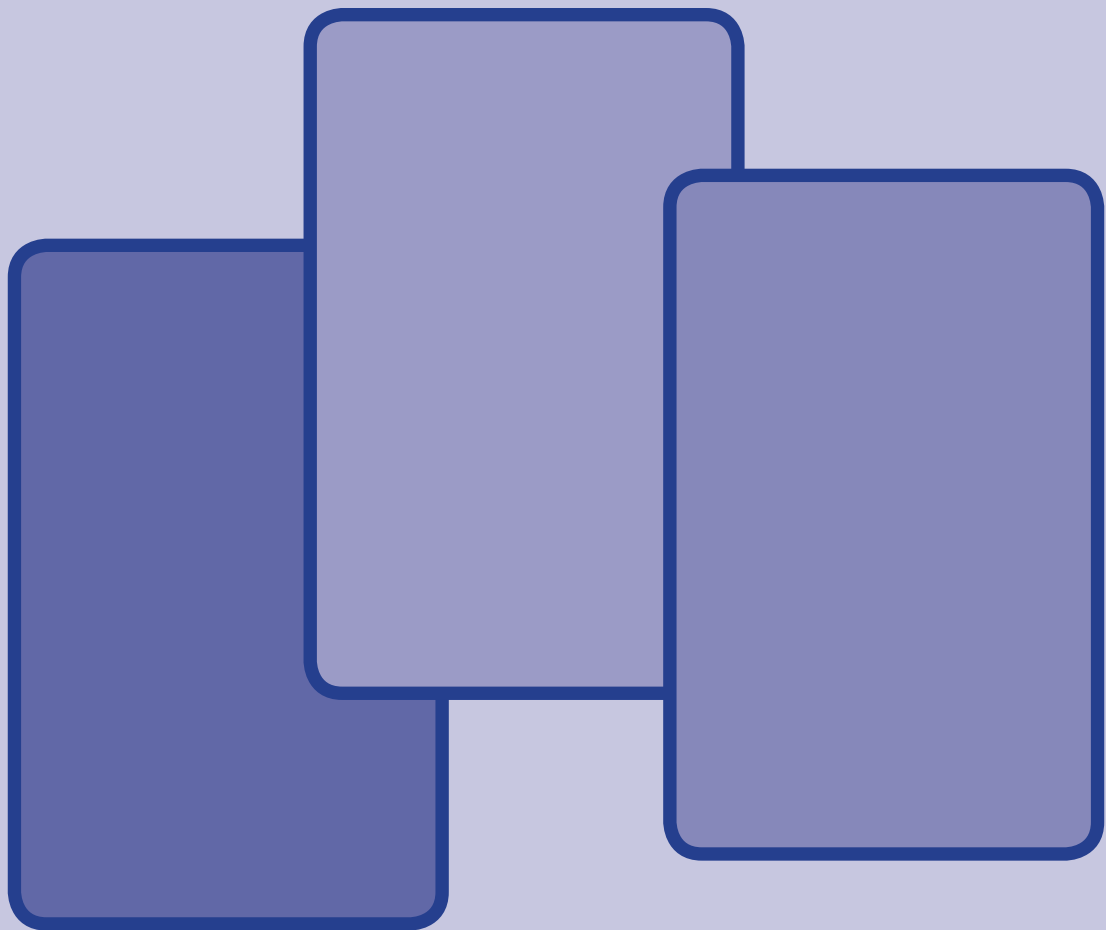


European Jewish Cemeteries: An Interdisciplinary Conference



25–28 October 2015
Vilnius

Venue details

Jewish Community Building
Pylimo St. 4
Phone: +370 5 261 3003

Food

All food at the conference will be kosher under the supervision of Rabbi Krelin and the East European Kosher Certification <http://eekosher.org/>

Hotels

Both hotels (Novotel and Neringa) are a five minute walk away from the venue.

Please note that there might be slight changes to the programme. You will receive a final copy at your allocated hotel in Vilnius.

Welcome

I am delighted to welcome you to Vilnius, and to this Cross-Disciplinary Conference on European Jewish Cemeteries: Theory, Policy, Management and Dissemination. Jewish cemeteries across Europe vary in their condition, protection, size, documentation and preservation and this conference has been designed to bring together a group of experts with 3 core aims:

1. To review the achievements since the conference on Jewish Immovable Heritage in Krakow in 2013 <http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/focus/conferences/working-seminar-jewish-immovable-heritage>. We have asked organisations to share their most important projects, including new trends such as the development of technological tools to assist in the discovery and research of cemeteries.
2. To explore the important issues through a series of roundtable and panel conversations on the central questions and topics affecting the field.
3. To encourage future collaboration between participating organisations, exploring how they can work together, encourage cross-border opportunities and consider further strategic co-operation.

The Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe supports Jewish heritage and is committed to the value of Jewish heritage as a testament to the Jewish traditions and culture that have shaped the Jewish experience for centuries. We are delighted to partner with the Vilnius Jewish community who are graciously hosting us in their community centre. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Faina Kukliansky, the President of the Vilnius Jewish community and her team for all their assistance regarding the logistics of the conference.

It has been a pleasure to ‘meet’ you all via email in the lead-up to the conference, and now I’m delighted to actually meet you in person. Thank you for bringing your experience and knowledge to the conference – we hope it will prove to be an interesting opportunity for an important exchange of ideas and has the potential to create new initiatives to enhance and consolidate the field.

Sophie Hirt

Conference Organiser

Grant Programme Manager

Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe

Conference schedule

Sunday 25 October

Optional walking tour of Jewish built heritage in Vilnius

Three meeting time options: 13.30/14.00/14.30

Meeting point: Cathedral Square

Will include a visit to the Šnipiškės (Shnipishok) Jewish Cemetery

Monday 26 October

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 08.30 – 09.00 | Registration opens
Tea, coffee and pastries |
| 09.00 – 09.15 | Welcome
Faina Kukliansky and Sally Berkovic |
| 09.15 – 10.00 | ‘Admat kodesh’ - Tending and Caring for It. Today’s Needs and Challenges
Professor Michael Brocke |
| 10.00 – 11.00 | The value of a Jewish cemetery
Panel session
Lesley Weiss, Ruth Ellen Gruber and Rabbi Ginsberg
Facilitator: Connie Webber |
| 11.10 – 11.30 | Break |
| 11.30 – 12.30 | Cemetery restoration – perspectives from a landscape architect
Parallel session
Dr Joachim Jacobs |
| | A break in tradition: care for cemeteries before and after the Holocaust
Parallel session
Samuel D. Gruber |
| | Jewish burial customs and practices
Parallel session
Prof. Dr. Falk Wiesemann |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |

- 13.30 – 14.30 Ownership and accessibility of information**
 Panel session
 Zuzana Berankova, Ruta Anulyte and Witold Wrzosinski
 Facilitator: Tobias Ruetnik
- 14.40 – 15.40 Restoration vs Preservation vs Fencing vs Documentation**
 Panel session
 Philip Carmel, Monika Krawczyk, Michael Lozman and Stephen Reece
 Facilitator: Samuel Gruber
- 15.40 – 16.00 Break
- 16.00 – 16.50 Jewish cemeteries as part of European/World heritage**
 Panel session
 Rudolf Klein, Susan Sandler, Herbert Block and
 Dr Michael Studeman HaLevy
 Facilitator: William Gross
- 17.00 – 18.30 Food and drink reception
- 18.30 – 19.30 A focus on Jewish cemeteries in Lithuania**
 Panel session
 Dr. Romas Jarockis, Faina Kukliansky, Gediminas Rutkauskas and
 Ruta Anulyte
 Facilitator: Herbert Block

Tuesday 27 October

- 08.30 – 09.00 Tea, coffee and pastries
- 09.30 – 10.00 The role of the internet**
 Panel session
 Albert Stankowski, Ruth Ellen Gruber, Marla Osborn and
 Michael Tobias
 Facilitator: Witold Wrzosinski
- 10.10 – 11.10 Advances in the use of technology**
 Panel session
 Dr Caroline Sturdy Colls, Dr Leonard Rutgers and Jay Osborn
 Facilitator: Ruth Ellen Gruber
- 11.10 – 11.30 Break
- 11.30 – 12.30 Cemetery restoration – perspectives from a landscape architect**
 Parallel session
 Dr Joachim Jacobs

A Break in Tradition: Care for Cemeteries Before and After the Holocaust

Parallel session

Samuel D. Gruber

Jewish Burial Customs and Practices

Parallel session

Prof. Dr. Falk Wiesemann

12.30 – 13.30

Lunch

13.30 – 14.30

Cemeteries and scholarship

Panel Session

Dr Gerard Nahon, Dr Carsten Wilke, Professor David Malkiel and Anna Klein

Facilitator: Dr Philippe Pierret

14.40 – 15.40

Building stakeholder relationships

Panel session

Beata Nemcova, Tudor Drambarean, Anna Chipczynsk and Annemarie Grosse-Juett

Facilitator: Ruth Ellen Gruber

15.40 – 16.00

Break

16.00 – 16.30

Concluding session

Sally Berkovic

16.30 – 17.30

A Town Called Brzostek: film and presentation

Professor Jonathan Webber

Wednesday 28 October

Bus trip to Jewish Cemeteries in Vilnius and the region:

08.00

Departure from hotel “Novotel”

08.15 – 09.00

Uzupis Old Jewish Cemetery (Olandu str.)

09.15 – 10.15

Vilnius Jewish Cemetery (functioning) (Suderves rd)¹

08.11 – 11.45

Pabrade Jewish Cemetery

12.30 – 13.15

Svencioneliai Jewish Cemetery

13.30 – 14.15

Svencionys Jewish Cemetery

14.30 – 15.00

Summing up (in Svencionys)

16:30

Returning to Vilnius (hotel “Novotel”)

Olena Andronatiy

Director

Lvivs City NGO Student Center Hillel

Ukraine

Ruta Anulyte

Project Manager

**Litvak Cemetery Catalogue MATZEVA
(NGO)**

Lithuania

www.litvak-cemetery.info

Since 2012 Ruta Anulyte has been working as a Litvak Cemetery Catalogue MAZEVA project manager. During this period Ruta has surveyed and documented over 60 Jewish cemeteries of the pre-WW2 Lithuania.

Ruta is pursuing a Master's degree at Vilnius University and is in her final year of Cultural Heritage Preservation program. She holds a B.A. in Cultural History and Anthropology from Vilnius University. Her academic interests include Jewish cemeteries, Jewish burial and mourning traditions, traditional Jewish Symbols, legal (and Halakhic) protection and the preservation practices of historical Jewish cemeteries.

She is also a part-time history researcher and a consultant at the Seduva Jewish Memorial Fund (NGO), where she was involved in the first extensive restoration project of Jewish burial sites in Seduva, Lithuania.

Ruta is also a database manager of the Lutheran Cemetery Register Project (NGO) on a voluntary basis.

Lucia Apostol

**Deputy Director for Development &
Preservation of The Patrimony**

**Federation Of Jewish Communities
Of Romania**

Romania

Lucia Apostol is currently the Deputy Director, in charge of Development and Preservation of Jewish Heritage, at the Center for the Management of the Patrimony, of the The Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM). In this role she has coordinated and completed a number of development projects, as well as preservation projects for the sacred patrimony (synagogues and cemeteries), as part of FEDROM strategic preservation program. She takes particular interest in the preservation of Jewish Sacred Patrimony of Romania, including restitution.

Zuzana Berankova

**Technical Management and Care of
the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague**

**Matana a.s./ Jewish Community of
Prague**

The Czech Republic

www.kehilaprag.cz

Zuzana Berankova is the Department Assistant and the Manager of the Technical Maintenance at the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague where she is responsible for the preservation, management and organization of the renewal. She is involved in other activities such as issues of supplementary financing (grants, donations, gifts), disposal of legal affairs, dealing with bureaux, organizations and people, including foreign countries, cooperation on keeping the heritage sites (circa 270 properties) within the entire CR as background support, support for ancestor search.

Sally Berkovic

Chief Executive

Rothschild Foundation Europe

UK

www.rothschildfoundation.eu

Sally trained as a social worker at Melbourne University, Australia and worked in that field for over 10 years, primarily with children with disabilities and their families. She developed a freelance writing career through her travels, focussing on social issues and contemporary Jewish life. She is the author of *Under My Hat*, which reflects on raising her daughters whilst straddling the tensions between Orthodoxy and modernity as it impacts on women. She is currently the CEO of the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe, a grant-making body focused on academic Jewish studies, preserving Jewish heritage and enhancing Jewish life throughout Europe.

Herbert Block

Special Advisor

**World Jewish Restitution
Organization**

USA

Herbert Block is a Special Advisor to the World Jewish Restitution Organization and is a Member of the US Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. From 1999 until 2015 he was an Assistant Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Previously, he served as Assistant Director for Intergovernmental and Public Affairs for the New York City Independent Budget Office from 1996 to 1999, and was Deputy Director for Intergovernmental Relations at the Corporation for National and Community Service from 1994 to 1995. Mr. Block was Assistant to the Mayor of the City of New York from 1990 to 1993 and a Special Assistant to the Manhattan Borough President from 1986 to 1989. Mr. Block received a B.A. from Columbia University and a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School.

Dan Z. Bondy

Senior researcher

Moses Mendelssohn Akademie, Halberstadt, Germany

Germany

Dan Bondy has researched and documented Jewish cemeteries in Germany for some 30 years. During much of that time he worked closely with Prof. Michael Brocke in Berlin and later in the Steinheim Institute for German Jewish History in Duisburg. Along with others, he was the lead researcher for two major projects in Frankfurt (the old Jewish cemetery Battonnstr) and in Hamburg (Königstrasse, Altona). He is currently engaged as an expert consultant to the Denkmalschutzamt in the nomination process for Unesco World heritage status, and the upcoming project with Fraunhofer IPK Berlin on developing tools to enable the reading of otherwise unreadable inscriptions on old gravestones. He was involved in the creation of the Epidat database, containing some 30,000 inscriptions from over 150 cemeteries in Germany and the Netherlands.

Professor Michael Brocke

Professor Jewish Studies

Steinheim Institute

Germany

www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat

Michael Brocke was born near Worms, South-West Germany and spent his student years in Germany and France. At university he studied French literature and Philosophy in Germany and Vienna and studied Jewish Studies from 1963 to 1968 at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Since the 1980s Michael Brocke has been working with students on the preservation, documentation and research of Jewish monuments, especially cemeteries. Michael Brocke has created an online database 'epidat' at S.L.Steinheim-Institut, which virtually safeguards about 150 cemeteries and 30,000 tombstones.

Philip Carmel

Chief Executive Officer

ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Project

Belgium

Born in Manchester, UK, Philip is Chief Executive Officer of the ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Project, a German-based NGO which is fencing and protecting dozens of Jewish cemeteries across Central and Eastern Europe. After making Aliyah to live on a kibbutz in Northern Israel for 15 years, Philip returned to Europe in 2000 working as an editor on the Europe-Africa desk of Agence France Presse in Paris before becoming France, Belgium and European Institutions correspondent for the New York-based Jewish Telegraphic Agency and Britain's *Jewish Chronicle*. From 2005-2012, he was International Relations Director of the Conference of European Rabbis based in Brussels and founder and Executive Director of Foundation Lo Tishkach, set up by the Claims Conference to create and maintain a database of Jewish burial sites in Europe. From 2012-2015, he served as Special Advisor on European Policy for the European Jewish Congress. He holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in International Marketing and a BSc in Business Management from University College Salford in the UK.

Jasmina Ćirić

President

Jewish community Niš, Serbia

Serbia

www.elmundosefarad.wikidot.com

Jasmina Ćirić lives and works in Niš, Serbia. Jasmina has been President of the Jewish Community of Niš for the past 21 years and has dedicated her life to preserving the historical and cultural heritage of Jews in ex-Yugoslavia. Jasmina has documented 96 Jewish cemeteries throughout Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina. She has written books and articles and organised photo exhibitions concerning the cemeteries and Jewish life in her country. Jasmina is currently working on a newly discovered old mikve in the city of Pirot, Serbia.

Anna Ewa Chipczyńska

President

Jewish Community of Warsaw

Poland

<http://warszawa.jewish.org.pl/en>

Anna Chipczyńska has been President of the Board for the Jewish Community of Warsaw since April 2014 and her educational achievements include a degree in international relations from the Central European University in Budapest (CEU), a post-graduate degree in law from BPP Law School in London as well as a political science degree from Tel Aviv University and a degree in international relations from the University of Warsaw. Anna has worked, among others, for Polish Humanitarian Action, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. Anna's work has included cooperation with institutional partners, co-management of programs for protection of human rights, anti-discrimination activities and humanitarian aid. Anna is also a member of the Founders' Assembly of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and a member of the Council of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland.

Dr Caroline Sturdy Colls

Associate Professor

Staffordshire University

UK

www.staffs.ac.uk/archaeology

Dr Caroline Sturdy Colls is an Associate Professor of Forensic Archaeology and Genocide Investigation within the Forensic and Crime Science department at Staffordshire University. Caroline is also the co-founder and Research Lead for the Centre of Archaeology at the same institution. Her current research focuses on the application of novel forensic and archaeological techniques to the investigation of the Holocaust. Caroline has led the first scientific investigations at Treblinka extermination and labour camps in Poland, Semlin concentration camp in Serbia, and the labour camps and fortifications in Alderney in the Channel Islands. She is particularly interested in the ethics surrounding the investigation of Holocaust landscapes and has developed a unique non-invasive methodology so as to cater for the scientific, ethical and religious aspects regarding investigations at sites of mass murder. She is the author of a number of publications including two recent monographs: *Holocaust Archaeologies: Approaches and Future Directions* and *Forensic Approaches to Buried Remains*. She is also a practicing forensic archaeologist and regularly works with UK Police forces on missing persons investigations.

Dario Disegni

President

**Fondazione per i Beni Culturali
Ebraici in Italia
(Italian Jewish Heritage Foundation)**

Italy

www.beniculturaliebraici.it

Dario Disegni's professional career was mainly in the Foundations world, where he was in charge of Cultural Affairs in one of the largest European Foundations, the Turin based Compagnia di San Paolo for more than 20 years. He was also Chairman of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) in Brussels and of the European Cultural Laboratory (LAB) in Amsterdam. Today Dario is President of the Mangini Museum in Milan, Board member of the Turin Egyptian Museum (the second largest in the world), of the National Risorgimento Museum and of many other Foundations and cultural institutions. He is also President of the Turin Jewish Community.

Tudor Dramborean

**Expert in implementation of Local
Action Plans**

Alba Iulia Municipality

Romania

**[http://www.apulum.ro/index.php/
site/en](http://www.apulum.ro/index.php/site/en)**

Mr Tudor Dramborean has a Bachelors' Degree in International Relations and European Studies and a Master's Degree in Sustainable Regional Development. He has four years experience in the European Parliament in Brussels where he has worked extensively for three Members of the European Parliament (two members from Romania and one from United Kingdom). Since 2012 Tudor has been working in the Municipality of Alba Iulia city in Romania and he has also been collaborating with a local NGO on social and economic issues. Tudor Dramborean's main work is related to the elaboration, implementation and management of projects financed through non-reimbursable funding.

Rabbi Abraham Ginsberg

Executive Director

C.P.J.C.E.

UK

www.1000yearsofjewishheritage.com

Rabbi Abraham Ginsberg was born in 1968 in London, and has lived and studied in London at the Mesifita Talmudical College, where he received his degree in Talmudical Studies. After his marriage to Lea Bollag of Zurich in January 1990, he continued advanced studies in Israel where he received his diploma and was ordained as Rabbi and lecturer. Following his return to London in 1998, he was appointed as Executive Director to the CPJCE, where he established close co-operation with various local and national Government leaders and was active in the passing of the resolution by the Council of Europe, in 2015, to formally recognise the CPJCE as the official body to consult regarding issues concerning Jewish cemeteries in Europe.

William Gross

Director

Gross Family Collection

Israel

Born in the United States, William made Aliyah with his family to Tel Aviv in 1969. He has had a passion for collecting Jewish ritual objects throughout his life, which has led to William traveling extensively to collect and research Jewish objects, synagogues and cemeteries in numerous countries for more than 50 years. The Gross Family Collection has been represented in more than 150 public exhibitions throughout the world. He has written more than 30 contributions to books, catalogues and journals and lectures widely regarding his view of Judaic objects as documents illuminating Jewish history.

Annemarie Große-Jütte

**Member ASF & Volunteer Holocaust
Ctr, Moscow**

ASF

Germany

Annemarie Große-Jütte has an education in Social Sciences (Eastern European Affairs) and Slavonic Studies and studied at the Ruhr-University, Bochum. Annemarie has worked as a Research Officer at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) and as a Research Officer at the Research Institute of the German Council for Foreign Relations (DGAP), Bonn. Annemarie has been a volunteer for Action Reconciliation – Service for Peace (ASF), and the Russian Research and Educational Centre “Holocaust” in Moscow.

Ruth Ellen Gruber

Writer and Co-ordinator

Jewish Heritage Europe

USA

www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu

Ruth Ellen Gruber has chronicled Jewish developments in Europe for more than 25 years and also studies the European fascination with the American Wild West, its mythology and its music. She co-ordinates the web site www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu and in Spring 2015 was the Distinguished Visiting Chair in Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston, SC. Her books include “Virtually Jewish: Re-inventing Jewish Culture in Europe;” “National Geographic Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Eastern Europe”; “Letters from Europe (and Elsewhere)”, and “Upon the Doorposts of Thy House: Jewish Life in East-Central Europe, Yesterday and Today.”

Samuel D. Gruber

Director

Gruber Heritage Global

USA

http://works.bepress.com/samuel_gruber/

Samuel D. Gruber is a cultural resource consultant active in the documentation, protection, preservation and presentation of Jewish cultural and historic sites. For 25 years he has participated in cemetery and synagogue restoration projects. As Director of the World Monuments Fund's Jewish Heritage Program (1989-1996) and Research Director of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad (1998-2008), he organised country-wide surveys of Jewish cemeteries in many countries. Gruber is President of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments and has been Lecturer in Jewish Studies at Syracuse University since 1994, and has frequently taught elsewhere.

Sophie Hirt

Grant Programmes Manager

Rothschild Foundation Europe

UK

www.rothschildfoundation.eu

Sophie is responsible for the Museums grants programme and Heritage-related projects at RFHE where she has been a Grant Programmes Manager for almost three years. Sophie has a degree in Politics and History from the University of Nottingham, where she specialised in the history of Jewish relations in London up until WW1. Prior to working at the Foundation, Sophie was a researcher for a member of the UK government.

Dr Joachim Jacobs

Senior Partner

**Dr. Jacobs & Huebinger Office for
landscape planning and garden
restoration**

Germany

www.jacobs.huebinger.de

Dr Joachim Jacobs studied landscape architecture in 1980 and received his PHD from the Technical University Berlin. Since 1992 Dr. Jacobs has specialised in garden restoration. Commissions have included the Federal and several State Governments of Germany as well as other private and public institutions. A focus of the work is on cemetery projects for Jewish communities in East and North Germany and Berlin. Work is steadily accompanied by numerous publications in journals and books such as 'Houses of Life. Jewish Cemeteries of Europe' (Frances Lincoln 2008). He has been on the board of Berlin's Pestalozzistrasse synagogue for many years.

Dr. Romas Jarockis

Vice Minister

**Ministry of Culture of the Republic of
Lithuania**

Lithuania

After graduating from Vilnius University as archaeologist–museologist in 1990 Romas Jarockis continued studying at the Lithuanian Institute of History as well as Universities in Kaunas, Lund and Stockholm and gained his Doctorate in 2001. Romas Jarockis' academic interests are settlements' archaeology, theory of urbanisation processes and development of settling in late Iron Age and Middle Ages. Romas Jarockis worked as a researcher in the Lithuanian Institute of History and the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology (Klaipeda University) and as lecturer and docent at the University of Klaipeda, Faculty of Humanities. Romas Jarockis was appointed as the Vice Minister of Culture in 2013.

Dr Sharman Kadish

Director

Heritage UK

UK

www.jewish-heritage-uk.org

Dr Sharman Kadish was born in London, educated at University College London, St Antony's College Oxford and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and has taught at the Universities of London and Manchester. She has been active in preservation of the Jewish built heritage for almost 30 years and is the author of a number of books on Anglo-Jewish history and heritage, including companion architectural guides *Jewish Heritage in England* (first edn. English Heritage 2006; revised and expanded 2nd edn. retitled *Jewish Heritage in Britain and Ireland*, Historic England 2015) and *Jewish Heritage in Gibraltar* (Spire Books 2007). Her monograph *The Synagogues of Britain and Ireland: An Architectural and Social History* (Yale University Press 2011) was shortlisted for the American Society of Historians of British Art Prize in 2013.

Anna Klein

Student; Jewish studies

Hebrew College, Newton Centre, MA

USA

A native of Poland, Anna Szajnert-Klein followed the path of a wandering Jew. After graduating from the University in Lodz, with a MA in psychology, she emigrated to Belgium where she studied computer programming. In the US, she specialised in substance abuse counselling. In 2015, Anna graduated from Duke University with an MA in Liberal Studies. Her thesis, *Jewish Cemeteries in Poland as a Testimony to the State of Affairs*, confirms her life-long interest and connection to the land of her ancestors. Anna is currently enrolled at the Hebrew College, Boston, in the Jewish Studies programme.

Rudolf Klein

Professor of architectural history

Szent István University

Hungary

Prof. Rudolf Klein (1955), Dr. Eng., Dr. Phil., architect, is a theoretician and historian of 19th and 20th century architecture. His special interest is architecture created for or by Jews: Ashkenazi synagogues in Central and Eastern Europe, Jewish cemeteries, Jewish houses and quarters, Judaism's influence on architectural modernism, post-modernism and deconstruction. He is author of nine and co-author of three books in the field of the architectural history of modern times. He has published over 40 reviewed papers. He teaches at Szent István University, YBL Miklós Faculty of Architecture, Budapest.

Monika Krawczyk

CEO

Fodz

Poland

Monika Krawczyk, attorney-at-law with independent practice in Warsaw. Since 1999 she has been a member of the Governmental Regulatory Commission on Jewish Property Restitution. Since 2004 she has been Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (www.fodz.pl), an organization established by the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland to carry on the restitution process, manage the returned properties and protect the historical heritage, which is done in close cooperation with the Chief Rabbi of Poland.

Faina Kukliansky

Chair of the Community

Lithuanian Jewish community

Lithuania

Faina Kukliansky was born in Vilnius, to a Lithuanian Jewish family who were survivors of the Holocaust. She graduated from the Faculty of Law at Vilnius University, as well as from the Criminology Research Institute in Moscow. Faina Kukliansky was elected chairperson of the Lithuanian Jewish Community in 2013. She is also a member of the Vilnius International and National Commercial Arbitration, as well as the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists. She is a partner at a law firm, mostly practising in the field of restoration of ownership rights. In 2013, Faina Kukliansky was awarded with the Order of Merit to Lithuania by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Dr Michael Lozman

Founder

**Restoration Of Eastern European
Jewish Cemeteries , Inc.**

USA

Restorejcem.org

Dr Michael Lozman's expertise is somewhat unique in that he takes college students from the United States to Eastern Europe to restore Jewish cemeteries. It is a given that this work would not be necessary if not for the Holocaust. Dr Lozman's team selects those cemeteries in the most serious condition and restores them by installing an iron fence around the perimeter, righting grave stones, removing debris, and archiving the names found. While the goal is the preservation of the cemetery, the educational benefits about the Holocaust are far reaching. The students first engage in Holocaust studies, visit concentration camps and Holocaust memorials, and then become involved in the hands on activities required in the restoration. They do home stays in the villages and meet with local school children, enhance the purpose of their presence to the people of the village, and the country (this work has received national and international media attention). This unusual combination of restoration and education sends a message to the country and the international community that the Holocaust is forever meaningful and must not be forgotten. 13 Jewish cemeteries (10 in Belarus and three in Lithuania) have been completed to date, with more planned. Each one has changed the lives of the students involved. This approach to teaching Holocaust history, while at the same time giving students an opportunity to do something for the murdered Jews, is an important step forward and deserves a larger audience.

Lucy Lisowska

President

**Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej
Polska Izrael**

www.bialystok.jewish.org.pl

Lucy Lisowska is President of Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej Polska-Izrael in Bialystok, Poland, and representative of Bialystok and Podlaskie to the Jewish Community of Warsaw. Lucy Lisowska has cared for Jewish heritage in Bialystok including coordinating the memorial for the Bema Street Jewish cemetery and restoration efforts of Bagnowka Jewish cemetery, the largest in Northeastern Poland. For six years, Lucy has arranged Summer camps to restore Bagnowka, bringing university students from the EU and US to work on the cemetery. Before these Summer camps, Lucy organised cleanup efforts on this cemetery, involving local school children, and also oversaw the rebuilding of the cemetery walls. Her work in Bialystok also includes organizing Zachor Jewish Cultural Festival, with an academic conference, educational school programs about Judaism for children, teenagers and adults, and directing financial matters related to these projects.

Professor David Malkiel

Professor

Bar Ilan University

Israel

Professor David Malkiel is a historian, engaged in the study of Jewish culture in the Middle Ages and early modern era (roughly, 8th to 18th centuries), with a special interest in Italy. His Ph.D. dissertation is from Harvard University, 1988. Professor Malkiel has published five books, one about Medieval Ashkenaz and the others about early modern Italy. He has edited a journal (*Pe'amim*) and a volume of essays. His current project is a study of “Shadarim,” Rabbinic fund-raisers from Ottoman Palestine.

Rūta Matonienė

**Deputy Director of Urban
Development Department**

Vilnius City Municipal Government

Lithuania

Rūta’s professional career commenced as an Architect–Chief specialist in Urban Development Department of the Vilnius Municipality in 1999. Since 2004 Rūta has been Head of Development in the Planning Division. Since 2011 - Deputy Director of the Urban development department. Main responsibilities related with coordination of strategic urban planning/regeneration development projects, implementation of new brownfield/greenfield development projects, Explicit experience in management of projects’ financed by EU Structural funds on behalf of City of Vilnius; Leadership of projects, financed by various EU programs, e.g. INTERREG IIB, IV C, URBACT, INTELLIGENT ENERGY and a leading role in the number of Municipality’s working groups, since 2015 – Member of the Board at the Municipal company “Vilniaus Planas”

Andrea Morpurgo

Board Member

**Fondazione per i Beni Culturali
Ebraici in Italia (Italian Jewish
Heritage Foundation)**

**Fondazione Beni Culturali Ebraici in
Italia – Onlus**

Italy

Andrea is an architect and architectural historian. He graduated from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, then moved to Holland where he obtained a Masters in Architecture at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and later his PhD in History of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Polytechnic of Turin. From 2001 to 2012 he has lectured on the History of Architecture at the University of Bologna. He is professor at IED Master of Madrid, board member of FBCEI (Foundation of Jewish Cultural Heritage in Italy) and author of the book *Il cimitero ebraico in Italia*. Storia e architettura di uno spazio identitario (Quodlibet, 2014).

G rard Nahon

Directeur d tudes honoraire

**Ecole Pratiue des Hautes Etudes,
Sorbonne**

Section des sciences religieuses

France

G rard Nahon was elected in 1977 as Directeur d tudes   l Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris-Sorbonne), Department of Religious Studies, where he taught medieval and modern Judaism until 2000. He served from 1980 to 1996 as Director of the Revue des Etudes Juives. He is currently Director of the “Collection de la Revue des Etudes Juives” (56 volumes published from 1980). He is the author, co-author and editor of numerous books including Incriptions h bra ques et juives de France m di vale (Paris 1986, book awarded by the Institut de France) Menasseh ben Israel, The Hope of Israel, The translation of Moses Wall 1652 (Oxford 1987), Rachi et la culture juive de la France du Nord au Moyen Age (Paris 1997), La Terre sainte au temps des Kabbalistes 1492-1592 (Paris, 1997), M tropolles et p riph ries sefarades d Occident. Kairouan, Amsterdam, Bayonne, Bordeaux, J rusalem (Paris, 1993), Juifs et juda sme   Bordeaux (Bordeaux, 2003), Epigraphie et sot riologie. L Epitaphier des “ Portugais “ de Bordeaux (1728-1768) (under press). In 1995 he was awarded of the Jerusalem Prize by the Municipality of Jerusalem. In 2012 He received   Jubelschrift edited and published by Dani le Iancu-Agou and Carol Iancu.

Dr Beata Nemcova

Director

**Informacne centrum mladych -
Youth Information Centre in Bansk 
Stiavnica, NGO**

Slovakia

www.zidovskycintorin.sk

Dr Beata Nemcova is the author of the training tour guide publications *Restoration of Jewish Cemetery in Bansk  Stiavnica*, *History of Jewish Community in Bansk  Stiavnica*, *Education on history of the Community*.

Agnieszka Nieradko

**Project Coordinator/Head of the
Foundation**

**“Rabbinical Commission for Jewish
Cemeteries in Poland/Zapomniane
Foundation (The Forgotten
Foundation)**

Poland

Agnieszka Nieradko studied applied linguistics and philosophy. Between 2006–2008 Agnieszka worked as the assistant of the Chief Rabbi of Poland. In 2009 she joined the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland where she coordinates the project researching Holocaust graves. In 2014 together with other members of the RCC, Agnieszka Nieradko created Zapomniane Foundation (The Forgotten Foundation) whose aim is to preserve and commemorate forgotten Jewish war graves.

Jay Osborn

Program Manager

Rohatyn Jewish Heritage

Poland

<http://rohatynjewishheritage.org/>

Jay Osborn is a former mechanical product development engineer for several computer companies including Sun Microsystems and Apple. He is named on twenty US patents and four UK patents covering structures, thermal management, vibration, acoustics, sensors, and test engineering. Currently, he is the creator and volunteer manager of the online Gesher Galicia Map Room, assembling and presenting historical cadastral maps scanned at archives in Europe for free use in research by historians and genealogists. For Gesher Galicia he has presented at conferences organized by ICARUS (archives) and IAJGS (genealogy), has published in journals and conference proceedings, and is collaborating with the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews on a joint mapping project for their Resource Center. He is also currently the volunteer program manager for Rohatyn Jewish Heritage, responsible for web site development and heritage project planning.

Marla Raucher Osborn

**Manager of Archive-Genealogical
Research Department**

**Foundation for the Preservation of
Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ)**

Poland

<http://fodz.pl/>

Marla Raucher Osborn is a former California attorney and lead for the Rohatyn Jewish heritage project. She has written and lectured internationally, including at the 2013 Krakow conference on “Managing Immovable Jewish Heritage”. Marla works at the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ) in Warsaw. She is advisor to the Board of Gesher Galicia and a Director of Remembrance & Reconciliation, partner of FODZ in the maintenance of the Przemysl Jewish cemetery. Marla has had collaborative projects with the Galicia Jewish Museum, Jewish Historical Institute, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and L’viv Center For Urban History of East Central Europe. Marla most recently lectured at the 35th annual International Jewish Genealogy Conference in Jerusalem (IAJGS) on the use of cadastral maps for genealogy and identifying prewar Jewish community-owned heritage sites.

Dr Philippe Pierret

Curator

Jewish Museum

Belgium

From French and Belgian nationalities, Philippe Pierret is a graduate of the Jewish Studies Institute -Martin Buber- ULB, Brussels and the École pratique des hautes études (fifth section of religious sciences), Paris / Sorbonne; Doctor of history of religions and systems of thought, the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris. Curator at the Jewish Museum Belgium (MJB) in Brussels since 1998. He is also a scientific collaborator of the Free University of Brussels, associate researcher at the CNRS, in Montpellier – Nouvelle Gallia Judaica, a researcher at the Martin Buber - Institute for Jewish Studies in Brussels and Associate Fellow at the Foundation for Contemporary Memory. His research and publications focus on the social and religious history of Judaism in Belgium and France in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Founder and scientific director of the Franco-Belgian-Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Summer camps program in Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste (Berlin) for the restoration of ancient Jewish cemeteries, he inventoried and restored the Jewish cemeteries in Arlon (B), La Ferte-sous-Jouarre (F), Vantoux (F), Clausen (GDL), Boulay (F), Créhange (F) and Bayonne (F). He is also the creator and editor of MuséOn, the annual review of art and history of the Jewish Museum of Belgium.

Daniel Polakovič

Historian

The Jewish Museum in Prague

The Czech Republic

<http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/>

Daniel Polakovič studied Jewish and Cuneiform Studies and History at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. From 2003 he completed a Postgraduate Programme in Jewish Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. Since 2000 he has been a research worker in the Department for Jewish History of the Jewish Museum in Prague. Since 2007 Daniel Polakovič has been a collaborator on the grant project “Symbolics of Jewish Sepulchral Art in the Czech Lands” (The National Institute for the Preservation of Historical Monument in Prague). He is a member of the international research committee for Medieval Hebrew Mss. Fragments (École Pratique des Hautes Études at Sorbonne, Paris).

Max Polonovski

Conservateur général du patrimoine

Ministry of Culture, France

France

Max Polonovski is the General Curator of the Jewish Heritage at the Ministry of Culture (France), Director of the Museum of Plans-reliefs in Paris, member of Committee “Memory and Transmission” at the Fondation pour la Memoire de la Shoah, member of the International Team of Experts for the Management Plan of the former Camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, member of the Board of Governors of Jewishgen.

Ruta Puisyte

Project Manager

**NGO Litvak Cemetery Catalogue
MATZEVA**

Lituania

www.litvak-cemetery.info

The Vilnius Yiddish Institute (VYI) is an international research and teaching centre based at Vilnius University, Lithuania. The institute is dedicated to the documentation, preservation and education in the field of East European Jewish languages, literature, culture and history. The VYI provides a wide range of university courses for the students of Vilnius University throughout the academic year. The VYI publishes original research on the history, linguistics, philology, folklore, and the arts of the East European Jewry. It produces educational material and carries out seminars on anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, discrimination, human rights and tolerance for schools and other societal circles in Lithuania and internationally. The VYI launched field expeditions in Lithuania, Belarus, Latvia and Ukraine to seek out, interview and videograph the last Holocaust survivors and non-Jewish witnesses to the Holocaust. The VYI provides colloquiums, exhibitions, documentary films, library, film and music festivals and an array of resources and events to strengthen the primary aims of research and education.

Steven D. Reece

President

The Matzevah Foundation

USA

Steven D. Reece worked as professional photojournalist before entering religious and charitable work. He currently leads The Matzevah Foundation, Inc. (TMF), a non-profit organization established by a group of Christians that seeks to remember, preserve, and honor the Jewish heritage of Poland through caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries. TMF cooperates closely with the Rabbinical Council for Matters of Jewish Cemeteries and the Jewish Community of Poland and partners directly with the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage. Steven is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Presently, he is a candidate for the PhD in Leadership at Andrews University.

Tobias Ruetenik

Assistant Professor

Weissensee cemetery project

Jewish Museum, Belgium

Germany

Tobias Ruetenik studied architecture at Berlin Institute of Technology and became assistant professor at the Department for History of Architecture and Urban Design, Berlin Institute of Technology. From 2010-2012 he completed a comprehensive Inventory of Jewish Cemetery Berlin-Weißensee for the preparation of a UNESCO World Heritage Nomination. In 2012 he completed his PHD in History of Architecture and Historic Building Research and since 2012 has been assistant professor (postdoc) at the Department for History of Architecture and Urban Design, Berlin Institute of Technology. From 2012-2015 his Research project "Spatial Relations - Visualisation of Topographic Small-Scale Structures" (funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Science), focused on the digital inventory and the geo-spatial visualisation of Jewish cemeteries in Hamburg-Altona and the Rhine-Ruhr-Region for scientific purposes.

Leonard Rutgers

Full professor

**Dept. of History and Art History,
Utrecht University**

The Netherlands

**[http://leonardrutgers.nl/research/
venosa/](http://leonardrutgers.nl/research/venosa/)**

Leonard V. Rutgers holds a chair in late antiquity history and archaeology at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He is best known for his groundbreaking work in the Jewish and early Christian catacombs of Rome as published in *Nature* and the *Journal of Archaeological Science*. His book-length and award-winning publications include *The Jews of Ancient Rome. Evidence for Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora*, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism*, and *Making Myths. Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation*. He is currently finishing a new book on the Jewish catacombs of Rome and conducting a major international research project on the Jewish communities of the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean, entitled *Reconfiguring Diaspora*.

Gediminas Rutkauskas

Director

Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency

Lithuania

Gediminas's professional career commenced as Architect-Inspector for Vilnius County at the State Inspection for Cultural Heritage in 1991. 1993-1996 acted as a Head of International Affairs at the Dept. for Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture. He was an authorized Representative of Lithuania at the Council's of Europe, Committee for Cultural Heritage (CC/PAT) in 1994-1996. 1997-1999 Regional Coordinator for ICCROM (www.iccrom.org) Integrated Territorial and Urban Conservation Program for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine. Director of Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency since 1998. He acted as international ICOMOS expert in the frames of technical advisory missions in Tbilisi (Georgia) in 2004 and Baku (Azerbaijan) in 2004, 2007 and 2013. He actively takes part at the Organization of World Heritage Cities since 2000. He is a Focal Point / National Coordinator for UNESCO Periodic Monitoring of Vilnius World Heritage Site. He is a member of ICOMOS National Committee.

Susan Sandler

Foreign Affairs Officer

**Office of the Special Envoy for
Holocaust Issues at the State
Department**

USA

Susan Sandler is a Foreign Affairs Officer in the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, which is responsible for developing and implementing U.S. policy pertaining to the return of Holocaust-era assets to their rightful owners, compensation for wrongs committed during the Holocaust, and Holocaust remembrance. She joined the Special Envoy's staff in 2011 after residing abroad for twenty years in Africa, Asia, Europe, The Middle East, North America, and The West Indies. A licensed attorney, her diverse work experience encompasses corporate, environmental and development law, democracy and legal reform, development aid, human rights, citizen rights and discrimination. In addition, Ms. Sandler has worked for the European Commission, in the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry's International Affairs Unit in Brussels, Belgium. Ms. Sandler is an adjunct professor in the Maryland university system, where she teaches international business to MBA students. She earned an MBA and a Juris Doctor from Drake University, a Certificate of International Business from Georgetown, and an LL.M. (With Distinction) in European Union Commercial Law from the University of Leicester. She speaks English, French, and Japanese.

Duvid Singer

Director/Treasurer

**American Friends of Mosdos Harav
Koppel Reich**

USA

heritageanddiscovery.com

Duvid Singer is presently involved in the reclamation and rebuilding the ohel in Mielec, Poland. He works with architects and designers, arranging permits, attending to legal issues and reviewing estimates. His previous projects have included the erection of monument in Rzepiennik Strzyzewski, Poland; rebuilding of ohel in Gorlice; feasibility research of completion of cemetery wall of Przedborz and Przemyśl in Poland. In 2014 and 2015 Duvid has worked on the construction of the monument of mass grave of Jews murdered in Jasna, Poland and was responsible for the reclamation and return and restoration of the Synagogue of the Divrei Chaim in Nowy Sącz. He has negotiated a 30 year lease on the synagogue and established a fully functional guest house & mikva. Duvid Singer has directed educational youth groups in visits to Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia & Czech Republic and has been awarded a medal of valor by the Polish Minister of Culture. Further projects have included rebuilding ohel in Parysow, restoration of road to old cemetery in Radoszyce, rebuilt cemetery wall. He has organised the 11th & 12th Siyum Hashas celebration in Yeshiva in Lublin, erected matzeiva in Warzyce military cemetery for mass grave of murdered Jews of Jasło, erected Mateiva, replaced fence of Jewish cemetery in Pilzno Poland in Sacueni, Romania and Hajdunanas, Hungary.

Albert Stankowski

Manager, Digital Collections

**Museum of The History Polish of
Jews POLIN**

Poland

Albert Stankowski is a Polish historian and a member of the Jewish Historical Institute Association in Poland, the originator of the Virtual Shtetl, the Head of the Digital Collection Department of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. In 2001, Stankowski lectured on contemporary history and Polish-Jewish relations at the University of Warsaw. From 2003 to 2007, Stankowski coordinated the 'Memory Programme' (Program Pamięć) of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Warsaw (FODŻ). Stankowski is also the originator of the 'Virtual Shtetl' international multimedia project, run by the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which he coordinated from 2007 to 2011. Since 2011 he has been a member of the Jewish Historical Institute Association.

Iva Steinova

**Documentation Specialist and
Technical Management and Care of
Cemeteries**

**Matana a.s./ Jewish Community of
Prague**

The Czech Republic

Michael Studeman-Halevy

Senior lecturer

**Institut für die Geschichte der
deutschen Juden, Hamburg**

Germany

www.igdj-hh.de

Michael Studeman -Halevy's major fields are in Linguistics, Jewish Studies and special fields in Judeo-Spanish, Jewish-Romance languages, Sefardic, Epigraphy and Iconography. Michael Studeman -Halevy has studied at the University of Hamburg, University of Lisbon, University of Bucharest, University of Perugia, University of Freiburg and University of Lausanne. In 2013 he was awarded the Prix Alberti Benveniste for Sefardic Studies (Paris).

Michael Tobias

**Expert in implementation of Local
Action Plans**

JewishGen, Inc

Scotland

<http://www.jewishgen.org>

Michael Tobias holds a BSc Honours in Mathematics and Physics and qualified as a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries in 1986. In 2012 he completed a Masters Degree in Genealogical, Palaeographic and Heraldic Studies at Strathclyde University. He is a co-founder of Jewish Records Indexing – Poland and Vice President, Programming of JewishGen, Inc. He was Database matching consultant to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC). Michael assisted Steve Morse with his Ellis Island developments. He has contributed to various Journals, Radio and TV Programmes, including "Who Do You Think You Are" both in the UK and USA. He has spoken at many conferences including the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) annual conference since 1996 and was awarded their "Lifetime Achievement" award in Washington in 2011.

Martynas Užpelkis

**Founding managing director;
Representative for heritage
preservation**

**Non-profit organization 'KULTUR';
Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak)
Community**

Lithuania

Martynas Užpelkis holds a Master's degree in history-ethnology from Vilnius University (1997) and MSc in Responsible Tourism Management from Leeds Metropolitan University (2012). Since 2005 Martynas Užpelkis has run his non-profit consultancy for sustainable tourism development and heritage preservation, serving local and national authorities, museums, protected areas and other heritage organizations. Since 2013 Martynas Užpelkis has acted as the Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community's representative for heritage preservation.

Dr Jurgita Verbickienė

Director and Assoc. Prof

**Centre for Studies of the Culture and
History of East European Jews and
Vilnius University faculty of History**

Lituania

[www. zydai.lt](http://www.zydai.lt)

Dr Jurgita Verbickienė's PhD topic was "Jews in the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: aspects of coexistence", and is Associate Professor of Vilnius university Faculty of History, Head of the specialization "History and anthropology of ethnic minorities." Jurgita's interests include Jewish history and culture in Lithuania, Jewish heritage and problems of its representation, understanding of Jewish culture in Lithuanian society (in different historical periods and now), process of recognition of Jewish culture in the interwar Lithuanian society, sociocultural history of Lithuanian towns, historical demography of Jewish community. Jurgita has participated in the following projects related to the preservation of Jewish heritage: actualization of Jewish heritage and its representation using mobile technologies, commission of rebuilding Pakruojis synagogue and has worked on the international project "Lietuvos sinagogos. Sąvadas" to create *Synagogues in Lithuania*. Catalogue, vol.1, A-M, (in coop. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, Sergey Kravtsov, Vladimir Levin, Giedre Mickūnaite).

Connie Webber

Managing Editor

**Littman Library of Jewish Civilization
Poland**

Connie Webber has been involved in heritage-related projects in Poland since 1992. In 1994 she became a council member of the Institute for Polish Jewish Studies (London) and in 1998 she was awarded the Silver Cross of the Order of Merit for services to Polish-Jewish relations. In 2011 she moved to Krakow, Poland, where she has served on the board of the JCC since 2013. Together with her husband Jonathan, she facilitated the restoration of the abandoned Jewish cemetery in the small town of Brzostek, Poland. Professionally she is the managing editor of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Professor Jonathan Webber

Professor

Jagiellonian University

Poland

http://brzostek.pl/galeria/96_re-konsekracja_cmentarza/index.html;
www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org

Jonathan Webber, a British social anthropologist specialising in Jewish studies and Holocaust studies, is currently a professor at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, having previously taught at the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham. His academic specialities focus on modern Jewish society and the Polish Jewish heritage. He is the founding chairman of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków; and he was a founder member of the International Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, on which he served for 23 years. His “action research” has included the restoration of the abandoned Jewish cemetery in the small town of Brzostek, Poland.

Lesley Weiss

Chair

**US commission for the preservation
of America's heritage abroad**

USA

www.heritageabroad.gov

In January 2013, Lesley Weiss was appointed Chair of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad by President Obama, having been a Member since 2011. The Commission is charged by law with identifying cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Central and Eastern Europe that are associated with the heritage of U.S. citizens. It also seeks assurances from governments that these cultural properties will be protected and preserved. In October 2014 Ms. Weiss served as a member of the U.S. Presidential Delegation to the Opening of POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and the Presidential Delegation to the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 2013. She is a member of the U.S. Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Ms. Weiss is also Deputy Director of the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry. (NCSEJ) She monitors compliance by the governments of the region in the areas of free emigration and religious and cultural rights. A daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Ms. Weiss accompanied her mother, Irene Weiss to the 70th commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz in January 2015 and was with her mother, a co-plaintiff in the trial of former SS Sergeant Oskar Groening in May 2015 in Lueneberg Germany.

Prof. Dr. Falk Wiesemann

Professor of History (retired)

**Heinrich-Heine-Universität
Düsseldorf**

Germany

Prof. Dr. Falk Wiesemann is a retired Professor for Modern History at the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf. As an employee of the “Institute for Contemporary History” in München he has worked on the social and regional history of National Socialism. Here he edited the German version of the “Pinkas Hakehillot – Bavaria”. Since 1979 in Düsseldorf, he turned to the history and the material culture of rural Jews. Another special focus is on Jewish book history. He curated exhibitions of Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and printed books. Among his bibliographical works “Jewish Cemeteries, Death, Burial and Mourning from the Period of Hellenism to the Present” was honoured by the Association of Jewish Libraries AJL with the Bibliography Award 2005.

Carsten Wilke

Associate Professor

Central European University

Hungary

<http://medievalstudies.ceu.edu/people/carsten-l-wilke>

Carsten L. Wilke is Associate Professor of Jewish Thought and Culture at Central European University Budapest. He obtained a PhD in Jewish Studies from the University of Cologne and a diploma in Religious Studies from the EPHE in Paris, both in 1994. Among his publications on the medieval and modern history of European Jewry are *The Marrakesh Dialogues* (Leiden, Brill, 2014) and *Histoire des juifs portugais* (2nd ed. Paris, Chandeigne, 2015). He has presented his research on cemetery inscriptions in “Medieval Hebrew Inscriptions: Towards a European Database,” *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* 7: 2009-2011 (2013), pp. 147-172.

Tomek Wisniewski

Member and Founder

Stowarzyszenie Szukamy Polski

Poland

www.bagnowka.com

Tomek Wisniewski is a historian, journalist, writer, filmmaker, and educator. Tomek founded the society “We are in search of Poland.” Tomek has been published in many Polish outstanding periodicals and newspapers and has created websites including www.bagnowka.com. He has received several awards including awards from Israel State as well as one of the most outstanding awards in Poland, the Golger award.

Witold Wrzosinski

Founder, board-member

Foundation for Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland

Poland

www.cemetery.jewish.org.pl

Witold Wrzosinski was born in 1980 in Warsaw and holds an MA in Hebrew Studies from the Warsaw University. He runs Avanim, a Polish Jewish genealogy research service, as well as Foundation for Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries, which has indexed and published over 100,000 inscriptions from 90 cemeteries all over Poland, complete with transcriptions, photographs and locations. Witold has taken part in dozens of educational programs and has been publishing on Polish Jewish matters in popular and scholarly publications. He also created the Hebrew transcription system for the Core Exhibition at the recently opened Museum of the History of Polish Jews. In July 2015, the work of his Foundation was awarded by the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies at their annual conference in Jerusalem, making history as the first organization from Continental Europe to be honored with this award in 35 years of IAJGS history.

Articles sent in by participants

(Candle)sticks on Stone: the Representation of Women in Jewish Tombstone Art¹

By Ruth Ellen Gruber

[...] the branches, cups and flowers of the pure candlestick are broken.

-Epitaph, tombstone (now destroyed) of the legendary “Golden Rose” of L’viv who died in 1637

Candles and candlesticks are a common and potent symbol on the gravestones of Jewish women. That is because lighting the Sabbath candles is one of the three so called “women’s commandments” carried out by female Jews - and the only one easily represented in visual form: the others include observing the laws of Niddah separating men from women during their menstrual periods, and that of Challah, or burning a piece of dough when making bread.

In 2009 I began an ongoing project, *(Candle) sticks on Stone*, about the candles and candlesticks motifs found on Jewish women’s gravestones. My work focuses mainly on regions of today’s northern Romania, western Ukraine and Poland, where tombstone carving became an especially vivid folk-inspired art form in the 17th and 18th centuries, and where denoting women’s graves with candlestick imagery became the norm in the 19th century.

This essay draws from material I have posted on the web site I established for the project (<http://candlesticksonstone.wordpress.com>), which combines artistic visual imagery and on-site documentation with research and commentary.

A primary aim of my project is simply to present the tombstone carvings as examples of art and to show the many ways in which candlesticks are portrayed. But, as a Jewish woman who has almost never lit the Sabbath candles in my home, I also cannot fail to consider what the candlesticks representation means. Candlesticks, in a way, often simply form a schematic shorthand denoting both gender and Jewishness, placed even sometimes on the grave markers of women who had little to do with traditional Jewish observance.

My own mother, for example, is buried in a municipal, not a Jewish, cemetery in Santa Monica, California, and she lies surrounded by people of other faiths and even languages. An accomplished artist, my mother possessed a strong Jewish identity, but I don’t recall ever seeing her light the candles on a Friday night. Nonetheless, the flat metal plaque marking her grave includes the representation of candles - in her case, a seven-branched candelabra, or menorah. And, interestingly, a major self-portrait she painted when she was in her 50s prominently featured a pair of Shabbos candles.

Carvings

The first time I saw a Jewish woman’s tombstone bearing a representation of candlesticks was in 1978, when for the first time I visited Radauti, the small town in the far north of Romania near where my father’s parents were born. The tombstone in question was that of my great-grandmother, Ettel Gruber, who died in 1946 and in whose honor I received my middle name. Her gravestone is a very simple slab, with a five-branched candelabrum topping an epitaph.

Since then, and particularly over the past two decades and more, I have visited scores if not hundreds of Jewish cemeteries in East-Central Europe, documenting them, photographing them, and writing about them in books and articles.

Carvings on Jewish tombstones include a wide range of symbols representing names, professions, personal attributes, or family lineage — as well as folk decoration. In what today is northern Romania and parts of Poland, western Ukraine and nearby areas, the carved designs on Jewish gravestones became exceptionally ornate, particularly from the 17th and 18th centuries. The ornate style continued through the 19th and even into the 20th century in some places, although by the late 19th century unique hand-carving had often given way to more standardized (though often still elaborate) templates.

The style and even iconography on Jewish gravestones here is quite different from that found on even the most highly decorated Jewish gravestones in the west, such as those in the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague, in provincial cemeteries elsewhere in Bohemia and Moravia (such as at Mikulov), and in parts of Germany or in the wonderfully ornate Sephardic tombstones such as those in Altona, Germany; Venice, Italy; and Ouderkerke, Holland. Studies have traced some of the influences to Christian tombs and carving as well as to Jewish mysticism, but in the areas of Eastern Europe I examine, these concepts have been transformed into a unique set of

¹ A version of this essay was published as: “(Candle)sticks on Stone. The Representation of Women in Jewish Tombstone Art.” In *Juden in Mitteleuropa 2011 - “Ostjuden” Geschichte und Mythos*. St. Pölten: Institut für Jüdische Geschichte pp 60-67

styles and aesthetic sensibilities.

Much of the carved imagery on the stones, in fact, is also found in other Jewish decorative art -- in the paintings that adorned the now-destroyed wooden synagogues (and also masonry synagogues); in the elaborately carved and painted Torah Arks - some of which still survive in synagogues in several Romanian towns, including Botosani, Iasi, Roman and Falticeni; and - from the 19th century - in traditional Jewish papercuts. The exuberant mix of religious iconography and folk-influenced styles is sometimes described as the "Jewish baroque."

Jewish tombstones in this region include a variety of wonderfully vivid motifs. There are lions, birds, stags, bears, snakes, griffins and other imaginary beasts; there are flowers, grapevines, garlands, vines and geometric patterns; there are the pitchers of the Levites, the crown of the Torah, and the hands of the Cohanim raised in blessing; and there are books, charity boxes, crowns, and powerful symbols of death: the hand of God plucking a flower, for example, or breaking off a branch from the Tree of Life. Some stones still retain traces of the brightly colored painted decoration that once adorned them. Candles and candlesticks became an almost across-the-board marker for women from the mid to late 19th century onward.

I am far from the first to fall under the spell of these marvelous yet often forgotten examples of Jewish art and artistry. The late Russian photographer David Goberman began documenting Jewish gravestones in what is now Belarus, western Ukraine and Moldova in the 1930s, and several other more recent authors have written and published photographic and other works. In addition, scholarly research and documentation has been carried out by researchers including Boris Khaimovich, Binyamin Lukin, and others associated with the Center for Jewish Art in Jerusalem. Still, scholarship, analysis, and even appreciation of these sculptural forms remains surprisingly rare, as most past research on Jewish cemeteries focused on the epitaphs.

There is, wrote University of Massachusetts professor Aviva Ben Ur in a lengthy article about Jewish tombstone iconography in Suriname:

*an academic print culture that regards sculpted stones and cemeteries as largely peripheral [...] The historian's focus on the written word has also meant that stone imagery is at most a secondary consideration. Research on Jewish sepulchres has thus focused on inscriptions, and has been primarily concerned with local community history, genealogy of distinguished members, and linguistic aspects.*²

This attitude was borne out by the distinguished art historian Moshe Barasch, who in 1988 wrote a memoir article, "Reflection on Tombstones: Childhood Memories," about the Jewish cemetery in his native Czernowitz (now Cernivtsi) Ukraine. Concerning the "level of artistic achievement" of the stone-carvings, he wrote:

*Not too much should be expected. I shall have to describe the artistic character of the monuments as "primitive," without going into a discussion of what the term means, fully aware that the meaning is far from obvious [...] Keeping in mind the rather modest quality of these monuments, one's expectations as to what the free exercise of an artist's skill may provide in them should not be too high.*³

I strongly disagree with Barasch! (And indeed, to my mind the pictures that were provided with his article also prove him wrong.) He does admit, though, that one can be "often surprised" by "the variations invented by popular fantasy and executed by anonymous stone carvers."

Much more to my way of thinking is the analysis by Boris Khaimovich, who described Jewish tombstone decoration in this part of eastern Europe as developing through the 18th century into "an evolved and independent artistic form," (p 89) and David Goberman, who describes many of the stones he documented as "genuine masterpieces of carved stone art." (p. 10)

It is more than probable that the majority of elaborate, centuries-old tombstones that existed before World War II have been destroyed, and those that remain are deteriorating. Many surviving cemeteries have been vandalized or are overgrown with vegetation. Nonetheless, in some cemeteries, the carving on the stones is so distinctive that you can still discern the hand of individual, if long forgotten, artists. And while later stones, often carved according to stencils or templates, present a more uniform appearance, their style and format still varies greatly from town to town.

"Innovations of one individual could define a whole group of gravestones or, in the case of a powerful creative style, shape an entire stream of creative design," Goberman wrote. "Almost every cemetery offers examples of one cutter who produces variations of a theme, each making more demands of the master's talent than the previous one." (p 15-16)

Most tombstone-carvers remain anonymous, but several sources, including Goberman and Barasch, report

²Ben-Ur, Aviva. "Still Life: Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and West African Art and Form in Suriname's Jewish Cemeteries" in American Jewish History, vol 92/1

³Barasch, Moshe. "Reflection on Tombstones: Childhood Memories," *Artibus et Historiae*, nr. 17, 127-135, 1988

on how tombstone-carving was often (or at least sometimes) a family business, passed on down the generations. In particular, Barasch refers to families of carvers named Picker the Steinmetz (the name means “stone carver”), and Goberman mentions the Raizers and Tsellers.

Typology of Candlesticks

Candlesticks on tombstones come in many types, styles and degrees of ornamentation. As Goberman put it, considering all the variations “would make an interesting study in itself.” This, in fact, is part of what I have been trying to do.

The earliest women’s grave markers bearing candlesticks that were found and described by Borish Khaimovich in Ukraine and Silviu Sanie in Romania (in the old Jewish cemetery in Siret, just on the Ukrainian border) date from the late 18th and very early 19th centuries; most women’s tombstones before and around this period seem not to have this special female iconographic marker. By the mid-to-late 19th century, however, and particularly by the latter part of that century, the candlestick imagery was almost universal.

This was illustrated by an interview that was conducted in 1926 with the last professional tombstone carver from the town of Ozarinty - a young man named Goldenberg - and cited by Borish Khaimovich in his PhD dissertation.⁴ The interviewer, a Ukrainian scholar named Danylo Shcherbakivs’ki, wanted to find out “what guided him in carving certain images on a tombstone: whether definite rules and tradition, or the wishes of the dead person’s family, or perhaps his own imagination.”

Goldenberg apparently had “poor knowledge of ancient tradition.” But he did adhere to some of the old tombstone stone-carving conventions and told Shcherbakivs’ki he was “usually guided” by certain considerations. Regarding women’s tombs these considerations show how strongly engrained the tradition had become. They were:

- 1) for the grave of a young girl – a chopped down tree, a small fir-tree, a wreath, a bird;
- 2) for the gravestone of an important woman – a candelabrum (since the mistress of the house must light Shabbat candles), two candelabra, two birds

Khaimovich concluded that:

Apparently, the “poor knowledge of tradition” referred to the fact that the carver neither used nor knew the meaning of the motifs depicted on old tombstones [...]. This means that the tradition was totally lost by the turn of the 20th century. At the same time, the carver’s testimony sheds some light on the nature of this phenomenon, and clearly points at the existence of a special symbolic language, of which Goldenberg’s generation retained no more than vague notions and echoes. (BK Dissertation, p. 158)

The depictions of candlesticks on stone range from what I would call “classic” Shabbos candles – two matched candles in individual candle-holders – to multibranched candelabra (including seven-branched menorahs) of various types. Some appear as if they could have come off of a household’s shelf. Others look like the classic Menorah of antiquity as God commanded its construction in Exodus 25:31-32: “And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side.”

Sometimes (particularly in more modern times) they are very simple silhouettes, such as that on my great-grandmother Ettel’s tomb, or even crudely scratched figures. Yet extraordinarily vivid bas-relief sculptures are also found. Many of the depicted candlesticks are elaborately ornamental but still look like physical objects. But others still are intricate figures that weave and twist and entwine the branches of the candelabrum and/or its the base into fanciful convoluted forms. And some clearly combine the imagery of the Menorah with that of the Tree of Life, where the candelabrum sprouts leaves and shoots or its branches turn into tendrils. They

⁴ My deep thanks to Sergey Kravstov of the Center for Jewish Art for identifying the interviewer and providing information on him. Danylo Shcherbakivs’ki (1877-1927) had a tragic history under the Soviet regime. In a lecture that will soon be published, Kravtsov states: “Research of Jewish monuments went on in the Soviet Ukraine. Ukrainian art historians and ethnographers included it in the curricula of the 1920s. Great efforts were undertaken by Danylo Shcherbakivs’ky, the museum curator and a professor at the Academy of Arts in Kiev, who organized student expeditions to Podolia and Volhynia. Shcherbakivs’ky tended to construct the art history of Ukraine along the lines of that of other European state nations, and thus his attitude to Jewish monuments was inclusive. Impeded in his many initiatives by the Commissars, he committed suicide in 1927; his name was blotted out of the Soviet curricula. Other great Ukrainian figures were a museum curator Stefan Taranushenko, and his assistant Pavlo Zholtovs’ky. By 1930, their documentation of Podolian synagogues in Mińkowce, Michałpol, Smotrycz, and Jaryszów had expanded knowledge about the wooden synagogues, surveyed in previous decades. However, the stifling atmosphere of the Soviet Ukraine barred any possibility of a comprehensive study of these monuments. Both researchers were arrested in 1933. Taranushenko was able to return to Ukraine only in 1953. Zholtovs’ky returned to Ukraine in 1946, and then he had the courage to study Jewish art in Lviv.”

also may be treated as symbols of death: In some examples the branches of the menorah may look like snakes, and in many instances broken candles or flames being extinguished represent the ending of life. Animals, birds, flowers and other designs often accompany the candlesticks. And in northern Romania and parts of Ukraine in particular, many tombstones bear depictions of a woman's hands blessing the lights. (A tombstone showing hands blessing candles in a menorah dating from 1781 and found by Khaimovich in the Jewish cemetery in town of Kosuv, Ukraine may be one of the earliest examples exhibiting this trope.)

The menorah, or candelabrum, was a very widespread image in Jewish paper cuts, a form of folk art that developed in the 19th century. Elaborate paper cuts, usually created by men, were used for a variety of ritual and decorative purposes, including as "mizrachs" or wall decorations to show which direction was east.

In fact, regarding the twisted, braided or convoluted menorah in particular, Joseph and Yehudit Shadur write that this image appears almost exclusively in just two places – in traditional East European Jewish paper cuts (where they are often dominant compositional elements but do not seem to reflect any special female reference) and on East European Jewish women's tombstones. The Shadurs write that this image appears to represent a development of the mystical "endless knot" motif.

As far as we could ascertain, neither the convoluted menorah configurations nor the endless-knot motif have ever been considered as distinct visual symbols in Jewish iconography. And yet, they are so common and figure so prominently in East-European Jewish papercuts that they can hardly be regarded as mere decorative motifs.

They theorize that

the metamorphosis of the traditional menorah of antiquity and the Middle Ages into the convoluted, endless-knot configurations appearing in the papercuts coincides with the spread and growing popularization of messianic mysticism and the Kabbalah throughout the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe from the early eighteenth century on⁵

In her book *A Tribe of Stones, Jewish Cemeteries in Poland* Monika Krajewska, a post-World War II pioneer in the study of gravestone imagery – who is also an accomplished paper-cut artist – offered another interpretation that also makes some sense. She likened the twisted branches of convoluted menorahs to the braiding of Challah loaves – and in a way, that would mean that those images denote two of the three "women's commandments."

Transmission of Tradition

As part of this project, I have been examining – in an anecdotal way, to be sure – what I call the transmission of tradition. Specifically, I have been looking at what happened between the generations of my women ancestors buried in the Jewish cemetery in Radauti, Romania – and the generations, in the U.S., who came after. In addition to my great-grandmother Ettel, my great-great grandmother Chaya Dwoira, who died in 1904, is also buried there. The candelabrum on Ettel's tomb is a very simple silhouette. But the branches of the one on Chaya Dwoira's tomb are convoluted: it is, however, what looks like a mass-produced design based on a stencil or template.

Both Chaya Dwoira and Ettel probably fulfilled the women's commandment to light the Shabbos candles — and maybe the other two commandments, too.

But what about us today, their descendants?

I myself am not observant, and most of my cousins married non-Jews. As part of this project, I began asking my aunts and cousins about their relationship to Jewish tradition, observance and identity.

My cousin Merrick (one of the seven children of my father's younger brother Matthew) offered a thoughtful meditation on the meaning of ritual and tradition and particularly moving and evocative memories of her childhood in Toledo, a small milltown on the coast of Oregon, where hers was the only Jewish family for many miles around. Her mother, she wrote, lit the Sabbath candles ever Friday night when she and her siblings were growing up, and today blesses the lights in a way that is reminiscent of the hands on so many carved tombstones:

Even though Mom is not especially religious she probably didn't ever consider not lighting Sabbath candles, but I suspect Mom & Dad had a special appreciation for this weekly ritual because we were so isolated from Jewish....anything. She didn't hold her hands over the candles or circle them at all, she stood with head bowed and said the blessing (in English); now she holds her hands over the candles and says the blessing in Hebrew. It was sort of a special honor when we were little to be the child who she held the match out to & got to blow it out. Later, I would like to watch her as she had a certain way she shook the match to extinguish

⁵ Shadur, Joseph and Yehudit. *Traditional Jewish Papercuts: An Inner World of Art and Symbol*. (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 2002). p 170-171

it. Friday dinners were usually a more special menu too, something like a beef roast, rice, salad, & vegetable. The candles would usually burn for some time after we left the table. It was really kind of pretty to go back into the dark kitchen for some reason with the candles burning low [...]

Merrick went on to recall that her parents gave her a pair of candlesticks as a special wedding gift, and that she regularly lit the candles when her children were young.

I loved lighting the candles... for any number of reasons, but really one of them was the connection I felt to a long, long line of women who did this before me and with me. Whatever Jewish traditions, few as they are, that I practice they have always connected me more to my lineage than to God...Sabbath candles most of all. As my kids got older and life seemed busier and busier I looked forward to the brief moment of calm and gathering that lighting the Sabbath candles brought. It was refreshing.

When her children grew into their teens and became involved with activities that spilled over into Friday nights, she stopped the practice – but she told me she plans to begin again.

Now that I'm a grandmother myself, I'm realizing my grandchildren will probably only know Jewish traditions (other than Hanukkah & Passover) if I do them. Lighting the Sabbath candles is something I will begin again this fall. It's kind of funny though, since it's been so long since I've lit candles I feel kind of awkward about doing it. Will my family all roll their eyes and indulge me? Or make fun of me? I want it to be just a very natural, real part of Friday night. I wish I wouldn't have quit, because now I will have to work to maneuver it back to that. And maybe I can't get it there...Tradition? I grew up as a member of the only Jewish family in a rural Oregon town. I admire how much tradition Mom & Dad (and grandparents and family), were able to pass on to us in that situation, but there are big gaps. I'm aware of that. But I still live in Toledo so I don't have a very good gauge to know what Jewish tradition can really look like if you have a Jewish community. Right now, I don't have a lot of Jewish tradition that I practice, but like I said earlier, that will be changing...at least a bit.

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Reconstructing Atlantis

The Lost World of Small-Town Jewish Cemeteries

Foreword by Tomasz Wiśniewski

With this book I invite you to take a journey through the lost world of small-town Jewish cemeteries (commonly known as “kirkuty”) and to immerse yourself in the realm of these “stone people”, as Anna Kamienska so beautifully described them. For centuries these cemeteries were a unique museum - a storehouse for the treasures of Jewish folk art, then all of a sudden they disappeared, vanished into thin air like the mythical Atlantis. The most characteristic wooden and painted matsevot [tombstones: sing. matsevah], of whose existence few are aware, vanished irretrievably. On looking at these prewar photographs, it is hard not to be overwhelmed by longing and grief for this fragment of that multinational Republic of Poland that no longer exists.

During the First World War, Arthur Levy, a rabbi serving as a chaplain in the German army, spent four and a half years in the eastern territories of the former Republic of Poland where he came face to face with this world of beauty. Captivated by their unusual charms, he wrote that the art of these small Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe was so imbued with spirituality that it should serve as an inspiration and example for tombstone makers in the West. He pointed out that the craftsmen from these tiny Jewish centers of population – the shtetls – had far fewer resources and possibilities at their disposal and yet they created tombstones that were extremely rich in design, more interesting and more imaginative than those produced by their western counterparts. There was a great contrast between the rich funerary art he found in the East and the Jewish tombstones produced in Western Europe which were becoming increasingly banal with each passing year.

After many years I have turned once more to the subject of Jewish cemeteries. Since I could arouse no interest in this topic in local academic circles, I limited my activity to collecting prewar photographs depicting these cemeteries. I believed that instead of launching into theoretical speculations about that which is virtually non-existent, one must first gather evidence to show what this irretrievably lost world actually looked like.

After many years research, during the course of which I managed to put together an impressive collection of archive photographs, I have ventured to address the subject in print once more and now present a draft summary of my findings. I have illustrated this book with unique, hitherto unpublished photographs of cemeteries from different parts of the II Republic of Poland (in some cases from Kovnian Lithuania, Latvia and the eastern Ukrainian and Belarusian regions). These have one thing in common - not the slightest trace remains of them. In this book I have also included photographs of cemeteries from larger cities such as Brest-Litovsk, Vilnius and Bialystok. Nevertheless, their poetic inspiration - rabbinic in the case of Bialystok and Snipiszki in Vilnius (of whose art there are no existing examples) – comes from the spirit of the Jewish small town – the “shtetl”.

This is not a scientific work, which is why I have refrained from including traditional notes within the text itself. In many cases a single statement is based on several sources, including my own observations. At the end there is a list of the most important works that I have used as references. To a certain extent my intention in writing this book has been to summarise the current body of knowledge on this subject, but my main aim has been to draw up a specific “road map”, which will facilitate future scientific research into many of the themes touched on in the present work. I also hope that this work will help make the inhabitants and local authorities of the regions covered more aware of the steps that are now being taken to rescue what still remains. I would be pleased if this work proved to be the inspiration for a number of scientific projects, so that research into this extensive subject could be continued and my no doubt numerous mistakes corrected. I am infinitely grateful to Senior doctor lecturer Andrzej Trzeciński from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin who helped me avoid many errors. I also wish to thank professor Heidi Szpek from Central Washington University, Ellensburg (Washington state, USA), who - knowing Hebrew incomparably better than I - helped me translate epitaphs from matsevot.

My warm thanks to Krzysztof Bielawski, creator of the website www.kirkuty.xip.pl, and Antoni Oleksicki, who for many years has been regional conservation officer in Bialystok – for a number of valuable observations. My thanks also to Edyta Fiedorowicz and Marcin Tur for graphical reconstructions of the colours on matsevot, and Iza Łysko and Feliks Woroszyński for translations from the German. And thanks to Mike Aylward – translations into the English.

Tomasz Wiśniewski

Foreword by Ruth Ellen Gruber

Tomasz Wisniewski is a rescuer of Atlantis. Like most of the postwar generation, he grew up in Bialystok with no inkling that his native city had once been an important center of Jewish life and learning, a hotbed of Jewish political and economic activity. Born in the late 1950s, he was ignorant of the fact that Jews had made up the majority of

Bialystok's pre-war population, that tens of thousands of Jews had been confined in the wartime Bialystok ghetto, that in 1941 the Nazis had herded some 1,000 Bialystok Jews into the city's main synagogue and then had torched the building. Only three out of the more than 60 synagogues that had stood in Bialystok before World War II had survived the conflagration, and all were put to other use. The city's Jewish cemeteries had all been destroyed or swallowed up by encroaching forest. Wisniewski discovered local Jewish history by chance in the early 1980s, when he read a book about the wartime Bialystok ghetto and the almost total annihilation of the Jews.

The book changed his outlook about his town, his country and even his own local identity. "I wanted to know what there was before", he told me, "when Jews lived in Bialystok." Since that moment more than 25 years ago, Wisniewski has devoted his life to documenting Jewish history in Bialystok and in the surrounding region of eastern Poland, where Jews had formed the majority of the population in numerous small towns, or shtetls.

He felt he was discovering a lost world, a world that had vanished from view and from public awareness as if it had been drowned like the mythical continent of Atlantis -- and indeed, "Postcards from Atlantis" was the title of the first series of articles that he published in the local press.

Over the years, Wisniewski has become a recognized expert on the Jewish history and heritage of eastern Poland. He has published books and many articles, mounted exhibitions, and, more recently, set up a web site with an expanding database of historic and contemporary photographs of synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and other heritage sites. In 1998 he became one of the first recipients of an annual award presented by the State of Israel to honor non-Jewish Poles who care for Jewish heritage in Poland.

This new book, *Shtetl Jewish Cemeteries in Eastern Europe before 1945*, is based on the extensive photographic archives Wisniewski has collected over the past quarter century. For the first time, the pre-war state of Jewish cemeteries in the small shtetls scattered around the region is visually documented in dramatic detail: the exquisite carved imagery on the tombstones, or matsevoth, the surprising way many of them were painted in bright colors, the many striking grave markers made of wood, none of which survived the Shoah... and more. In the text that accompanies the pictures, Wisniewski tells stories of the prewar past but also reflects unblinkingly on the savagery of destruction, both during and after World War II. Tombstones were smashed or uprooted and, as he documents, were used as paving stones, building foundations, and even as whetstones to sharpen knives. There are still streets and pavements where the wheels of cars and carts still roll over visible Hebrew letters. Recovering these fragments, too, is a means to rescue memory and return from oblivion.

Ruth Ellen Gruber, Author of National Geographic Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Eastern Europe.

New book 2008 - Letters from Europe (and Elsewhere)

More about REG www.ruthellengruber.com

Opinion of Carol Highsmith

Tomek Wisniewski is the consummate authority on Jewish genealogy in Poland and nearby European countries. I met Tomek on a trip I took to Poland gathering information and taking photographs of disappearing Jewish sites for my Library of Congress collection. Tomek not only knew exactly where to find diverse and interesting locations, he also was able to convey detailed history of each site. I doubt there is any other individual who has a more complete and varied collection of images, maps and postal cards of the Holocaust era than Tomek.

Carol M. Highsmith, Washington, D.C.

Carol Highsmith is an accomplished architectural photographer who is donating her life's work to the Library of Congress. Her photographs have been featured in more than 50 books and her image of the Jefferson Memorial was used on a U.S. postage stamp.

More about CH www.carolhighsmithamerica.com

Opinion of Miriam Weiner

For much of his life, Tomas Wiśniewski has been fascinated with the Jewish history and heritage of his home town of Bialystok, Poland. For decades, he has been collecting both physical objects (photographs, maps, books, documents, postcards and other items) along with the memories of local residents and those former residents who come to visit Bialystok and the region. A visit to Bialystok is incomplete without having Tomas as the local guide. His many publications have focused on the synagogues and cemeteries of Bialystok and the region. This latest publication is a visual tour of pre-Holocaust Jewish cemeteries depicting typical tombstones as well as ones with unique designs and construction (including some tombstones made from wood). The text and accompanying images is a bitter reminder of what was. There is no better resource for "Jewish Bialystok" than Tomas Wiśniewski.

Miriam Weiner, Secaucus, N.J.

Miriam Weiner is author of the award-winning books: *Jewish Roots in Poland* and *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova*. Weiner is also the creator of the Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc. website at www.rtrfoundation.org which includes a searchable database by town name of surviving Jewish and civil records in the archives of Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Lithuania and Moldova.

Wooden tombstones

By Tomasz Wiśniewski

Of the tens of thousands of wooden Jewish tombstones [matsevot] that could once be found in Poland, not one single one has survived down to the present day.

With a few exceptions, small-town Jewish cemeteries in Poland “exist” only on old maps and photographs. Their rich artistic heritage has been lost, or survives only in fragmentary or merely symbolic form e.g. walled cemeteries behind whose walls practically nothing is to be found. The most interesting and impressive tombstones have disappeared. They all met the same fate. The Germans used them to pave roads and pavements, to reinforce escarpments and clad the beds and banks of rivers. They were used in the construction of flights of stairs and farmers used them as sandstone knife-sharpeners. Despite these years of destruction, tens of thousands of the most beautiful stone headstones managed to survive in Poland, but not one single wooden one was preserved.

For centuries the Jews erected wooden tombstones. Typically they were to be found in the poorest communities in areas where stone was in short supply. The graves of the Jewish poor took the form of ordinary planks of wood painted with a simple, short dedication. For the slightly better-off, the name and surname of the deceased would be carved into the wood in Hebrew characters.

The Jews of Polesie and the area around Pińsk (nowadays Belarus but part of Poland up to 1939), grew up in a landscape dominated by wood and water; they lived in wooden cottages and worshipped in wooden synagogues – for them wooden tombstones were part of a centuries-old tradition.

Wooden tombstones were also used in Volhynia, Mazowsze and Wielkopolska and by the poorest Jews in larger towns such as Białystok, Wilno and Lublin. During the First World War several hundred wooden Jewish tombstones in the old cemetery in Lublin (founded in 1541) were used by Russian soldiers for firewood.

Furthermore, during the First World War wooden tombstones were often erected on the graves of Jewish soldiers of the Austrian army, especially in the Beskid Niski region.

The oldest wooden tombstones in Poland date from the XVII century and come from Miejsce in the vicinity of Namysłów. According to Marcin Wodziński on the website www.jewishgen.org the Jewish cemetery in Miejsce was already in existence by 1771. This date has been arrived at from photographs of four wooden tombstones from 1771 – 1805 from the Jewish cemetery in Miejsce. These photographs can be found in the collection of the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt-am-Main. The oldest of them has carved on it an inscription that reads: “Here lies a brave and honourable woman, Mrs Chajosen, daughter of the venerable Mr Alexander, of blessed memory. She died on Tuesday, the fifth day of Adar in the year 5531” (19 February 1771)”.

As a matter of fact, this is one of the few traces of evidence for the existence of wooden Jewish tombstones. Archives in Poland and abroad contain only very small iconographic collections of Jewish necropolises from before 1939. In addition, in the course of many years of research, I myself have managed to acquire several original photographs of wooden tombstones from Ozdzytycze, Łokacze, Drużkopol and Kisielin in Volhynia, as well as from Pińsk in Polesie.

3. Wooden Jewish tombstones – apart from wooden funerary shrines (ohels) – were usually tall and after some years had passed and the wood had begun to rot, the lower part would be cut off and the tombstone buried deeper in the ground. An identical tradition reigned in Christian cemeteries where, a few dozen years after they had been erected, the tall wooden crosses that stood there would have the rotting bottom part periodically cut off.

Sometimes, after a year or two, a wooden tombstone would be removed and replaced by a stone one. In such instances – just as in the Christian tradition – the wooden tombstone served as a temporary grave marker. Members of the Burial Society, the Khevera Kadisha, were responsible for making sure that registrations were carried out properly and the necessary taxes paid.

Surviving photographs show that wooden tombstones are very similar to each other, being made from long planks whose upper part is fashioned into a semi-circle symbolising the head of the deceased. Most wooden tombstones have an inscription carved on them and, apart from a few humble decorative gestures, they do not bear any ornamentation.

Mercy: The Power of Remembering, Restoring, & Reconciling

By Steven D. Reece, Founder & President, Matzevah Foundation, Atlanta, GA

“Poland is still a wounded country with a wounded society” Stefan Meller said.

Meller, a Polish historian and former Foreign Minister of Poland, made this statement several years ago in a story concerning the manner in which Poland’s votes within the European Union were weighted with regards to Germany’s votes. His statement uniquely reflects that Poland’s past is painful and it impacts the present and influences Poland’s future.

Poland: the graveyard of Europe

Poland is a country known by many as the “graveyard of Europe” It has truly seen many wars and has suffered the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust.

- Think of these numbers: nine million.
- Nine million segmented into six million and three million.
- Nine million: six million and three million.

According to historical accounts, nine million people died in Poland as a result of World War II.

Of this number three million Poles died directly due to the war or Nazi executions.

The remaining six million people who died were Jews from many European countries who were murdered systematically in six death camps established by the Nazis in Poland as a “final solution” to the Jewish question.

Of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis in Poland. Three and a half million of the six million Jews were Jews of Polish descent.

By not being Jewish many of us have great difficulty grasping completely in its fullest and most realistic sense the meaning of “Shoah|Destruction”. Shoah, the Destruction, is what we know as the Holocaust – the deliberate and systematic Nazi pogrom that burned or gassed to death six million Jews, 3.5 million Polish Jews.

We can never completely understand why the Holocaust occurred. But it did occur. And it must be faced.

It may help you to understand me to know that I am a photojournalist by trade. Gratefully, in my professional career I have had my photos published in my home country the USA, by Time and Newsweek magazines, and internationally by the Associated Press, Reuters and other press agencies.

Thus, items of news, disaster, or human suffering definitely catch my attention. So when I lived and worked in Poland for twelve years, I naturally became curious about World War II and its impact on Poland, I investigated the history of Europe in more detail.

On a personal level, I became aware of the troubled history of the two largest communities of Poland: the Roman Catholic community and the Jewish community. And I realized that I was not part of either of these two communities – I was not part of either the Roman Catholic community or the Jewish community.

In fact the Polish government put me in a third category, a third community: the Baptist Christian community. If you yourself are not familiar with the difference between the Roman Catholic Christian and the Baptist Christian, I will repeat for you what I told a Jewish woman one Tuesday evening in Warsaw.

She asked me “I know that you are a Christian but tell me who you are as a Baptist.”

I told her that we gather to worship the One True God, we study Scripture, we pray and someone teaches.

In other words, Baptist Christians are not like Roman Catholics, who pray to the saints and have images, priests and ceremonies. Our practice is based on what we learned from the Jewish community. We follow the simple pattern of synagogue worship.

One Jewish man from the Chevra Kaddisha – the holy society said it this way “You are Baptist? I like Baptists because they focus on what we share in common”

On a larger scale, several themes caught my attention:

- The anti-Semitism of Polish and Jewish relations prior to, during and following the War
- The social change in village Poland as people moved to the cities
- Aktion Reinhard (Operation Reinhard) - Hitler’s plan for the extermination of European Jews.

In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany and began the radical transformation of Germany. His plan was simple: nullify the undesirables (concentration camps for political prisoners and mentally ill), multiply the desirables (Lebensborn and eugenics for biologically and racially pure Aryan traits) and liquidate the barriers (thus, discriminatory actions against Jews, considered the primary hindrances to pure Aryan racial development) in order to establish German supremacy in Europe.

In September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and unleashed his attack not only upon a military enemy but innocent

people principally, who were Jews. He began by progressively reducing the rights and freedom of the Jewish population and then finally herded them into ghettos.

In the summer of 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union and began the systemic extermination of Jews through the use of Einsatzgruppen or mobile killing units which in the end proved to be ineffective and costly. For this reason, Hitler ordered the development of a plan to answer the Jewish question or what is known as the Final Solution. Aktion Reinhard was the code name for the plan to eliminate European Jews.

Hitler's Aktion plan called for the development of an efficient method to execute large numbers of Jews. The Chelmno extermination camp (originally called the Kulmhof concentration camp), near Łódź Poland, was the first concentration camp that was used to perfect the method for the mass murder and disposal of Jews.

What developed out of this experimentation was the construction of three extermination camps in Nazi occupied Poland: Treblinka, Sobibor and Belzec. These "death camps" were built not to profit from slave labor like German concentration camps but were designed to liquidate the lives of the Jewish people.

The ultimate purpose of these death camps was the mass extermination of Jews upon arrival. Between 1942 and 1943 nearly one and a half million Jews perished in these three death camps.

The Nazis advanced their methods from the lessons learned at Chelmno and the Aktion camps and applied them at the Majdanek and Auschwitz concentration camps. At Auschwitz the Nazi system was perfected culminating in the systematic and effective mass murder of innocent people. Estimates place the death toll at Auschwitz between 1.1 and 1.5 million people with the overwhelming majority of them being European Jews.

In the end Hitler's solution to the Jewish question resulted in what we know today as the Holocaust and the extermination of 6 million European Jews of which more than half were Jews from Poland.

As the magnitude of the Holocaust began to weigh on me, I tried to grasp the scope and the scale of the tragedy; nevertheless, I could not even begin to wrap my mind around what had happened and why.²

My personal journey into remembering, restoring and reconciling

Gradually, I came to feel that I must deal with the aftermath of such a monumental tragedy and lead others to deal with it as well.

But the question was, "How?" How do we speak to such an injustice as the Holocaust?

On this question, let me speak personally. I will only now speak of my own individual journey.

Between 1999 and 2001, my own personal thinking was impacted deeply by the story in Moses' book Genesis. Moses records what some have called the first news release of murder: Cain, the younger brother of Able, beat Able to death. Then, he hid the evidence. He buried the body of Able and hid his crime.

The news archives records the conversation between the Almighty and Cain's conscience. It is one of the oldest records of moral and inner spiritual conflict in the literature of planet.

To me, that ancient news release became very moving from my experiences in Poland.

The ancient record is brief. It reads like this:

"While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain 'Where is your brother Abel?'

'I don't know' Cain replied 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

The Lord said 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground'

That is it. Rather short. But the question stayed with me, was the question that God asked

Cain after he murdered his brother Abel, "Where is your brother? What have you done?"

For me, it became very personal. I am only explaining what happened to me.

I was living in Europe at the time of the Kosovo Conflict in which Serbian Christians were killing their Albanian Muslim neighbors. It was called genocide and led to one of the greatest humanitarian crisis of the 21st century, when hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees began to tumble across the border of Kosovo into neighboring countries. At one point there was an estimated 650,000 Albanian refugees residing in primarily Macedonia and Albania.

I saw this refugee crisis first hand when in May 1999 when I volunteer to assist a non-governmental organization in its distribution of humanitarian aid to the displaced people of Kosovo. This was the first time in my life that I had heard first-hand the testimony of people whose loved ones had been killed at the hand of their neighbor. It was overwhelming and tragic.

"By not being Jewish many of us have great difficulty grasping completely in its fullest and most realistic sense the meaning of Shoah [Destruction]. Shoah, the Destruction, is what we know as the Holocaust – the deliberate and systematic Nazi pogrom that burned or gassed to death six million Jews, 3.5 million Polish Jews. We can never completely understand why the Holocaust occurred. But it did occur. And it must be faced."

Steven Reece

In 2001, I was preparing to move to Warsaw, Poland and was there in June making arrangements for my move. One afternoon, I accidentally stumbled upon the only surviving Jewish synagogue remaining in the city.

I began to contemplate my experience in Kosovo and I was disturbed, deeply disturbed. Innocent bloodshed – it troubled me.

- Could God be asking me this question regarding the Holocaust today?
- And for me, because I was a follower of Jesus, I asked:

How might I personally speak to such a heinous crime in which millions of innocent people died at the hands of their “brother?”

So then, as a result of that ancient story, and from asking those two questions, I began to deal with the question of the Holocaust. I sought a way to speak eloquently, but simply, to that focused issue as a follower of Jesus.

Then, one day I had a conversation in a restaurant in Otwock (a city just outside of Warsaw) with a waitress named Hannah. She was interested in me and what I was doing with a group of young college students in her city. She asked me a great many questions at every meal about what we are doing and why. Hannah was very pleased about our work and the good that we were doing for her city.

One day quite unexpectedly, she suggested that I take these young people to visit the Jewish cemetery in the city.

I asked her very politely this question “Czy ma pani pochodzenie Żydowskie?” (“Madam, are you of Jewish descent?”)

She replied simply “Yes”

What was significant about that Jewish cemetery to Hannah? What was the meaning of a cemetery to a Jew or someone, who had Jewish heritage? I wanted to find out.

Sometime later, I went to visit this cemetery in the forest on the outskirts of Otwock, Poland. So there in this quiet, lonely and desolate place, I began to consider a thought that for me was new, even radical.

Caring for the dead: restoring Jewish graveyards

I asked myself these questions:

“What if I began caring for and restoring this neglected and deserted cemetery as a means to serve the Jewish community?”

And even maybe, could it be, maybe to bring even a tiny bit of healing to 6 million stab wounds inflicted upon Poland?”

What if? What if?

What if I myself began caring for and restoring just this one neglected and deserted cemetery? What good would it do? Would it do any good?

I did not know the answer that day in 2004. But I did know the question: *What if I myself began caring and restoring?*

When I approached the Jewish community about bringing friends of mine, friends who followed Jesus as volunteers, to clean and restore this Jewish cemetery I was asked “Why do you wish to do such a thing?”

In Polish, I responded, “*Pojednanie*” (“Reconciliation”)

Not a big explanation – just one word.

I simply said: “*Pojednanie*” – reconciliation.

But it was enough.

And with that single word, began an eight year journey that has led me to where I am today – working with the Jewish community of Poland through caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries.

Some may wonder “Why would someone do something like this?” My answer to that question began many years ago.

Following World War II, politically and economically, the Polish nation recovered and has been reintegrated into Europe. However, it has not been the same for Jews in Poland. For the devastation for the Jewish people of Poland was not just or even primarily political or economic.

World War II in Europe was a political and economic trauma for the Jews. But it was more than that. It was a spiritual devastation, a destruction to which they refer today as the Shoah.

For all intents and purposes, in the midst of WW II, Jewish culture was lost, destroyed, and nearly eliminated from Poland completely.

What was left behind were only dim shadows of the past in the memories of people – echoes of a former way of life – home, family, community and to some paradise. Now, these are gone and all erased.

And yet, despite this tragic loss, a remnant remains.

There is a small number of Jews remaining in Poland today. According to estimates, there are between 10,000 to 20,000 Jews living in Poland. Nonetheless and possibly even more significantly, there are silent witnesses that testify

to the influence of the once vibrant Jewish culture.

Those silent witness lie scattered in 1,200 Jewish Cemeteries throughout Poland. These cemeteries are a visible reminder of the presence of the ones the Torah calls God's People – God's People among Gentiles in Poland.

Over the last several years I have heard a question many times from Jewish people with whom I had contact while working on a Jewish cemetery restoration project.

The first time I heard the question was in 2007, during a Jewish cemetery restoration. At that time, a Jewish woman asked me "Why would you a Christian do this for us a Jew?"

"Love" I answered.

"I love God. And I love my neighbor."

"I love the Jewish people and I honor them as the root of everything that I know about God as you have given us the Scriptures"

Since that first time, some Jews have responded to me by saying "If I told people in Jerusalem what you are doing, they would not believe me." In 2006, a young Jewish woman said "I have no words to express about what you are doing I am amazed."

One survivor of the Holocaust told me "What you are doing on earth the angels are proclaiming and rejoicing about in Heaven."

A survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto shared with me, because of what happened during the war and Ghetto, he became an atheist.

During the darkest days of the Warsaw Ghetto, during the deportations of Polish Jews to the gas chambers of Treblinka he went to one of the Catholic churches in the Ghetto and stood before the statue of Jesus and cried out "Where are you Jesus?" There was no answer.

He said to me as he shared his story with me "I have watched you and what your friends are doing in our cemetery" Then he reached out his hand and touched my chest.

He said "I don't believe in God But I see God in you."

Many Polish Catholics see the importance of dealing with the past and honoring the Jewish heritage of Poland. One Polish Catholic shared with me that through what we were doing she caught a glimpse of the past and what was once a "normal part of Polish life" – Jews living among them.

Another atheist of Jewish descent shared with me "These Jewish cemeteries which are presently restored will testify to the normal Jewish life in Poland before the Nazis."

"Whatever our sufferings in our individual lives – including those which are in these abandoned Jewish cemeteries today – these cemeteries testify that people were living there.

They were living there with their trades, their loves, their aspirations. That's what I mean by the term of 'a normal life.'"

One Polish Catholic woman asked me "Why do you work with Jews?"

I carefully explained to her that as a heart-follower of Jesus Christ, not just a person born into a Christian family, that I must live as His disciple and put into practice His teaching.

Jesus proclaimed that the two greatest commandments given in the Torah were to "love God" and to "love neighbor"

I went on to say "Jews and Poles have lived as neighbors together for nearly a thousand years. If am a follower of Christ, then I must love my neighbor as myself. What greater way is there to show God's love than by loving my neighbor? The Jews are my neighbor. I must love them."

This devout, elegant, and skeptical Polish woman then said to me most interesting. In Polish it is "Stucham. Twoje słowa nie biegną po moim uchu"

She said, "I am listening. Your words are not rushing past my ears"

So, this is what I am doing. This is what I and a growing group of friends – Christian, Jewish, and others – are doing.

We are opening a conversation. We are seeking to open a dialogue with both Jews and Gentiles. We are beginning to dialogue about the true nature of God's love.

To me, love is not an abstract thought. Nor is love a fleeting emotion. Instead, love is action.

Jesus said "If you love me you will keep my commandments" And his commandment was best expressed by the deeper matters of the Torah "justice mercy and faithfulness."

"If I told people in Jerusalem what you are doing, they would not believe me."

...This devout, elegant, and skeptical Polish woman then said to me most interesting.

In Polish, it is, "Stucham. Twoje słowa nie biegną po moim uchu – I am listening. Your words are not rushing past my ears."

Conversations in Poland

Matzevah memorial stones in the house of the living

Specifically, the name “matzevah” (מצבה) is derived from a Hebrew word meaning a memorial stone¹ which is placed at the head of a grave facing toward the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The word matzevah reflects and captures the vision and purpose of the organization as it seeks to remember and honor the Jewish heritage of Poland by restoring Jewish cemeteries, and reconciling Jews and Christians through participating in a common “mitzvah.”

“The concept of mitzvah is singularly Jewish in that it refers not to deeds, but to behaviors that are explicitly set forth in the Torah by One God”

One of the most important mitzvahs (mitzvot) that a Jew can perform is honoring the dead through the care of cemeteries – because the dead cannot care for themselves. This type of care is one of the highest expressions of true mercy or loving-kindness expressed in Hebrew as, Chesed Shel Emet (חסד של אמת) – literally meaning “kindness of truth.”

The Matzevah Foundation is cooperating with the Rabbinic Council for Matters of Jewish Cemeteries (Komisja Rabiniczna do Spraw Cmentarzy), the Jewish Council of Warsaw and with Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, in Jewish cemetery restoration projects.

Working together with like-minded churches and Jewish organizations, we organize volunteer trips principally to Poland in order to care for and restore Jewish cemeteries.

These cemeteries are in places where there are no longer Jewish communities. Or, where the community is too small or has aged to the point that it can no longer care for these cemeteries.

In the future, Matzevah will explore and embrace projects in other Eastern European countries impacted by the Holocaust (Shoah). Accordingly, The Matzevah Foundation will organize Jewish cemetery projects in Poland beginning with the completion of the renovation of the wall surrounding the Jewish cemetery in Pruszków, Poland, a city of 80,000.

Matzevah is recruiting and training three types of volunteer groups for these projects:

- Groups that are exclusively Jewish
- Mixed Groups of both Jews and Christians
- Groups of volunteers entirely from churches.

Through Jewish cemetery restoration projects, we remember and make people aware of the plight of the Jews of Poland during the Holocaust (Shoah). By remembering the dead and restoring the graveyards, we have already seen seeds of reconciliation over what occurred to Polish neighbors at the hands of the Nazis during World War II.

In the house of the living

Upon reflection, I have learned at least three lasting lessons.

First, you must locate the cliffs of injustice.

Second, build bridges of mercy.

Third, travel the road of dialogue.

1. Locate the the cliffs of injustice

Find the cliffs of injustice where justice was cheated, clubbed, and killed. Where is the wound of the people? You locate the cliffs of injustice, by listening to the stories of wrongs. In Poland, Roman Catholic Poles and Jewish Poles still feel the currents of the river of rage.

On a cool summer afternoon, I took a group of friends to the place in Warsaw where the bridge that connected the two Ghettos was built. While explaining what happened here, an elderly Polish woman approached and asked me in Polish “What are you doing?”

I replied in Polish “I am telling them about the bridge that was once here on this corner”

She began to tell me how difficult the war was for Catholic Poles: How if they tried to help a Jew in any way, in any area, they and their entire families came under a sentence of death.

Then she said strongly to me, “You tell them that we had no choice”

Injustice kills choices. Injustice carves cliffs. And the cliffs of injustice stare out over the vast rivers of rage.

2. Build the bridge of mercy

Deeds of loving kindness lay the bridge of mercy. The bridge of mercy allows us to connect with the people who have suffered the injustice. It allows us to be invited to that table I mentioned above, where five Holocaust survivors sat. It allows us to tell who we are.

And when you do the deeds of mercy, others will say to you what Anna said me: “Stucham. Twoje słowa nie biegną po moim uchu – I am listening. Your words are not rushing past my ears”

Your words will slow down and walk. Your words will sit at the table of memory. Others see.

Others hear. And your deed-words will not rush past their ears.

3. Travel the road of dialogue

Once you locate the gaping wounds injustice, you get a sense of how to build the bridge of mercy. And when the bridge of mercy is constructed, you can begin to travel along the road of dialogue. It is a road always under construction. Alek Wasowicz lived in Warsaw when we met. He was on the Rabbinical Commission for Matters of [Jewish] Cemeteries. I began this journey with him. When saying goodbye to Alek, he said “In this global world, I do not see why you cannot continue your work from America. You must continue, because you have entered the most difficult dialogue in the world”

The way of dialogue may be difficult. But that road is paved with matzevahs – stones of memory. And along the neglected roads to Poland’s House of the Living my friends and I are sharing common times of deeply remembering, practically restoring, and wonderfully reconciling.

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Endnotes

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See <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/369864/matzeva> In the Torah and Tanakh: Genesis (Bereshith) 28:18–22; 2 Samuel (Sh’muel) 18:18; Joshua (Y’hoshua) 4:20–23, the word matzevah “is used to designate a stone memorial, or monument, or, more specifically, as in the case of Rachel, a tombstone”

Interwoven with the tenets of Torah, Service-to-God and Deeds-of-Loving-kindness is the commandment to live a holy life, with elements of holiness expressed in the concept of mitzvot (singular—mitzvah). The concept of mitzvot is singularly Jewish in that it refers not (as often thought) to mere deeds, but to behaviors that are explicitly set forth in the Torah by the One God. Observing Sabbath, for example, is one central mitzvah.

Centering around Shabbat are additional mitzvot – lighting Friday night candles to mark the start of Shabbat, baking the special Shabbat bread called Challah, refraining from work-related activities, reciting special prayers, and numerous other mitzvot that developed from the inception of Judaism and throughout its history.

Serbia — Nis Cemetery Report

Posted on April 14, 2012 by Ruth Ellen Gruber

On April 9 and 10, Jewish Heritage Europe coordinator Ruth Ellen Gruber joined Ivan Ceresnjes of the Center for Jewish Art in Jerusalem, Jasna Ciric, President of the Nis Jewish Community, and Ruben Fuks, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia, on a visit to the Jewish Cemetery in Nis, southern Serbia, to assess its condition and threats to its preservation. Photos in this post (c) Ruth Ellen Gruber

The Jewish cemetery in Nis is believed to date back to the 18th century. It was expropriated by the communist authorities in 1948, and burials were barred in 1965. After that, Roma families occupied about one-third of the site, building homes among the tombstones and creating a village without proper plumbing, sewage treatment or garbage disposal. Industry also encroached on the area, and the cemetery was long used as dump for rubbish and human waste. Vandals over the years broke open tombs, scattering bones.

A major clean-up operation in 2004 removed tons of garbage and waste that had covered the site to the depth of 1.5 meters and also installed a sewage system for the Roma village.

But the cemetery has received little care or maintenance since. And despite being listed as a National cultural heritage site in 2007, it still faces several threats. (JHE ran a news item in December 2011 about new concern by the Jewish community over the situation in Nis, nearly eight years after the clean-up operation – the visit this week was a follow-up to that.)

One-third of it is still occupied by the Roma settlement, or Mahala – composed of permanent brick/masonry/cement structures that are home now to 70 families, or between 700 and 1,500 people, depending on whom you talk to. Warehouses, a restaurant and other illegal industrial construction have encroached on the rest of the space, bulldozing tombs and closing the area off with an illegal 4-meter high wall, making access difficult and sometimes impossible.

Moreover, the new industrial construction also destroyed the sewage treatment system that was installed during the 2004 cleanup.

At the same time, the Jewish community has been restituted part of the property (but so far only that part occupied by the Roma Mahala), and city authorities now include the cemetery on a big tourist map set up in the center of town, meaning that they — at



Looking toward the Roma Mahala



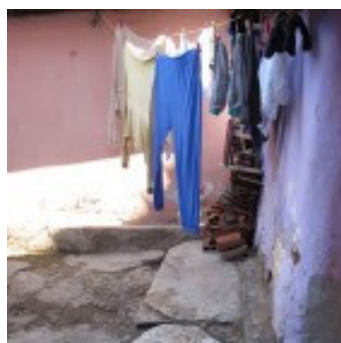
least in theory — recognize the site as important. (The modernist synagogue in Nis, meanwhile, has been restored and is used as an art gallery and is promoted as a tourist attraction.)

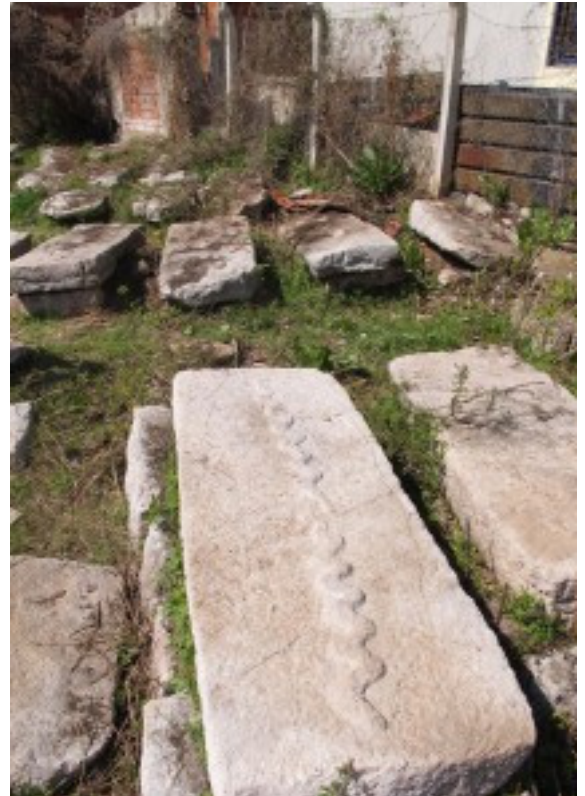
The Jewish community expects to be restituted the rest of the cemetery - or at least the open part where there are still graves - but Jasna Ciric reported that the owners of the restaurant and other commercial and industrial sites built on this land have made clear that they will refuse to vacate or move.

On our visit April 9-10, we were able to enter the Roma village (escorted by two security guards and two plainclothes policemen as well as by the headman of the village) so that we could document about a dozen grave markers that are visible in the open, outside houses. Most were slabs or fragments embedded in the paving or protruding from the foundations of houses, but there were several sarcophagi, including one with inscriptions.

It was clear to us that by now the presence of the Mahala is a fait accompli, and that there is little chance such a permanent village can be moved. But – it was not clear at all what is happening with the sewage and other waste. Pipes leading from the buildings are draining into the cemetery grounds, and though there are no open sewers or toilet areas as before the 2004 clean-up, it is unclear what the situation actually is.

We also made a close documentation of the grave markers in the open part of the





cemetery. This area had recently been cleaned up – weeds and brush cut, etc – probably ahead of our visit, rather than as a result of regular maintenance. But the vandalism denounced by the Jewish community in December was clearly visible, and dogs roamed among the tombs.

There are about 1,000 grave markers, notable because of the unique – and mysterious – carving on many of the older ones, horizontal slabs that otherwise generally have no epitaph or other inscriptions. The carvings include semi-spheres (numbering from two to 12) arranged in various patterns; geometric forms, and snakes. There is also at least one example of a spiral pillar, laid horizontally. (We could not find two examples of these carved tombs known to have existed there in the past.)

Ivan Ceresnjes believes that these carvings are rooted in Jewish mysticism and may indicate a link to followers of the false Messiah Shabbetai Zevi (1626-1676). Zevi was exiled to Albania and lived the last years of his life and died in Ulcinj (now in Montenegro). In Ulcinj, Ceresnjes has found symbols similar to the ones in Nis, and the earliest reference (or one of the earliest references) to Jews in Nis refers to people coming there from the south. (The only other place he has found seemingly related carvings is in Sarajevo.)

We met at City Hall with Mimi Pesic, director of the city housing office, whom we were told was a representative of the Mayor, and raised concerns about the threats, par-





These properties are at least partially built on the former cemetery grounds

ticularly the lack of regular maintenance and the encroaching (illegal) construction around the site which can bar access to the cemetery.

These properties are at least partially built on the former cemetery grounds

We urged that the city guarantee access to the site for visitors, provide regular maintenance, erect a plaque at the entrance giving information about the cemetery, promote tourist visits, see what can be done about the illegal construction, etc.

Pesic expressed willingness to do all this, but it is far from clear what actually will happen.

“The conservation of Jewish Cemeteries”, The Future of Jewish Monuments in Europe, International Conference, Prague, 24–27 May 2004

If we consider Jewish heritage, Jewish cemeteries present a special case. No doubt there is a Jewish cultural specificity in comparison with the other European religions. In most Christian or secular cemeteries, the graves are periodically replaced by other occupants.

Nevertheless, this difference doesn't give a satisfying definition of the interest of Jewish cemeteries. Nowadays, the tendency is to accept everything as patrimony and it is becoming obvious that everything has to be preserved. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves about the reasons which justify the conservation of Jewish cemeteries. We have to determinate their artistic, historical, social and religious, but also technical, legislative and anthropological characteristics. It will give clues to elaborate solutions of conservation, which have to be adapted at the different level of interest. This is important in regard of the financial implications conservation requires.

For instance, there are several levels in the historical or genealogical data Jewish cemeteries can provide. During the modern period, 19th and 20th centuries, the numerous sources of archives and public records reduce the historical interest of the inscriptions on the tombstones.

For the more ancient period, they appear as precious as a unique page of manuscript.

On the other hand, if we go on the field of literature, the corpus of the inscriptions gives fundamental information on the history of mentality (dia). It is one of the great contributions to the Science of Judaism Prof. Michael Broecke, of the Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institute in Duisburg, brought, when he undertook with his students the accurate and complete transcriptions of all the inscriptions of several cemeteries in Germany.

No period must be preferred. Each element is important as a part of the chain of the history of the Jewish people and of anthropology of death (dia).

Has the legal regime of a Jewish cemetery an influence on the condition of conservation? Is it different when the owner is a private or a public one? The case of France, known as a secular country, gives all the kind of features: private Jewish cemeteries (dia), public Jewish cemeteries, Jewish plots in public cemeteries (dia).

The main difference between a private and a public cemetery is that in the private one, you expect the guarantee of eternal rest for the human remains. In the case of a public cemetery, the perpetuity depends of the contract you signed when you bought the concession. For the richest people, there is no limitation of time of occupancy, but after one hundred years, the grave must be still maintained in good condition.

But, if, after one hundred years, the grave is not in good condition, it goes back to the public domain. If that difference has implications towards the religious beliefs, it has none towards the conservation of the tombstones. In the case of public cemetery, the tombstone is a private property of the heirs of the dead. It doesn't allow anyone, individual or association, to take care of the stone. The consequence is that it is quite rare that after a century and several generations, a tombstone could have resisted to natural decay, if we do not mention intentional damages.(dia)

The situation of the private cemeteries is not better, since the community is usually not interested in conservation

of the stone but of the ground.

The natural danger which threatens the Jewish cemeteries is the same which attack the whole historical patrimony. Monuments, sculptures on open air, are the victims of the weather, the pollution and so on. It happens that the kind of stone which is used can be responsible of its own destruction (dia). It brings our attention on the dialectic relation between inventory and conservation. Before the unavoidable disappearing of the tombstones, or at least, of their inscriptions, we have to keep the memory of them. But the unrealistic goal of collecting the billions of inscriptions and decorations would make necessary to apply safeguarding.

The simple maintenance is not always sufficient, especially when it is done with a lack of technical knowledge. Good intentions can bring future disaster. Here in Vantoux (dia), in Lorraine, the stone have been fixed on concrete blocks. It stops the exchanges between the earth and the stone. The limestone cannot eliminate the water anymore and at the hard junction between the two different materials, the limestone will began to accumulate sulfates which will soon attack the surface.

Sometimes, the community which owns the cemetery prefers not to cut the grass too often because it costs a lot of money. They will use chemical products to stop the growing of the grass, like here in Haguenau (dia) in Alsace. The consequences are often dramatic. The ground is no more strengthened by the vegetal cover, it cannot maintain the vertical stones which fall down and are broken.

Vandalism is another enemy. It seems that cemeteries are a privileged target for antisemitic violence. In Cernay (dia) in Alsace, all the stones were pushed down by the inhabitants during the war. They are still in the same condition. Nobody took interest in this situation.

One case reminded me the title of a book of Walt Kelly, Pogo's author, "We have met the enemy, and he is us". In Jungholtz (dia), which is listed as historical monument, some Israelis painted the tombs of their relatives to make sure they will find them next time they come. It seems that the word vandalism in Hebrew can be translated by Hutzpah.

In France, there are approximately 350 Jewish cemeteries. Less than 200 are in private hands, 80% of them are located in Alsace-Lorraine. 21 are listed as Historical monuments by the Ministry of Culture.

What is the role of the State in this matter? Usually, the Ministry of Culture doesn't undertake any action if it is not asked for. The problem is that the Jewish communities have rarely interest in Cultural matters, and if they have any, it wouldn't be in restoring cemeteries. And of course, the Ministry doesn't complain about this situation. It has enough with its 40 000 listed historical monuments. But, in my opinion, there are two advantages in the legal protection of Jewish cemeteries. First, it is the acknowledgment by the State of the cultural value of the cemetery. Then, it has an impact locally and it gives to the inhabitants of the village or of the town the consciousness of the diversity of patrimony. The self identification to such an heritage by a population which it doesn't belong to is a condition to its survival.

The other advantage is weaker because of the great number of demands and the low level of financial means of the Ministry of Culture. But it still remains a potential partner among others and can help with its technical and scientific expertise.

Poles and Jews restore the Jewish memory of Brzostek

1 July 2012, 1:28 PM

By Connie Webber, managing editor of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in Oxford

Jews have not lived in Brzostek in southern Poland for more than 70 years, but Mayor Leszek Bieniek clearly welcomes the Brzostek Jewish Heritage Project's restoration of Jewish memory to the town.

Starting in 2009, Poles and Jews have collaborated closely on a number of initiatives. In that year, the Jewish cemetery was restored and rededicated, and a memorial was erected. A small book was published in Polish on the Jewish history of the town, including a list of all the Jews buried in the cemetery, fruit of research by a local historian. A plaque in memory of the Jews of the town – "its rabbis, shopkeepers, teachers, artisans, and others" — was installed in the town square. Even the town map was reprinted, to show the location of the newly restored cemetery. Perhaps most importantly for educating a new generation, an annual school-leaving prize was established in memory of the

Jews of Brzostek, with an associated educational program.

Mayor Bieniek and Town Secretary Lucyna Pruchnik have facilitated all these initiatives personally. They host Jewish visitors in their offices and maintain contact with them when they leave. Mrs Pruchnik's daughter helps with the English.

If memorializing Jewish life was the focus of the first stage of the project in 2009, the key element of the second stage, completed in June 2012, was memorializing where it came to a tragic end. For 70 years, the mass grave has remained hidden from view. The Germans chose a site deep in the Podzamce forest, just outside the nearby town of Kołaczyce. Those who remember the shootings of the 260 Jews from Brzostek, Kołaczyce, and surrounding villages are mostly dead; local memory of the atrocity, apparently perpetrated by only three Germans, has long since faded.

Now, thanks to the Brzostek Jewish Heritage Project, working together with Mayor Bieniek of Brzostek and Mayor Małgorzata Salacha of Kołaczyce, that memory is being passed to a new generation. The full extent of the mass grave has been paved, a properly signposted track created, and a memorial erected. It was dedicated on June 17 with the participation of Polish Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the Deacon of the Parish of Brzostek Fr. Dr Jan Cebulak, and Parish Priest of Kołaczyce, Fr. Jan Sabat. The hour-long ceremony was attended by the mayors of Brzostek, Kołaczyce, and other towns; close to 50 descendants of Brzostek Jews from nine countries; and a large crowd of local adults and young people. They wept openly as the names of the families that were murdered there were intoned, one by one, in the traditional Jewish memorial prayer. They wept again as the sound of the shofar, hinting at the future resurrection of the dead, reverberated through the forest.

Three other ceremonies organized by the Brzostek Jewish Heritage Project also took place that day. Two new memorial plaques were dedicated in the Jewish cemetery, a site that, until it was fenced and rededicated in June 2009, had been just an empty field. The act of fencing it encouraged local people to return stolen headstones; by the time of the rededication some 50 stones were standing upright. This year's ceremony continued the process, with descendants of Brzostek families coming from France and the United States to memorialize their dead. Those attending included two survivors who had been in Brzostek during the war: Ruth Wachner Pagirsky, now of New York; and Mark Schonwetter, now of New Jersey. Fencing the cemetery was a Jewish initiative, but it was the public encouragement by the mayor and the priest to return the headstones that made it once again a site of active memorialization rather than just a relic of the past. Local schoolchildren help maintain the site; it has become an integral part of the town, a site shown with pride to visitors from around the world.

In a second ceremony, this time in the Catholic cemetery, a new memorial was dedicated to the memory of a Polish woman, Maria Jałowiec, who had saved the lives of two Jewish women by hiding them for two years. The memorial was the initiative of Irving Wallach of Sydney, Australia, and Sabina Wallach of San Diego, California, born after the war to one of the women she had saved. Both travelled to Brzostek for the ceremony, which was conducted in the presence of the Australian Ambassador Joan Dunn, Wallach family members from six countries, and Maria Jałowiec's grandson Tadeusz. Now a grandfather himself, as an eight-year-old boy he had kept his grandma's secret about the Jews she was hiding in the barn. Irving Wallach told his mother's story, praised Maria Jałowiec as deserving to be called a Righteous Gentile, and said he would initiate the process of recognition with Yad Vashem. Prayers were recited by the chief rabbi and the deacon of the Parish of Brzostek. Tadeusz Jałowiec's face radiated pleasure at the belated recognition for his beloved grandma.

The third ceremony, in the Brzostek Middle School, followed a rousing cultural performance in memory of the Jews of Brzostek that culminated in the award of the fourth annual Jews of Brzostek Memorial Prize. The prize was initiated to help young people gain an awareness of the Jews who had lived in the town and how the Germans had murdered them and three million other Polish Jews. The school entered wholeheartedly into this project, as demonstrated by a carefully prepared exhibition created by pupils.

The rededication of the mass grave was the last ceremony of the day. The fact that it was broadcast by an internet TV station to local people living in England and the USA underscored the consistent interest shown in the project by local authorities — the mayors and their staff, the priests, and the teachers — and their encouragement to local people to identify with it.

The Brzostek Jewish Heritage Project is an initiative of the Webber and Tager families of England, both with roots in Brzostek. It is represented in Poland by Jonathan Webber of Oxford, now a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, working together with Mr. Adam Bartosz of the Tarnow Committee for the Protection of Monuments of Jewish Culture.

Making Poland whole again: Germany's opportunity to restore Jewish cemeteries

By Andrew Kier Wise – Associate Professor of History, Daemen College (Amherst, NY)

Destruction and Neglect

A Hebrew saying states that “a cemetery is more beautiful than the grandest palace.” But during World War II, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated and stripped of their matzevot (headstones) as part of the Nazi attempt to exterminate Jews and their cultural legacy. Nowhere is this more problematic than in Poland, where the pre-World War II population of 3.5 million Jews was virtually obliterated by the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust. The Nazis also targeted for destruction sacred Jewish sites, such as synagogues and cemeteries. Jewish slave laborers were forced to dismantle their shtetl's cemeteries and use headstones to build roads for German tanks and other military equipment. The monuments were also used as building materials to construct fortifications and to fill in marshes. The Jews were then sent off to the death camps or murdered and buried in mass graves in the cemeteries or nearby forests.

Ilustracja Matzevot were desecrated and removed by the Nazis from the Jewish cemetery in Łosice to construct walls at the Gestapo headquarters (photo: courtesy of Norman Weinberg)

The destruction of the cemeteries occurred during the German occupation and also after the war, because the Jewish population had been annihilated and could not care for them. Without caretakers for these sacred sites, during the postwar Communist era many cemeteries were declared abandoned and were converted into parks, sports arenas, housing developments, and even garbage dumps. Headstones continued to be repurposed under the new regime, and were used by communities for highway construction and other public works projects. Of the more than 1,200 Jewish cemeteries in Poland, only about a third have any headstones today.¹

In the immediate postwar years, Jewish leaders in Poland and the two Germanys (the Federal Republic of Germany in the west and the German Democratic Republic in the east) repeatedly demanded governmental support for the preservation of Jewish sacred sites. But in all three countries, Jewish synagogues and cemeteries were neglected. As Michael Meng explains in his superb book,² the preservation of Jewish sites was not included as part of the reshaping of a historical narrative that avoided the complicated issues of the wartime years.

West German government responses to the problem of devastated Jewish cemeteries began to emerge in the 1950s. This was the era of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's policy of restitution, which led in 1952 to the Reparations Agreement Between Israel and West Germany. Over the years, billions of dollars have been paid out to the state of Israel and the World Jewish Congress under this agreement as partial compensation for human and property losses during the Holocaust. In 1956, the West German government agreed to provide funding for the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries in that country. This was an exception in the regions most devastated by Nazi policies. In East Germany and Poland, for example, there were no concerted efforts by the Communist parties to preserve and protect Jewish cemeteries. Rather, neglect was the norm.³

International demands for German governments to fund the preservation of Jewish sacred sites in Poland and other countries were also unsuccessful. In 1965 a delegation from the World Center of European Rabbis requested the West German government to pay for the restoration of 2,000 Jewish cemeteries in Poland and elsewhere in Europe that were damaged under German occupation during World War II. Rabbi Moses Rubin, president of the World Center, reported that one million American Jews had signed a petition in support of this demand. But no action was taken by the West German government.⁴

Cultural Significance of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland

In her important study of the state of Jewish cemeteries in Poland, Anna Szajnert-Klein comments that she experienced a sensation of feeling “at home” when visiting them. She suggests that:

t. his may be because Jewish cemeteries have a very personal character. The matzevot say a lot about the people who belonged to a given community. One could almost recreate the life of an entire shtetl by reading the inscriptions and symbols on the tombstones. That is why I can sense the presence of community in these necropolises more intensely than in any other place, such as surviving Polish synagogues, for example. The Jewish cemeteries satisfy my longing for community, which was cut short, leaving my generation, the second generation post-Holocaust, with emptiness. Part of me will always dwell in Jewish cemeteries and I know that there is a key to my identity among these graves. Cemeteries hold an answer.⁵

Indeed, Jewish cemeteries were at the heart of the life of every Jewish community. For a thousand years, “Jews in Poland had a very close, even mystical, relationship with their cemeteries. They visited regularly, tearfully mourning the loss of loved ones; with happy hearts to announce births and marriages; to pray and plead

for guidance at the graves of their revered rabbis; and, they would carefully look after and clean their sacred burial sites.”⁶

According to Dr. Norman Weinberg, Executive Coordinator of the Poland Jewish Cemeteries Restoration Project (PJCRP), Jewish cemetery restoration in Poland “is about remembering and honoring the dead and those murdered during the Holocaust. It is doing what the murdered cannot do: caring for their sacred sites. We must do this for them. It is among the greatest of mitzvot, because they cannot thank us. And it is an obligation.”⁷ But Weinberg points out that Jewish cemetery restoration in Poland “is also very much about life and the living, educating youth, both Jews and non-Jews, reconciliation, and creating peace in the world.”⁸ As Szajnert-Klein suggests: “It seems as if past generations of Polish Jewry conveyed their legacy through these enduring stones; it seems as if these stones held the secret to how to rekindle the spark of Jewish life in Poland.”⁹

Restoration and Preservation

Funding for the restoration and preservation of cemeteries and of other Jewish heritage sites remains problematic. Today there are only an estimated 3,000 to 10,000 Jews living in Poland, and they do not have the resources to care for the devastated and desecrated cemeteries and unmarked mass graves. Since 2001, the Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego (FODZ, or Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland) has overseen the restitution of the majority of former Jewish communal properties in Poland. FODZ consistently maintains that “the protection of the Jewish cemeteries” is an integral part of its mission “to protect and commemorate the surviving monuments of Jewish cultural heritage in Poland.” This all serves to “broaden the public’s knowledge about the history of Jews who for centuries contributed to the cultural heritage of Poland.”¹⁰ FODZ has also just initiated a new “Adopt a Jewish Cemetery in Poland” program that hopes to generate broader international interest in the restoration of these sacred sites.

For nearly 15 years, Dr. Norman Weinberg has been a leader in these restoration efforts. Weinberg explains that he became involved in cemetery restoration after he started researching his family history in the former Polish shtetl of Ożarów. The cemetery in the small town was in poor condition, “with only about 60 monuments left out of many hundreds, walls destroyed and the grounds overgrown with the debris of 60 years of neglect.”

¹¹ Weinberg’s restoration project energized residents in the community, who helped find and return over 200 gravestones that had been removed during the war. Over 500 local residents attended the cemetery’s dedication ceremony on 15 October 2001. Weinberg notes that as a result of “the success of the Ozarow Ożarów.

‘model,’ Rabbi Michael Schudrich now Chief Rabbi of Poland. ... urged me to continue restoring the Jewish cemeteries of Poland. I agreed and Poland Jewish Cemeteries Project (PJCRP) was born.”¹²

Working closely with Poland’s Jewish foundations and under the supervision of the Chief Rabbi of Poland (Michael Schudrich), the PJCRP has participated in more than 30 projects since its inception. Survivors and their children have provided much of the funding for these restoration efforts. But future funding will be increasingly difficult as Survivors pass away.

Responsibility

For the past decade, the PJCRP has circulated a petition that requests the German government to provide funding to restore and preserve Jewish cemeteries in Poland. The petition states:

We ask the German Government to take responsibility and pay their fair share of the costs for restoration and maintenance of more than 1200 Jewish cemeteries German forces desecrated and destroyed and for the fencing and memorialization of the thousands of mass graves German forces created during German occupied Poland.¹³

Signatories of the petition believe that German contributions would be a fair and equitable solution to the enormous burden imposed on Jewish communities in Poland and elsewhere to repair and maintain cemeteries damaged during World War II. The PJCRP petition has a clear message: the German government has a responsibility to provide funds for restoring and preserving Jewish cemeteries in Poland.

In 2003, Norman Weinberg sought assistance from the German government for the restoration of two Jewish cemeteries in Poland. In a letter from its embassy in Warsaw, the German government acknowledged “the significance of memory and cemeteries in the Jewish religion” and noted that it had contributed to memorial efforts in Germany and abroad.¹⁴ Indeed, the Jewish Cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee has benefitted from large grants (1 million Euros) from the federal and Berlin city governments that were approved in 2009. Opened in 1880, this massive cemetery covers 42 hectares (104 acres) and holds more than 115,000 graves.¹⁵

The German government also recently provided millions of Euros to help fund the construction of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which is located in Warsaw on the site of the former Jewish ghetto. Located directly across from the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, the Museum is thus also very near the small monument dedicated to the occasion in 1970 when Chancellor Willy Brandt asked for atonement for the German people. Clearly, the site of the wartime ghetto has come to symbolize through its memorials the changing mood that has

emerged among Germans and Poles. Today, Germans and Poles more broadly recognize the need to restore and preserve Jewish cultural sites as part of a shared multicultural heritage.

But the German government has not yet funded the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in Poland. When war reparations agreements were concluded in 1953 and 1970 between Poland and German governments, they did not include specific provisions for the restoration of Jewish sacred sites. And despite the trend among Germans and Poles to embrace their nations' multicultural past, there has not been a full recognition of Jewish cemeteries as cultural sites that merit preservation. Anna Chipczyńska, President of the Jewish Community of Warsaw, is nevertheless optimistic that partial funding from the Polish Ministry of Culture will help defray the \$800,000 needed to restore the 225 year old Brodno cemetery in Warsaw. The oldest Jewish cemetery in the capital city, Brodno was one of a dozen devastated and neglected cemeteries whose ownership was transferred from the city to the Jewish Community in 2012.¹⁶

The dilapidated state of the remaining Jewish cemeteries in Poland is a palpable reminder of the devastating impact of German occupation during World War II. Following a 1991 German-Polish agreement, the bodies of thousands of Wehrmacht soldiers have been relocated from mass graves to 13 well-tended German military cemeteries in Poland. But the German government has yet to provide financial support for the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in Poland that were devastated during the war. In the city of Przemyśl, the contrast between the "new" Jewish cemetery on Słowacki Street (dating to 1860, ongoing restoration and preservation efforts are funded by petition signatory Dr. John Hartman's foundation, Remembrance and Reconciliation, Inc.) and the well-maintained cemetery dedicated to 4,000 German soldiers of World War II (opened in 1995 and occupying a place of prominence higher up the hill on the same street) is striking testimony of current German funding priorities. Worse yet, the grounds of the "old" Jewish cemetery in Przemyśl (dating back to the 16th century and totally obliterated by the German occupation forces) remain unmarked and unprotected. This exemplifies the urgent need for additional funding to restore and preserve Jewish cemeteries in Poland. And the reality is that in a few years' time there will be no Survivors to help care for these sacred sites.

The international community today does speak out when sacred sites are targeted for destruction by military forces. For example, the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has condemned recent actions by ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). But the international community has never fully addressed the desecration and destruction of sacred Jewish sites during World War II. The PJCRP petition firmly maintains that those responsible should provide the aid necessary to rectify, as much as this is possible, the damage to Jewish religious sites in Poland that occurred during German occupation. Signatories of the petition insist that no one should be immune from the moral, legal, and financial responsibility for purposeful desecration and destruction of religious sites. Yet despite initial optimism after meetings in Warsaw in September 2011 between Norman Weinberg's delegation and the German and Austrian ambassadors to Poland, the expressions of interest in the PJCRP petition have not led to any tangible commitment of funds.

Reconciliation

The PJCRP's Petition to the German Government has gained enormous popular support around the world. In signing the petition, Alan Yusim (Director of the Midwest Region of B'nai Brith Canada) thanked the PJCRP for "leading the mission to convince the German government to come clean and take responsibility for . . . the cemeteries that were despoiled, desecrated and reduced to rubble during the Nazi invasion and subjugation of Poland."¹⁷ Representing the one million supporters of the Jewish National Fund, signatory Russell F. Robinson (CEO) agrees that it "would be a meaningful reconciliation to the remaining survivors, their children and grandchildren, if the German government could provide the funding to honor the memories of their loved ones."¹⁸

Signatories of the petition include representatives for 25 Holocaust organizations – such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Anne Frank Center USA – that serve millions of visitors annually. Endorsing the petition on behalf of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (an umbrella organization of 14 national Jewish organizations and 125 local Jewish groups), Executive Director Steve Gutow reminds us that the "American Jewish community, many of whose members have roots in Eastern Europe, has great interest in remediation of the Jewish cemeteries and mass burial plots in Poland."¹⁹ Signatory Phyllis Snyder, president of the 90,000 strong National Council of Jewish Women, also notes that many members and supporters of her organization have family ties to the region.²⁰

The Polish American Congress, representing 10 million Polish Americans, also supports the petition. In May 2008, Joseph Macielag (past president of the Western New York Division of the Polish American Congress) delivered an impassioned speech to his peers at the National Directors of the Polish American Congress meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. He explained that he saw "the restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Poland as a continuous resurrection of a democratic Poland."²¹ Macielag believes that Norman Weinberg and the PCJRP are "making Poland whole again" through their efforts to restore Jewish sacred sites. 22. After hearing Macielag's pres-

entation, the Polish American Congress endorsed the petition. Also inspired by Macielag's address, Anthony J. Bajdek (President of Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts) signed the petition on behalf of his regional affiliate. He believes that since Nazi Germany deliberately precipitated World War II in Europe and chose to enforce barbaric methods, wholly devoid of humanity, of pacification and extermination on selected populations that it considered sub-human, it is the responsibility of Germans to close this particular ugly chapter of the Third Reich by doing what common decency and civilized behavior demand world-wide. In this case, Germany should and must make amends for this particular crime against humanity on Polish soil from 1939 to 1945 by funding the full restoration of the aforesaid Jewish. cemeteries.²³

The Government of the Republic of Poland, representing over 38 million Poles, also supports the petition. In an email dated 26 February 2010, Ambassador Maciej Kozłowski stated:

We do share your opinion that the German armed forces occupying Poland in 1939–1945 were responsible in large measure for the destruction and desecration of countless Jewish graveyards ...we would like to encourage your efforts in preserving Jewish cemeteries in Poland and do think you can address German authorities in this regard. Hoping that your request will be received with due understanding and sensitivity ...²⁴

Other leading Polish officials have added their support. During a visit to Buffalo in July 2007, the Mayor of Łódź, Jerzy Kropiwnicki, signed the petition on behalf of the 800,000 citizens of his city. He explained that he supported the petition "because it's right, it's just, and it's necessary."²⁵ Support of the petition is now global in scope. For example, signatory Eagle's Wings is an international Christian ministry that represents more than one million Christians worldwide. In total, over 60 million people around the world are represented by the signatories to the petition. The full list can be found at the PJCRP website at <http://www.pjcrp.org/list.html>.

In their letters of support, signatories voice their request for the government of Germany to "do the right thing." Rabbi Tanchum B. Becker, President of "Esh-Dat" Rabbinical Seminary in Israel, believes that the German government has an "opportunity to fulfill both a moral and historical obligation to those so brutally murdered during the Holocaust."²⁶ Supporters of the petition believe that regardless of any prior political or legal arrangements with other governments, groups, or individuals, the German government has an unpaid debt to the millions of Jewish victims of the Holocaust and their descendants. This can be paid in part in the form of a righteous act – the financial support for the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in Poland.

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Warsaw's Graveyard for Gravestones

by Liam Hoare, Warsaw

All Photos: Liam Hoare

The histories of the Jews of Europe can often best be gleaned not from monographs, museums, or synagogues, but from cemeteries. The details of the matzevot, or tombstones — the size and shape, location, condition, detailing, symbolism, text and language of the inscriptions — can be decoded to reveal not only something about the deceased, but also about the community itself.

But what can be surmised of a community from its cemeteries when all the matzevot are gone?

Paweł Bysko, an official from the Jewish Community of Warsaw, recently unlocked the gates to the Bródno cemetery for me, in the Bródno district on the east bank of the Vistula river. It was a cold afternoon in late October, and as we traversed the central way that ran from one end of the graveyard to the other, the final hours of daylight sliced through the trees that today forest this defunct, desecrated site where the absence of tombs and stones say as much about the fate of Polish Jewry as if they were present.

Founded by Józef Samuel Jakubowicz in the late 18th century, Bródno cemetery officially opened on July 26, 1780, and was used as a regular burial site (in addition to the main cemetery on Okopowa Street on the other side of Warsaw) up until the Nazi occupation of Poland in September 1939. Prior to the beginning of the Second World War, there were around 300,000 marked graves within the walls of the cemetery.

With the occupation came the systematic destruction of the site by the Nazis as the matzevot were used for building material; further damage was inflicted upon it as Warsaw was made dust following the failed uprising of August 1944. After the war, in December 1947, one final burial took place at Bródno: a mass interment of those bodies found and exhumed amidst the rubble of Warsaw. Bródno closed in 1950.

One year later, the communist administration carpeted the site in trees and resumed the Nazi practice of using the cemetery as a quarry, making use of the matzevot as stonework for the reconstruction of Warsaw. The walls and gates of the cemetery were levelled in 1960, and as the condition of the site deteriorated further, it came to be used as pastoral land for cattle farmers and as a resource for robbers in search of loot.

Some order was restored during the 1980s when the then newly-formed Nissenbaum Family Foundation — dedicated to the preservation of the sites of Jewish life and culture in Poland, including its cemeteries — took to tending the site. They erected an iron fence around the cemetery, installed the looming gates, featuring bronze bas-reliefs by Polish artists that play on Jewish themes, and began the work of ingathering the stones that had been dispersed around Warsaw.

Now the future of the cemetery — in a sense a graveyard for gravestones — remains undetermined. The Nissenbaum Foundation, having made inroads tidying and maintaining Bródno, ceased work at the site in 2010. Beyond



the gates, their legacy, located at the end of the cemetery's central axis, is an incomplete lapidarium, a platform for a monument to Warsaw's lost Jewish culture that was barely started, let alone finished.

Two years ago, Bródno passed back into the possession of the Jewish Community of Warsaw. They have set aside a budget for the site and have loose plans to use the site as an educational facility. The community continues to take in stones returned by city residents or recovered from public places.

But what is evident, of course, is that however many matzevot are found, what has been lost at Bródno — above ground reclaimed by nature, beneath an anonymous mass of bones and dust — shall be so forever. What is true of Polish Jewry is true of its cemeteries.

Read more: <http://forward.com/the-assimilator/209252/photos-warsaws-graveyard-for-gravestones/#ixzz3nPn5ficU>





