

Steven D. Reece

From: Mark H. Zimmerman <ravmark@zimmerman.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 14:31
To: Steven D. Reece
Subject: Re: Mitzvah in Poland

Sounds like a terrific mitzvah project...

I have contacted a couple folks I know from the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta to see if there might be some interest in getting involved with this project.
I'll let you know when I hear back.

Rabbi Mark Zimmerman
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CBS Web Site: <http://bshalom.net>
Learn Siddur at: <http://sidduraudio.com>

On 2/22/2010 10:48 AM, Steven D. Reece wrote:

Greetings, Rabbi Zimmerman,

My name is Steven Reece. My family and I live directly behind the Congregation Beth Shalom with my wife's parents, who have lived in this home since 1978. My wife and I lived and worked with our children in Poland for twelve years. We worked primarily with Polish Baptists principally in Warsaw, Poland; however, we also developed a working relationship with the Jewish Community of Warsaw. We returned from Poland in October 2008 due to family needs and the health of my wife's parents. I work as a consultant with Baptist churches in the Atlanta area currently.

Since early 2005, as I mentioned above, I have worked closely with the Jewish Community of Warsaw, specifically with the Rabbinic Council for Matters of Jewish Cemeteries (Komisja Rabiniczna do Spraw Cmentarzy) in the care and restoration of Jewish cemeteries in the Warsaw area in a mitzvah of caring for the dead.

I have attached a photocopy of a letter of introduction from Rabbi Michael Schudrick, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, outlining who I am and how I have worked with the Jewish Community in Poland.

In brief, I have organized numerous projects related to this specific mitzvah involving both American and Polish volunteers who have served the Jewish Community by working with them to restore and care for several Jewish cemeteries in the Warsaw area including the largest Jewish Cemetery (Okopowa), the Praga Cemetery on the east bank of the Wisla River in Warsaw, the Otwock and Pruszkow Jewish Cemeteries just outside of Warsaw in its suburbs and Sochaczew a city about 40 miles from Warsaw.

In our work, we have primarily cleaned and removed debris, repaired broken headstones, and rebuilt part of a wall in the Jewish cemetery located in Pruszkow, a suburb of Warsaw. Most of what we have done has been done as a way to assist and serve the Jewish Community catalogue headstones, and reclaim important historical information and preserve vital elements

of Jewish culture along with documenting important ancestral information for future generations. However, most importantly we have sought to enter into what G_d is already doing by bringing healing and restoration to the world (Tikkun Olam) through this mitzvah.

I would like to continue this mitzvah; albeit in a different manner. Many of these American Baptist volunteers wish to continue in this mitzvah and are willing to participate and support this project. However, I am not certain at this point how to proceed with and/or engage the Jewish Community of Atlanta in this mitzvah, since I have no direct connection with them. For this reason, I need help and advice concerning how to go about mobilizing the Jewish Community of Atlanta in this vital mitzvah.

I do not know if you see any value in this mitzvah or not for your congregation, but I would like to know if you do and what you think about this mitzvah project. Secondly, if at all possible, I would like to meet with you and discuss possibilities, ideas, and seek your input and guidance, as well as, your assistance concerning how to we might continue this mitzvah from this side of the Atlantic and engage the Jewish Community of Atlanta in this mitzvah.

I still feel called to this mitzvah and I believe that it is vitally important to continue in the care and restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Poland, because the "dead cannot care for themselves." If G_d so allows, I would like to finish the restoration of the wall surrounding the Jewish cemetery in Pruszkow. I have the support of the Jewish Community in Warsaw, as they wish to complete this restoration project. What I need are more fellow laborers (co-workers) and partners for the completion of this project.

I have included some photos below for your reference in order for you to see what the work looks like.

Please let me know if you would like to meet. I am available to meet with you most any morning between 9:00 AM and 11:30 AM or anytime during working hours on Wednesday's or in the morning on Friday. Thank you for your consideration in this matter and I look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

Shalom!

Steven

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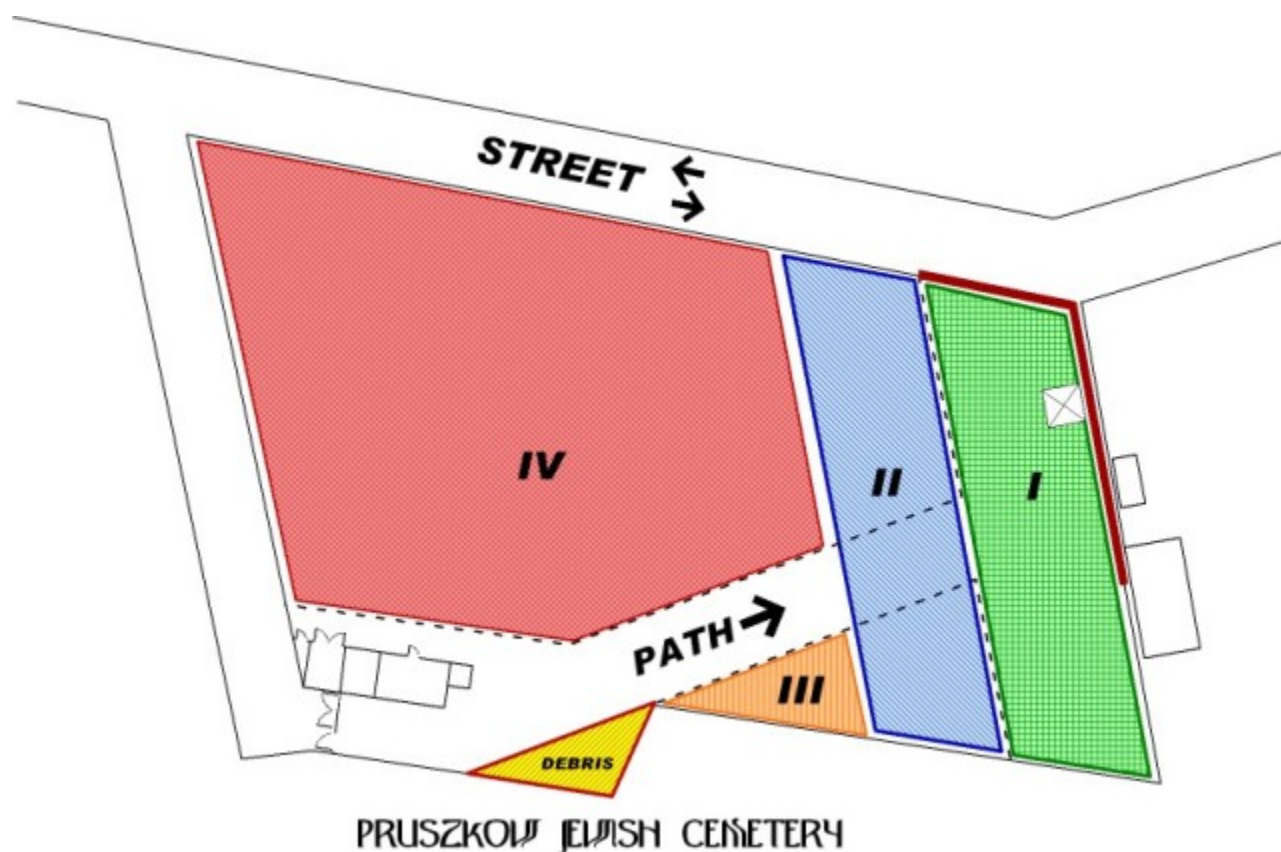
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Pruszkow Jewish Cemetery Project

"If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. You will be called the Repairer of Broken Walls, the Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" (Isaiah 58:10,12).

Project Synopsis: We would like to complete the restoration of the wall of the Jewish Cemetery in Pruszkow. Three American groups of Baptist volunteers worked to replace a 24 meter (80 feet roughly) segment in the summer of 2008 (from June to August). I am not 100 percent certain, but I believe that there are approximately 150 to 200 meters (approximately 660 feet) of wall remaining to be restored. I would like to complete the restoration of the Pruszkow cemetery wall. This project could take up to 4 years depending upon the number of volunteers and resources available.

Project Overview: Graphic showing the work done and yet to be completed. Photos shot prior to (September 2007) and during the restoration of the wall in the Pruszkow Jewish Cemetery June - August 2008:



Map showing restored segment of the wall in red. Teams worked in four phases to clear the cemetery of debris while working on the wall.

Photographs showing the original state of the cemetery wall in Pruszkow.



Broken segment of wall September 2007.



Condition of wall around Pruszkow Jewish Cemetery September 2007 (along main road).



Condition of wall June 2008.



Clearing and demolition of wall June 2008.



Volunteer teams attempted to reclaim and clean as many original bricks as possible (June 2008).



Final stage of completing the restoration of the wall segment at Pruszkow (August 2008).



Completed segment of wall repaired in August 2008.



Finishing of the segment of wall repaired in August 2008.



Completed segment of wall repaired in August 2008.



Completed segment of wall repaired in August 2008.

Below are an English and Polish accounts of our work with the Jewish Community beginning in July 2005 in Otwock, Poland (a suburb of Warsaw). These brief accounts are from Polish websites.

http://www.sztetl.org.pl/?a=showCity&id=1984&city_id=655&action=viewtable&cat_id=12&lang=en_GB

"The owner of the Otwock cemetery is the Jewish Religious [Community](#) in Warszawa. Since 2004, the Baptist [Community](#) in Otwock (I Baptist Church in Otwock – Road of Life) and Baptist volunteers from the USA (Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas and North Carolina) have been acted (working) together with the Jewish [Community](#) towards the renovation of the cemetery. At first, the North Lanier Baptist Church carried out the works. Over the last two years, about 140 volunteers from Baptist circles from the USA and Poland have been involved in the clearing works in the Anieline cemetery. The person who is responsible in Poland for the contact with American Baptists is Steven D. Reece."

http://www.sztetl.org.pl/?a=showCity&action=viewtable&cat_id=12&city_id=655&id=1984&lang=pl_PL

Właścicielem cmentarza w Otwocku jest Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Warszawie. Od roku 2004 r. z gminą żydowską w renowacji otwockiego cmentarza współpracuje Społeczność Baptystyczna w Otwocku (I Zbór Baptystyczny w Otwocku - Droga Życia) i baptystyczni wolontariusze z USA (Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Teksas i Północna Karolina). Początkowo prace prowadził North Lanier Baptist Church. W ostatnich dwóch latach w prace porządkowe na cmentarzu w Anieline zaangażowało się łącznie ok. 140 wolontariuszy ze środowisk baptystycznych z USA i Polski. Osobą odpowiedzialną w Polsce za kontakty z amerykańskimi baptystami jest Steven D. Reece.

And this one: <http://swidermajer.nazwa.pl/zo/rca.html>



Work from the Otwock Jewish Cemetery, June 2007.
