

FOUNDATION FOR
THE PRESERVATION
OF JEWISH HERITAGE
IN POLAND



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Revitalization
of the Renaissance
synagogue
in Zamość

for the needs of the Chassidic Route
and the local community



The official opening of the “Synagogue” Center on April 5th, 2011, was held under the honorary patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski.

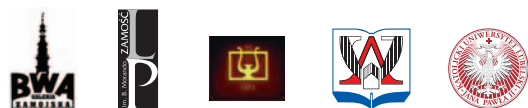
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This brochure has been published within the framework of the project “Revitalization of the Renaissance synagogue in Zamość for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community” implemented by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.



Activities implemented at the synagogue following the completion of renovation works involve our local partners:

Zamość Gallery
Bernardo Morando Fine Arts High School
Karol Namysłowski Symphonic Orchestra
Zamość University of Management and Administration
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin



as well as
the Jewish Community of Trondheim, Norway (Det Mosaiske Trossamfunn, Trondheim).

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland was founded in 2002 by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO).

The Foundation’s mission is to protect surviving monuments of Jewish heritage in Poland. Our chief task is the protection of Jewish cemeteries. In cooperation with other organizations and private donors we have saved from destruction, fenced and commemorated several burial grounds (in Zakopane, Kozienice, Mszczonów, Iwaniska, Strzegowo, Dubienka, Kolno, Iłża, Wysokie Mazowieckie, Siedleczka-Kańczuga, Żuromin and several other localities). Our activities also include the renovation and revitalization of Jewish monuments of special significance, such as the synagogues in Kraśnik, Przysucha and Rymanów as well as the synagogue in Zamość.

However, the protection of material patrimony is not the Foundation’s only task. We are equally concerned about increasing public knowledge regarding the history of Polish Jews, whose contribution to Poland’s heritage spans several centuries. Our most important educational projects include the “To Bring Memory Back” program, addressed to high school students, and POLIN – Polish Jews’ Heritage www.polin.org.pl – a multimedia web portal that will present the history of 1200 Jewish communities throughout Poland.

One of the Foundation’s main undertakings is the Chassidic Route project, centering around the revitalized synagogue in Zamość.

We invite you to have a look at our activities.

Monika Krawczyk
CEO

For more information about the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland visit:

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

“REVITALIZATION OF THE RENAISSANCE SYNAGOGUE IN ZAMOŚĆ FOR THE NEEDS OF THE CHASSIDIC ROUTE AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY”

The Renaissance synagogue in the Old Town of Zamość is one of the most spectacular monuments of Jewish heritage in Poland. The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage has been the owner of the building since 2005.

Due to several years of neglect the synagogue was in a very bad technical condition upon its takeover by the Foundation. We immediately proceeded to secure the edifice and carry out crucial renovations. We then developed a revitalization scheme and launched efforts to acquire the necessary funding.

In 2008, the project “Revitalization of the Renaissance synagogue in Zamość for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community” received support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. In 2009–2010, the Foundation carried out construction and conservation works on the site, restoring the building to its original appearance and securing it for centuries to come.

In 2011, the “Synagogue” Center, created to serve the needs of Jewish visitors to Zamość as well as those of its inhabitants, was opened within the renovated building. It currently comprises the Chassidic Route tourist and cultural information center as well as the Multimedia Museum of the History of the Jews of Zamość and the Surrounding Area. Thanks to the existence of the Center visitors can learn about the history of the Jewish community which over several centuries took part in shaping the region’s intellectual, religious and cultural identity. Part of the building has also been adapted for the needs of local NGOs active in the area of culture.

The “Synagogue” Center also serves as a venue for educational activities and cultural events involving the Foundation’s local partners: the Zamość Gallery, the Bernardo Morando Fine Arts High School, the Karol Namysłowski Symphonic Orchestra and the Zamość University of Management and Administration. The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and the Jewish Community of Trondheim are also involved in the Center’s activities.

Within the framework of the project “Revitalization of the Renaissance synagogue in Zamość for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community” the Foundation also implemented the activity “Restoration of the synagogue complex in Krasnik – phase I (protective works from further decay)”. Works on the site were carried out in 2010.

We invite you to visit the “Synagogue” Center!



THE ZAMOŚĆ SYNAGOGUE

The Renaissance synagogue in the Old Town was erected at the beginning of the 17th century, in all likelihood between 1610–1618 or 1620. It was initially a single chamber structure, with annexes for women most likely added to the main building sometime in the 1630's. The edifice is topped by an attic concealing a recessed roof. The vaults are adorned by masterfully crafted stucco elements. The eastern wall of the main hall houses the aron ha-kodesh – a richly ornamented niche in which Torah scrolls were once kept.

In the 18th century, the synagogue underwent extensive refurbishments. The façade was altered, the attics removed and a new roof constructed, while a second floor was added to the annexes for women. A vestibule connecting the synagogue to the adjacent kehilla house was built on the western side. In 1788, a beautiful bimah made of wrought iron, funded by Rabbi Samuel Barzel, was placed in the center of the main hall.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the interior of the synagogue was looted and devastated by the Nazis. The southern annex for women was taken down, while the northern suffered extensive damage. In 1941, the Germans converted the interior of the synagogue into a stable, and then a carpenters' workshop.

After the war, the synagogue was renovated, however its function as a house of prayer was never restored. Between 1951 and 1954, the building functioned as a warehouse, and between 1959 and 2005, as the provincial and municipal public library. A number of works were carried out, aiming to restore the building to its form prior to the 18th century reconstruction. The southern annex for women was rebuilt between 1948–1950 (with only one floor), and the second floor of the northern annex was eliminated. The attic was reconstructed between 1957–1972.

In 2005, ownership of the building was transferred to the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, which launched efforts to revitalize the synagogue for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community. In 2009–2010, the Foundation carried out comprehensive renovation and conservation works on the site.

THE CHASSIDIC ROUTE

The Chassidic Route is a tourist route following traces of Jewish communities through south-eastern Poland, and soon also western Ukraine. The project has already been joined by twenty-three communities, in which priceless reminders of a centuries-old Jewish presence have survived. These are: Baligród, Biłgoraj, Chełm, Cieszanów, Dębica, Dynów, Jarosław, Kraśnik, Lesko, Leżajsk (Lizhensk), Lublin, Łańcut, Łęczna, Przemyśl, Radomyśl Wielki, Ropczyce, Rymanów, Sanok, Tarnobrzeg, Ustrzyki Dolne, Wielkie Oczy, Włodawa and Zamość.

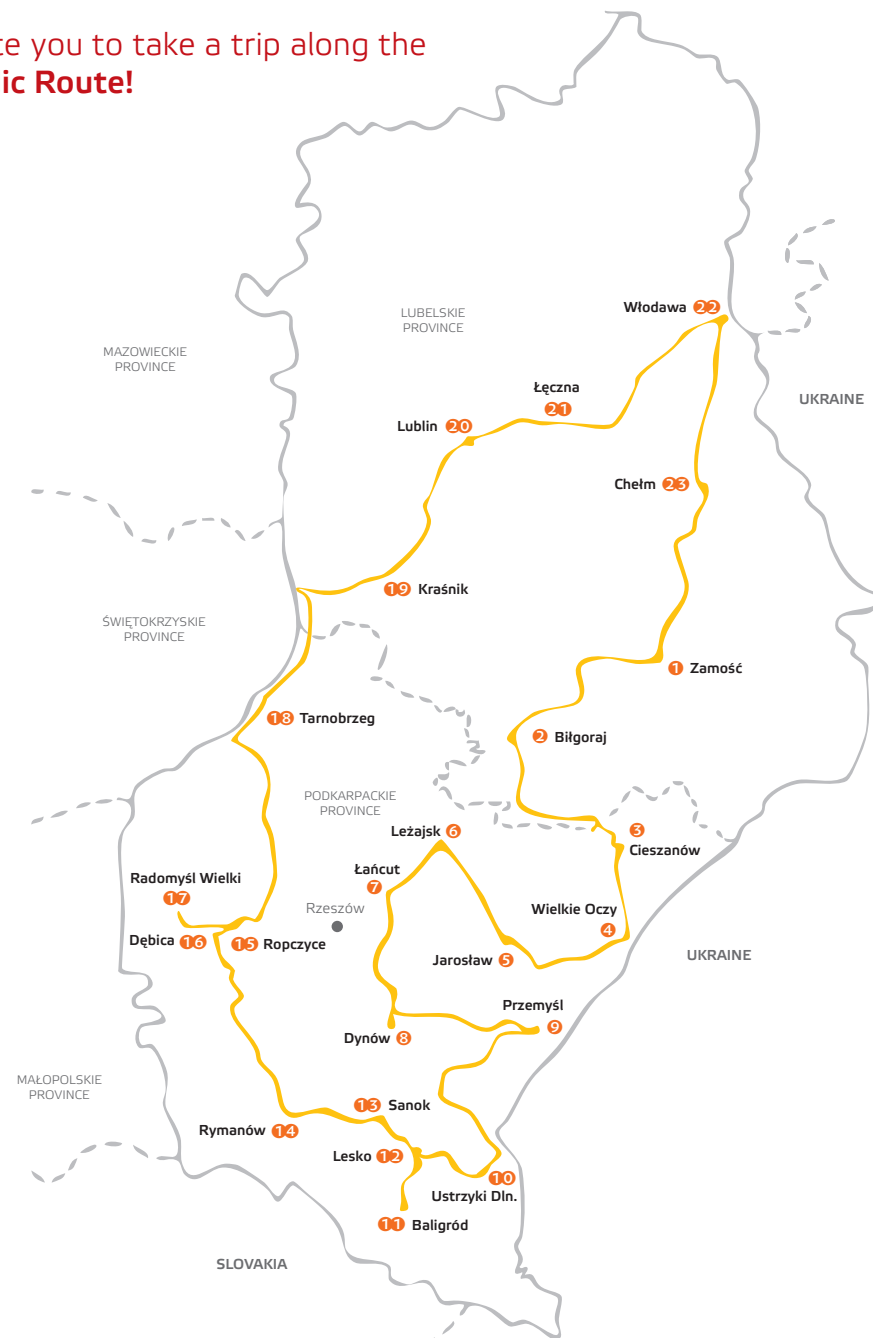
The Chassidic Route runs through many picturesque areas, like the Roztocze Hills or the Bieszczady Mountains, and joins localities where one can find imposing synagogues and Jewish cemeteries with gravestones dating back to the 18th, 17th or even the 16th century. Many of them are still visited by Chassidim from all over the world.

Within the framework of the Route, the Foundation supports local authorities and non-governmental organizations in protecting and promoting their townships' multicultural heritage. Our aim is also to stimulate the development of dedicated tourism based on Jewish heritage through the establishment of permanent inter-sector partnerships.

The Chassidic Route gives many places in Poland the opportunity to appear on the map of tourist attractions. Apart from well-known Zamość, included on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, there are many places along the Route that are often omitted by tourists, unaware of their significance and charm.

The Chassidic Route
is a tourist route following the
traces of Jewish communities
through southeastern Poland.

We invite you to take a trip along the
Chassidic Route!



WHY THE “CHASSIDIC ROUTE”?

For many centuries Poland was home to several generations of Jews, as well as the scene of an unprecedented flowering of Jewish culture, religious thought and writing. It was here that Chassidism, one of the most important currents ever to come into being within Judaism, emerged in the 18th century. Chassidism gained an especially high number of supporters in eastern Poland, including territories through which the Chassidic Route runs today.

It is traditionally believed that the creator of Chassidism (chassid is Hebrew for “pious”) was Israel Ben Eliezer of Medzhybizh in Podolia (today, a region of the Ukraine), known as the Baal Shem Tov. Chassidim believed that religion should not be limited to the strict observance of commandments, or even that obeying them in too literal a manner could distance man from God. They therefore strongly emphasized the emotional experience of faith.

Chassidim concentrated around tzadikim (Hebrew for “the righteous one”), charismatic spiritual leaders, each of whom preached a distinct way of approaching God - specific ways of studying religious texts and celebrating rituals. Some tzadikim became famous for their theories, for example that prayers would be heard by God only if they were shouted or accompanied by dancing. In the 19th century the title of Tzadik became hereditary, which led to the creation of whole dynasties, taking their names from towns in which tzadik courts were located.

On yortzeit, the anniversary of a tzadik’s death, Chassidim gather round the tzadik’s grave, believing that on this day the rabbi’s soul visits his place of rest. They pray and leave kvitlech – pieces of paper bearing their requests – on the tzadik’s tomb. This tradition is still alive and Chassidim from all over the world still regularly visit the graves of tzadikim in Dynów, Leżajsk, Łańcut or Rymanów.

However, not all the places along the Chassidic Route were centers of the Chassidic movement. Tzadik “courts” existed in Cieszanów, Dębica, Dynów, Lesko, Leżajsk, Lublin, Łańcut, Przemyśl, Ropczyce, Rymanów and Tarnobrzeg (or, more precisely, in nearby Dzików). The most important center of Chassidism in Poland was Leżajsk, where the famous tzadik Elimelech was active. Other places along the Route were home to smaller groups of Chassidim, affiliated with tzadikim from other towns and villages. This, however, does not reduce the appeal of the Jewish heritage sites located there.

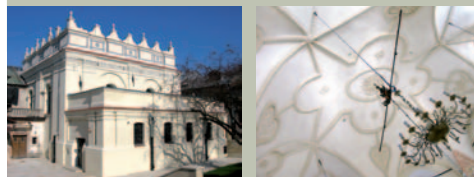
Zamość

renaissance synagogue built at the beginning of the 17th c.

14 Icchaka Leibusza Pereca St.

the so-called “new cemetery” founded in 1907 Prosta St.

1



Biłgoraj

cemetery founded in the 19th c.

Marii Konopnickiej St.

2



3

Cieszanów

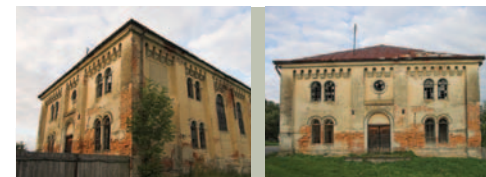
synagogue built at the end of the 19th c.

Ks. Ignacego Skorupki St.

cemetery founded in the 19th c.

Armii Krajowej St.

4



Wielkie Oczy

synagogue built at the beginning of the 20th c.

Rynek St.

cemetery founded in the 18th c. Krakowiecka St.



Jarosław
two synagogues built in the 19th c.
5 Ordynacka St. and 12 Opolska St.
building of the Yad Charuzim Society
1 Tarnowskiego Sq.
cemetery founded at the beginning of the
18th c. *Kruhel Pelkinski St.*

5

Leżajsk (Lizhensk)
cemetery founded in the 18th c.;
resting place of Tzadik Elimelech of Leżajsk/
Lizhensk (1717–1787), pilgrimage destination
for Chassidim from all over the world
Górna St.

6

Łańcut
Baroque synagogue built in the 18th c.
16 Jana III Sobieskiego Sq.
cemetery founded in the 17th c.;
resting place of Tzadik Naftali Tzvi Horowitz
of Ropczyce (1760–1827) and Eleazar Shapiro
of Łańcut (d. 1865), the founder of the Dynów
tzadik dynasty *Stanisława Moniuszki St.*

7

Dynów
cemetery founded at the end of the 18th c.;
resting place of Tzadik Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro
of Dynów (1785–1841) *Józefa Piłsudskiego St.*

8



Przemyśl
the so-called “new synagogue”
erected at the beginning of the 20th c.
5 Unii Brzeskiej Sq.
the so-called “new cemetery” founded
at the beginning of the 19th c.; the largest
Jewish cemetery in Podkarpackie province
Juliusza Słowackiego St.

9

Ustrzyki Dolne
cemetery on Mount
Gromadzyń, founded
in the 18th c.

10

Baligród
cemetery founded
at the beginning
of the 18th c.
Jana Dupleka St.

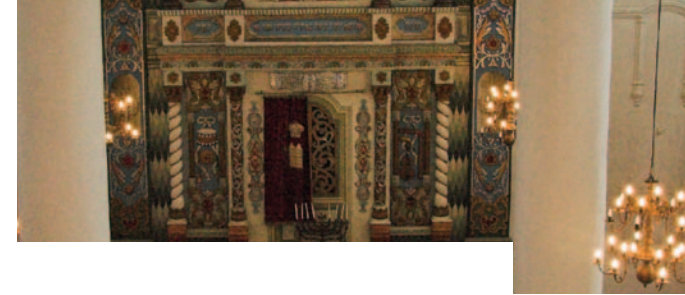
11

Lesko
synagogue built in the 17th c.
16 Berka Joselewicza St.
cemetery founded in the 16th c.; one of the
oldest surviving Jewish cemeteries in Europe
Juliusza Słowackiego St.

12

Sanok
the synagogue of the Yad Charuzim Society
built in the 19th c. *5 Franciszkańska St.*
the Sadogóra synagogue erected in the
interwar period *10 Rynek St.*
the so-called “new cemetery” founded in the
19th c. *Kiczury St.*

13



Rymanów

Baroque synagogue built in the 17th c.
in restoration since 2005
corner of Rynek and Ignacego Bieleckiego St.

cemetery founded in the 16th c.; resting
place of Tzadik Menachem Mendel of
Rymanów (1745–1815)
Juliusza Słowackiego St.

14

Ropczyce

**cemetery
founded in the
18th c.**
Monte Cassino St.

15

Dębica

**synagogue built at
the end of the 18th c.**
3 Krakowska St.

**cemetery founded
at the turn
of the 18th c.**
Cmentarna St.

16

Radomyśl Wielki

cemetery founded in the 19th c. *Kąty St.*
mikvah (ritual bath) *Targowa St.*

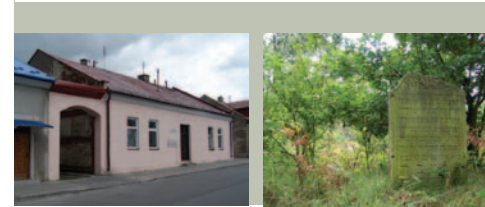
the so-called "Teflówka"; former house of
Rabbi Chaim Englam *2 Tadeusza Kościuszki St.*

17

Tarnobrzeg

**cemetery founded at the beginning
of the 20th c.;** resting place of Tzadik Eliezer
Horowitz of Dzików (d. 1860)
Marii Dąbrowskiej St.

18



19

Kraśnik

**synagogue complex consisting of two
synagogues built in the 17th and 19th c.**
6 and 6a Bożnicza St.

**the so-called "new cemetery" founded
ca. 1850** *Szewska St.*

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I (protective works from further decay)". Works
on the site were carried out in 2010

20

Lublin

**the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin (the School
of the Wise Men of Lublin) built in 1930**
as the biggest Jewish religious school in the
world *85 Lubartowska St.*

**the so-called "old cemetery" founded in
the 16th c.;** resting place of Tzadik Jacob Isaac
Horowitz, known as "The Seer of Lublin"
(1745–1815) *Sienna St.*

**the so-called "new cemetery" founded at
the beginning of the 19th c.** *Walczyńskich St.*

21

Łęczna

the Great Synagogue, built in 1648
19 Bożnicza St.

**the Small Synagogue, built at the beginning
of the 19th c.** *21 Bożnicza St.*

**cemetery founded in the second half
of the 16th c.** *Pasternik St.*

22

Włodawa

**Baroque synagogue
complex erected
in the second half
of the 18th c.**
*7 Czerwonego
Krzyża St.*

23

Chełm

**the so-called "new
synagogue" built at
the beginning of the
20th c.** *8 Kopernika St.*

**cemetery founded in
the 15th c.;** one of the
oldest surviving Jewish
cemetaries in Europe
Kolejowa St.



THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT ON THE CHASSIDIC ROUTE IS THE RENAISSANCE SYNAGOGUE IN ZAMOŚĆ.

ZAMOŚĆ – A CITY OF MANY CULTURES

Zamość is Poland's only – and one of Europe's very few – Renaissance urban complexes. It was founded in 1580 by the Hetman and Grand Chancellor of the Crown, Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605), as the Renaissance „ideal city”. It was designed by the Italian architect Bernardo Morando.

In 1992, the town's Old City complex was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

The uniqueness of Zamość derives not only from its architecture and urban design. Taking a walk down the city's Renaissance alleyways one should remember that nearly from the very beginning, Zamość was a multinational metropolis whose life was governed by the ideas of tolerance and harmony. Apart from Poles, Zamość was also home to people of many other nations, enjoying equal rights and mutually shaping the multicultural image of the city.

In 1992, the town's Old City complex was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.



HISTORY OF THE ZAMOŚĆ JEWISH COMMUNITY

The first Jews in Zamość

When Jan Zamoyski founded Zamość nothing indicated that the town would soon become a multicultural and multi-ethnic center, inhabited not only by Poles, but also by Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Germans, Italians, Scots and Jews. At first, the Hetman granted Catholics the exclusive right to settle in the city. However, he was soon forced to change his plans. As early as 1585, settlement rights were granted to Armenians, and in 1588, to Jews.



It should be kept in mind that Zamoyski's consent to settle within the city walls and to set up a kehilla (or religious community) was given to Sephardi Jews. The term refers to Jews who had settled in the Iberian Peninsula from the 2nd c. AD, and who were subsequently expelled from Spain. Following their expulsion, the Sephardim sought refuge chiefly in Western Europe and the Mediterranean Sea region. Meanwhile, the majority of Jews living in Poland were Ashkenazim, descendants of the Medieval Jewish communities of Germany, whence they had come to Poland. Sephardim and Ashkenazim differed by way of custom, liturgy as well as musical and linguistic traditions.

In Zamoyski's time there was only one small Sephardi community in Poland, located in Lvov. It was the Sephardim of Lvov who were the first to settle in Zamość by right of a privilege granted in 1588. Later, Sephardi Jews from Italy and Turkey, and after 1623, also from Flanders and the Netherlands, arrived in the city. It was thus that Jewish merchants from the most important commercial centers of Renaissance Europe who were able to provide Zamość with excellent trade contacts with the Levant (the Middle East) and contribute to the city's cultural and economic development, came to settle in Zamość.

Zamoyski's privilege allowed the Sephardim to build houses in Żydowska ("Jewish") Street (now Ludwika Zamenhofa St.) and to erect a synagogue, a cheder (religious school for boys) and a mikvah (ritual bath). More importantly, Jews settling in Zamość were granted legal rights equal to those enjoyed by other citizens – an exception at the time. They could earn their living as craftsmen and tradesmen, pharmacists and doctors. The privilege also gave them the right to produce luxury goods: elegant clothing, jewelry



The intellectual prowess of the community is illustrated by the fact that already in the 17th c. Jewish Zamość was referred to as "a town full of scholars and writers alike".

and household items. The Jewish community of Zamość was to remain Sephardi, although Ashkenazi Jews could be admitted to it on condition of obtaining permission from the town owner and the kehilla. At this time, however, Sephardim did not allow mixed marriages with Ashkenazi Jews, as differences between the two groups were regarded as too deep.

The turn of the 17th century saw the founding of the first Jewish cemetery in Zamość. It was there that Rabbi Yaakov Kranz, the famous Maggid of Dubno, was buried in 1804. No trace of the burial ground, located in today's Partyzantów St., remains. The site is occupied by the Zamość Culture House. At the beginning of the 17th c., the famous Renaissance synagogue was erected in Żydowska St. (today at 14 Icchaka Leibusza Perca St.), followed by the community house of learning and prayer – the bet midrash. The Jewish district itself developed gradually, expanding from Żydowska St. into today's Icchaka Leibusza Perca St. and the Rynek Solny ("The Salt Market"). The intellectual prowess of the community is illustrated by the fact that already in the 17th c. Jewish Zamość was referred to as "a town full of scholars and writers alike".



The End of the Sephardi Community

The wars which struck Poland in the 17th c., especially the Khmelnitsky Uprising and the Swedish invasion (commonly known as the Deluge), brought an end to the Sephardi community of Zamość. Most of the Sephardim left town, to be succeeded by Ashkenazim, which led to the incorporation of the town kehilla into the vast communal organization of Polish Jewry. From the second half of the 17th c., Zamość was represented at the Council of Four Lands (the central body of Jewish authority in Poland from 1580 to 1764), in which the town's deputies also acted on behalf of the smaller Jewish communities from the Zamość Entail.

Religious and Intellectual Life

In the 18th c. Zamość became an important center of rabbinical education. Rabbi Yaakov Isaac Hochgelentner founded the city's first rabbinical school, the Yeshiva of the Wise Men of Zamość.



In the 18th c. Zamość became an important center of rabbinical education. Rabbi Yaakov Isaac Hochgelentner founded the city's first rabbinical school, the Yeshiva of the Wise Men of Zamość.

Unlike other communities in southeastern Poland, the Jewish community of Zamość never associated itself with the Chassidic movement, which drew a considerable following in Poland in the second half of the 18th c. Unlike the smaller communities surrounding Zamość, where Chassidism found many supporters, the capital of the Entail became a significant anti-Chassidic center. Not coincidentally, it was the hometown of Rabbi Ezriel Halevi Horowitz, a major critic of Chassidism and opponent of Rabbi Jacob Isaac Horowitz, known as "The Seer of Lublin" – the famous leader of the Lublin Chassidim. In the first half of the 19th c., there were only two small Chassidic groups in Zamość, consisting of followers of the Tzadik of Góra Kalwaria and the Tzadik of Bełz.

The community's rejection of Chassidism was likely due to the attitude of its traditional elite and well-educated rabbis, one of whom was Rabbi Israel Ben Moshe Halevi Zamość. A philosopher and mathematician, he became well-known throughout Europe, and was notably the teacher of Moses Mendelssohn, the famous thinker and precursor of the Haskalah. The Haskalah (Hebrew for "Enlightenment") was a pan-European movement which evolved in the Jewish circles of Western Europe. Its proponents called for the renunciation of isolationism and the involvement of Jews in the social and political life of the countries they inhabited. At the end of the 18th century, Zamość became one of the most important centers of the Haskalah in the region.

Under the Partitions

As a result of the First Partition of Poland in 1772, Zamość became part of the territory of Austria. In 1815, following the Congress of Vienna, the town was incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland (a puppet state under Russian rule). In 1822, the tsarist authorities decided to enlarge the Zamość fortress. Civilians living in the Old Town, and thus within the fortress walls, were relocated to the suburbs, mainly to Nowa Osada ("New Settlement"), later called Nowe Miasto ("New Town"). The seat of the kehilla was also moved to this new location.

At this time, the Jewish community already made up the majority of the population. In 1827, Jews numbered 2 874 out of the town's 5 414 inhabitants, comprising 53% of the total population. In 1857, they numbered 2 490 out of 4 035.

The Russian authorities did not allow civilians back into the Old City until 1866, when the town lost its fortress status. While most of the elite moved back to the Old Town, many of the poorer Jews stayed in the New Town. From that time onwards one may speak of an informal division among the Zamość community, which split into the more progressive Old Town and the New Town community. The latter eventually came to be dominated by supporters of Chassidism, with the descendants of the Seer of Lublin holding rabbinical office. Between 1866–1872, a synagogue was built in the New Town. Although vastly altered, the building has survived to our day (at 32 Gminna St.).

In the second half of the 19th century, a new group appeared among the Zamość Jewish elite: assimilated Jews, who nonetheless made up only a very small percentage of the Jewish community. Though small in number, they were very active. One has but to mention



On the eve of World War I, over 90% of shops and over 75% of workshops in the city belonged to Jews.



By 1897, there were 7 034 Jews living in Zamość, making up 62 % of the total population.

the Hernhut family, who ran a Russian-Polish printing house as well as a well-known bookstore. In 1913, all of the six bookshops in Zamość belonged to Jews. Apart from the Hernhuts', there were three other Jewish-owned printing houses, publishing books not only in the Jewish languages but also in Polish and Russian. Lay Jewish schools, whose curricula included Jewish history and modern Hebrew classes, began to appear as early as the middle of the 19th century. The first Jewish public library in the Lublin region was also founded in Zamość before the First World War.

Many outstanding and well-known figures have also been associated with Zamość. It was the hometown of Alexander Tzederbaum, the creator of the first Yiddish-language newspaper ("Kol Mevaser") as well as the first Hebrew-language newspaper ("Hamelitz") published in Russia. Solomon Ettinger (1800–1856), a poet and playwright composing in Yiddish and Hebrew, was born in Zamość. Zamość was also the birthplace of Isaac Leib Peretz (1852–1915), considered to be one of the fathers of Yiddish literature. Although most of Peretz' works were written in Warsaw, many of them take place in

Zamość, like the *Chassidic Tales* or the play *Night in the Old Marketplace*. Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), a famous socialist activist, was also born there.

By 1897, there were 7 034 Jews living in Zamość, making up 62 % of the total population. In 1907, as the old Jewish cemetery ran out of space, the community founded a new burial ground in Prosta St. In 1910, 9 188 out of the town's 14 593 inhabitants were Jewish. Most of them earned their living from trade and crafts. On the eve of World War I, over 90% of shops and over 75% of workshops in the city belonged to Jews.

The growth of the town came to a halt during World War I. In 1914, the Russian military accused the Jewish community of collaborating with the Austrians, which resulted in the execution of 11 Jews as well as a few Poles. Following the end of the Great War, but with the Polish-Bolshevik War (1919–1921) still in progress, soldiers from a Kozak division fighting on the Polish side carried out a pogrom of the Zamość Jewry, as Budyonny's Cavalry Army laid siege to the town.

It should be noted that in spite of these tragic events, it was World War I that sparked a veritable flowering of modern Jewish political life in Zamość (especially under the Austro-Hungarian occupation, which was much more liberal than Russian rule). It was during this period that the majority of Jewish political parties became active in the city and the first Jewish citizens were elected to the city council. Several Jewish social, cultural, economic and charitable organizations, independent of those run by the kehilla, were also founded at this time.



The interwar period (1918–1939) saw an unprecedented economic, cultural, political and social development of the Zamość Jewish community.



On the eve of World War II, Zamość was home to 12 531 Jews, who made up 43% of its population.

The Interwar Period

The interwar period (1918–1939) saw an unprecedented economic, cultural, political and social development of the Zamość Jewish community. The Jewish Communal Co-Educational Humanities Middle School was established in 1927, with classes held in Polish. Numerous magazines in Yiddish came out, e.g. a bi-weekly "Zamoscher Shtime" ("Voice of Zamość"), published by the Zionist-Socialist Party, Poale Zion, and appearing in 1928 and from 1937 to 1939. Jews also had 9 libraries, 4 bookshops and 3 large printing houses. Apart from lay schools, there were also religious ones, mostly traditional cheders, as well as a small yeshiva, the "Aitz-Chaim" (Tree of Life). It is also worth mentioning that Bolesław Leśmian (1877–1937), a famous poet, lived and composed his works in Zamość between 1922–1935.

During the interwar period, 94,7% of the town's Jewish citizens declared Yiddish to be their daily spoken language, although Polish was gradually becoming the chief language of the younger generation. At the same time, 4,1% of Jews declared Polish to be the language they spoke at home – more than in Lublin, a bigger city, where this figure amounted to 2,5%. Although many Polish businesses had been established during the interwar years, Jews still dominated trade, crafts and industry. In 1924, 75,7% of trade firms in Zamość belonged to Jews, as did 54,5% of factories.

On the eve of World War II, Zamość was home to 12 531 Jews, who made up 43% of its population. They lived mainly in the Old City and in the New Town.

After the Russians left Zamość in 1939, there were some 4 000 Jews left in the city.



After the Russians left Zamość in 1939, there were some 4 000 Jews left in the city. Within a short time this number rose as a result of an influx of Jews deported by the Germans from Polish territories incorporated into the Third Reich. The newcomers included Jews from Włocławek, Koło, Kalisz and Łódź. At the end of 1940, there were about 7500 Jews staying in the town.

For the Jewish community, the German occupation meant systematic and brutal persecution. Their property confiscated, they were forced to work both in the town and in labor camps throughout the Lublin district, mainly in nearby Bełżec and Bortatycze. On May 1st, 1941, the German authorities ordered all Zamość Jews to move to the New Town, thus creating a separate Jewish quarter. A closed ghetto, however, was never established.

In March 1942, the Germans launched "Operation Reinhardt", aimed at exterminating Jews in the General Government (a part of the Polish territories which had not been annexed by the Third Reich). For this purpose, the Nazis created a death camp in Bełżec, about 40 km from Zamość. The first deportation took place on the Jewish holiday of Passover on April 11th, 1942. Nearly 2 900 people were transported to the camp. The elderly and the infirm were murdered by the Germans right in their own homes or in the

World War II and the Holocaust

Following the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Zamość came under German occupation. Beaten and stripped of their property by the German soldiers, Jews suffered violent persecution. It is little surprise then that the arrival of Russian troops on September 26th, 1939, was greeted with relief – if not always with joy – by the town's Jewish inhabitants. The Red Army stayed in Zamość for two weeks. Some Jews, especially those with leftist views, openly collaborated with the new authorities. When the Red Army began to withdraw, an official announcement was made to the Jewish community offering the possibility to evacuate with the Russian troops. Having already experienced the bestiality of the Germans during their short stay in Zamość, a large number of Jews opted in favor of evacuation over the Bug river. An estimated 7 000– 8 000 Jews left the town. Most of them halted just beyond the Soviet demarcation lines, mainly in Volodymyr-Volynskiy and Lvov. In 1941, when those areas were seized by the Nazis, the refugees shared the tragic fate of the local Jewry. A small number of the displaced were deported by the Russians to Siberia in 1940 and 1941, where many of them managed to survive the war.





Only about 50 Zamość Jews survived the Shoah in the town and its vicinity; a few hundred more survived the war in the Soviet Union.

streets. Officially, the Germans told the Jews that they were being sent “to the East” to work. In reality, all of the deported were killed in the camp at Bełżec. Fifteen-year-old Leib Wolstein managed to escape from the camp and tell the truth about the atrocities committed there to the officials of the Zamość Jewish Council. The story of young Wolstein however was never officially transmitted to the ghetto inhabitants.

Following the first “operation”, three other large transports arrived in Zamość: nearly 1 000 German Jews from Dortmund and 2 000 Czech Jews from the Theresienstadt ghetto. The second stage of deportation began on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot on May 24th, 1942. On May 27th, 1942, almost 2 000 Jews were taken to Sobibór, the second largest (after Bełżec) death camp in the Lublin district. On August 11th, 1942, about 400 Jews were transported to the death camp at Majdanek, and in September 1942, another 400 were deported to the death camp at Bełżec.

The final liquidation of the Jewish quarter in Zamość took place on October 16th, 1942, when the few Jews remaining in the New Town were ordered by the Germans to move to the nearby village of Izbica. On October 18th, 1942, the Germans officially announced Zamość Judenrein – a town “free of Jews”. Most of the Zamość Jews in Izbica were deported to the death camps at Bełżec, Sobibór and Majdanek. Only a few managed to flee, and, thanks to the help of Poles, to survive the war. At the time, small groups of Jewish prisoners were still kept alive in labor camps throughout Zamość. In 1943, all of them were killed or deported to Majdanek.

Only about 50 Zamość Jews survived the Shoah in the town and its vicinity; a few hundred more survived the war in the Soviet Union. In 1945, just after the liberation of Poland, there were only 224 Jews left in the town, and it is hard to tell how many of them originally came from Zamość. As a result of post-war migration from Poland, in 1947 their number shrank to only 5 people. Jewish survivors from Zamość and their descendants are now associated within the Israeli Organization of Zamość Jewry, the Vicinity and their Descendants, which currently has about 2 000 members.

Traces of Presence

Today, numerous traces still remind us of the rich history of the Zamość Jewry. Soon after the war, a monument made of broken matzevot was erected in the Jewish cemetery in Prosta St. (which had been razed to the ground by the Germans) to commemorate the murdered Jewish inhabitants of Zamość. The New Town synagogue (32 Gminna St.) has been rebuilt to accommodate a kindergarten and a Protestant community. The former mikvah (5 Ludwika Zamenhofa St.) was until recently home to a jazz club, while the building of the kehilla (11 Ludwika Zamenhofa St.) has remained empty for several years. The most interesting and valuable monument of Jewish culture in Zamość is the Renaissance synagogue in the Old Town.

| ROBERT KUWAŁEK



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