed a sense of grandeur comparable to the New Synagogue in Berlin or the Dohány Street Synagogue in Budapest.

The Great Synagogue was the successor of the progressive synagogue on Daniłowiczowska Street and became famous for its rabbis and cantors. One of the most well-known and revered was Dr. Moses Schorr, who succeeded Samuel Poznański as the rabbi. He was a bible scholar, an expert in Polish Jewish history, a renowned orator, a professor at the University of Warsaw, and a member of the Polish Parliament. Though a passionate Zionist, Schorr was dedicated to strengthening Jewish life in Warsaw through B'nai Brith and Warsaw's rabbinical council. Schorr left Warsaw in the early days of World War II, surviving several Soviet labor camps and prisons before dying in a camp in Uzbekistan in July 1941.

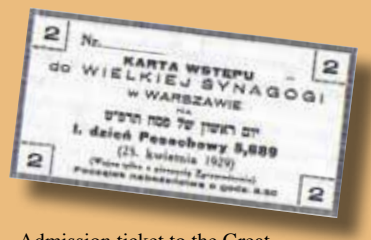
Before the prayers and the rabbi's sermon, ushers greeted members at the door. Congregants would take their seats, men and women sitting separately. The ḥazan, resplendent in high hat, long robes, and a flowing talit (prayer shawl), would stand in front of the congregation. Two of the greatest voices in the history of Jewish music have resonated within the Great Synagogue's walls: Gershon Sirota and Moshe Koussevitsky. Their voices would soar over the choir and into the cavernous space. The music was elegant, beautiful, stirring. As befit a congregation of sophisticated listeners who attended the opera and the symphony, these were not the nigunim of the Hasidim or the tunes of the klezmorim but rather music imported from synagogues in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Vilna, or Odessa.

The professional choir of more than 50 men and boys, sitting in a loft almost two stories above the ark, was so



Artist's drawing of the opening ceremony of the Great Synagogue in 1878.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Admission ticket to the Great Synagogue on Passover 1929.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



Ḥazan Gerson Sirota circa 1910.
(Wikimedia Commons)



Album cover of a recording by Ḥazan Moshe Koussevitzky.
(Wikimedia Commons)

accomplished that the Warsaw Philharmonic regularly invited it to perform during the season, in addition to its regularly scheduled performances on Polish Radio. The great Enrico Caruso is said to have expressed gratitude that Sirota had decided to remain in the synagogue rather than becoming a competitor in the opera halls of Europe.

The rabbis delivered their sermons in eloquent Polish rather than in Yiddish as was the custom elsewhere. Dr. Schorr was trained not as an Orthodox rabbi but rather as a liberal "reform" rabbi. The liberal movement was not Reform in the German or American sense, but more akin to today's Modern Orthodoxy. The "traditional" Orthodox Jews of Warsaw would never think to attend services here, and the religious press castigated the Great Synagogue as being "worse than a church," not only because of the rabbis or the fact that the congregation itself was far from religious, but also because of the many non-Jewish visitors. When Marshal Piłsudski died in 1935, nearly half of the attendees at the memorial service held in the synagogue were non-Jews, who had come to hear the preaching of Dr. Schorr and the prayers sung by Ḥazan Koussevitzky and the choir.

Ruins of the Great Synagogue, with both candelabras still standing
(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



The legacy of the Great Synagogue lives on through the teachings of its rabbis and its cantorial traditions, which have been replanted in synagogues around the world.

The Great Synagogue was blown up by S.S. Gen. Jurgen Stroop on May 16, 1943, to celebrate the destruction of Europe's largest Jewish community. No physical trace of the building remains, yet the memory of its splendor continues to generate legends. Construction of the skyscraper now standing in its place was plagued with problems from its start in the 1970s. Building supplies went astray, contractors went broke. The word on the street was that a rabbi had cast a curse on the site because the land had never been properly purchased from the Jewish community.

The legacy of the Great Synagogue lives on through the teachings of its rabbis and its cantorial traditions, which have been replanted in synagogues around the world. When World War II broke out Koussevitzky escaped to Soviet Russia, where he sang opera. After moving to the United States he served as ḥazan of Temple Beth El of Borough Park in Brooklyn, bringing with him the traditions of pre-war Jewish Warsaw. Those who were privileged to learn from these masters are now teaching the next generation of cantors. The annual Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków or the Singer Festival in Warsaw, and the many smaller Jewish culture festivals, have brought Polish Jewish music back to Poland. The melodies and repertoires from klezmer bands, the mandolin orchestras, the show tunes and jazz, as well as the cantorial music created by pre-war Polish Jewry and preserved around the Jewish world are again being sung in Polish synagogues and performed at cultural and communal events around the country.



On the steps of the Great Synagogue on the first day of school, August 27, 1933. The photograph appeared in *Nasz Przegląd*, the largest Polish-language Jewish newspaper.

(Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute)



In July 2009, 70 of the world's finest cantors assembled in Warsaw to pay tribute to Poland as the birthplace of cantorial music. Here performing before the Rapoport Ghetto Heroes Monument.

(Taube Foundation Collection)

Kraków Walking Routes: An Overview



Kraków

Kraków today stands as the emblem of the Golden Ages of two cultures—Polish Catholic and Ashkenazi Jewish. These cultures developed side by side on Polish lands from the 14th to the 20th centuries, and each experienced a special period of intellectual and cultural dynamism in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was experimenting with both religious tolerance and a limited form of parliamentary democracy, long before they were embraced by Western Europe during the Enlightenment. The Jewish Va'ad Arbà Aratsot (Council of the Four Lands) functioned alongside the Polish *Sejm*, or Parliament, and represented a form and a scale of self-government unprecedented in Jewish history. Yeshivas were well established and Poland became a world center of Jewish scholarship.

The richly preserved architecture of Kraków's Old Town, and of the historically Jewish district of Kazimierz, immediately takes us back in time, long before the 20th century. In Kraków and Kazimierz the intact layout of streets and market squares dating back to the 16th century and earlier, the dense concentration of preserved synagogues, their interior frescoes restored, the Remuh cemetery with its intricate, centuries-old gravestones, the slant of heavy stone walls raised in the 15th century, all encourage us to imagine the hundreds of years of Jewish life in Europe during which Ashkenazi culture developed, and to picture the environment in which it did so. For Jewish visitors, Kraków represents a unique portal into the development of Ashkenazi culture in Europe.

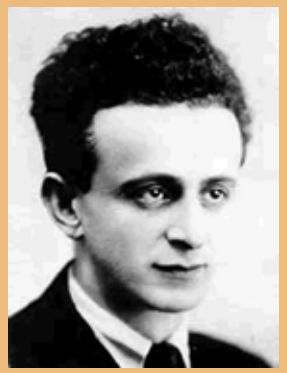


Map of Kraków and Kazimierz, two medieval cities separated by a branch of the Wisła (Vistula) River.
(Wikimedia Commons)

How to Use the Guide

We have divided a visit to Warsaw or Kraków into four routes, each identified by its own color and with its own map. The routes are coordinated so that the end of one walk leads easily into the beginning of the next, but you should feel free to take as many walks as you like, in whatever order seems best. The individual route maps note the primary sites described along the route, as well as hotels, major city venues, and sites that may not be described in the text but might be of interest.

Sidebar images and texts provide additional information about the places you will see as you walk, as well as about themes and topics of more general relevance. The Discussion Topics and Questions add yet another dimension to your explorations of Jewish Warsaw and Kraków. At the back of this Field Guide is a glossary that explains terms, phrases and organizations with which you may not be familiar.



Itzik Manger (1901-1969), Yiddish poet and songwriter, who wrote, "Jews have biblicized the Polish–Lithuanian landscape and therefore it became homelike, intimately Jewish."

(Wikimedia Commons)



Restored interior of the Tempel Synagogue, Kazimierz District.

(Taube Foundation Collection)

Visiting Kraków and walking in the streets of its preserved Jewish district, Kazimierz, we can begin to imagine how the landscape, the shtetls, and the cityscapes of Poland and the former Commonwealth could have seemed truly Jewish landscapes to their Jewish residents. They were not foreign environments, in which you found a way to live, but native Jewish spaces that would engender powerful new forms of Jewish expression. Hasidism originated in the Carpathian Mountains of today's Ukraine. The yeshiva culture marked Lithuania. Modern literatures in Yiddish and Hebrew spoke to secularizing generations in shtetls and cities throughout the Russian Pale of Settlement and later independent Poland between the world wars.

The theme of Polish lands as a place of Jewish identity runs through centuries of Jewish literature and folklore, religious and secular.

The theme of Polish lands as a place of Jewish identity runs through centuries of Jewish literature and folklore, religious and secular. The beloved interwar Yiddish poet and songwriter Itzik Manger explained it poignantly. "Jews have biblicized the Polish-Lithuanian landscape," he wrote, "and therefore it became homelike, intimately Jewish. The Sabbath candles shed their rays through the Jewish windows and made the Gentile outside world Sabbath-like. The Yom Kippur candles wept through the synagogue windows, and the surrounding countryside became Yom-Kippur-like."

Manger himself was a secular Jew and a Yiddishist, but his words capture an experience that was true for Polish Jews of all orientations:

> The Sossover Rebbe, Moishe Leib, in his peasant fur. The Berditchever Rebbe who argues with God, half in Yiddish, half in Ukrainian. The Polish Rebbe who declares his love to God in Polish,"Moy Kochany," "My Beloved".... It took thousands of years, this process of making the week, the Sabbath and the Holy Days at home with, intimate with the foreign landscape. After the Biblical classic this was a tremendous achievement, a Golus-classic. This lovely and classic Jewish style and way of life became, as I said, possible through the Jew acclimatizing himself, growing to be at home in the Slav landscape. The Baal Shem revealed himself in the Carpathian Mountains. Reb Nachman of Bratzlav improvised his marvelous tales during his walks across the Ukrainian fields....
>
> —Itzik Manger, "The Poetry of Our Holy Days"

This sense of belonging here, in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, found modern secular expression in the concept of doikeyt (hereness), which became a key term for Yiddishists and proponents of Diaspora nationalism in the 20th century. Doikeyt promoted an understanding of Jewish and in particular Yiddish culture as native to Europe, deeply rooted in the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and identified with it. "The Sabbaths and the Holy Days," Manger concluded, "did not come like shamefaced beggars somewhere in an alien foreignness, but to their own home, homely, at home."

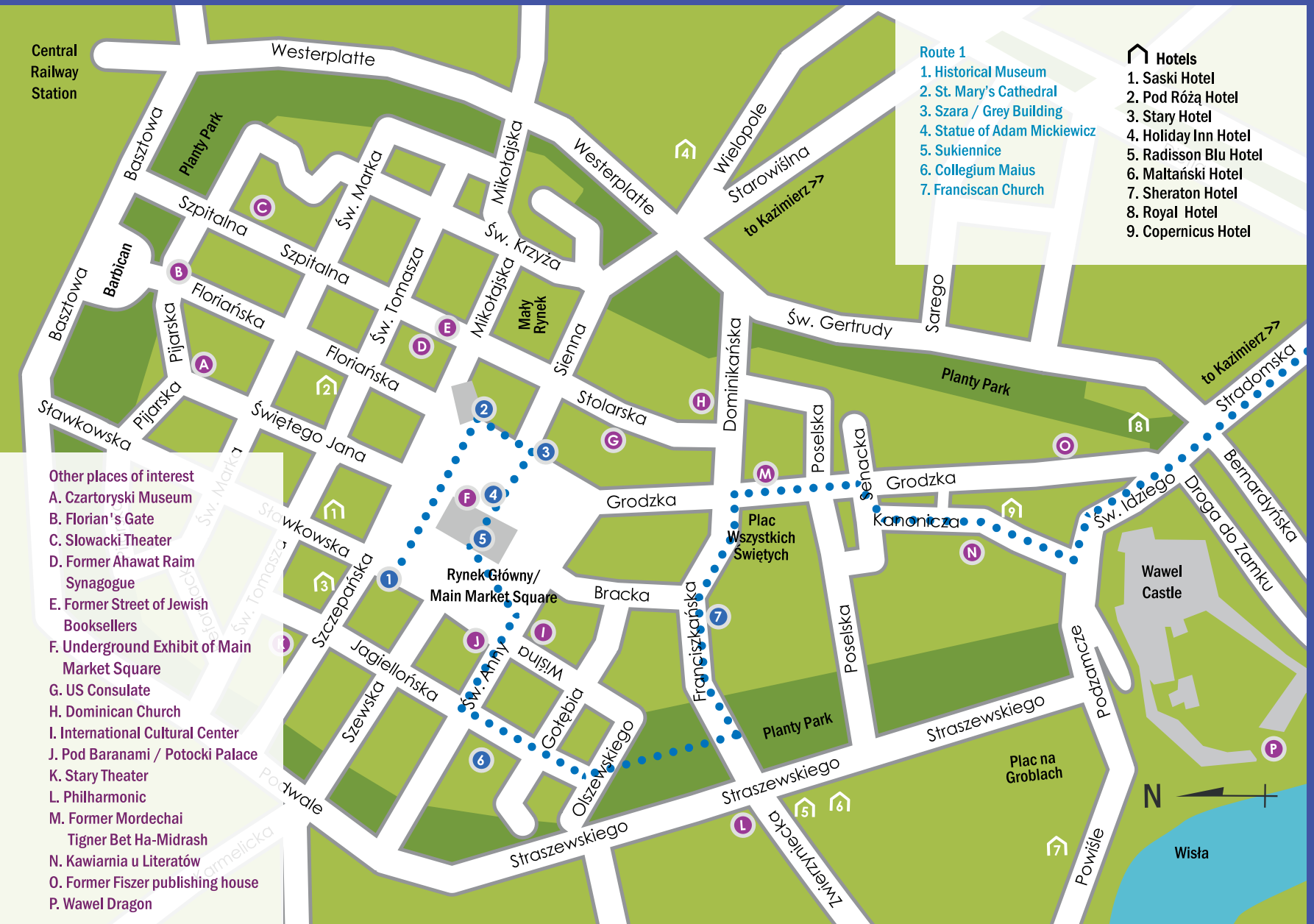
Manger's words can help us to understand how powerful the experience of walking in and being in this landscape continues to be for Jewish visitors today. Kraków's Kazimierz provides an unusual portal into this experience. And the annual Festival of Jewish Culture, both in its inception and in the growing numbers of visitors from all over the world who attend it, can be seen as a response to the powerful call of history that permeates this city.



The Rynek Główny (Main Market Square), where Jews first settled in Kraków.

Polish Catholic and Ashkenazi Jewish cultures developed side by side on Polish Jewish lands for six centuries, and each experienced a special period of intellectual and cultural dynamism when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was experimenting with both religious tolerance and a limited form of Parliamentary democracy, long before they were embraced by Western Europe.

Kraków Walking Route 1



Kraków Route 1

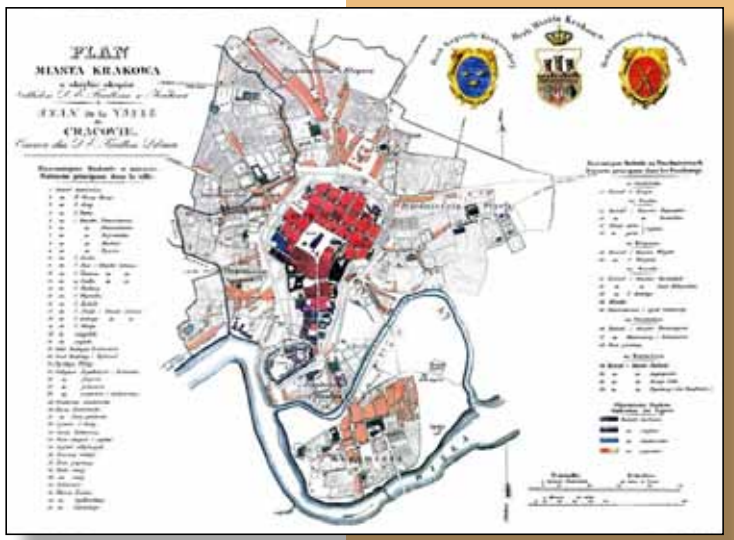
A trek through seven centuries of Kraków's Jewish community, from feudal magnificence to modern sophistication; from the beginnings of Ashkenazi culture to the emergence of Jews as full national citizens.

Old Town / Krzysztofory Palace-Kraków City Museum / Rynek Główny (Main Market Square) Kamienica Szara (Gray Building) / Feintuch Family / Adam Mickiewicz Monument / Św. Anny (Jewish Street)

The Old Town

We begin our walk in Kraków's Old Town with a visit to a three-dimensional tabletop model of Kraków as it looked in the 13th century. One such model rendered in bronze can be viewed in the underground exhibit beneath Kraków's Rynek Główny, or Main Market Square. **Point F, Map 1** Another is in the Kraków City Museum at the northwest corner of the square. **No. 1, Map 1**

Kraków was the royal seat and capital of Poland until 1596. Its central urban space is defined by two focal points: the vast main market square, still a bustling center of daily life in this city of over 800,000, and Wawel Hill, with its castle buildings and cathedral overlooking the Wisła (Vistula) River. These are joined by the Royal Way, the route that leads from the Floriańska Gate, down Floriańska Street, through the east side of the square, and out the sweeping exit at the southeast corner of the square down Grodzka Street to the base of Wawel Hill. The road would have continued out the city walls across a bridge over a branch of the river that has since been filled in, and into the separate city of Kazimierz, which is today Kraków's historic Jewish quarter.



Map of Kraków and Kazimierz in 1836 by Teofil Żebrawski..

(Wikimedia Commons)

Kraków existed as a prominent trade center as early as 966. It took its current form when it was rebuilt after Mongol invasions and incorporated according to Magdeburg City laws in 1257, with its large central square, surrounding sidestreets in a grid pattern, and defensive walls with 13 gates and a main entry, the Barbican.

During the time of our tabletop model the Jewish community still resided within the Old Town's walls, on Św. Anny Street adjoining the main square. **Point J, Map 1** Almost nothing has changed about the layout since that time. Though no longer surrounded by walls, Kraków's city center was never destroyed in any of the major wars or invasions of the preceding centuries, and the buildings we see in the Old Town really date from the 14th or 15th



The Sukiennice (Cloth Hall) on Kraków's Main Square.
(Wikimedia Commons)

centuries, although they gained their present facades in the 17th century. Kraków's medieval city is real, not reconstructed. The aura of Poland's Golden Age emanates from its buildings and from the vastness of its central square.

In fact, however, it is what we *cannot* see as we walk through the Rynek and the Old Town—layers of history that are not evident on the surface—that can be considered most "authentic" and representative of the enduring cultural dynamics of this region and city. We can think of Kraków's terrain as a palimpsest, a surface text that is written over an older historical script, whose traces remain hidden beneath the surface narrative. As we walk through the Old Town we see a remarkably well-preserved medieval city of churches and palaces. And yet today's ethnically homogeneous Polish Catholic society is exactly not "traditional" for Poland. It differs dramatically from what existed here at any point in the 900 years before World War II.

Architecturally, what we cannot see is an entire underground layer of the city: a complicated network of subterranean vaulted arches, chambers, staircases, and corridors that reach one and sometimes two or three levels below street level. The Old Town's original ground level, in the 13th century, used to be one floor lower than it is today. Over the centuries, the level of the streets was raised as more dirt was laid down. The drive-in level for carriages and for shops became a basement level, and basements became sub-basements. Thus, over time some of the most original and defining elements of the Old Town became invisible to the casual visitor. It takes some exploring to learn about them. So it is with Poland's complex cultural heritage, and with its rich Jewish past.

Krzysztofory Palace-Kraków City Museum

No. 1, Map 1 The amazing basements of Kraków, which have gradually been excavated, uncovered, and restored over the past two decades, offer a metaphor for larger processes that are taking place within Polish society since the fall of Communism, and that we have referred to throughout our guide. They evoke a dynamic of vital cultural elements being kept alive underground, during times of political duress, to be revived in times of democracy and independence.

Kraków's medieval city is real, not reconstructed.

In Kraków, this dynamic is not just metaphorical. Kraków's buildings and basements housed organized cultural, political, and military resistance during the successive periods of Poland's occupation, including the partitions, World War II, and the Communist era. The Krzysztofory Palace at the northwest corner of the square, which houses the Kraków City Museum, offers a fascinating example. In its basements the director and playwright Tadeusz Kantor staged inspiring and controversial theater productions. One of the most important avant-garde theater directors of the 20th century, Kantor began staging illegal theater performances in private apartments on the square during the Nazi occupation. Later, throughout the Communist period, in the basements of the Krzysztofory Palace he created powerful works (for example, *Wielopole, Wielopole* and *The Dead Class*) that evoke Poland's complex and multicultural past. They focus on the cultural crossroads of Poland's eastern lands, where Kantor's Polish and Jewish families had lived.

Underground theater groups, "flying universities" (courses and discussions held in private apartments), and the extensive underground press during Communism are all characteristic of Poland's traditional efforts to keep its culture alive under duress. The post-World War II Jewish revival itself, which developed in the Communist period

through the use of models such as the flying university, has emerged not despite this strong Polish heritage, or in opposition to it, but as an integral part of it.

Rynek Główny (Main Market Square)

Now let us walk into the Rynek Główny, the main square. One-eighth mile long on each side, it is the largest market square in Europe, after St. Mark's in Venice, and is located on the historic trading routes from the Far East and Middle East through Lwów (now Lviv) to Kraków and on to Prague.

The square contains several buildings that reflect Kraków's multicultural heritage. On the northeast corner at an angle to the other buildings is the Kościoł Mariacki (St. Mary's Church), **No. 2, Map 1** distinctive with towers of two different heights and architectural styles. St. Mary's is a symbol of Polish national pride and one of the most important heritage sites in the country. When it was built in the 1390s, however, the urban population of Kraków was largely German and services at St. Mary's were held in German. It was competition between German Catholic and Jewish merchants that would lead to Jews finally being moved out of Kraków to neighboring Kazimierz.

In the center of the square sits the long building called the Sukiennice, or Cloth Hall, **No. 5, Map 1** with a Renaissance façade acquired in the 16th century. The name comes from the Turkish word *suk* and is a reminder of the substantial influence of Ottoman culture on Polish noble culture, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. Trade and wars between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire led to the introduction of many Turkish influences, particularly among the nobility who referred to themselves as "Sarmatians" and introduced Turkish elements into their dress and architecture. Excavations of the foundations of the original cloth hall between 2006 and 2010 unearthed shoes from Asia as well as Western Europe that had gotten stuck in the mud in centuries past. An underground route beneath the square has been opened for visitors, with multimedia installations recreating the appearance of medieval Old Town.

Jewish merchants had shops primarily on the southeast end of the Sukiennice and sold books among other wares. Kraków would develop into one of Europe's most important centers for the printing of Hebrew books. Most of the printers were located on Szpitalna Street, northeast of the square, from the 16th century up until World War II.

The Renaissance architecture of the Sukiennice testifies to the important influence of Bona Sforza (1493-1557), of the Italian Sforza dynasty, who married King Sigismund I and became Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania in 1518. Legend has it that she agreed to move to Kraków only if, in addition to her political and economic savvy, she could bring along every element of her native Italy—including architecture, music, literature, and foods. Kraków itself became a Renaissance city, and many of the buildings, including synagogues in Kazimierz, were built in the 16th century by renowned Italian architects.

Walk through St. Mary's if possible to view its beautiful 19th-century frescoes designed by Stanisław Wyspiański, which are characteristic of Kraków's version of Art Nouveau, the Polish national style known as "Young Poland" or Młoda Polska. The interiors of many of Kraków's famous buildings were repainted in the late 19th century with frescoes in this richly colored, flowery style, including St. Mary's and the Franciscan Church on Pl. Wszystkich Świętych. You should visit both to get a feeling for the Kraków style.

Kamienica Szara (Gray Building)

No. 3, Map 1 The Gray Building (Kamienica Szara) at the corner of Sienna Street on the east side of the main square, which houses the Szara Restaurant on its ground floor,



Floral wall fresco by Stanisław Wyspiański, leading representative of Młoda Polska, Poland's national style of Art Nouveau.

(Wikimedia Commons)



The Gray Building (Kamienica Szara) in the 1920s, when it was occupied by the department store owned by the Feintuch (later Szarski) family. The Adam Mickiewicz monument is on the right.

(Wikimedia Commons)

has an illustrious history that is connected with Kraków's tradition of underground resistance and insurrection and its Jewish history.

It was here, in the Gray Building itself, that Tadeusz Kościuszko organized the Uprising of 1795 against Russia. Again in 1861 the building served as the headquarters for the November Uprising against Russia. From the 1850s the Gray Building was owned by the Jewish Feintuch family, which here created the most famous store of imported goods in Kraków. The Feintuchs owned the building for over a century, well into the post-World War II period, and represent an interesting example of early, 19th century acculturation by Jews into Polish society within the Austrian Empire. We will use our visit to the Feintuch basements as a chance to talk about those dynamics, and also about the different situations in which Polish Jews found themselves when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned among three neighboring powers.

During the late 18th century, the rulers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria entered into a secret agreement to divide the lands of the weakened Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth among themselves. Between 1772 and 1795 they carried out what are called the Partitions of Poland, invading and annexing all territories of the Commonwealth, until Poland-Lithuania disappeared as a political entity.

The experience of the partitions meant that Polish culture, and the culture of Polish Jews, would begin to develop distinct characteristics, depending on which of the three empires a given region had been incorporated into. Residents of every ethnicity and religion would be subjected to the respective laws, forced acculturalization, and different forms and degrees of repression imposed by these three empires. The experiences within each partition were very different, and the Polish and Jewish communities living in each would enter the



Map of the Polish partitions showing Kraków's location in the Austrian zone. (Wikimedia Commons)

period of modernization and industrialization in different cultural and political environments.

Kraków and Lwów (today's Lviv) were located on the Polish lands acquired by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the region referred to as Galicia (the homeland of "Galizianers" as opposed to "LItvaks" who were from the north, in today's Lithuania). The Austrian-controlled partition was by far the least repressive of the three, and the ethnic groups residing within it received a range of freedoms, including the ability to maintain separate schools, publish books and journals in their own languages, and produce art that promoted national pride. From 1815 to 1846 Kraków enjoyed a degree of independent governance as a "free city." It became the spiritual and cultural center of Poland, while its political center, Warsaw, fell under increasingly restrictive Russian control.

[As] a result of the partitions, Jews from Kraków and Galicia developed a stronger identification with Polish culture and a higher degree of Polish patriotism than did those from Warsaw.

Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were "emancipated" and received full rights as citizens in 1867. In Kraków, where they had continued to face a variety of legal or economic obstacles throughout the first half of the 19th century, they were finally able to participate fully in economic and political life. Now the separate Jewish town of Kazimierz was incorporated into the city of Kraków, and the river that divided the two was filled in and became today's Dietla Street, the large boulevard of trams that we cross when walking to Kazimierz. Jews began moving back into Old Town, where they had not owned property since the 15th century, and started buying businesses and real estate and even running for political office.

Also as a result of the partitions, Jews from Kraków and Galicia developed a stronger identification with Polish culture and a higher degree of Polish patriotism than did those from Warsaw. Thus, for example, Ber Meisels, chief rabbi of Kraków in the mid-19th century, remarked that the great 16th century rabbi Mosheh Isserles "indicated to us that we should love the Polish nation above all other nations, for the Poles have been our brothers for centuries." While this patriotism would become more problematic in the late 1930s in independent Poland, when antisemitism was on the rise, during the 19th century it was a defining feature of Jewish life in Kraków.

The Gray Building has some of the oldest and most interestingly restored basements on the entire square. It is especially evocative for the idea of revival, both cultural

If these are Polish lands, why does my family say we are Russian Jews?

Most Jews worldwide who understand themselves to have come from Russia have roots in the large Eastern region of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that was annexed by Russia during the Polish partitions.

The Russian Empire itself had always banned Jewish settlement. Except for a minority of merchant families granted special privileges to live in St. Petersburg or Moscow, Russian Jews were from historically Polish lands and were originally welcomed to live on these lands as a result of the unique political and economic structure and climate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, not of Russia.

When Catherine the Great acquired the eastern lands of Poland in the late 18th century, however, she became ruler over the world's largest population of Jews, Polish Jews. Her solution was to ban Jews from moving outside of a zone known as the Pale of Settlement, an act that created increasing impoverishment, lack of employment, extreme overcrowding, and limited access to professions or to higher (secular) education. The suffering of Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement was compounded by the cruel policy of forced conscription of young boys into the Czar's army and by politically motivated pogroms, most notably following the assassination of Czar Nicholas in 1882, which precipitated the mass emigration of "Russian" Jews to the United States at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.



Russian Pale of Settlement, the territories of Poland acquired by Russia during the partitions, and within which Jews in Russia were forced to remain. The Pale in its full form began in 1835 and did not end until the Russian Revolution during World War I.

(Jewish Virtual Library)



Part of the underground network of cellars in the Gray Building, precious remnants of Kraków's residential and commercial life in centuries past.

(Taube Foundation Collection)

revival and the revival or recovery of rich and complex Polish-Jewish narratives. The basements are currently occupied by the Faust pizzeria and dance club, but during the daytime we can enter them and see the well-preserved remnants of the walls of several buildings and an actual street of the 13th and 14th centuries, when the city was a full floor lower.

When the owners of the restaurant began the renovation process they exposed the walls of these original medieval buildings and discovered interesting architectural elements as the basements were gradually excavated. The owners decided to preserve all the historically significant architectural elements and work them into the interiors of their place of business. Their decision, which involved spending more on restoration than they had intended, has changed the way that we can experience the history of the city, specifically the Jewish history. It shows that one individual, one business, or one nonprofit organization can transform our experience of heritage, history, and even identity.

The basement's restoration shows how one individual business or nonprofit can transform our experience of heritage and history.

When we descend the stairs, we see a painting on the wall at the bottom showing the layout of the 13th-16th century walls and streets that were uncovered. The long, narrow medieval street, or ulica (identified in the words over the arched doorway), is now an art gallery. In other basement chambers we find interior elements of several separate 14th- and 15th-century houses: a preserved wooden stairway that would have led to the second floor but is today at the basement level; a hearth with chimney; a bathroom; windows that would have opened to the medieval street but today lead between rooms in the basement; and a deep recess for closing the heavy wooden lock on a front door.

The Feintuch Family: An Early Model of Jewish Assimilation into Polish Society

As we stand in the basement of the Gray Building we can reflect on the story of the Feintuch family, which founded the elegant department store once located upstairs. Their lives illustrate an early trend of assimilation that appeared within Polish-Jewish communities in the 19th century, as a result of the Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah. Enlightened Jews, maskilim, were usually members of the burgher class and of the intelligentsia. Like German enlightened Jews they argued that cultural assimilation was the only way to gain emancipation and full participation in modern European society. This model is one that we commonly associate with German or West European Jews or Jews from St. Petersburg: wealthy and educated members of the society who become leading contributors to the economic and cultural life of the European countries that they live in. It is a model that is less commonly associated with Poland.

The Feintuch family was one of the first Jewish families in Kraków to be Polonized and thereby to move into positions of real status within the economic and political life of the city. Marcin Feintuch (1805-66) was a banker and owned an exchange bureau. He was one of the first Jews to buy property in the Christian part of Kazimierz. As a Jew, in this period prior to the formal emancipation of minorities on Austro-Hungarian controlled territories, Feintuch was not permitted to serve on the board of merchants of Kraków. He chose to convert to Protestantism in 1846 as a way of participating in economic and political life without becoming part of

Poland's Catholic culture. Protestant conversion of this kind was also practiced in the Russian partition, where Jews could not hold government positions.

The Feintuchs could now join Kraków's Congregation of Merchants, and Marcin's son Stanisław Feintuch was able to open an elegant department store in this building in 1853. It would make him one of the wealthiest merchants in Kraków. The store was called Szara (Gray) for the color of its façade. In another move common in 19th-century Jewish assimilation, Feintuch changed his name to the more Polish-sounding Szarski, based on the name of his store. The son of Stanisław Feintuch, now-Szarski, and Józefa Rosenzweig, was Henryk Szarski, who inherited the business and also became Vice-President (Vice-Mayor) of the city of Kraków in 1907. The second-generation's move from merchant to politician was followed by the third generation's move into culture and the arts. Another of Marcin Feintuch's sons took the name Zawiejski, and his son, Jan Zawiejski, became a leading Kraków architect and the designer of Kraków's grand Słowacki Theater **Point F, Map 1** on Szpitalna. Other Szarskis would become professors at Jagiellonian University and in Wrocław and Toruń. The descendents of Marcin Feintuch owned the Gray Building until after World War II.

The Feintuch family's story is characteristic of an early 19th-century model of assimilation that would change by the late 19th century, with the rise of modern ideologies, Jewish cultural movements, and political alignments including Zionism, Yiddishism, and mass emigration to America. Jews in interwar Poland (1919-39) placed their emphasis instead on exploring a range of forms of modern expression, both religious and radically secular, that proudly affirmed a distinct Jewish identity. Significantly, they brought movement into the centers of Polish culture and economic life without requiring acculturation to non-Jewish norms.

Now let's walk around the Main Market Square, stopping in front of the large monument to Poland's best-known Romantic poet and playwright, Adam Mickiewicz.

Discussion Topic

Assimilation, pros and cons.

The paradigm of wealthy and educated Jewish residents who became leading contributors to the economic and cultural life of the European countries that they lived in is a model of acculturation that we commonly associate with German or West European Jews, or Jews from St. Petersburg. We often look favorably on the history of Jewish assimilation into high German culture, or into Austrian culture in the Vienna of 1900, but disdainfully or skeptically on the idea of Jews assimilating into Polish culture.

Question

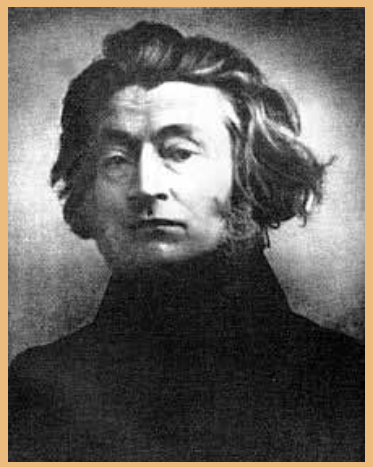
Does the idea of Jews assimilating into Polish culture sound positive, or like a betrayal of some kind?

Is Polish culture more commonly associated with antisemitism, or with the Holocaust, than German culture? Or is it simply that being a member of Polish high culture carries less caché than being a member of German high culture?



Słowacki Theater (1893), designed by leading Kraków architect Jan Zawiejski, son of Marcin Feintuch.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Polish Romantic poet and playwright Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855)

(Wikimedia Commons)

Mickiewicz believed Jews had a central role to play in Poland.

Adam Mickiewicz Monument

No. 4, Map 1 Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855) embodied and expressed the fantastic complexity of the Polish-Lithuanian heritage, and his relationship with Jewish culture is one of the many narratives of Polish-ness that have reemerged in recent decades. Mickiewicz, like Pushkin in Russia, became the leading representative and narrator of national culture and identity, in this case Polish. He was also a socialist, a messianic mystic, and an early feminist of sorts. On his mother's side his background was Frankist Jewish, referring to a sect that arose in the late 18th century and rejected rabbinical authority.

Mickiewicz's poems and plays defined for the entire Polish people what it meant to be Polish. His epic poem "Pan Tadeusz," a paean to traditional Polish life, begins "O Lithuania! My Homeland!" In it the figure who most powerfully expresses the aspirations of the nation is the musician and tavern-keeper Jankiel, a devout Jew and a Polish patriot. Mickiewicz wrote during the partitions, a time when Poland did not exist as a political entity and sustained itself instead through its literature, its narration of itself, its texts. Mickiewicz saw deep similarities between the Polish situation and the Jewish nation, a stateless People of the Book. The Jews, he believed, had a central role to play in the history of Poland and in the future emancipation of all the peoples of Europe. This vision was somewhat akin to arguments later made by cultural Zionists, who believed Jews could be a light to the peoples of the world.

Mickiewicz argued that while the Poles prepared for the uprisings that would someday overthrow oppressive European regimes, they must find their model of enduring faith and perseverance in the Jews, a people who had never lost their direct line of communication with God. In Paris, where he lived in exile, Mickiewicz decided that his colleagues should attend services at the synagogue at rue Neuve St. Laurent, on Tish'ah be'Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He entreated them: "Let us associate ourselves with the sorrow of Israel who, everywhere that he is throughout the world, is today mourning Jerusalem's destruction.... Let us humble ourselves before the spirit of Israel...."

Mickiewicz died in 1855 in Constantinople, where he was in the process of organizing a Jewish Legion to fight the Russians in the Crimean War.

Now let's walk around the left side of the Sukiennice to the corner of St. Anne's street, the earliest site of Jewish settlement in Kraków.

Św. Anny (Jewish Street)

When we stand on the southwest corner of the Rynek Główny, on Św. Anny (St. Anne's Street), we are on what used to be called Jewish Street (ul. Żydowska). This is where Kraków's Jews lived, amid Christian neighbors, until the early 15th century.

Walking from the square's southwest corner to the corner of ul. Jagiellońska (Jagiellonian Street), we stop in front of the massive Collegium Maius building, **No. 6, Map 1** the oldest part of Jagiellonian University. For nearly three centuries the Jews of Kraków were concentrated on this street, where university buildings stand today. Jewish merchants reached Poland as early as the 10th century and settled permanently in Silesia (to the west) by the 11th century. There was a Jewish community in this quarter of Kraków from the city's founding in the 13th century. The street had a synagogue, and a Jewish cemetery was located just outside the city walls, where the Bagatela Theater is today, on the other side of the Planty (Park Ring).

Not until 1492 were Kraków's Jews forced to move out of the city center, to nearby Kazimierz. Founded in 1335 by King Kazimierz the Great, the city of Kazimierz was a self-contained entity, with its own surrounding walls, separated from Kraków by a branch of the Wisła (Vistula) River. When it was founded both Jews and Christians lived in Kazimierz. It was not, as one Kraków legend has it, created as a "gift to the Jews," though this and many other legends attest to pride that many Poles in Kraków have for the Jewish past of their city and for their country's positive treatment of Jews historically. The migration of Kraków's Jews from sw. Anny to Kazimierz took place in stages. It was connected with the establishment of Jagiellonian University and also the increasing tension between Jewish and Christian merchants in Kraków, which the King attempted to defuse by removing the Jews to Kazimierz.

By 1931 Jews made up 25.6% of the student population in a country with a total Jewish population of about 11%.

As the University expanded it bought more properties from Jews on this street until, in 1469, all the remaining Jewish buildings were acquired. The Jewish community was moved north, to the area of Plac Szczepański and Tomasza Street, where the Hotel Stary and Stary Teatr are now located. **Point K, Map 1** The Jews would stay there only a few decades before violence incited by Church leaders and local merchants led to their resettlement to Kazimierz. After this Jews continued to trade within Kraków and especially with towns throughout Poland, but they had to bring their merchandise into the city in the morning and return to Kazimierz in the evening. This situation persisted for over three centuries, until the emancipation of Jews and other minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the second half of the 19th century.

Significant numbers of Jews began to attend Jagiellonian University in the opening decades of the 20th century and to receive higher degrees in law and medicine. By 1931 Jewish students represented 25.6% of the student population, in a country with a total Jewish population of about 11%. This changed dramatically in the second half of the 1930s, following the death of Marshal Piłsudski and the beginning of anti-Jewish policies under the influence of Roman Dmowski. A *numerus clausus* (limited number) policy was applied to reduce the proportion of Jewish students at Polish universities to 10%, and "bench ghettos" required that Jewish students sit separately from non-Jewish students. By the academic year 1937-38 the proportion of Jewish students at Jagiellonian had dropped to about 13%.

The faculty here included notable Jewish scholars in every field, from medicine and the sciences to classical philology and medieval Polish law. They include, for example, classicist Leon Sternbach, as well as Julian Aleksandrowicz, who taught internal medicine at the university and also worked at the Israeli Hospital on Skawińska.

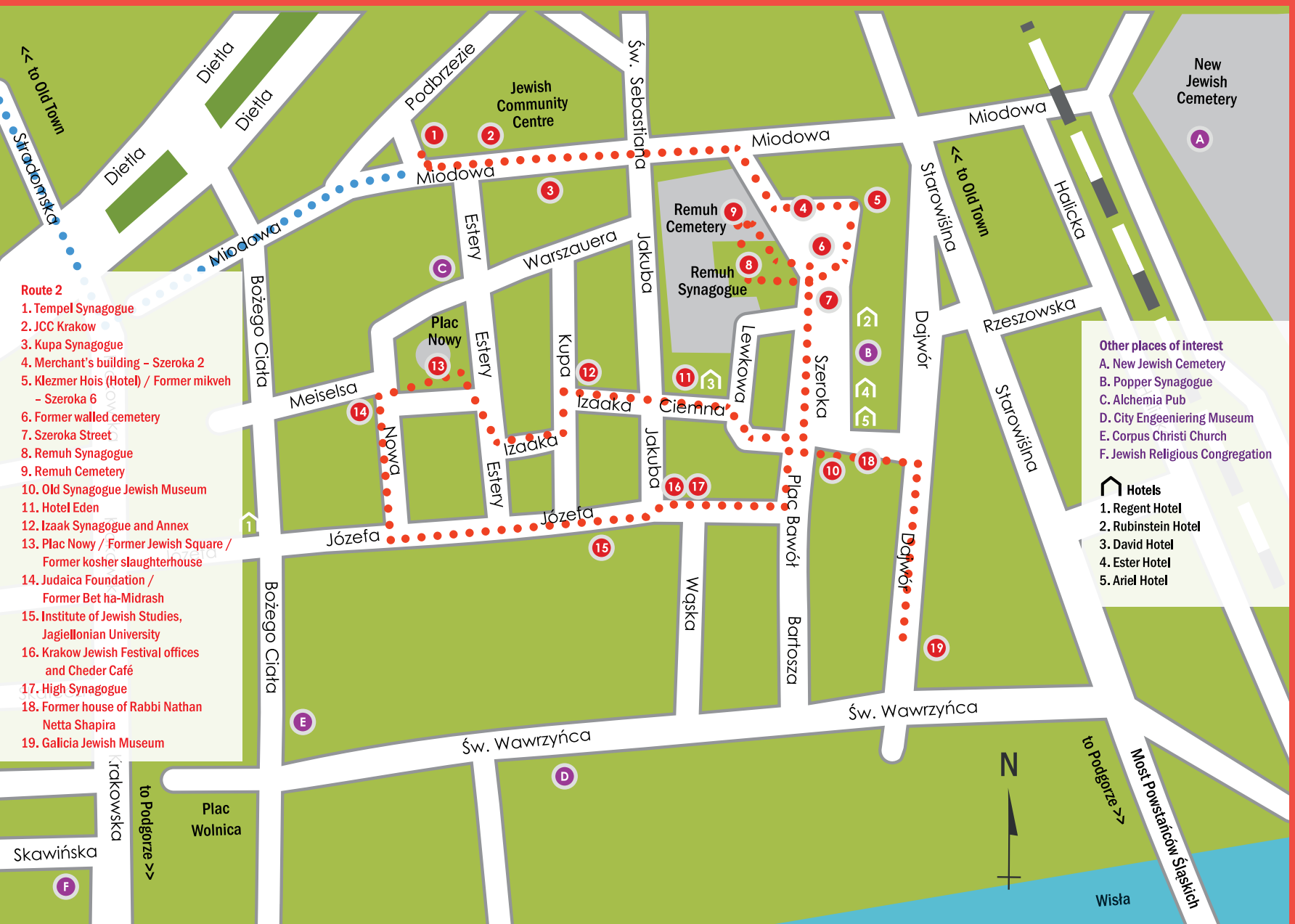
We continue down Jagiellońska to the Planty Park, which dates from beautification projects undertaken by the Austrian imperial government during the 19th century. These involved demolishing Kraków's medieval city walls and planting the park we find today—hence its name, Planty. After crossing Dominikańska Street, if we have time we should visit the Franciscan Church **No. 7, Map 1** to view the renowned stained glass windows and elaborate frescoes by Stanisław Wyspiański. Then we can rejoin Grodzka Street, or the King's Way, to walk toward Jewish Kazimierz.



Courtyard of the Collegium Maius at Jagiellonian University in the 1920s. The Collegium Maius is the oldest building of the university, constructed in 1407. One of the most beautiful medieval buildings in the city, it houses a museum worth a separate visit.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Kraków Walking Route 2



Kraków Route 2

A stroll back in time, from the Jewish confrontation with modernity and secularism to the roots of Ashkenazi culture and Kabbalah.

Tempel Synagogue / Polish-Jewish Education / JCC Kraków, Kazimierz / Szeroka Street, Kazimierz / Remuh Synagogue and Cemetery / Tour within the Tour with Rabbi Boaz Pash

[No. 1, Map 2]

Tempel Synagogue

We are standing in front of the first "progressive" (*postępowa*), or Reform, synagogue in Kraków, hence its name, Tempel Synagogue. Orthodox and Conservative Jews do not use "temple" out of the conviction that no synagogue may be considered a replacement for, or equivalent of, the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed in 70 C.E. The choice of the name Tempel in this case made clear the break with Orthodoxy and also represented a rejection of the concept of life in Europe as exile, or galut, and permanent waiting.

Kraków's first Reform congregation was founded in the 1840s in a smaller prayerhouse referred to as the Deutsche Schul, or German Synagogue. Its purpose, according to the founders, was to "contribute to the education of young people and to the creation of a wider intelligentsia class." The congregation grew quickly and the present-day Tempel Synagogue was dedicated in 1862.



Interior of Tempel Synagogue, 1933. (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)

Reform Judaism came to Poland in the early 19th century as an outgrowth of the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, which began in Germany in the 18th century and spread eastward. Moses Mendelssohn, a German-Jewish philosopher, argued that one should be "a Jew at home, and a German in the street." The maskilim, or followers of Jewish Enlightenment principles, embraced their identity as citizens of the European countries in which they lived and considered these countries to be their homeland. Services at Tempel Synagogue were originally held in German, Kraków at that time being in the Austrian partition.

The location of the synagogue on Miodowa (Honey) Street, which had centuries earlier marked the edge of medieval Kazimierz, suggests a move toward the city and the centers of Polish culture. After 1867, with the emancipation of minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jews were permitted to live in all parts of Kraków. The wealthier and more assimilated among them,



Tempel Synagogue.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Discussion Topic

Agency in the restoration of Jewish heritage sites.

Tempel Synagogue in Kraków's Kazimierz is an example of the difficult questions that are raised by the process of the historical restoration of Jewish heritage sites. We may readily agree that an old synagogue, for example, should be cleaned and treated to prevent the interiors from degrading, but we may differ on whether it should be repainted as if it were newly built. Different approaches to restoration, and to the presentation of Jewish spaces, serve different aims and encourage different kinds of memory. Some observers have proposed that there should be an international commission of cultural advisors to assist in deciding how Jewish heritage sites in Poland should be restored and used.

Questions

How should a synagogue like Kraków's Tempel be restored? Should it be "preserved" in the state that it was left after the war?

Should some synagogues be allowed to fall down?

How does a given form of restoration or abandonment influence the way that the object becomes a part of new narratives?

Who should decide?

If an international commission of cultural advisors is established, by whom should its members be chosen? Should Jewish communities or organizations have more say about this than Polish or European Union entities? Should only Polish Jews make the final decisions, despite the relatively small size of Jewish communities in Poland today, or should Jewish organizations worldwide have a voice?



Ozjasz Thon (1870-1936), rabbi at Tempel Synagogue, member of Polish Parliament, and Zionist leader. (Wikimedia Commons)

many of whom would have belonged to Tempel, moved into the city center and neighborhoods beyond and would have returned to Kazimierz for services at Tempel.

A number of Tempel's structural elements reflect the "progressive" ethos that is standard in many Conservative and Reform synagogues in the United States today. Tempel Synagogue was built in 1860-62 (with additions continuing into the 1920s), and the layout of the interior reflected that of the "temples" built in Vienna and in German cities, which resembled a Protestant church: pews facing forward and without a central bimah. The wooden bimah that we see today was installed after World War II, when the tiny Remuh synagogue (see p. 97) was not large enough to accommodate the sizable Orthodox community that returned to Kraków. The women's gallery on the second floor is open, not separated by a gate or curtain, and during the interwar period (1919-39) the choir gallery (adopted from Protestant services in Germany) included women. By the 20th century services were conducted in Polish and included weekly sermons given by rabbis with a secular, academic education.

Two personages associated with Tempel are especially good examples of the entry of Jews into modern European and Polish society. Jehoshua Ozjasz Thon, rabbi at Tempel from 1898 until his death in 1936, was an early Zionist, a Member of Parliament, and an eminent leader within the Jewish community of Poland. In a speech honoring a young Jewish soldier, Władysław Steinhaus, who had fought and died in Piłsudski's legion in World War I, Rabbi Thon quoted Steinhaus as saying he was happy to die "as a Pole and as a Jew." As historian Sean Martin writes, "by honoring a man who gave his life for the freedom of his native country, Thon made clear his respect for those who died for the ideal of a free and just Poland."

Thon's viewpoint did not entail adopting Polish national or religious culture or identity. Rather, he emphasized developing and preserving a distinct Jewish identity within the multicultural republic that was interwar Poland. Jews who shared this view sought to acculturate into modern Polish society, embrace their rights as citizens, and participate in every aspect of secular life. Rabbi Thon was elected a representative to independent Poland's first Parliament, or *Sejm*, in 1919, where he served until 1931. He was both a leading Zionist—a follower of Ahad Ha'am's form of cultural Zionism—and a participant in Poland's young democracy. Thon's Zionism did not lessen his Polishness or loyalty to Poland. A considerable number of Polish Jews in the interwar period felt this way.

Many synagogues were restored by the postwar Communist government as part of Poland's cultural heritage.

The other personage, Ḥazan Józef Fiszer, was renowned for his beautiful singing. Even Orthodox Jews offended by the very existence of Tempel would come and stand outside to hear him. He owned the Fiszer publishing house, located in Kraków's Old Town, at Grodzka 62. Before World War I, when Kraków was within the relatively benign Austrian partition, Fiszer's publishing house became a center for printing Jewish journals that were subject to strict censorship in the Russian partition.

Fiszer hosted luminaries of both the Yiddish and modern Hebrew literary worlds, including Ahad-Ha'Am (Asher Ginsberg), Sholem Aleichem (Solomon Rabinowitz), I.L. Peretz, and even Mendele Mokher Sforim (Abramowitz), considered the grandfather of Yiddish literature. For a period of time Ahad Ha'am, the father of cultural Zionism, printed the monthly *Hashiloach* in Kraków. Fiszer published the oldest Hebrew newspaper, *Ha'maggid*, which was moved to Kraków in 1892, as well as the periodicals *Ha'Zman, Ha'Cheker, Ha'Dor,* and *Mi'Mizrach Umima'arav.* He also published a Polish translation of the Bible by Warsaw Rabbi Isaac Cylkow.

The Nazis used Tempel Synagogue as a stable and storehouse, ensuring its survival during the war. Until its complete restoration in 1996, you could see holes in the walls where hay mangers were attached. The Communist government began preservation of the synagogue, and it is important to remember that many of Poland's synagogues were restored by the government of the postwar People's Republic of Poland as part of the country's cultural heritage. In the 1950s the government restored the basic structure and the roof and reinstalled and restored the turn-of-the-century stained glass windows (unique in Poland), which run the length of the women's gallery and were removed and hidden during the war. The furthest right window on the south wall did not survive, and the replacement window is a beautiful example of the craft of the workshops of the Polish Department of Monument Conservation, or PKZ (Pracownie Konserwacji Zabytków), which became renowned for its restoration work following the war. Most of the windows commemorate a donor, but this one bears the PKZ insignia and otherwise is almost indistinguishable from the originals.

Beyond this, the interiors of this synagogue remained for half a century in the state that they had been after the war. This made Tempel a particularly evocative, contemplative place to visit. Many synagogues, those that were restored, were turned into artists' workshops, archives, libraries, or museums, or served other cultural or storage purposes. Here, you felt as if time had stopped. The brown velvet on the railings and the glass lanterns in the women's gallery remained as they had been, and the silences of loss and absence hung in the air like dust particles.



Crowd gathered at the funeral of Ozjasz Thon in Kraków, 1936.
(Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)



Sarah Schenirer, founder of the Beis Yaakov schools for girls.

(Wikimedia Commons)



A Beis Yaakov graduating class in 1934.

(Yehudis Bobker, Sydney, Australia)

The restoration of the interior of the Tempel Synagogue in 1996 was sponsored by the World Monument Fund, with support from the Getty Foundation. Today Tempel Synagogue is open to visitors but is used primarily for performances and other cultural events, including the concerts of the annual Jewish Culture Festival. The synagogue has a Torah, and visiting groups especially from Israel make arrangements to use the Tempel for special services.

A Polish-Jewish Education

The discussion of the Jewish population's movement into modernity is a good opportunity for us to mention a few important schools both for girls and boys that were established in Kazimierz in the interwar period. The variety of educational institutions and experiments in that period speaks to the complexity and diversity of Polish Jewish society in the early 20th century. The world of Jewish Poland was defined above all by a multiplicity of ideologies, religious and secular alignments, and competing visions of what it meant to be Jewish in the modern world. While Yiddishist or Bundist schools did not gain sizable support in Kraków, both religious and Zionist schools did; and elite Polish private schools in Kraków also had student populations that were up to 50% Jewish. Rabbi Ozjasz Thon's daughter, Nella Thon, for example, attended the Queen Jadwiga Private Gymnasium for Girls, an elite Polish school where more than a quarter of the girls were Jewish.

It was in Kraków in independent Poland that Sarah Schenirer (1883-1935) established the first of the Beis Yaakov (Bet Ja'akov; Beys Yankev) schools for Orthodox girls and women, which received the support of the Orthodox party Agudas Isroel. Schnenirer was born in Kraków, into a Belz Hasidic family. She received a grammar-school education at a Polish state school, since the type of schools she would later create did not exist; and she went on to educate herself in Jewish scripture and philosophy while working as a seamstress. We can see the five-story building built in 1929 as a teachers' college, to meet the needs of the growing Beis Yaakov movement, by taking a short detour in the direction of the river, to Stanislawa 10.

The most prominent Jewish high school in Kraków before World War II was Zionist and bilingual (Polish-Hebrew).

The most prominent Jewish school in Kraków before the war was the Hebrew High School, or Jewish Coeducational Gymnasium, a Zionist, "bilingual" (Polish-Hebrew) school that attracted many of Kraków's assimilated Jews "back" to Kazimierz in the 1930s. It provided an environment in which Polish Jews who felt proud to be both Jewish and Polish were protected from experiencing the antisemitism that Jewish students encountered in non-Jewish schools. Many prominent graduates from the Hebrew High School who moved to Palestine before the war or who survived the war would retain deep feelings of connection to Kraków, to their school, and to their Polish-Jewish identities. Their memoirs are a source of information for us today about Jewish life in Kraków before the war. Graduates included Knesset members Chaim Landau and Elimelech Rimalt, novelist Miriam Akavia, journalists Natan Gross and Rafael Scharf, and historians Moshe Landau and Emanuel Meltzer, who developed programs in the study of East European history in Israel. Others, like Artur Sandauer and Chaim Löw, returned to Poland after the war to become prominent writers and literary critics.



Kraków's JCC on Miodowa Street, built in 2008. (JCC Collection)

JCC Kraków, Kazimierz

No. 2, Map 2

Today Kraków has a very small Jewish population, and yet since 1989 it has become the most visible center of Jewish revival in all of Poland. There are many reasons for this, beginning with the city's well-preserved medieval buildings, its seven synagogues, two graveyards, and numerous important heritage sites, as well as its proximity to Auschwitz. Many funders, including both foundations and individuals, have helped establish institutions in the Kazimierz district that aim to create or facilitate the revival of Jewish life and culture. Among the most prominent of these institutions are the Galicia Jewish Museum, the annual Jewish Culture Festival, Jagiellonian Universitiy's Center for Holocaust Studies, and its sizable Jewish Studies Department, which recently relocated to Kazimierz.

These institutions began as separate, uncoordinated initiatives of individuals and organizations, each with its own founders and volunteers, funding sources, and fundraising mechanisms. Unlike in Warsaw, the institutions and programs owe less to initiatives from within the Jewish Gmina and more to philanthropic institutions or engaged individuals from outside who have wanted to contribute to the revival of Jewish life, heritage, and memory. Kraków holds enormous appeal for such groups and individuals, for the same reasons that it is the central site in Poland, besides Auschwitz, for Jewish visitors.

We are standing in front of the most recent of these major initiatives, the Kraków JCC, the first to have generated a multigenerational, public Jewish space. Under the direction of American (New Yorker) Jonathan Ornstein it has quickly become the center of Jewish life in Kraków. Its goal is to serve the existing Jewish community in Kraków and to offer "those who are looking for Judaism the option to explore what it means to be Jewish." The JCC offers a full schedule of courses in both Jewish and non-Jewish subjects (Yiddish and Hebrew languages, Krav Maga, belly dancing, Talmud study), activities and daycare for children, a center for elderly members, and a rich library of Jewish history and culture. There is an ongoing program of cultural and scholarly events and talks: contemporary art exhibitions, author discussions, film screenings, meetings with visiting diplomats, academic conferences on subjects from modern Jewish philosophy to Polish-Jewish relations.



Poster for the annual Purim celebration at the JCC, by Alicja Beryt.

(JCC Collection)



The Kraków JCC holds many well-attended events, including this lively Tolerance Parade in 2011.

(JCC Collection)

Café Readings in Kazimierz



Journalist Ruth Gruber has been visiting Kraków and writing on the phenomenon of the commercial development of Kazimierz since 1989. Her book *Virtually Jewish* considers the complex dynamics of Jewish memory in Kazimierz. Gruber's books, as well as almost all contemporary titles on Jewish history and Kazimierz in particular, can be found at the reading room in the Cheder café, at 36 Józefa. After touring Kazimierz, the reading room at Cheder is a wonderful place to spend time browsing through books on any aspect of Polish-Jewish heritage that you find compelling. Plus superb cappuccino.

Perhaps most interesting about Kraków's JCC is that it has become a center for Jewish practice and expression from the widest range of perspectives: secular and religious, Zionist and anti-Zionist, Polish, Israeli, American, and British, radical and traditional, multigenerational. In countries with larger, more established Jewish communities, individuals and groups with such diverse approaches to Jewishness would rarely congregate and mingle in a common institution and share a single Jewish space. This has made the JCC a fascinating zone, moment, or experiment in Jewish hope, energy, and life – unlike any Jewish institution that exists in the world today. Partly for this reason, and certainly for the unexpectedness of attending a huge, celebratory Sabbath in a public space in Poland, visitors find the experience of joining in a JCC Friday night dinner here particularly inspiring and thought-provoking. We encourage you to spend time speaking with the volunteers who work here, with community members who are welcoming to the public, and even with the director, Jonathan Ornstein, if possible.

The JCC has a remarkable history, beginning with the visit of Charles, Prince of Wales, in 2002. Kazimierz made a strong impression on him as it does on so many visitors. He walked through it with Tadeusz Jakubowicz, head of the Jewish Community, and decided that he wanted to contribute something. When he returned to England he joined with World Jewish Relief to raise support for building a new JCC that would serve as a gathering point for Kraków's Jewish community. It was decided to construct a new building rather than adapt and refurbish one of the dozens of buildings in Kazimierz that the Polish government had returned to the Gmina. Director Ornstein feels that starting with an entirely new and modern facility has helped him to create a space in Kazimierz that is focused entirely on Jewish life and the Jewish future, rather than on the past, and that attracts Polish Jews, non-Jewish Poles who are deeply committed to helping support Jewish life in Poland, and foreign visitors of all generations.

You may notice that the JCC's gate stands open to welcome visitors, and has no security guards, unlike many Jewish facilities elsewhere in the world. JCC Director Jonathan Ornstein invented the slogan "Never Better" to describe the Jewish situation in Kraków, a counterpoint to "Never Again," the motto for remembrance and vigilance.

A tour of the institutions within a short radius of where we stand reveals the diversity and complexity of the Jewish revival: from the offices on Józefa Street of the Kraków Jewish Culture Festival **No. 16, Map 2** to the Galicia Jewish Museum on Dajwór **No. 19, Map 2**; from the Remuh Synagogue, where Orthodox services are held regularly, to the Kraków JCC, to the sizable Jewish Studies Department of Jagiellonian University, which relocated in 2010 to Józefa **No. 15, Map2**. From the Judaica Foundation on Meiselsa Street **No. 14, Map 2** to the Isaac Synagogue,

where the first Sabbath dinners and Hebrew classes were organized by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in the early 1990s, **No. 12, Map 2**, to the Olive Tree kosher restaurant a few doors down on Kupa Street.

Often visitors ask whether economic motivations are primary in the Jewish revival. After seeing Jewish-themed restaurants they might wonder, Is the revival taking place because Poles are able to profit from Jewish tourism? Here it is essential to distinguish between tourism, which operates separately from and alongside the Jewish revival, and according to its own economic logic, and the activities of Jewish cultural renewal themselves.



Children enjoying a workshop at the Galicia Jewish Museum.

(Galicia Jewish Museum)

Motivations for participating in the Jewish revival are varied and grow out of a range of almost exclusively idealistic convictions. The projects and initiatives contributing to the larger phenomenon of "Jewish revival" are the result of cooperation between engaged individuals in Poland, both Jewish and non-Jewish; foreign foundations and interested organizations, whose mandates may be religious or secular, philanthropic, educational, and cultural; and also support from the Polish government and European Union initiatives.

The first such initiative in Kraków was actually undertaken by American Jewish author Jerzy Kosinski, who visited Kazimierz in 1989 and worked to convince the U.S. Congress to devote funds to renovate the Bet Ha-Midrash on Meiselsa Street and to found a center for Jewish cultural activities, which is today's Fundacja Judaica. Janusz Makuch, co-founder of the Jewish Culture Festival in 1988, even before Poland's transition to democracy, and who continues to run it today, is a Pole from Kraków. The late Chris Schwarz, founder of the Galicia Jewish Museum, was a photographer from Britain who felt drawn to honor his Jewish roots in Poland.

The JCC receives support from World Jewish Relief (WJR), the Joint Distribution Committee, and numerous volunteers and private donors. The kosher shop in the Isaac Synagogue is a Chabad initiative, and the Eden Hotel at ul. Ciemna, which houses the only active mikveh in Kraków and serves, among others, an enormous population of Hasidic visitors to Kraków's Kazimierz, was opened in the late 1990s by an American

Seeing the Unnoticed

American anthropologist Erica Lehrer has examined the unique complexity of "Jewishness" in Kazimierz. Her article "Jewish? Heritage? In Poland?" considers dynamics that can be difficult for Jewish visitors to recognize.

As she writes: "What do such travelers miss? They miss ten centuries of Jewish cultural development and flowering. They miss the fact that there is a dramatically expanding Jewish community in Poland in the present day. Also unnoticed are the increasingly common efforts by non-Jewish Poles to grapple with Poland's Jewish history and their own responsibility towards it. Pressing questions about Jewish identity, cultural ownership, and the ways in which memory is politicized—questions that reframe accepted distinctions between 'us' and 'them'—go unasked."

She describes her own path of discovery: "I had a growing sense that a kind of willful ignorance was being perpetuated by much Jewish tourism, and what it was erasing was too important to ignore. I wanted to find a way to translate for others some of the complicated Polish realities that I came to know. I was inspired, in fact, by some of the Poles I met who, in innovative ways, were raising questions about Jewish culture in their local communities. I met graphic designer Hannah Smotrich, and together we created 'Conversation Maps.'"



A young member of Kraków's Jewish community. (JCC Collection)



Once Upon a Time in Kazimierz, a storefront restaurant on Szeroka Street. (Wikimedia Commons)

who moved permanently to Kraków. The Klezmer Hois hotel and restaurant located in the former mikveh at Szeroka 6 **No. 5, Map 2** is also home to Austeria, an intellectually ambitious and prolific Jewish publishing house founded and run by Wojciech and Malgorzata Ornat, who discovered their own Jewish roots. Shavei Israel in Israel funds the position of the official Orthodox Rabbi of Kraków, while Beit Kraków supports Reform services that have been held at the Galicia Jewish Museum and the JCC. The Polish government funds the Jewish Museum located in the Old Synagogue on Szeroka Street, as well as the Schindler Factory Museum in Podgórze across the river.

More than 200 Polish students, most of them non-Jewish, enroll each year in a program of studies that requires proficiency in both Hebrew and Yiddish. Many do original research into Jewish history and culture and contemporary Jewish studies, as well as make translations from Yiddish and Hebrew into Polish. Highly knowledgeable about Jewish history and culture, many of the graduates are becoming stewards of the Ashkenazi Jewish heritage in Poland. As tour guides, museum curators, translators, and volunteers in Kraków's many institutions they are able to open that heritage up both to Polish students and adults and, importantly, to thousands of Jewish visitors, students, and educators from abroad.

The vibrant Sabbath dinner tables at the Kraków JCC, which are attended by 50-100 people per week, reflect the diversity of the community involved in Kraków's Jewish revival. Jonathan Ornstein speaks for many who have taken part in it when he describes this phenomenon as "a miracle."

Szeroka Street, Kazimierz

Walking east on Miodowa we pass Kupa Synagogue **No. 3, Map 2** and enter Szeroka Street by a narrow sidestreet that heads to the right, just after Jakuba. Kazimierz provides a superb opportunity to discuss and challenge assumptions—about relations between Jews and non-Jews, about prejudice and stereotyping, about the dynamics of Jewish peoplehood, and about the very nature and definition of Jewishness itself.

The first thing that greets us is a row of faux-Jewish signage hanging above the Jewish-themed restaurant Once Upon a Time in Kazimierz. This façade stands opposite the wall of the Old Jewish Cemetery, which in its current form was constructed from the broken tombstones of Jews who lived in Kraków centuries earlier. **No. 4, Map 2**

The contrast raises interesting questions. What kind of commercial activity is appropriate in this, the largest and best preserved Jewish quarter in Europe? What effects does commercial activity have on the ways that visitors experience Jewish heritage and Jewish life here? Are the Poles who are making money here exploiting the Jewish past? As we noted earlier, it is easy and understandable



Gate to Remuh Synagogue on Szeroka Street in the 1920s. (Wikimedia Commons)



Szeroka Street on market day, 1936. (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe)

to assume that some sort of cultural exploitation is the primary dynamic, but it would not be accurate. Visitors must be extremely cautious in drawing conclusions or making generalizations about the attitudes and motivations of non-Jewish Poles toward Jewish heritage.

"And here, in Szeroka Street, there was a second-hand market, which could be named the 'mother of all second-hand markets.' And there again, the famous Remuh Synagogue, so named to the honour of the great Krakow-based rabbi and learned man named Moses Isserles, and, the grand 'Alterschul'—the Old Synagogue."

—Rafael Scharf, *Poland, What Have I to Do with Thee...* (1998)

Remuh Synagogue and Cemetery

Nos. 8 & 9, Map 2

Moving into Szeroka Street **No. 7, Map 2** we stop in front of the gate to the Remuh Synagogue, the center of Jewish religious life in Kraków today. The inscription over the entry reads, "The New Synagogue, dedicated to the blessed memory of Rabbi Remuh." The Remuh is Rabbi Mosheh Ben Israel Isserles (1525-72). A brilliant young rabbi, the son of a successful Kraków merchant and financier to the King, Isserles founded the Kraków yeshiva, which would become in his lifetime one of the most important centers of Jewish learning in the world. He was President of the Rabbinical Court in Kraków from 1547 to 1572. Isserles built the New Synagogue in 1553 as a small family shul erected in honor of his wife who had died young. Today the synagogue is big enough for the Kraków community, but as larger groups of visitors come other venues are being used on certain occasions, especially Tempel and Isaac Synagogues, both of which now have Torahs.

The New Synagogue was founded after the older and much larger Altershul, or Old Synagogue, that we see at the far south end of the square. **No. 10, Map 2** The Altershul now belongs to the National Museum and houses the Judaica Collection as well as temporary exhibits on the Jewish history of Kraków. The Old Synagogue is well worth visiting for its exhibits and beautifully restored interior.

The first synagogue and medieval walls on the site of the Old Synagogue, at the south end of Szeroka Street, date from 1407, almost a century before Kraków's Jews were forced to move here. Kazimierz had both Christian and Jewish residents until 1492, when its eastern part formally became the Jewish City of Kazimierz. During the next four and a half centuries the life of Kraków's Jewry centered around this market square and the streets surrounding it.



Interior of the Old Synagogue, now part of the National Museum, restored in the 1950s.
(Wikimedia Commons)



Rabbi Mosheh Isserles (1520-72).
(Wikimedia Commons)

Recalling the Golden Age

In a presentation at YIVO in New York City in 1945, philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke almost poetically when evoking the world of the Jewish Golden Age:

The Jews begin to sing. Their fancy takes wings…the sermons of the preachers abound in parables. Everywhere one finds cryptic meaning and allusions. The author of *Megalleh Amukot,* in the 17th century, interprets the portion of the Bible (Vaethanan) in which Moses pleads with God for permission to enter the Holy Land, in 252 different ways.... Even the names of towns and countries contain allusions. The name of Poland is allegedly derived from the two Hebrew words Po-lin ("here abide"), which was inscribed on a note descended from heaven and found by the refugees from Germany on their eastward journey at the time of the Black Death and the attendant massacres of Jews. On the leaves of the trees in this land, the story goes, are inscribed sacred names and in the branches are hidden errant souls seeking deliverance through the intermediation of a pious Jew, who in passing would raise his voice in praise to the Creator.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The East European Era in Jewish History"

The continuity of Jewish observance in the Remuh is an astonishing symbol of the unbroken transmission of Ashkenazi culture and practice, from its Golden Age until the present. Why "Golden Age"? For some, the idea of Jewish life in Poland evokes images of a homey, likely difficult small-town existence in the shtetl, before emigration to America. But during the Renaissance Kraków, or more accurately Kazimierz, was one of the most illustrious centers of Jewish scholarship in the world. We can even think of Kazimierz as the birthplace of Ashkenazi Jewish culture. It was here, in the 16th century, that Mosheh Isserles wrote the authoritative text that codified Ashkenazi Jewish practice.

Rabbi Isserles wrote his most famous work, the *Mapah* (Tablecloth), as an interlinear commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh* (Set Table) by Joseph Caro, one of his contemporaries. The *Mapah* distinguished Ashkenazi culture from Sephardic Jewish culture. That was not what Rabbi Isserles originally intended. He began compiling his work with the idea of creating a general guide to Jewish practice and law. When he learned that Joseph Caro in Safed had already completed such a work (but from a largely Sephardic perspective), Isserles decided to make his *Mapah* into a kind of conversation between the tablecloth and the set table, indicating in each case where Ashkenazi custom and practice differed from the Sephardic. If the *Shulhan Arukh* said, "This is what Jews do," the *Mapah* replied, "Yes, and this is how we Ashkenazi Jews do it."

The continuity of Jewish observance in the Remuh is an astonishing symbol of the unbroken transmission of Ashkenazi culture and practice, from its Golden Age until the present.

The *Mapah* set forth approaches to Jewish practice and law that would become common to Jews throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Whether they are aware of it or not, most Jews in the world today with East European roots are inheritors of the cultural practices and "life-feeling," as Abraham Heschel describes it, that took shape in Kraków in the 16th century. Isserles' text not only described practices that were already in place, but it also became a guidebook that allowed Ashkenazi Jews to establish autonomous Jewish communities, based on a common set of customs and practices, as they spread throughout the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and helped to settle new towns further east.

Beyond his influence through the *Mapah*, Rabbi Isserles stands as one of the major Jewish thinkers of the Renaissance. He is considered the Maimonides of Poland for his approach, which embraced the study of classical non-Jewish texts such as the philosophy of Aristotle, astronomy, and mathematics. He entered into fierce arguments with other rabbis about whether one should be allowed to study philosophy, in particular the humanities. Rabbi Isserles favored such study, while others accused

him of leading his students astray by teaching them secular sciences. He used these sciences in his own works and also in his answers to questions of Jewish law. Not surprisingly his decisions were sometimes controversial for their progressiveness. Nevertheless, his reputation grew and he maintained correspondence with other important Jewish thinkers throughout Europe and beyond.

Kraków also became a center for the study of Lurianic Kabbalah. For Lurianic Kabbalah, and for the Hasidic traditions that later popularized it, living a devout life meant finding and stirring up sparks of the divine that are hidden in the created world, and working to return them to their source. One of the most enduring legacies of the philosophy of Lurianic Kabbalah in Poland is the centrality of activist idealism and philanthropy within today's Jewish communities worldwide. In Jewish tradition the messianic kingdom is to be fulfilled in this world, not in another. But Lurianic Kabbalah made messianism even more personal. Every individual, it argued, is responsible for working to repair this world and prepare for the messianic age. The Messiah will come only after the Jews have done the work of tikkun, or repair, which every Jewish individual must perform on a daily basis.

The fundamental tenets of Lurianic Kabbalah permeated the culture and thinking of Eastern European Jews, and later the Hasidim. Thousands of Hasidic Jews make pilgrimages every year to visit the graves of these eminent Jewish scholars, whose gravestones still exist in the Remuh Cemetery, and to pay homage to their teachers.

At the south end of Szeroka Street, to the left of the Old Synagogue entrance, you will pass the house of Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapira, the famous kabbalist writer. In his studies he was so diligent that, according to legend, anyone who needed fire in the middle of the night could go to his house, where he would be at his desk. Today a small light shines in the window of his house every night, visible to passersby—and to the tourists.

The teachings of Lurianic Kabbalah also had a very real influence on the rise of idealistic secular political and social movements. They are present in the idealism and sense of responsibility that so many feel to make the world a better place. In this sense Kraków is available as a site of pilgrimage for Jewish believers of all political orientations. But what about others, secular or Reform Jews, who do not have an established practice of making pilgrimages to sites of Jewish heritage in Poland? One central goal and effect of the growing effort to develop educational trips to Poland is that they may also uncover very real connections to the Ashkenazi culture that took shape here.

Secular or Reform Jews who do not have an established practice of making pilgrimages to sites of Jewish heritage may find connections to



Commemorative plaque for Mordechai Gebirtig, "Carpenter, Poet, Songwriter" (Berka Joselewicza Street).

(Wikimedia Commons)

Mordechai Gebirtig, one of the greatest Yiddish songwriters of the interwar period, can be considered the Bob Dylan of Poland. He died a victim of the Germans in 1942. Gebirtig wrote and sang about working people and the poor, as well as about his beloved Kraków.

Farewell, Kraków, Farewell

A horse-drawn cart is waiting for me out in the street,

I'm driven out of here like a dog.

Will I ever see you again?

This place is so close to me;

I've wept my heart out on my Mother's grave and shed my last tear on my Father's tombstone;

This hallowed ground….

—Mordechai Gebirtig



Rabbi Boaz Pash, Chief Rabbi of Kraków.

(Taube Foundation Collection)

the Ashkenazi culture that took shape here. The klezmer musicians and Yiddishists who come together here on Szeroka Street each summer for the Jewish Culture Festival, which began in 1989, honor and share a tradition and heritage that derives in part from the Jewish Socialist Bund, which rallied the energies and idealism of a large portion of Poland's Jews before the war. One of the greatest Yiddish songwriters in that tradition, Mordechai Gebirtig (d. 1942), was a native of Kraków. A short detour across Miodowa to Berka Joselewicza Street will take us to a plaque on the building where Gebirtig lived. A carpenter by trade, he sang on behalf of the poor and of working people, as well as about his beloved Kraków. After the war his songs were collected, published and recorded, and are still widely performed.

On the other side of the square, at Szeroka 6 **No. 5, Map 2**,we see the building of the former mikveh, one of the dozens of buildings in Kraków which were returned to the Gmina in the early 1990s. Today it is home to the Klezmer Hois hotel and restaurant, whose owners also run the publishing house Austeria and the bookstore Austeria at 38 Józefa Street, next to the offices of the Jewish Culture Festival. We strongly recommend a visit to the store for its books, which include memoirs and essays translated into English by a number of individuals who have been at the center of the process of Jewish revival in Kraków over the past 20 years, including Henryk Halkowski (d. 2010), a local historian of Kraków's Jewish past; Stanisław Krajewski and Konstanty Gebert; and journalist Ruth Gruber.

A Tour within the Tour

As a special treat we are going to take a personal tour of the Remuh Synagogue and Cemetery, led by an expert, Kraków's Chief Rabbi, Boaz Pash. We have adapted the following highpoints of his tour from the authoritative source, *The Remuh Synagogue and the Old Cemetery Guide*, which was written by the Rabbi and is available for purchase at the Jarden Bookstore on Szeroka.

The Synagogue

Before we enter the courtyard of the synagogue, let us look at the vaulted entrance gate to the courtyard, which bears the inscription, "The New Synagogue of the Remuh. *Zecher Tzaddik Livracha* [The Memory of the Righteous is a Blessing]" (Proverbs 10: 7). The courtyard is decorated with plaques from various periods dedicated to those who contributed to the maintenance and preservation of the synagogue and who gave to the numerous charitable institutions that once abounded in the city.

We step into the synagogue through the smaller side gate, which was the traditional entrance for worshippers, as the main gate was only opened on festival occasions. Upon entering the central space of the synagogue we see on the left the Charity Box, set into the wall, with the inscription "Gold and silver and copper." This refers to the contribution which the Israelites brought to the Temple in Jerusalem or, as in the case of the present small sanctuary, to the coin that one gives to charity before prayer. On the right is a sink for ritual hand-washing.

We can think of Kazimierz as the birthplace of Ashkenazi Jewish culture.

Having only 60 seats in the men's section and about the same number in the women's gallery, the Remuh is one of the smallest synagogues in Kraków. A wooden synagogue once stood on this site, but after the great fire which befell Kazimierz in 1553, Rabbi Israel Isserles—an affluent merchant, leader of the community, probably also a Torah scholar, and the father of Mosheh Isserles—

decided to construct a stone building on the same site that would also serve as a domicile for the yeshiva of Kraków, which was headed by his son. Only after much negotiation with authorities did he finally receive permission from King Sigismund II Augustus to build the new synagogue. The building was financed by the inheritance of his wife Malka who had perished in the plague.

Like all of Kraków's synagogues the Remuh is built in a Renaissance style which betrays a marked Italian influence. The central space is used for prayer, and the adjacent room behind it, now the women's gallery, was originally a classroom. The original women's gallery was a wooden structure on the second floor, and the women could see or at least hear the proceedings in the prayer-hall below by looking through the two windows that we note high up in the northern wall. The entrance to the women's gallery was situated at the rear of the synagogue on the cemetery side. Today the women's gallery is on the ground floor behind the central prayer-hall, and the three large vaulted windows at the rear connect the two spaces.

In this house of prayer the study of Torah and prayer never ceased. The traditional Ashkenazi form of prayer is the only version of prayer here, whereas other houses of prayer adopted the Sephardic Hasidic version. During World War II, however, when the Jewish residents of Kraków were forced into the ghetto across the river, and later to concentration camps, the synagogue was used as a German ammunition depot and a storehouse for clothes. Some of the ornaments were destroyed, including the bimah and the entrance. After liberation the synagogue was restored and reopened in 1948.

The seat on the right side of the Holy Ark was reserved for the Rabbi, the Remuh, and above it we read an inscription that is a faithful copy of the original: "Among us it is accepted that this was the place where the Remuh stood for prayer and where he communicated with the Holy One Blessed Be His Name." Traditionally the Rabbi sat on the south side of the Holy Ark, as is written in the Talmud (Bava Batra 25b): "He who desires to become wise should turn to the south [when praying]." To the left of the Ark hangs the eternal light for the memory of the soul of the Remuh.

Discussion Topic

The power of place and the role of pilgrimage.

Groups of Hasidic Jews regularly visit Remuh Cemetery, where their spiritual teachers are buried, and make pilgrimages to the towns where their rebbes, or tsadikim, lived and taught. In a sense, the musicians who make the annual trip to Poland for the Kraków Jewish Culture Festival are engaged in a secular pilgrimage to the homeland of klezmer music. It is reasonable to conclude that connecting with the Jewish heritage *in situ*, in Poland, has an effect on how and what we learn. Indeed, many visitors say that coming to Poland opens up new conversations and inquiries. The effect is real yet difficult to describe.

Questions

How can we explain the powerful effect of the aura of a particular place or landscape? Is it possible to feel the presence of that history, and of individuals who lived, taught, and dreamed there?

Does the past speak to us differently when we are here?

What personal convictions or commitments may be deepened by our visit to Jewish Poland?



Interior of Remuh Synagogue.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Discussion Topic

Experiencing Jewish absence in Poland.

Physically there is not much left to visit in Poland, of its centuries-long Jewish past. Compared to a world in which every town was a Jewish shtetl, and the shopfront signs were written in both Yiddish and Polish, Poland looks little like the world in which the majority of Ashkenazi Jews lived. But, precisely because of the loss, the surviving elements and evidences of the Jewish past and heritage touch us with uncanny intensity. The stones of the buildings, the last Yiddish letters left printed on the side of a building in Warsaw or Kraków, the recognizable slant of a roof in a former Jewish shtetl in Galicia, a bet midrash transformed into an archive, or a cultural center—these physical traces hold the dreams and aspirations of thousands and wait to be unlocked.

In the words of philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, writing immediately after the war: "Rich stores of potential energy, of intellectual resilience and emotional depth, gathered in the course of generations of a disciplined mode of life, are now contained in us….The present generation is still in possession of the keys to the treasure. If we do not uncover the treasures, the keys will go down to the grave with us, and the storehouse of the generations will remain locked forever….It is incumbent upon us never to forget the Jews that sanctified their lives by their proximity to heaven."

Question

To what extent should Jews today feel a sense of responsibility to preserve knowledge and memory of Poland's Jewish heritage?

The Holy Ark itself is decorated in Renaissance style, with high, flower-shaped ornaments around the two Tablets of the Covenant flanked by limestone columns. The Ark bears numerous inscriptions, like "By me Kings reign…" (Proverbs 8:15). "By me" refers to the Torah through which the Kings will reign; and as the Talmud says (Gittin, 62a), the Kings are the Torah scholars. Thus the verse not only emphasizes the superiority of the knowledge of Torah over the secular sciences, which the Remuh also studied as a supplement to his Torah learning, but also underlines the superiority of knowledge in general over worldly rule.

The Ark once held the Torah scroll that the Remuh himself had written, after a copy of the famous *Keter Aram Tzova* (Crown of Aram Tzova, the *Aleppo Codex*) of Aaron ben Asher. This scroll was sent to him from Safed (in Palestine) by Rabbi Joseph Caro, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, as a token of thanks and appreciation for the Remuh's *Darkei Moshe* (The Ways of Moses), which was only read at Yom Kippur. To our great sorrow the Nazis destroyed this treasure together with the other Torah scrolls in Kraków.

Two small steps lead up to the bimah, which is surrounded by a high latticework gate, again in Italian Renaissance style. The decorated doors on the north side are original to the synagogue and had only to be restored, while those on the south side were made in the early 20th century. If we take a close look at the reader's stand we see that the floor beneath it is a little bit lower. This is done to give visual expression to the Biblical verse, "Out of the depths I cry to you" (Psalms 130:1), and thus it confirms the saying from the Mishnah, "to go down before the Ark" (Ta'anit 2b).

The Cemetery, One of the Oldest in Europe

No. 9, Map 2

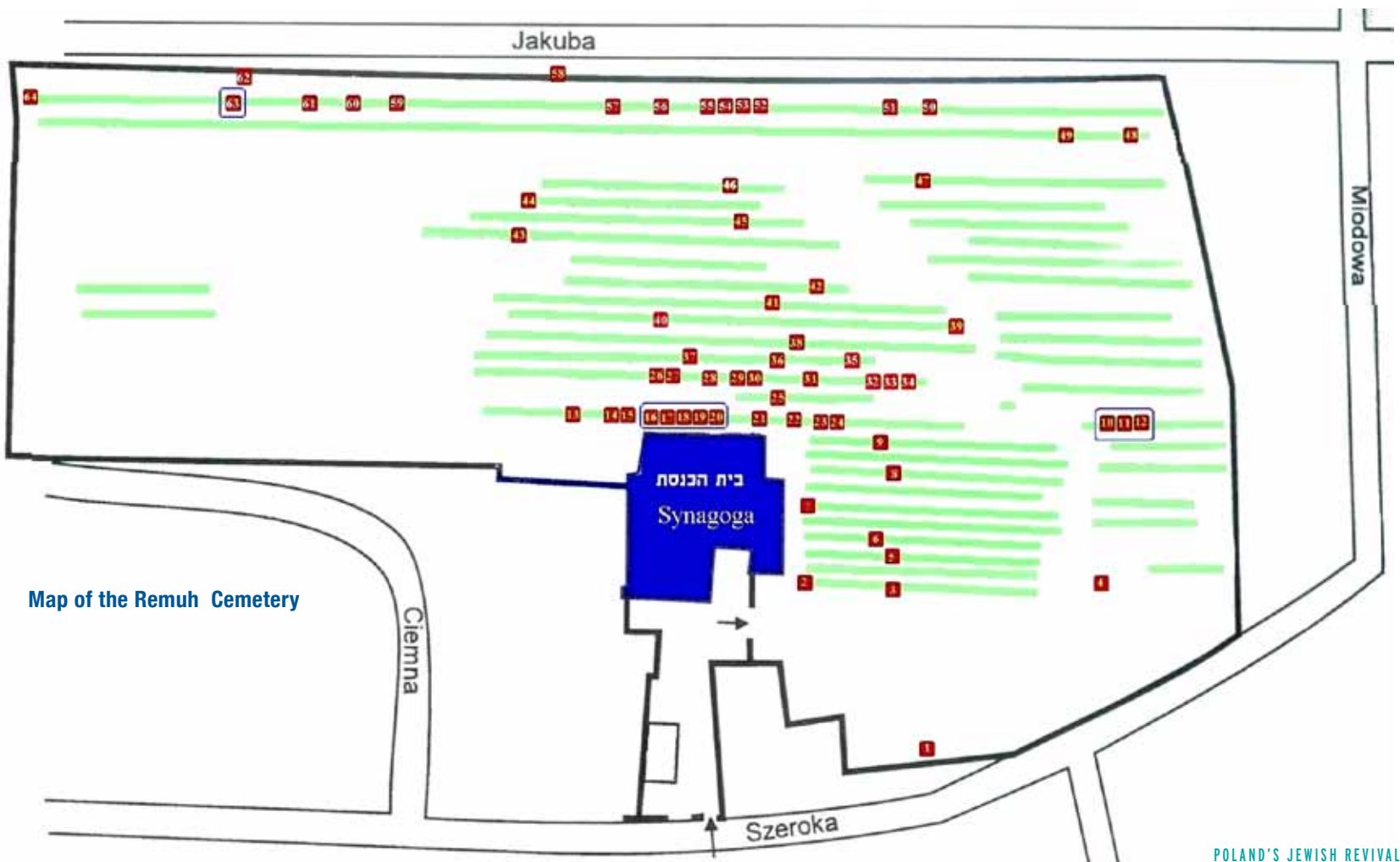
Let us leave the synagogue and step into the courtyard, where to the left we find the low entrance gate to the cemetery. The Remuh cemetery is a place of worldwide significance.Kraków was home to some of the most outstanding rabbinical (poskim) and Torah scholars.

Please keep in mind that this is a holy place. Take care to wear appropriate dress (for men, a skull-cap or hat, for women, clothing or a shawl covering arms and shoulders) and to behave in accordance with

the solemnity of the place, taking into consideration the sensitivity of those who come here to pray, as well as other visitors.

Above the gate is a stone tablet with the text, “The old cemetery, and the place of burial of the great Torah scholars, was established out of the Box of the Kahal [the Board of the Jewish Community] in the year [5]311 [1551].” Originally the main entrance was on the west side of the cemetery, on Jakuba Street, whose remnants are visible. The present entrance has served as the main entry since the early 20th century.

The cemetery is one of the oldest in Poland, indeed in Europe. The tombstone decorations were clearly influenced by the Italian Renaissance, and many of them also contain familiar Polish-Jewish motifs, such as the Polish eagle, a motif that also appears on all the menorot (candelabra) in the synagogues of Kraków. Because of the density of the graves and the difficulty of receiving a permit to create



Map of the Remuh Cemetery



Entrance gates to the Remuh Cemetery.
(Wikimedia Commons)



"Wall of Tears" in the Remuh Cemetery. (Chris Schwarz)

additional burial space, it became an accepted practice to bury several people in the same grave. Often those buried together shared the same tombstone. The lack of space finally brought an end to burials at the synagogue in 1800 (with some prominent exceptions), and from that time burials took place at the new cemetery on nearby Miodowa Street, which is still the active cemetery of the Jewish community. It is much larger, and a deeply contemplative place that is well worth a separate visit.

Many tombstones did not survive the ages here, from weather damage but also from insufficient maintenance. Documents from before World War II mention complaints about the wretched state of the cemetery and a level of neglect that allowed one to speak of disrespect toward the dead. After the Nazi occupation a careful restoration was undertaken that continues to this day. It includes archaeological digs as well as the return of tombstones to their original places. Among those returned are the tombstones of the Remuh and the members of his family.

The restoration efforts uncovered hundreds of tombstone fragments, which were gathered and embedded, as we can see on our right, on the Szeroka Street side, in the eastern wall of the cemetery. It did not take long before this became a "wall of tears," a memorial site for the Jewish community of Kraków.

Let us now take a look at a few of the most interesting sites. (The numbers in brackets correspond to the numbers on the accompanying cemetery map.) Some tombstones tell the stories of the people buried beneath them, and others are distinguished by a special ornamental element.

Let us begin by walking to the raised ground in the northeastern part of the cemetery, in front of the entrance and to the left.

[1] To our right is the Wall of Tears, where we will stand for a moment and commemorate the Jews of Kraków who were murdered in the concentration camps, in the wartime ghettos, and in nearby Płaszów labor camp, and who were denied the right to be buried in a proper grave. Here we also find the tombstone for the bones which were gathered from throughout the cemetery during the restoration and maintenance activities, the archaeological digs, the cleaning of the cemetery, and the work of returning the tombstones to their original places. In accordance with Jewish law these bones received an honorable burial at this place, with an obligatory request for forgiveness.

[10, 11, 12] Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapira (Spira) and family. We find the gravestone [11] of Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapira ben Solomon, the Ranan, born in 1583. He is considered to be one of the three founding fathers of Kabbalah (the others being Rabbi Shimon of Austropola and the Shla, Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz), and his work had a marked influence on subsequent kabbalist writings.

Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapira of Kraków wrote important kabbalist works, including *Megalle Amukot al Vaetchanan* (Revealer of the Deep Secret on the Words [of Moses]), published in Kraków in 1636, which examines the longing of Moses to enter the Land of Israel, denied to him by the Almighty. The main idea of the book is that the Jews are in exile to "catch the scattered sparks" from among the non-Jewish nations. Rabbi Shapira followed the saying of the Sages that the Torah is explained in 70 ways. But it should be kept in mind that the number 70 can be used to indicate a "very great number" and not literally 70. Rabbi Shapira found different interpretations for the smallest details and elements of the Torah. Thus throughout his writings we find expressions like "the first way," "the second way," and sometimes tens, at other times hundreds of possibilities to explain the same topic. In *Megalle Amukot a'l veEtchanan* he offers 252 ways to explain the request of Moses to enter the Land of Israel and the divine refusal to let him in.

The Shapira family claims three lineages that go back to King David of Israel. They include, among others, Rashi (Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki, the commentator on the Talmud) and Rabbi Jochanan the Sandlemaker. Rabbi Nathan was a kabbalist, an expounder of Scriptures, and also a great scholar of Jewish law, whose answers to halakhic questions appear in the books of many others. He was head of the Kraków yeshiva, an appointment that he received at age 31 and fulfilled until his death in 1633, when he was only 48 years old. In addition he served as Av Beit Din (Head of the Rabbinical Court) in Kraków, and possibly as Rabbi of Kraków, taking over from his contemporary Rabbi Joel Sirkis, the Bach, an acronym from his famous work *Bayit Chadash* (A New House).



Gravestones of Nathan Shapira, author of the *Megalle Amukot*, and family. (Rabbi Boaz Pash)

Rabbi Nathan married Roza, daughter of Rabbi Moses Jekeles (Jakubovitz), who belonged to one of the most prominent families in Kraków. After his marriage he taught in the Synagogue on the Hill, the Bergel Shul, in Szeroka Street, next to the Old Synagogue. Hasidim were punctilious to pray there and it was not by coincidence that the Berger Shul harbored the first Hasidic minyan of the town, led by Rabbi Kalman Kolonimos Shapira, until they were removed because of the noise, songs, and dances during prayer-time.

Because of the affluence of his father-in-law, Rabbi Shapira could fulfil all his duties without receiving a salary from the board of the Jewish community, and he was able to give generously and benevolently to charity. Tradition tells us that the prophet Elijah revealed himself to him, an event witnessed by one of the rabbi's sons, who saw a man dressed in a hairy mantle and girded with a leather belt come to his father at the moment he held his *tikun chatzot*. Rabbi Shapira used to travel to people who had become estranged from religious life. He would beg them to read the *Shma* together with him and to take up the burden of the Kingdom of Heaven. As a reward he promised them part of the world to come, and he even promised them *his* part if they would do as he said.

It remains a mystery who revealed the secret teachings of



View toward the southeast corner of the cemetery. (Rabbi Boaz Pash)



View toward the synagogue and Isserles family gravestones. (Rabbi Boaz Pash)



Tombstone of Rabbi Mosheh (Moses) Isserles, the Remuh.
(Wikimedia Commons)

the Kabbalah to Rabbi Shapira. The only hint comes from his grandson, Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz of Prague, who wrote that his famous ancestor was "a third mouth for our Master Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, the Ari, may his memory be blessed." This means that Rabbi Shapira was a student of one of Luria's students. The student of the Ari who travelled extensively, including Poland, was Rabbi Abraham Sarok, or Sarog, who may have taught Rabbi Shapira.

The tombstone we see was renovated before World War II. The tablets of the original tombstones are affixed on both sides of the renovated stone. The inscription of the tombstone says, "A holy man like the ancients, who revealed secret and hidden depths, from whom it is said that he spoke with Elijah the prophet face to face."

Originally the order of the tombstones in front of us was slightly different. On the right side of the tombstone of Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapira stood the tombstone of a legendary figure, about whom nobody knows anything except that he had the privilege to be buried in the grave next to the tsadik. On the tombstone was written: *Yagid alav Re'o* (His companion will testify about him.). On the other side of Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapiro's burial place stood the tombstone of his daughter.

[10] Dobrisch (Devorah, Dobra), daughter of Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapira, died in 1642. The tombstone has a new stone plaque affixed to it with words reproducing those on the crumbled original.

[12] Roza, wife of Rabbi Nathan Netta Shapira, was the daughter of Moses Jakubovitz. She died in 1642.

Let us now turn to the southwestern part of the cemetery, with the long rows of tombstones behind the synagogue. At the row closest to the wall of the synagogue begins the fenced part for the Isserles family, with tombstones 16-20. On our way, we look briefly at the grave of Malka Dina **[29]**, daughter of Elazar of Brandenburg, the parnas from Lemberg. She was the mother of the Remuh and it was she who ordered the building of his synagogue from her inheritance. Like her daughter-in-law, the wife of the Remuh, she died from plague in 1552. Many fell victim to this epidemic, and guilt for the high death-rate must be shared by the authorities. They locked up all the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz and did not give them the opportunity to flee. The Remuh lamented her bitterly and wrote on her tombstone, in a highly personal style, "This is the tombstone of my dear mother Malka Dina, on the tenth of Tevet the joy of our heart stops, she made her own coverlets, her cover is fine linen and purple, she did not fear for her family when it snowed, she was like a vessel in her trade and in her vitality [Proverbs 31: 22–24]. My mother was wise and modest, the spirit of her soul flew away in the year 5312 [1552]."

[16] Furthest to the left within the gated section is the grave of Miriam Beila, the sister of the Remuh, who died in 1617. The tombstone is renovated.

[17] Next is the grave of the father of the Remuh, Israel son of Joseph, of the Isserles family, one of the most prominent and affluent in Poland. Rabbi Israel carried out his business throughout the whole of Poland and Lithuania, and on some of his travels he was accompanied by King Sigismund II Augustus. The Remuh memorializes him in the introduction of his book *Darkei Moshe* (The Ways of Moses): "There is a man in Kraków and his name is Israel, whose heart was willing to donate generously and he built a house for G-d, and he was like the ultimate wise man Itiel [Solomon], and the leading parnas and a supporter of his generation like Ekutiel [Moses], and I am his son Moses…."

[18] This is the burial site of Rabbi Mosheh Isserles, the Remuh. He is one of the greatest poskim, whose deci-

sions on Jewish Law have been binding until our day. The Remuh had a rich and complex personality. He was a master of Jewish law and of ethical teachings and a great teacher of haggadah (homiletic exegetical texts). It is said about him, "The Israelites marched out boldly by the power of the Remuh" (a paraphrase of Exodus 14: 8). His tombstone bears the inscription, "From Moses till Moses nobody stood up like Moses." This has its origins in a saying about the Rambam (Maimonides), "From Moses [the biblical Moses] to Moses [Rabbi Moses ben Maimon]." The inscription gives great honor to the Remuh, who esteemed the Rambam and followed him in his philosophical approach. A legend relates that during World War II, when a Polish worker stretched out his hands to desecrate the Remuh's grave, he stood frozen, and the German who came to his help suddenly fell and died. Another legend tells that the willow tree that stands nearby lowered its branches and concealed the grave from the eye of the oppressor.

As a child the Remuh was acknowledged as a genius, and when only a thirteen-year-old received smicha (rabbinical ordination). He studied at the yeshiva of Rabbi Solomon Shachna in Lublin, where he married his daughter Golda; but she died a short while after the marriage. On his return to Kraków he married the sister of Rabbi Joseph Katz, the author of *She'erit Joseph* (Remnant of Joseph). In Kraków he established a yeshiva that was located in the synagogue built by his father, and where he allowed his students to study at his own expense.

There are many legends connected to the grave of the Remuh. After years of writing his work *Darkei Moshe* (The Ways of Moses), an innovative interpretation of Jewish law based on the *Arba'a Turim* (Four Pillars) of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, he learned that in Palestine Rabbi Caro was writing a similar book, the *Beit Joseph* (House of Joseph). This forced the Remuh to revise and shorten his book. A legend claims that the Remuh hid the manuscript of the long version under the tree of the cemetery behind his bet midrash, and this was also the place where he asked to be buried. Another story tells that it was the Magid (an angel from heaven) who warned Rabbi Caro to finish his writing before another would precede him, a young genius from Poland.

Rabbi Caro based his halakhic decisions on the Three Pillars of Teaching: Rabbi Yitzhak Alphasi (the Rif), Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides, the Rambam), and Rabbenu Asher (the Rosh), not the Ashkenazi poskim like the authors of the *Tosafot* or the Mordechai (Rabbi Mordechai son of Hillel). Furthermore, the Ashkenazi approach to legal reasoning placed greater importance on the role of custom, in some cases even more than to what was written in books. That is why Rabbi Isserles often ended a discussion on law with the remark, "and so is the custom."

It is generally accepted that the Remuh died on the 18th of Iyar, on Lag beOmer, the 33rd day of the Omer time, a day which has become special in the Jewish community of Kraków. On this day the rabbi gives a sermon in the Remuh synagogue, the candles are lit, and many make a pilgrimage to his grave. However, there is no agreement on the year of his death, whether in 1572 or 1573. The tradition says "it was accustomed to say that he lived 33 years, wrote 33 books and died on the 33rd of Omer, in the year 5333 [1573]." But he probably lived longer.

Let us take a short walk now to the southeast corner of the cemetery, passing the former entrance gate on our way. Here we will visit the grave of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller. But first let us have a look at the grave closest to his, against the cemetery wall, which is associated with an age-old legend.



Detail of text on gravestone of Mosheh Isserles, the Remuh.

(Rabbi Boaz Pash)



Restored gravestones in Remuh Cemetery.

(Rabbi Boaz Pash)



Gravestone of Rabbi Gershon Saul Yom Tov Lipman HaLevi Heller. (Rabbi Boaz Pash)

[62] This is a grave without a tombstone. According to the stories this is the place where the tombstone of Josl Kamtzan Kadosh (Joseph the Holy Miser, or according to another version Josl the Holy Goy) once stood. The tale is very old and it reappears in various times and places, for instance in Bohemia, Moldavia, and Prague. Nevertheless, many versions locate the original story in Kraków, such as the version of Rabbi Solomon Carlebach, who tells it accompanied by guitar-playing.

We present a less well-known and historically less precise version as told by Samuel Joseph Agnon in "The Story of the Miser and the Benefactor." The essential question is, Why is the sage and author of the *Meginei Shlomo*, the Rabbi and Av Beit Din of Kraków, Rabbi Joshua Charif, not buried between the rabbis and sages of Kraków, but next to the fence, among simple people?

Once there was a great and wealthy man of Kraków whose "hand was closed for everything that had to do with charity and all his life he never gave a penny to the poor …. When he died they asked the sage and author of *Meginei Shlomo* how to behave with such a miser." His verdict was, bury him next to the fence.

In the neighborhood of that miser lived a man who gave generously to anything that had to do with charity, but kept his identity a secret. All the poor in Kraków made a living from his generosity, though they did not know from whom they received the gifts. "It came to pass that in the same week the miser died, this benefactor stopped giving charity to the poor, and thus it became clear that everything the benefactor had given among the poor came from the money of the one who was thought to be a miser." The author of the *Meginei Shlomo* heard this and summoned the men from the burial society. Bury me after my death, he said, "with that tzaddik, who 'disgraced' himself with the mitzvah of giving in secret."

Who was the rabbi in the story? Was it the author of the *Tosafot Yom Tov*, as the more well-known version says, or the Bach, who also is buried at a distant place close to the fence of the cemetery? Or was it the *Meginei Shlomo* himself, as Agnon hints in his story, because his burial place is even closer to the cemetery gate? That is problematic because his place of burial is surrounded by the graves of very eminent people (Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi on one side and Rabbi Heshel on the other side). Or was it maybe Rabbi Kalman, the Maor HaShemesh of Kraków, as Rabbi Solomon Carlebach tells? We only know that this grave is located in the area where we are now, next to one of the graves of the prominent deceased, and that the question remains why these prominent rabbis are buried here, at the end of the cemetery and not at a more honorable place. Although Agnon's answer remains ambiguous, his story is beautiful and sensitive.

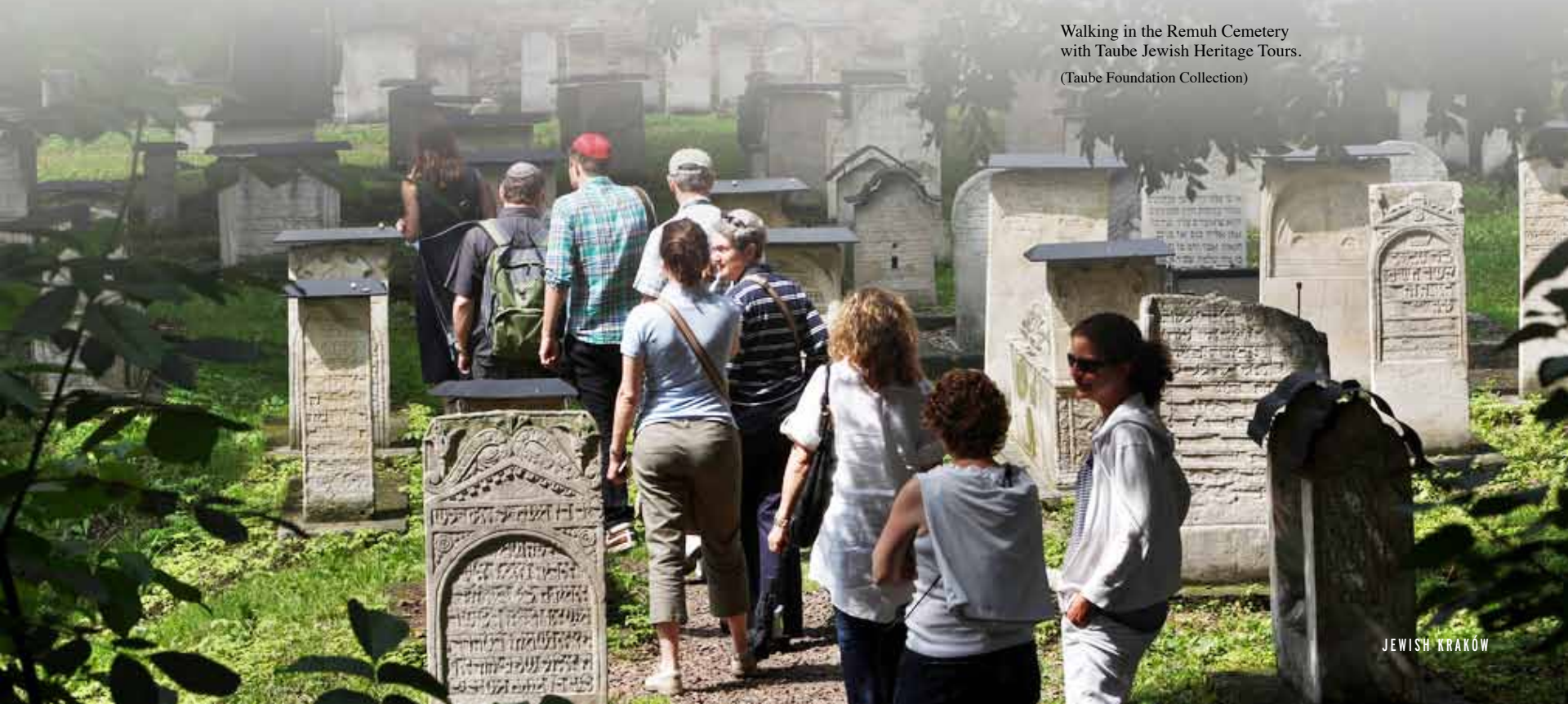
Here, renovated and surrounded by its own gate, we have the grave **[63]** of Rabbi Gershon Saul Yom Tov Lipman HaLevi Heller, also called Wallerstein after the Bavarian city where he was born in 1579. He was raised by his grandfather and that is why he signed his name both with the name of his father and of his grandfather. At age eighteen he was appointed as dayan at the rabbinical court in Prague, and it was in Prague that he published his first book, *Slichot* (Penitential Prayers). Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller reached a high level of education in astronomy, mathematics, and the natural sciences. He also extensively dealt with grammar, "because the knowledge of the grammar of our holy language is scanty and poor and the books in this science lie in an unobtrusive corner."

His writings address all aspects of Judaism. About the Talmud he composed his best known work, *Tosafot Yom Tov*. He also wrote intellectual and philosophical discourses like a commentary on the *Givat HaMore*

(Hill of the Teacher) by Rabbi Joseph bar Yitzhak HaLevi of Lithuania, wherein he questions the assertions of the *More Nevuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed) of Maimonides. Next he wrote a Torah commentary, *Tuv Ta'am* (Good Taste), with a kabbalist approach based on the writings of Rabbi Moses Cordovero of Safed on the words of Rabbenu Bachya. But he did not forget the less highly educated public. For them he translated the book *Orchot Chayim* of the Rosh and he wrote the *Berit Melach* (Covenant of Salt) on the halachot of salting and koshering meat.

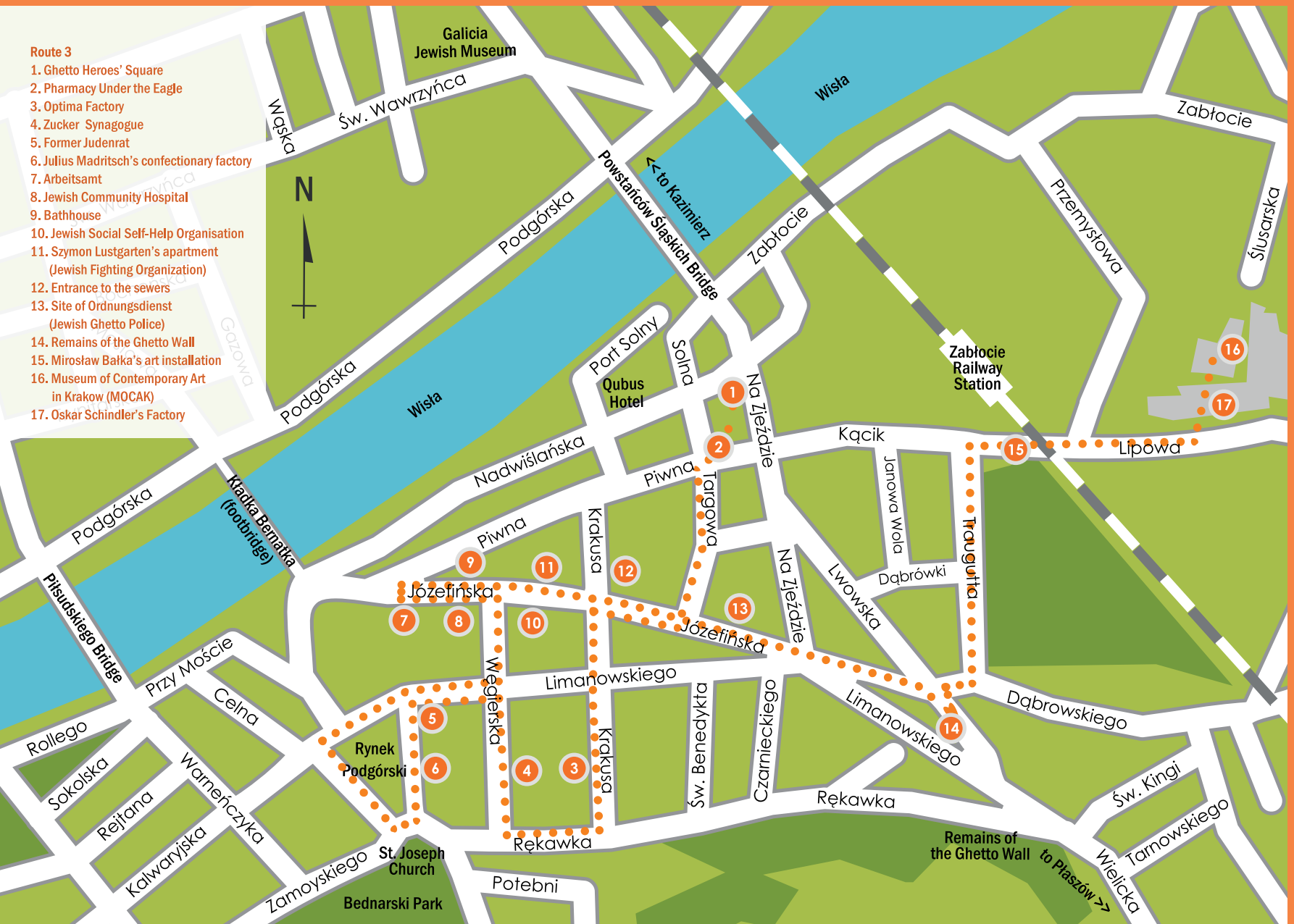
His own life story he wrote in *Megilla Eyva* (Scroll of Envy), a book that originally bore the more optimistic title *Kos Yeshu'ot* (Glass of Salvations). For beyond the wish to tell his own life story his objective was to educate his offspring in morality and to thank G-d for his kindness and benevolence toward him. A part of the inscription on his tombstone says of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller that he "dived deep into mighty waters, and wrote only a few books, which are not specified by their [his] name ...."

[64, in the last row, the first tombstone on the southern side] We will end with something romantic: the shared tombstone of an elderly couple. On the right side lies Rachel, daughter of Jacob, and on the left side Moses Iser, Rabbi Issachar Ber, *Magid Mesharim* (Preacher). They died in the same year, 1843, and, as in the days of their life, they share the same piece of earth. "During their life they were paired, and also after their death they are inseparable...." Above their heads is the canopy of marriage and maybe also the shared canopy for the couple that is prepared for them between the tsadikim in Paradise.



Walking in the Remuh Cemetery with Taube Jewish Heritage Tours.
(Taube Foundation Collection)

Kraków Walking Route 3



Kraków Route 3

Crossing a bridge to walk the streets where old Jewish Kraków made its last stand

Podgórze / The Ghetto / Ghetto Heroes' Square / Pharmacy Under the Eagle Zucker Synagogue / Rynek Podgórski

Podgórze

Once we leave Kazimierz and cross the river on Powstańców Śląskich Bridge we reach Plac Bohaterów Getta (Ghetto Heroes' Square), formerly Plac Zgody **No. 1, Map 3**, one of the main squares in Podgórze and the central square of the ghetto (1941-43). The Podgórze district used to be a separate city but was incorporated into Kraków municipality in 1914 and became a center of factories and warehouses. At the beginning of the 20th century it had a Jewish community with its own kehillah separate from Kraków's (in Kazimierz). When Podgórze became part of Kraków it meant that there were two different Jewish community authorities in one city. Each had its own cemetery in Podgórze, one at Abrahama Street and the other at Jerozolimska Street. The religious congregations were united only in the 1930s.

Standing in the middle of Ghetto Heroes' Square we can see pre-war buildings, several of them only recently renovated. When the war broke out in September 1939 the German army moved quickly to Kraków, where the military administration issued decrees limiting the rights of Jews and later requiring them to wear Star of David armbands. In 1940 many Jews were deported to the eastern territories of the General Government. Kraków, capital of the General Government, was supposed to become a city free of Jews.

The Ghetto

Otto Waechter, governor of the Kraków district, issued a decree on March 3, 1941, creating a "Jewish residential area." He set a deadline for all Jewish inhabitants of Kraków to relocate into a small, 20-hectare fragment of the Podgórze district by March 20. Jews had to take whatever belongings they could carry, any property that had not yet been requisitioned by the Germans. A ban on using motorized transport slowed and limited the relocation. Photographs from that time show even children holding pieces of furniture and trying to help their parents to relocate.

Once in the ghetto, Jews were unable to leave without special permission. At first it was relatively easy to obtain passes, but in October 1941 the situation worsened rapidly. Earlier in the year the original barbed wire fence around the ghetto was supplanted by a wall, about nine feet high, constructed in a manner that resembled a series of matsevot, Jewish tombstones. You can see two remaining parts of this wall on Lwowska and Limanowskiego Streets. The boundaries were patrolled on the outside by German police and the Blue Pass Police and on the inside by Jewish police (Ordnungsdienst, or OD). Outward-facing windows were bricked-up or barred to prevent contact between the ghetto and the outside world.



Forcible removal of Jews from Kraków to the ghetto, March 1941. Thousands of Jews took their belongings to the new location, considered a temporary one. No one expected that the ghetto would last for two years and that many of the inhabitants would not survive till its end.

(Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie)



Plac Zgody (Plac Bohaterów Getta, Ghetto's Heroes' Square) was the ghetto's only open space, where the inhabitants would often gather in the early days to relax and socialize. It was here that the Germans later assembled thousands of people for dispatch to the death camps. It was also the site of killings and mass executions. The metal chairs are set out as a memorial, inviting visitors to sit and ponder the history of this place.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Ghetto Heroes' Square

Today only traces remain of the ghetto. Ghetto Heroes' Square is the memorial site. It was reconstructed several years ago and the new design has a series of chair figures as the memorial to ghetto victims. The metal chairs, which can be found also at the nearby tram station, intrigue and invite people to think about the history of this place and its meaning.

German decrees and orders in the winter of 1941-42 worsened the ghetto's already difficult living conditions. On May 29, 1942, German troops suddenly surrounded the ghetto and the Jewish police began to check documents. Those who had not received permits to remain in the ghetto were ordered to assemble in Plac Zgody, the ghetto's main square, where the deportations began. People were transferred to the railway station and loaded into cattle cars for transportation to the Bełżec death camp (in the eastern part of occupied Poland). Among those murdered was Mordechai Gebirtig, a carpenter, poet, and author of popular Yiddish songs.



Main entrance gate to the ghetto in Kraków, at the intersection of Limanowskiego Street and Rynek Podgórski. The Yiddish inscription above the entrance is "Jewish Residential District." (Wikimedia Commons)

"The gates were snapped shut and navy-blue uniformed Polish policemen took up the duty of guarding them day and night. The very top of the wall was crenellated—a decorative motif—that was how it appeared to a child's eye. I never really gave it any thought, nor did I ever hear anyone comment on that finishing touch. Only many years later did I realize that those crenellations, one and all, were the most exact, the most faithful replicas of Jewish tombstones. A touch of humor? A touch of irony? A sinister message—simple enough to interpret for us Kraków Jews. But how many of the ghetto's inhabitants interpreted it correctly? My family failed to do so…."

—Janina Fischler-Martinho,
Have You Seen My Little Sister?

Pharmacy Under the Eagle

Plac Zgody was the only open space in the ghetto. On one corner sat the Pharmacy Under the Eagle (Apteka pod Orłem) **No. 2, Map 3**, the ghetto's only pharmacy and a favorite gathering spot of intellectuals and activists. Owner Tadeusz Pankiewicz was the sole non-Jewish

Pole permitted by the Germans to live within the ghetto. Pankiewicz provided the inhabitants with shelter and food, and forged documents that helped save many lives.

The part of the building containing the pharmacy now belongs to the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, where an exhibition about the destruction of the Jews of Kraków describes the pharmacy's role in the ghetto. One of Pankiewicz's important functions was to help residents obtain the proper documents, as, for example after June 6, 1942, when the authorities declared all permits to Jews invalid and introduced the Blauschein (Blue Pass). Those unable to obtain a Blauschein were held at the Document Control Point, and from there were taken to the courtyard of the Optima factory and later sent to a death camp. Also in June 1942, three forced-labor camps for Jews, known as Judenarbeitslager (or Julagers), were established in Kraków and its surroundings (Płaszów, Prokocim, and Bieżanów).



The building that housed the Pharmacy Under the Eagle (Apteka pod Orłem) on Plac Zgody, today Plac Bohaterów Getta. This was the ghetto's only pharmacy and supplied essential medicines and also functioned as a meeting place for intellectuals and cultural luminaries. The building is now part of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Tadeusz Pankiewicz (right) with his employees in front of the Pharmacy Under the Eagle. The only Gentile permitted by the Nazis to live in the ghetto, he provided the inhabitants with shelter and food, and forged documents that often saved lives; he was also a witness to the mass deportations to the death camps. (MHK Kraków)

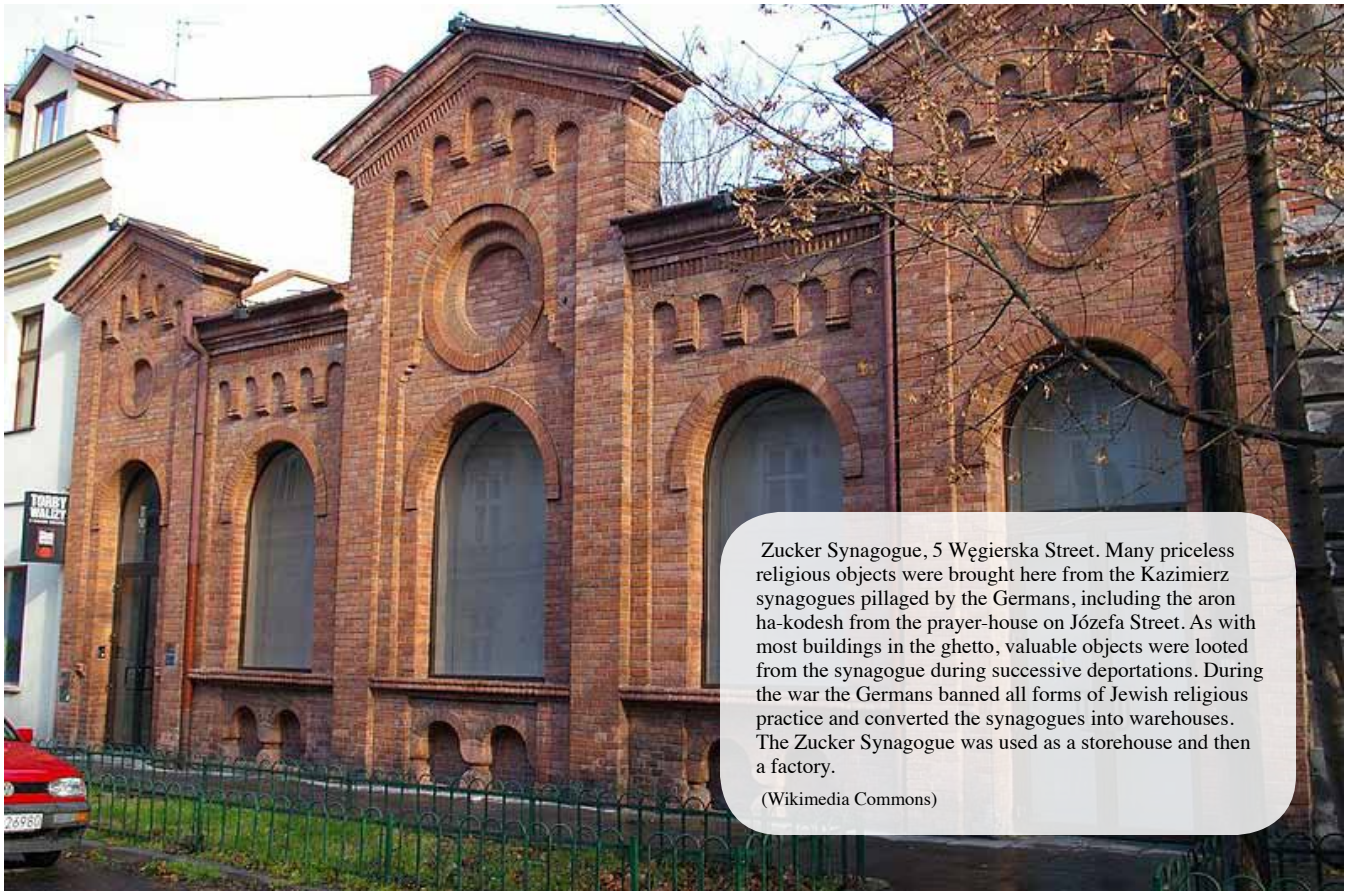


Belongings of Jews on the streets of Podgórze, after deportations and liquidation of the ghetto.
(Wikimedia Commons)

If you walk three or four blocks south from the square you can see the front wall of the Optima factory's building **No. 3, Map 3** in Krakusa Street. After the first mass deportation the Germans reduced the size of the "Jewish residential area." Parts of Krakusa and Węgierska Streets, as well as Rękawka and one side of Limanowskiego Streets, were left outside of the ghetto. The new boundaries were marked out with barbed wire which ran along the odd-numbered side of Limanowskiego and Węgierska Streets.

Zucker Synagogue

Walking along the parallel Węgierska Street you will notice a red brick building with a typical synagogue's facade. Pre-war Jewish religious life in Kraków was mainly concentrated in Kazimierz district, where the most important synagogues were located. But there were also houses of worship spread around the city, including Podgórze. One of them, the Zucker Synagogue **No. 4,**



Zucker Synagogue, 5 Węgierska Street. Many priceless religious objects were brought here from the Kazimierz synagogues pillaged by the Germans, including the aron ha-kodesh from the prayer-house on Józefa Street. As with most buildings in the ghetto, valuable objects were looted from the synagogue during successive deportations. During the war the Germans banned all forms of Jewish religious practice and converted the synagogues into warehouses. The Zucker Synagogue was used as a storehouse and then a factory.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Map 3, at 5 Węgierska Street, happened to be in the area of the ghetto. Many priceless religious objects were brought here from the Kazimierz synagogues after the German invasion. During the successive deportations some objects were looted, others were hidden in the nearby Płaszów labor camp. When the Germans banned all forms of Jewish religious practice and converted the synagogues into warehouses, the Zucker Synagogue became a storehouse and then a factory. Today, after significant renovation in the late 1990s, the synagogue serves as an art gallery. The structure of the building is preserved but the interior layout is not.

Was the Zucker Synagogue used for religious purposes during the ghetto's existence? Surely not, at least not officially. Religious life continued, under great difficulties. Some inhabitants lost their faith, while others may have become even more religiously observant. Jews prayed mainly at home or, for major festivals, at specially organized prayer-meetings. Meanwhile, Kraków's ghetto was getting smaller. In October 1942 an official decree announced that the area known as the Ukraine (east of Plac Zgody and bounded by Na Zjeździe, Dąbrówki, Janowa Wola, and Traugutta Streets) would no longer be part of the ghetto.



Rynek Podgórski (Podgórski Square). (Wikimedia Commons)

Many residents had to move, but it was only a prelude to the events of the following few days. On the night of October 27-28 another mass deportation began. Thousands were rounded up and sent to Plac Zgody, where they were ordered to sit on the ground and wait. They were taken to the station and transported to Bełżec, except for a group of children and the sick who were diverted to the newly established labor camp in Płaszów, where they were murdered. Approximately 600 people were shot inside the ghetto itself. It was into this ever shrinking ghetto, during the second half of 1942, that Jews from the surrounding towns and villages began to arrive.

Rynek Podgórski

As we walk in the former ghetto you might be surprised at seeing another big square with a huge, beautiful church, St. Josef's, dominating it. Rynek Podgórski and the church were next to but not in the ghetto area. Roman Polański, as a child living in the ghetto around the corner from Podgórski Square, could see the "Aryan" side, where he finally managed to escape.

The Judenrat (Jewish Council) **No. 5, Map 3** had offices on the corner of Limanowskiego Street and Rynek Podgórski. Its principal tasks ostensibly were to meet the ghetto's basic needs for food and sanitation, but in practice it was there to carry out orders from the Germans. After the first deportations the council's headquarters moved to 16 Węgierska Street, and the Nazis used the former headquarters to store possessions confiscated from the deportees.

The Judenrat was forced to follow many very difficult and even tragic orders, like the one on December 6, 1942, when the ghetto was divided into two sections. Section A was for the healthy and able to work, section B was for those who were soon to be deported. Three months



The former camp in Brünnlitz (Brněnec, Czech Republic) today. When the Germans began evacuating Poland, Oskar Schindler moved his factory from Kraków to Brünnlitz, where more than a thousand Kraków Jews found shelter and remained until liberation in May 1945.

(Edyta Gawron)



Oskar Schindler next to his tree in Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. Together with his wife he was recognized as one of the Righteous Among the Nations.
(USHMM)

later, at the beginning of March 1943, the commandant of the nearby labor camp in Płaszów, Amon Goeth, ordered the Council to relocate the inhabitants of Section A to the camp by 13 March. The inhabitants of Section B had to assemble in Plac Zgody where they were to be joined by all children under age fourteen. Many mothers from Section A would not abandon their young children and thus moved with them into Section B. Then began the bloodiest and most dramatic of all the ghetto's deportations. German troops and Ukrainian helpers surrounded the inhabitants at Plac Zgody on March 14. Inhabitants who tried to escape down side-streets were killed. More than 1,000 people were murdered that day, and the survivors—roughly 3,000—were sent to Auschwitz.

Jewish Partisans carried out numerous attacks and acts of sabotage, mostly outside of the ghetto.

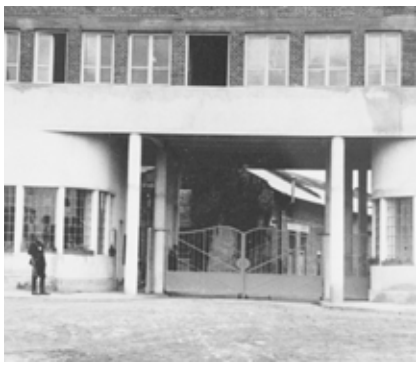
Julius Madritsch's confectionary factory, **No. 6, Map 3** located at 2 Rynek Podgórski, provided work for many of the ghetto's inhabitants. An Austrian businessman, Madritsch helped his workers get extra food and better working and living conditions, and he also assisted underground youth groups in the ghetto.

The Jewish Fighting Organisation (ŻOB) in Kraków, with its many young members, mainly Zionist activists, carried out numerous attacks and acts of sabotage, mostly outside of the ghetto. One of them was an attack, on December 22, 1942, on the Cyganeria café, in the city center, a meeting place for German officers. The fighters also had contacts within the ghetto, including Szymon Lustgarten's apartment **No. 11, Map 3** at 13 Józefińska Street.

Were there any forms of resistance in the ghetto? Did people try to escape?

Just before the liquidation a few dozen people escaped through the sewers, among them the Aleksandrowicz family and two siblings from the Fischlers. The sewer's two main entrances were located at the junction of Józefińska and Krakusa Streets **No. 12, Map 3** and at the intersection of Józefińska and Węgierska Streets, with their outflows going into the Wisła (Vistula) River. The Germans soon blocked off this route.

Many of the ghetto's institutions were on Józefińska Street. The Arbeitsamt (Labor Office) **No. 7, Map 3** was located at no. 10, which was also the address for the Hospital for the Chronically Ill. **No. 8, Map 3** Also on the street were the Jewish Community Hospital (no. 14), the Bathhouse (no. 3) **No. 9, Map 3**, the Jewish Social Self-Help Organization (ŻSS, no. 18) **No. 10, Map 3**, the Jewish Police, or OD (no. 17) **No. 13, Map 3**, and the Trade School for Jewish Orphans (no. 25). Today you cannot see the buildings that hosted the OD or provisional prison. However, if you cross the busy junction of Limanowskiego and Na Zjeździe Streets and move toward Lwowska Street you will see one of the two remaining parts of the ghetto wall. **No. 14, Map 3**



Entrance of Oskar Schindler's factory at Lipowa Street no. 4. The building in the foreground was constructed during the war and housed mainly administrative offices.
(USHMM)

After the final deportations, the Germans, with the help of the members of the OD and slave laborers from Płaszów, stripped the houses of any remaining valuables. In September 1943 they removed the last vestiges of barbed wire from the perimeter and that was the end of the ghetto's existence.

For a better sense of the complexity of Oskar Schindler's story and the Nazi occupation, visit the eponymous museum on Lipowa Street.

About 500 meters away from the ghetto, at 4 Lipowa Street, was the Deutsche Emaillewaren-Fabrik (German Enamelware Factory), known as Schindler's Factory. **No. 17, Map 3** More than one thousand Jews from the ghetto and later from Płaszów labor camp worked in the factory, and many were saved when Oskar Schindler evacuated his company and his employees to Brünnlitz, in the Czech part of Nazi-occupied Europe. Schindler is one of the best known Righteous Among the Nations recognized by Yad Vashem, owing to what he did and also to his story being told in the award-winning film "Schindler's List."Yet he was also a member of the Nazi party and for a while at least had supported the regime. To gain a better sense of the complexity of Schindler's story and of the Nazi occupation, you should visit the museum located in the front building of the industrial complex that used to belong to Schindler's Factory.

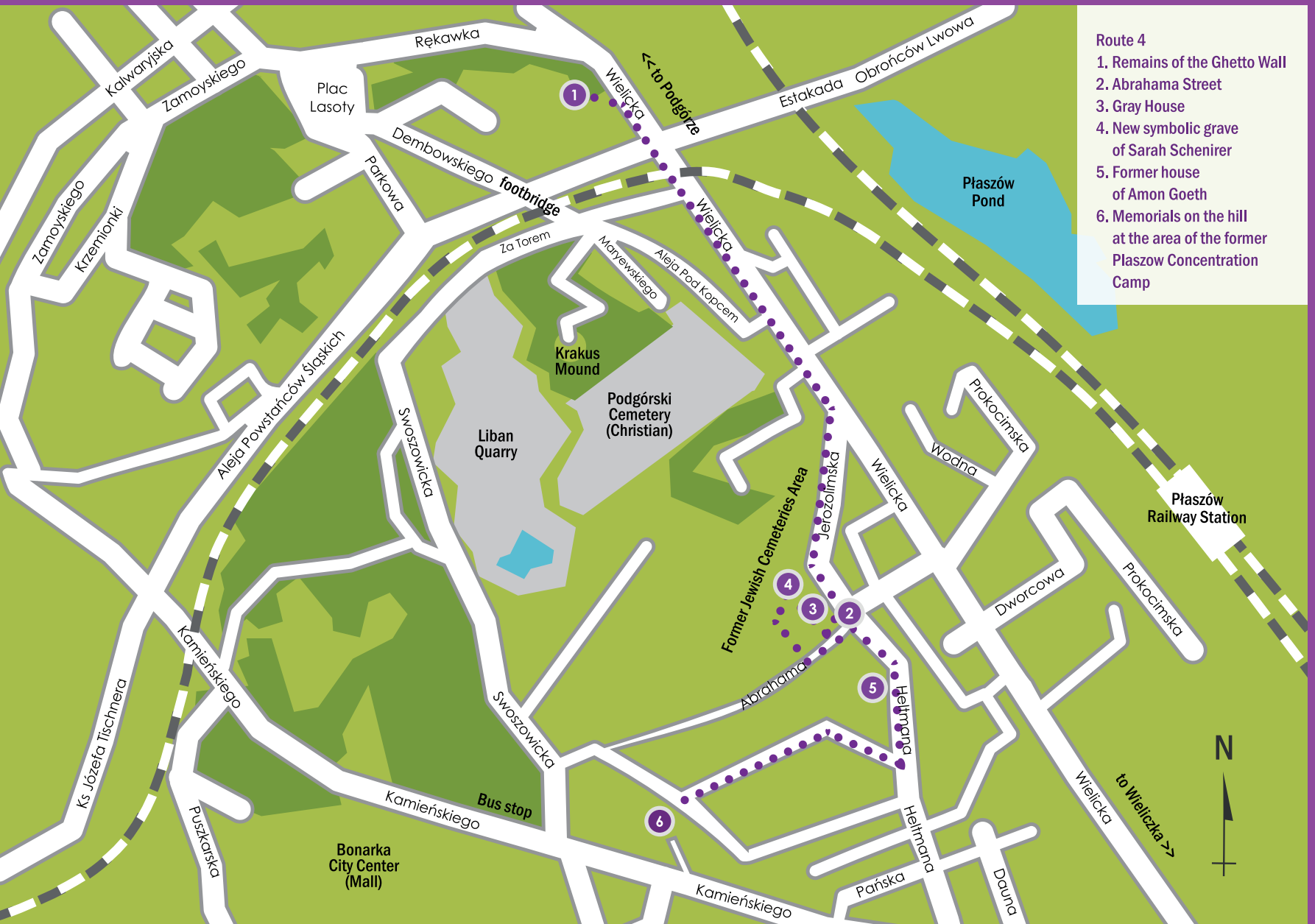
Behind the historical museum is the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków (MOCAK) **No. 16, Map 3**. Its space embraces the buildings that once used to be factory production halls, and its location overlaps the former area of Płaszów's subcamp. Its exhibitions present artistic perspectives and reflections on the past. One of the artists, Mirosław Bałka, whose works have been shown in the museum on Lipowa Street, placed his work in the urban space of Podgórze. **No. 15, Map 3** You can see his construction of concrete blocks leading from Traugutta Street to the tunnel under the railway. It includes walls with just two names: Wieliczka-Auschwitz. Both represent tourist attractions, linked by their historical significance and their frequent combination in one-day tourist packages.



Portion of the wall of photos of saved people in the Oskar Schindler museum.

(Wikimedia Commons)

Kraków Walking Route 4



Kraków Route 4

Visiting lost cemeteries and the scene of crimes against humanity.

Płaszów's Jewish Cemeteries / The Labor Camp

Retracing our steps from Lipowa Street we can return to Ghetto Heroes' Square or we can move south to the area of Płaszów. Before World War II Płaszów was the site of two Jewish cemeteries—the old one, of Podgórze's community in Abrahama Street, **No. 2, Map 4** and the new one of the Kraków community in Jerozolimska Street. **No. 3, Map 4** Today hardly any trace remains of the tombstones. **No. 4, Map 4**

During the war the Germans occupied the site and established a forced-labor camp for the Jews in 1942 (some prisoners worked in the area even earlier). The camp also contained confiscated Jewish community property as well as private Polish dwellings whose owners had been evicted. **No. 5, Map 4** It was regularly enlarged and in 1944, when it became a concentration camp, occupied more than 200 acres (80 hectares). The number of inmates varied, from 2,000, prior to the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, to 12,000 by the second half of 1943. By early summer of 1944 the number of prisoners had increased to 24,000, including 6,000-8,000 Jews from Hungary. Later that year the camp was systematically evacuated and proof of crime was destroyed or hidden. The Germans dismantled or destroyed most of the camp's facilities before retreating upon the approach of the Soviet Army, leaving behind only a few prisoners.

Every year on the anniversary of the ghetto's liquidation thousands of people join the March of Remembrance (Marsz Pamięci), walking silently almost 3 miles (4 km) from the former area of the ghetto to the site of the Płaszów camp. **No. 6, Map 4** The event began in the late 1980s, through the efforts of a small group of people, and has become an important remembrance of the past and a celebration of life. The March of Remembrance is also the occasion for Polish-Israeli meetings, lectures, seminars, and less formal exchanges.



The Gray House today. Originally part of the Jewish cemetery established in Jerozolimska Street by the Kraków community, it became an administration facility for the SS. The house was located in the center of Płaszów camp. Its basement became a remand prison with holding cells, a dark cell, and 20 small bunkers in which prisoners were kept in a standing position. (Edyta Gawron)



Pages of the Book of Burials of the cemetery in Podgórze. This is the only remaining register of the burials at the cemetery, which was completely destroyed during the German occupation.

(Edyta Gawron)



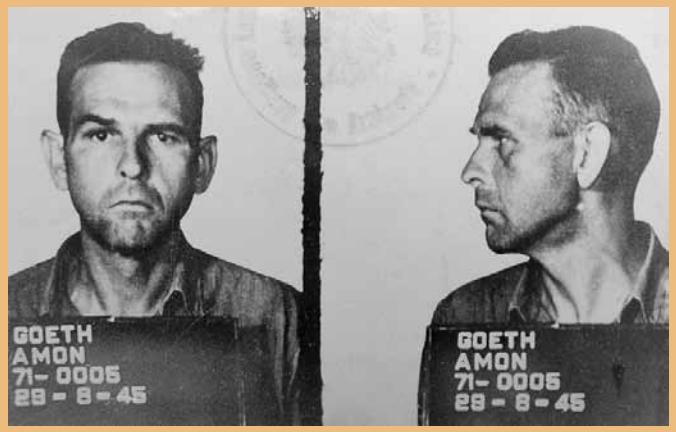
A former prisoner of the Płaszów camp during the March of Remembrance (organized yearly) on March 14, 2010. The man was marching with his family and friends.

(Edyta Gawron)



Symbolic grave of Sarah Shenirer. She was buried in the Podgórze Jewish Cemetery in 1935, but her tombstone was destroyed during the Holocaust and the grave was not marked for years. Now this location is visited by hundreds if not thousands of Jewish Orthodox girls and women, students, and graduates of Beis Yaakov schools, the system of education she established in Kraków in 1917.

(Edyta Gawron)



Amon Goeth, commandant of Płaszów labor camp, 1943-44. At war's end U.S. forces arrested and transferred him to Polish authorities. He was sentenced to death in Kraków in 1946.

(Wikimedia Commons)



Detail of the Gray House today, at the corner of Jerozolimska and Abrahama Streets. (Edyta Gawron)



Female inmates in Płaszów camp, mostly Jewish women from Poland and Hungary. They were digging, working at construction sites and pulling wagons by rope, supplying stones used to build a rather steep road. They worked in twelve-hour shifts.



Street sign for Jerozolimska Street on the wall of the Gray House. (Edyta Gawron)

Glossary of Terms, Phrases, and Organizations

Please note that there is no single, universal system for representing Hebrew and Yiddish words in English. The Glossary offers common spellings, which in some cases may differ from what you are accustomed to seeing.

Aram. = Aramaic

Ger. = German

Heb. = Hebrew

Pol. = Polish

Yid. = Yiddish

AK. Armia Krajowa (Pol.). Home Army. An underground army in occupied Poland during World War II, it was loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London.

ark. See aron ha-kodesh.

aron ha-kodesh (Heb.). Holy ark. The cabinet on the eastern wall of the synagogue in which Torah scrolls are kept.

Ashkenazi. From Ashkenaz (Heb.), Germany. It refers to European Yiddish-speaking Jewish populations.

Beit Warszawa (Heb.). Warsaw House. A Reform Jewish congregation in Warsaw.

bet midrash (Heb.), pl. batei midrash or batei midrashoth. Study hall, house of learning (or of interpretation). Colloquial designation of the synagogue as a place for study as much as for prayer.

Betar. Brit Trumpeldor, Covenant of Joseph Trumpeldor. The youth organization of the Revisionist, right wing of the Zionist movement, it has been active since the interwar period (1919-39).

bimah (Heb.). Elevated platform inside the synagogue, usually close to the aron ha-kodesh, from which the Torah is read during prayers.

B'nai B'rith (Heb.). Sons of the Covenant. An international Jewish fraternal organization, founded in the United States in 1843, it is dedicated to supporting Jewish causes and interests worldwide. A branch was reestablished in Warsaw in 2007.

Bobover. From Bobov (Yid.), Bobowa (Pol.), a locality in southern Poland associated with the Hasidic Halberstam dynasty, which originated there and today resides largely in Brooklyn, New York.

Bund. Algemeyner Yidiszer Arbeterbund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland (Yid.). General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland and Russia. An influential socialist party founded in 1897 in Vilna, it was active in the former Russian Empire and played a significant role in interwar Poland.

Cheder. See heder.

Conservative. One of three main religious streams of contemporary Judaism. It began as a reaction to Reform Judaism. Among other characteristics it affirms the divine inspiration of the Torah and the authority (if not immutability) of halakhah.

dayan (Heb.). Judge. A Jewish religious judge.

drasha (Heb.), pl. drashot. From *darosh* (Heb.), to study or inquire, referring to sermons by rabbis or scholars.

Dror (Heb.). Freedom. A Zionist youth movement active in Poland, 1922-50.

El Male Rahamim (Heb.). "God full of mercy." Opening words of the traditional Ashkenazi prayer recited at funerals and memorials.

Eretz Israel (Heb.). Land of Israel. Traditional name for the Biblical and present-day territory of the Jewish state.

etrog (Heb.). Citron. A lemon-like fruit used for blessings, together with the lulav, during the festival of Sukkot.

ezrat nashim (Heb.). Section of an Orthodox synagogue reserved for women (usually a gallery or a space separated by a partition).

Galizianer (Yid.). Someone from Galicja (Pol.), a region where Hasidism was particularly widespread. Traditionally, Galizianers were opposed to the anti-Hasidic Litvaks. Each group spoke its own variation of Yiddish.

galut (Heb.). Exile. A synonym for the Jewish Diaspora.

Gemara. Commentaries on the Mishnah assembled over several centuries after its redaction, and which, together with the Mishnah, make up the Talmud.

Gerer. From Ger (Yid.), Góra Kalwaria (Pol.), a locality near Warsaw associated with the Hasidic Alter dynasty, which originated there and is now based in Jerusalem.

Gmina (Pol.). Community. See kehillah.

haggadah. (Heb., "telling") A Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the haggadah at the Seder table is a fulfillment of the scriptural commandment to recall the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

halakhah (Heb.). The body of Jewish law as derived from the (written) Torah, debated in the Talmud (oral Torah), and codified by the rabbis; or a particular law drawn from these sources. Also the portions of the Talmud dealing with legal issues.

Hanukkah. Eight-day religious festival starting on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually mid-December) to commemorate the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabean revolt (2nd century BCE). Each night one more candle is lit in an eight-candle candelabrum called the hannukiyah.

Hashomer hatzair (Heb.). Young Guard. Left-wing Zionist youth organization founded in 1913.

Hasidism. From hasid (Heb.), pious. A religious movement started in Polish lands in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eleazar Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). Hasidism stressed joy, spirituality, and mysticism and denied that learning is the only way to God. Opposed bitterly throughout the 19th century by the mitnagdim, Hasidism developed into sects centered around spiritual teachers, known as tsadikim or rebbeim, and their descendants. Today, the Hasidim and their erstwhile opponents constitute the two main branches of Orthodox Judaism.

Haskalah (Heb.). Enlightenment. An assimilationist intellectual and social movement among Central European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries that advocated the adoption of European culture, language and mores, while maintaining a Jewish identity. Its followers were called maskilim.

ḥazan (Heb.). Cantor. Leader of the prayers which are chanted or sung during synagogue services.

heder (Heb.). Room. Jewish religious elementary school.

Hevrah kadisha (Heb.). Holy society. Group of community members dedicated to the ritual preparation of bodies for interment and to conducting funerals; one of the most important organizations of the kehillah.

High Holidays. The Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah), Yom Kippur, and the ten days in between are celebrated in the Hebrew month of Tishrei (September-October).

JCC. Jewish Community Center. Jewish communal institution that provides pluralistic social, cultural, and educational programs under one roof. Originating in the United States, the JCC model is becoming popular in Central Europe.

Judenrat (Ger.). A Jewish supervising body that the Nazis imposed on a ghetto to implement their policies. It was generally considered a collaborationist body, especially due to the activities of the Jewish police (OD).

jurydyka (Pol.), pl. jurydyki. From *iuridicum* (Lat.), subject to law. A term in pre-partition Polish law to designate settlements established on legal principles different from those generally binding. Noblemen would often settle Jews on their jurydyki.

Kabbalah (Heb.). That which is received. A mystical tradition within Judaism, especially influential in Hasidism and other spiritual movements.

Kaddish (Aram.). The traditional prayer recited in memory of the dead in the presence of a minyan.

kahal (Yid.). Community. See kehillah.

kehillah (Heb.), pl. kehillot. The central Jewish organization that regulates daily life in a Jewish community. In pre-partition Poland, a kehillah was governed by a board of elected and honorary officials who would hire and fire rabbis, conduct tribunals and maintain ritual baths, administer interest-free loans, provide social relief for the needy, and supervise education, sanitation, and hygiene. Kehillot would also elect deputies to the Va'ad Arba' Aratsot.

Khalyastre (Yid). The Gang. A Yiddish artistic group in interwar Poland.

kiddush (Heb.). The blessing said over wine or grape juice, especially on Sabbath and holidays.

klezmorim (sing. klezmer). From *klei zemer* (Heb.), musical instruments. Jewish musicians who would play at weddings and other festive events were popular until World War II and have recently experienced a revival. Klezmorim preferred fiddles and flutes, which were easy to transport from village to village and gave their music a unique sound.

lashon kodesh (Heb.). The holy language. In the Ashkenazi Diaspora, Hebrew remained the language of Scripture and prayers but was not generally spoken; the spoken language was Yiddish. The Sephardim spoke Ladino or Judeo-Arabic. The revival of Hebrew under the influence of Zionism was initially considered blasphemous by many ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Litvak (Yid.). Someone from Litwa (Pol.), Lithuania, historically a state federated with Poland, where Hasidism was less common and the mitnagdim prevailed. Litvaks were opposed to the Hasidic Galizianers. Each group spoke a different variation of Yiddish.

lulav (Heb.). Palm frond used during prayers on Sukkot. When bound with willow and myrtle twigs it comprises three of the "four species" used during the holiday celebrations; the fourth is the etrog.

mame-loshn (Yid.). Mother tongue. A colloquial and fond reference to Yiddish.

maskil (Heb.), pl. maskilim. Scholar, or a follower of the Haskalah.

matseva (Heb.), pl. matsevot. Standing stone. Tombstone.

matsa (Heb.), pl. matzot. Unleavened bread eaten on the festival of Pesach to commemorate the haste with which the Jews left Egypt during the Exodus.

mechitsa (Heb.). A structure, usually made of wood but sometimes of bricks or fabric, separating the synagogue into parts reserved for men and women. See ezrat nashim.

menorah (Heb.). Seven-branched candelabrum that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. Though the menorah has become a symbol of Judaism and an emblem of Israel, it plays no role in Jewish ritual outside the Temple.

mezuzah (Heb.). A small, usually metal or stone container, affixed to the doorpost of a Jewish home, holding a piece of parchment bearing an injunction (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21) to "affix these words to the doorposts of your home."

midrash (Heb.). Commentary or interpretation. It refers usually to the homiletic method of interpreting Scripture, or to the body of religious literature thus produced, or to one of several works known as Midrash.

mikveh (Heb.). Ritual bath. Jewish women and sometimes men must (separately) immerse themselves in the mikveh in order to meet the requirements of ritual purity.

minyan (Heb.). Quorum of 10 adult Jews necessary for the recitation of certain prayers, including kaddish and the public reading of the Torah.

Mishnah (Heb.). The central part of the Talmud. It contains the Oral Torah, as it was redacted in 220 CE by Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nasi. It was then complemented by the Gemara, commentaries on the Mishnah.

mitnagdim (Heb.). Opponents. Adversaries of the Hasidism who sought to maintain traditional rabbinic Judaism and were especially prevalent in Lithuania.

nigun (Heb.). Jewish melody or song without lyrics.

OD. Ordnungsdienst (Ger.). Public Order Service. A Jewish police force established in a ghetto by the Judenrat. Considered at first a valuable institution, the OD soon became hated for its role in enforcing German orders, in particular the deportations to death camps.

ohel (Heb.). Tent. Stone or brick structure erected over the grave of a prominent person.

Oneg Shabbat (Heb.). Joy of the Sabbath. The underground group of historians and researchers established in Warsaw to document daily life in the ghetto. Its meetings were disguised as Sabbath observances, hence the name. The collections are known as the Ringelblum Archives.

Ordnungsdienst. See OD.

Orthodox. One of the three main streams of contemporary Judaism, based on the belief that the Torah is the literal word of God and halakhah is ever binding and cannot be changed (though it may be amended). Orthodoxy developed in response to the Haskalah's perceived threat to Jewish continuity.

parnas (Heb.), pl. parnasim. Honorary member of the board of the kehillah.

Pesach (Heb.). Passover. Eight-day festival starting on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan (usually April) to commemorate the passing of God to smite Egypt's first born sons and the Israelites' subsequent Exodus.

posek (Heb.), pl. poskim. Jewish legal scholar with authority to rule on undecided, unclear, or novel issues of halakhah.

Purim. Jewish festival observed on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar (usually mid-March) to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews of Persia from the slaughter intended by Haman, courtier of King Ahashverosh.

PW. Polska Walcząca (Pol.). Fighting Poland. The Polish underground during World War II.

rebbe (Yid.). Rabbi. Often used to designate a Hasidic leader.

Reform. One of the three main streams in contemporary Judaism. Reform arose in opposition to Orthodoxy and taught that Scripture, while possibly divinely inspired, is not the literal word of God, while halakhah is a human creation and has to adapt to changing times. Reform also stressed that Jews are a faith, not a people.

Revisionist. A nationalist splinter group in the Zionist movement that emerged in 1935 under the leadership of Zeev Jabotinsky. Today's Israeli Likud party is the continuation of the Revisionist movement.

Rosh Hashanah (Heb.). The Jewish New Year, observed in the Hebrew month of Tishrei (September/October).

Sabbath (Shabbat). Seventh day of the week. Observed by many with special prayers, rituals, and rest.

seder (Heb.). Order. Ritual meal, including the retelling of the Exodus story, eaten during the first and, in the Diaspora, second days of Pesach.

Sephardic. From *Sepharad* (Heb.), Spain. It refers usually to the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain after its Muslim rulers were defeated by the Catholics in 1492. A majority of these Jews found new communities around the Mediterranean basin.

Shabbas See Sabbath.

Shavei Israel (Heb.). Returnees of Israel. An internationally active Israeli organization that helps Diaspora Jews reconnect with their Jewish roots.

shi'ur (Heb.). A lesson on any religious topic.

Shoah (Heb.). Total destruction. Hebrew name of the Holocaust, used to designate the Nazi genocide of Jews in World War II.

shtetl (Yid.). Small town or village settled mainly or exclusively by Jews.

shtibl (Yid.), pl. shtiblekh. A room or house used for prayer, usually by Hasidic Jews.

shul (Yid.). School. Also a common term for a synagogue.

Simḥat Torah (Heb.). Festival commemorating the conclusion of the yearly cycle of Torah readings, which follows the holiday of Sukkot.

sukkah. See Sukkot.

Sukkot (Heb.). Eight-day religious festival observed from 15th of the Hebrew month of Tishrei onwards (usually October) to commemorate the wanderings of the Jews in the desert after leaving Egypt. It is observed by eating and often sleeping in the sukkah-booth. The sukkah's roof is made of branches.

talit (Heb.), pl. tallitot (Heb.), talesim (Yid.). Prayer shawl.

Talmud (Heb.). According to tradition, at Mt. Sinai the Jews received a written and an oral Torah. The latter was eventually written down and redacted as the Mishnah. Commentaries were also compiled as the Gemara. Together they make up the Talmud, in Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, which share the Mishna but have different Gemaras. Most of the Jerusalem Talmud is missing; hence the Babylonian version is usually considered authoritative. Together with the written Torah, the Talmud is the fundamental source of halakhah.

tikkun olam (Heb.). Repairing or redeeming the world. Traditionally the fundamental ethical obligation of Jews.

Tish'ah be-Av (Heb.). Fast day on the 9th of the Hebrew month Av (usually mid-July) to commemorate the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and other disasters which befell the Jewish people on that day.

Tosafot (Heb.). Additions. Medieval commentaries on the Talmud.

tsadik (Heb.). Righteous man. A Hasidic religious leader and his recognized successors.

TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce (Pol.). Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland. Founded in 1950 to ensure the development of Communist Yiddishist culture

after all other Jewish organizations but the kehillah had been disbanded, it is currently the largest Jewish organization in Poland (3600 members).

Umschlagplatz (Ger.). Loading place. The site in Warsaw where Jews were loaded onto trains bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Va'ad Arba' Aratsot (Heb.). Council of the Four Lands. A Jewish governing body (1580-1764) that met to collect taxes to be paid to the royal treasury and to discuss other matters of importance to Polish Jewry. The Four Lands were Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Ruthenia, and Volhynia. In 1623, the Jews of Lithuania established their own Va'ad.

Yad Vashem (Heb.). Israeli national institution located in Jerusalem that studies, documents, and exhibits the history of the Shoah. It also documents and publicly acknowledges the actions of "Righteous Gentiles" who saved Jews at great personal risk during World War II.

yarmulke (Yid.). Small round head covering, known also as kippah (Heb.), worn during prayer or all of the time by observant Jews.

yeshiva (Heb.), pl. yeshivot. Jewish religious secondary or higher educational institution.

Yiddish. An international Jewish vernacular, with a vocabulary based on medieval High German, Hebrew, and Slavic, and a grammar based largely on German, written in Hebrew characters with competing different spellings. It was the spoken language of Ashkenazi Jews. Enclaves of mainly Orthodox Yiddish speakers still exist in Jewish centers in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Yiddishkeit (Yid.). Jewishness. An ill-defined but crucial term referring to the culture based on Yiddish, the concomitant identity and affiliation, the "Jewishness" of a work of culture, and a feeling of Jewish self-identification.

Yizkor (Heb.). Memorial prayers recited by the bereaved on major holidays.

Żegota. Council to Help the Jews. Established by the Polish underground in 1942, it provided material and organizational assistance to Jews in peril. Poland's Żegota was the only organization in all of Europe explicitly tasked with the rescue of Jews.

ŻIH. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Pol.). Jewish Historical Institute. Established in Warsaw in 1947 to study the heritage and history of Polish Jewry and preserve its records and artifacts. Today called the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Zionism. From Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, often used as reference to all of Eretz Israel. A political movement established by assimilated Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl in the late 19th century, it sought to encourage Jews to move to Eretz Israel, where some form of Jewish collective self-government, possibly a state, was to be established. Zionism quickly attracted followers among the Jewish masses and gained support in international politics. With the establishment of the Palestinian mandate, and then the Jewish state in 1948, the primary objective of Zionism was fulfilled.

ŻOB. Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Pol.). Jewish Fighting Organization. Created during 1942 in the Warsaw ghetto, it was the main fighting force in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943.

ŻSS. Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna (Pol.). Jewish Social Self-Help. The Warsaw ghetto's official social relief body.

ŻZW. Żydowski Związek Wojskowy (Pol.). Jewish Military Union. An underground fighting organization, it was established during1942 in the Warsaw ghetto, parallel to the ŻOB, but connected politically with the Revisionist movement and the Betar. ŻOB maintained contact with elements of the Polish Army and fought alongside ŻOB in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Acknowledgments

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland is grateful for the encouragement and the financial and professional support of the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture in bringing this unique guide to fruition.

We want to thank our contributing editors for their conceptual planning and elegant narratives: Dr. Edyta Gawron, Konstanty Gebert, Helise Lieberman, Cantor Benjamin Matis, Magdalena Matuszewska, Rabbi Boaz Pash, Shana Penn, Dr. Karen Underhill, and Dr. William Zeisel. Our managing editor Alice Z. Lawrence offered invaluable expertise. Research associate Aleksandra Sajdak tirelessly pursued archival materials and images, while Alicja Beryt displayed ingenuity and experience in creating the maps that chart our city walks. We are grateful for the beautiful work of our design and production team at LaserCom Design and the counsel of our assistant editor Vera Hannush.

Jan Jagielski, director of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute's Department of Documentation, shared his deep expertise and offered important assistance in selecting photos. For sharing their knowledge and expertise we want to thank our colleagues at the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center: Anna Przybyszewska Drozd, Aleksandra Dybkowska, and Yale Reisner.

The Taube Center expresses its gratitude to Professor Pawel Śpiewak, executive director of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and to our board members, Dr. Eleonora Bergman, Konstanty Gebert, Janusz Makuch, Joanna Matysiak, and Rabbi Michael Schudrich, for their ongoing support of our activities. We would also like to thank Maciej Kirschenbaum, coordinator of Mi Dor Le Dor, and the Mi Dor Le Dor 2012 participants for their contributions.

Finally, we thank all those who have toured with us, whose comments and questions have helped us hone our narratives and inspired us to expand our horizons. We also want to thank in advance those readers who will offer suggestions for improving our guide, advice that we will be pleased to receive via our website: www.centrumtaubego.org.pl or by sending an email to us at centrumtaubego@centrumtaubego.org.pl

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Alice Lawrence holds an M.A. in teaching from Harvard University and has been the Program Director for the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture since 2006. She has had many years of editorial and production experience in both magazine and book publishing, including a stint as production director of *Eating Well* magazine. Trips to Poland with the Taube Foundation have allowed her to connect with her family background, which is Polish on her mother's side and Russian on her father's.

Research and Design

Alicja Beryt, a graphic designer, is a student in philosophy at Jagiellonian University in Kraków. She is particularly interested in contemporary aesthetics and modern architecture. An active member of the Polish Jewish Community, Ms. Beryt has worked in the Kraków JCC since it was established in 2008. She is responsible for the JCC's graphics and visual materials, manages exhibitions, and oversees several programs. She coordinates the Pre-Limud Seminar offered during the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków which attracts students from around the country.

Vera Hannush has been Grants Administrator for the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture since 2011. She holds an M.A. in classics (Latin) from the University of California at Berkeley and a B.A. in Latin and German from Wellesley College. During study abroad in Vienna she was part of a museum exhibition team. Currently learning Polish, and eagerly anticipating her first trip to Poland with the Taube Foundation in 2012, she is fascinated by Polish Jewish history and the current revival of Jewish life in Poland.

Aleksandra (Ola) Sajdak serves as the Taube Center's Program Assistant. Born in Warsaw, she has interned at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Jewish Historical Institute. Ms. Sajdak was the Taube Center's first intern in 2011 and joined the staff in 2012, bringing her research and computer skills to the team. She holds a B.A. and M.A. from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and is pursuing a doctorate in Jewish history and heritage in Poland. Her thesis will focus on Jewish philanthropy in pre- and interwar Poland.

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and to connecting Jews from around the world to their East European heritage. Through educational and cultural programs in Jewish studies, tourism, publishing, arts and media, the Taube Center cultivates global knowledge of a living Polish Jewish heritage, drawing from its rich historical legacy.

The Center's flagship program, Taube Jewish Heritage Tours, offers tailor-made study tours for individuals, families and groups seeking to recover their personal histories, explore a collective past and to participate in the continuing revival of Jewish life in Poland. The tours offer unique insights into Jewish Poland's complex historical narratives, linking Jews from around the world with their Ashkenazi roots, strengthening Jewish identities, ensuring communal continuity and enhancing a sense of Jewish peoplehood.

Founded in 2009, the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland began a new educational initiative in 2012, called Mi Dor Le Dor (Heb. "From Generation to Generation"), as a programmatic response to requests from young Jewish educators and graduate students to learn Jewish history, tradition and culture in the very place where they developed. Because the transmission of Polish Jewish heritage, impossible to achieve under Communism, has left third and fourth generation Poles who today are in their 20s and 30s, with little knowledge about the Polish Jewish experience, Mi Dor Le Dor teaches this history as a living heritage with deep Polish roots. This unique experiential learning program includes bi-weekly seminars with scholarly experts, site visits and field research, walking tours and skills training, with the goal of providing Jewish literacy, instilling cultural pride, and preparing participants to assist in the year-round Taube Jewish Heritage Tour Program. The next edition of Mi Dor Le Dor will begin in October 2012, expanding from the five-month pilot program to nine months and drawing participants from the Center's partner organizations.

In addition to Mi Dor Le Dor, we offer "Walking Workshops through Jewish Warsaw," a series of interactive guided walks, forums, and inter-group dialogue in cooperation with partner organizations; consultations with educators and guides from Poland and abroad promoting Polish Jewish heritage education; and we produce educational resources such as *Deep Roots, New Branches: Personal Essays on the Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland Since 1989* and *A Historical Timeline: 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland.*

Helise E. Lieberman, *Director*

Magdalena Matuszewska, *Program Manager*

Konstanty Gebert, *Taube Scholar-in-Residence*

Aleksandra Sajdak, *Program Associate*

Maciej Kirschenbaum, *Coordinator, Mi Dor Le Dor*

TAUBE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND FOUNDATION

FUNDACJA CENTRUM TAUBEGO ODNOWY ŻYCIA ŻYDOWSKIEGO W POLSCE

Foundation Support

Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, based in San Francisco, established the Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP) in 2003 to support cultural, educational and communal programs that meet the diverse and complex needs of Poland's reemerging Jewish communities. The JHIP nurtures the revival of Jewish culture in Poland, furthers awareness of this resurgence among Jews and gentiles, and fosters positive interest in Poland and Polish Jews among Jews worldwide. The JHIP supports more than 70 institutions and projects in the areas of scholarship, genealogy and publishing, community building, the arts, educational tourism, and heritage restoration.



www.taubephilanthropies.org

Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe

The Rothschild Family has a long tradition of philanthropy, starting with Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1744-1812) and his five sons. The Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe, established by Lord Rothschild in 2000, continues the family's philanthropic tradition. During the last twelve years the Foundation has supported a range of educational, cultural, heritage and community-based initiatives in over forty European countries. Now chaired by Sir Victor Blank, with Lord Rothschild as President, the Foundation is currently focusing its activities in academic Jewish studies and Jewish heritage.

www.rothschildfoundation.eu

Partner Organizations and Cooperating Institutions

POLAND

Auschwitz-Oświęcim

Auschwitz Jewish-Center
www.ajcf.org
Plac ks. Jana Skarbka 5
Phone 48-33-844-7003

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
www.auschwitz.org
ul. Więźniów Oświęcimia 20
Phone 48-33-844-8100/8099/8000

Będzin

Cukerman Gate Foundation
www.bramacukermana.com
Al. Hugona Kołątaja 24/28
Phone 48-511-016-322

Gdańsk

Jewish Community of Gdańsk
www.gdansk.jewish.org.pl
ul. Partyzantów 7
Phone 48-58-344-0602

Katowice

Jewish Community of Katowice
gwzkatowice@poczta.onet.pl
ul. 3 Maja 16
Phone 48-32-253-7742

Kielce

Jan Karski Association
www.jankarski.org.pl
ul. Paderewskiego 40
Phone 48-41-343-2840

Kraków

Austeria
www.austeria.pl
ul. Józefa 38
Phone 48-12-411-1245

Beit Kraków
www.beitkrakow.pl

Chabbad
www.chabadkrakow.pl
ul. Kupa 18
Phone 48-12-430-2222

Cheder Café
www.jewishfestival.pl
ul. Józefa 36
Phone 48-12-431-1517

Czulent
www.czulent.pl
ul. Kupa 18
Phone 48-12-350-2395

Department of Jewish Studies
Jagiellonian University
www.judaistyka.uj.edu.pl
ul. Józefa 19
Phone 48-12-427-5918

Galicia Jewish Museum
www.galiciajewishmuseum.org
ul. Dajwór 18
Phone 48-12-421-6842

JCC Kraków
www.jcckrakow.org
ul. Miodowa 24
Phone 48-12-370-5750

Jewish Community of Kraków
www.krakow.jewish.org.pl
ul. Skawińska 2
Phone 48-12-429-5735

Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków
www.jewishfestival.pl
ul. Józefa36
Phone 48-12-431-1517

Klezmer Hois
www.klezmer.pl
ul. Szeroka 6
Phone 48-12-411-1622

Stradomskie Centrum Dialogu
www.scd.krakow.pl
ul. Stradomska 11/13
Phone 48-12-421-2290

Łódź

Jewish Cemetery
www.JewishLodzCemetery.org

Jewish Community of Łódź
www.jewishlodz.org.pl
ul. Pomorska 18, Łódź
Phone 48-42-633-5156

Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue
www.centrumdialogu.com
Pl. Wolności 5, Łódź
Phone 48-42-636-3821

Lublin

Grodzka Gate and NN Theatre in Lublin
www.tnn.pl
ul. Grodzka 21
Phone 48-81-532-5867

Jewish Community of Lublin
www.lublin.jewish.org.pl
ul. Lubartowska 85
Phone 48-81-747-0992

Ruda Śląska

Jan Karski Foundation
www.instytut-karskiego.org
ul. 1-go Maja 32
Phone 48-32-797-6535

Tarnów

Museum of Tarnów
www.muzeum.tarnow.pl
ul. Rynek 1
Phone 48-14-622-0625

Warsaw

Adam Mickiewicz Institute
www.iam.pl
ul. Mokotowska 25
Phone 48-22-447-6100

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Poland
www.jdc.org
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-652-1754

Association of Children of the Holocaust
www.dzieciholocaustu.org.pl
Pl. Grzybowski 12/16
Phone 48-22-652-1220

Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation
www.auschwitz.org
ul. Twarda 6, Warsaw
Phone 48-22-620-4899

Beit Warszawa (Progressive Community)
www.beit.org.pl
ul. Wiertnicza 113
Phone 48-789-217-685

Center for Yiddish Culture of the Shalom Foundation
www.jidyszland.pl
ul. Andersa 15
Phone 48-22-620-47-33

Chabad Lubavitch of Poland
www.chabad.org.pl
ul. Słomińskiego 19 (Suite 508A)
Phone 48-22-637-5352

Ec Chaim Chawura (Progressive Community)
www.ecchaim.pl
Al. Jerozolimskie 53, 4th floor

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute
www.jewishinstitute.org.pl
ul. Tłomackie 3/5
Phone 48 22 827-9221

Ester Rachel and Ida Kamińska Jewish Theatre
www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl
Pl. Grzybowski 12-16
Phone 48-22-620-6281

Forum for Dialogue among Nations
www.dialog.org.pl
ul. Chmielna 15/9
Phone 48-22-827-2207

Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland
www.fodz.pl
ul. Grzybowska 2
Phone 48-22-436-6000

History Meeting House
www.dsh.waw.pl
ul. Karowa 20
Phone 48-22-255-0505

Institute of National Remembrance
www.ipn.gov.pl
ul. Marszałkowska 21/25
Phone 48-22-581-8660

Jewish Agency in Poland
www.sochnut.com.pl
Plac Bankowy 2/1914
Phone 48-22-620-0553

Jewish Cemetery
www.cemetery.jewish.org.pl
ul. Okopowa 49/51
Phone 48-22-838-2622

Jewish Community of Warsaw
www.warszawa.jewish.org.pl
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-652-2805

Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center
familyheritage@jhi.pl
ul. Tłomackie 3/5
Phone 48-22-828-5962

Lauder Morasha School
www.lauder-morasha.edu.pl
ul. Wawelberga 10
Phone 48-22-862-6330

Midrasz Magazine
www.midrasz.pl
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-654-3156

Moses Schorr Adult Education Center
www.schorr.edu.pl
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-620-3496

Museum of the History of Polish Jews
(Administration)
www.jewishmuseum.org.pl
ul. Warecka 4/6
Phone 48-22-471-0300

Nożyk Synagogue
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-652-2805

Office of the Chief Rabbi of Poland
Nożyk Synagogue
ul. Twarda 6
Phone 48-22-624-1484

Polish Council of Christians and Jews
www.prchiz.free.ngo.pl

Shalom Foundation
www.shalom.org.pl
Pl. Grzybowski 12
Phone 48-22-620-3036

Sparkpro-Israel
www.sparkpro.org.il

Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation
www.centrumtaubego.org.pl
ul. Tłomackie 3/5
Phone 48-22-831-1021

TSKŻ Socio-Cultural Society of Jews in Poland
www.tskz.pl
Pl. Grzybowski 12/16
Phone 48-22-620-0554

ZOOM Polish-Jewish Young Adult Organization
www.zoom.edu.pl
Al. Jerozolimskie 53, 4th floor

Wrocław

Bente Kahan Foundation
www.fbk.org.pl
ul. Włodkowicka 5
Phone 48-71-341-8947

Jewish Community of Wrocław
www.wroclaw.jewish.org.pl
ul. Włodkowicka 9
Phone 48-71-343-6401

Jewish Studies Department Wrocław University
www.judaistyka.uni.wroc.pl
Pl. Nankiera 15
Phone 48-71-375-2017

Simcha Festival of Jewish Culture
www.simcha.art.pl
ul. Chorzowska 10/2
Phone 48-71-328-0734

Sof Ha Derech Youth Organization
https://www.facebook.com/SofHaDerech

EUROPE

Jewish Heritage Europe
http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/

Rothschild Foundation
(Hanadiv) Europe
www.rothschildfoundation.eu

Ruth Ellen Gruber
http://www.ruthellengruber.com
http://jewish-heritage-travel.blogspot.com/

















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