

One Thousand Years of the Polish Jewish Experience

PREPARED BY



TAUBE
FOUNDATION
FOR JEWISH LIFE
AND CULTURE

I. Jewish Settlement: 10th – 15th centuries

960-965 A Jewish merchant from Spain, Ibrahim Ibn Yaqub (Abraham ben Yaakov), travels to Poland and writes the first description of the country. During the 10th and 11th centuries, Jewish merchants and artisans settle in Poland, where they are granted asylum from the persecution of the Crusades. First Jewish merchants referred to as Radhanites.

1097-1098 Jews banished from Prague, Bohemia and Germany settle in Silesia.

1100s Post-crusade migrations continue to Poland

1206 First Polish coins minted, with Hebrew inscriptions

1264 Statute of Kalisz issued by Boleslaus the Pious, Duke of Kalisz. The Statute establishes The General Charter of Jewish Liberties in Poland, which becomes a legal foundation of Jewish presence in Poland.

1273-1295 Statute of Kalisz privileges extended to Silesian Jews.

1267 Catholic backlash creates segregated Jewish quarters through the Council of Wroclaw, Jews ordered to wear special emblems, and banned them from holding public offices higher than Christians.

Turn of the 13th and 14th centuries marks the end of feudal disintegration in Poland. New Polish rulers encourage Jewish migration to Poland. The 14th century also saw anti-Jewish riots in Silesia, which reached a climax during the Black Death, for which Jews were falsely blamed.

1349 Pogroms in Silesia result in Jewish migration to Poland.

1310-1370 King Kazimierz (Casimir the Great) Wielki extends the Statute of Kalisz (in 1334), and broadens Jewish privileges throughout Poland. According to medieval chronicler Jan Dlugosz, the king had a romance with a Jewish woman named Esther. This theme will reverberate in Polish folklore over the ages.

Jewish secular and religious culture thrives. Talmudic academies established.

1367 Pogrom in Poznan

1407 Blood libel pogrom in Krakow

1423 The statute of Warka forbids Jews the granting of loans against letters of credit and mortgage and limited operations to loans on moveable property only.

1454 New pogroms in Krakow and Poznan

1483 Jews expelled from Warsaw. The measure, largely inefficient, will be repeatedly reintroduced.

1495 Jews expelled from Lithuania

1495 Jews expelled from Krakow; the city obtains a royal privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* (not to tolerate the Jews). Jews settle in the suburb of Kazimierz, which will in 1568 obtain a royal privilege *de non tolerandis Christianis*.

1500 Jews expelled from Spain, Portugal and many German cities move to Poland.



Arthur Szyk, "Visual History of Poland," New York, 1946."



Arthur Szyk, "Samuel Anointing Saul," New Canaan, 1947.



Arthur Szyk, "Peddlers," Lodz, 1936.

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Arthur Szyk, "Bubbe,"
Lodz, 1936.



Arthur Szyk, "Dancing,"
Lodz, 1936.



Arthur Szyk, "Purim,"
New Canaan, 1948.

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II. The “Golden Age” of Polish Jewry: 16th – mid 17th Centuries

1503 King Alexander of Poland readmits Jews to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

1509 Rabbi Jacob Polak sets up a yeshiva in Krakow, which will spearhead the Talmudic methodology of *pilpul*.

1525 King Sigismund I for the first time knights a Jew without requiring he abandon Judaism. Such events were rare, but Jewish converts to Catholicism were, until the partitions of Poland, almost automatically granted nobility status.

1534 King Sigismund I of Poland abolishes the law that requires Jews to wear special clothes.

1534 The first book printed in Yiddish, a Tanach concordance by rabbi Asher Anchel, is published in Krakow.

1547 The first Hebrew Jewish printing house is founded in Lublin.

1557 King Sigismund Augustus decrees that trials for blood libel have to be conducted under special legal strictures, making them more difficult.

1569 Lithuania merges with Poland.

1572 Rabbi Moses Isserles, the *Remuh*, author of the fundamental commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*, passes away in Krakow. His grave, next to the synagogue that bears his name, still exists.

1576 King Stephan Bathory issues decrees against blood libel accusations, effectively preventing such trials, which will be resumed after his death.

1580 First session of the Council of Four Lands (“Va’ad Arba’ Aratzot”) in Lublin.

1586 King Stephan Bathory passes array. According to popular legend, his “court Jew” Shaul Wahl was king of Poland for one night, until the procedure for the king’s successor to be elected (Poland was an elective monarchy) was set in motion.

1609 Rebecca Tiktiner’s work on women’s obligations in Judaism is published posthumously in Prague (and republished in Krakow in 1618). Tiktiner, who studied in yeshiva, was considered an authority on the subject.

1618-1648 The Thirty Years War brings in the last major wave of Jewish refugees from western Europe.

1622 The *Tseeno u-reeno*, by Rabbi Yaakov Askenazy, a Tanach digest for women and the most important work to be published in Yiddish, is published in Lublin and Krakow.

1632 King Ladislaus IV of Poland forbids anti-Semitic books and paintings.

1633 Jews of Poznan are granted a privilege of forbidding Christians to enter into their city quarter.

1633 Ghetto established in Vilna.

1648 Jewish population of Poland reaches 450,000 or 4.5% of the whole population. In Bohemia, Jews number 40,000, and in Moravia 25,000. The worldwide Jewish population is estimated at 750,000.

Between the 16th-18th centuries more than 50% of the Jewish world population lived in Poland. 16th Century Jewish Parliamentary body is established in Lublin and became an autonomous representation of Polish and Lithuanian Jewry (1580-1764).

Jews can travel freely, working as tax collectors, traders and artisans. Jewish communities governed themselves through an administrative organization, known as the ‘kehillah.’ From the late 16th to the mid 18th century, Jews were subject to the Va’ad Arba’ Aratzot (Council of the Four Lands, i.e. Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia, Poland’s constituent territories).



Arthur Szyk, "Chanukah,"
New Canaan, 1948.



Arthur Szyk,
"Schmoozing," Lodz,
1936.



Arthur Szyk, "Zayde,"
Lodz, 1936.

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III. Crisis of Mid 17th century

1648-1655 The Ukrainian Cossack, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, leads the Khmelnytsky Uprising resulting in massacres of up to 100,000 Jews. Poland loses up to 25% of its population during the concomitant Swedish invasion, known as The Deluge. More destruction, and accusations that Jews sided with the country's enemies, followed the war with Russia in 1655; pogroms ensued.

1670 The Vaad condemns Shabtai Tzvi, the false messiah active in neighboring Turkey. His activities will influence Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a native false messiah.

1700-1760 The Founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov, was born in Podolia in the Ukraine (b. 1700), and Hasidism becomes widely adopted in Ukraine, Galicia and Central Poland.

1750 Jewish population of Poland reaches 750,000 or 80% of world Jewish population.

1759 The followers of Jacob Frank convert and join the ranks of Polish szlachta (nobility) of Jewish origin.

1761 Provincial court in Galitzia orders the burning of the Talmud, the last such event in Europe until the Nazis.

1764 The Sejm (Polish Parliament) abolishes the Va'ad, on grounds it is no longer capable of levying Jewish taxes.

1772 The Vilna Gaon passes a *herem* on the Hasidim; the conflict between them and their opponents, the *mitnagdim*, becomes acute.

IV. Poland Partitioned. Pale of Settlement Established

1772-1795 Partitions of Poland between Russia, Prussia and Austria. Old privileges of Jewish communities are denounced.

1778-1792 The Great Sejm debates granting Jews rights; reforms not implemented due to Russian invasion. Polish Jews constitute 10% of Poland's population.

Late 18th century: Haskala, or Jewish Enlightenment, encourages secularism proposed by Berliner Moses Mendelsohn.
By the late 19th century, Zionist movements emerge.

1791 Catherine II (the Great) of Russia establishes the Pale of Settlement as a territory for Russian Jews. The Pale of Settlement extended to eastern Poland, and included the territory of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Byelorussia. Some Central Polish cities retained Jewish populations in Warsaw, Lodz and Lublin.

1794 Berek Joselewicz formed a Jewish cavalry regiment that took part in the Kosciuszko Insurrection.

1798 Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady founds the Hasidic Lubavich movement.

1799 Brodno Jewish Cemetery founded by Szmul Zbytkower – destroyed by the Nazis, reconstructed in 1985.

1802 Volozhyn yeshiva, the most important centre of Talmudic learning in the 19th century, established.

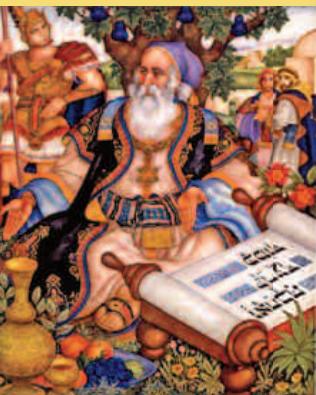
1806 Progressive synagogue established in Warsaw.

1807 The constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, set up under Napoleon, grants Jews equal rights. It will not survive the downfall of the French emperor.

1809 Colonel Berek Joselewicz of the Duchy of Warsaw cavalry, dies in battle with Austrian forces near Kock. His grave there still exists.



Arthur Szyk, "Succoth,"
New Canaan, 1948.



Arthur Szyk, "Hillel," New
Canaan, 1949.



Arthur Szyk, "Simchath
Torah," New Canaan
1948.

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1823 The first newspaper in Poland, "Dostrzegacz Nadwislanski – Der Beobachter an der Weschel," published in Polish and in *daytch-yiddish*, established.

1827 The tsarist authorities institute the draft for underage Jews and make Jewish communities responsible for its implementation. The measure, abolished in Russian Poland in 1843, would be a disaster for thousands of Jewish families.

1831 Jewish militia units take part in the defense of Warsaw against Russians during the abortive November Uprising against the tsar.

1832 The influential Polish democratic emigre activist Joachim Lelewel issues from Paris an appeal to Polish Jews to support the Polish national cause, but fails to guarantee them equal rights. More such appeals will follow.

1846 Abortive uprising in Krakow against Austrian rule, supported by local Jews.

1848 Abortive uprising in Poznan against Prussian rule, not supported by Jews who are then accused of treason.

1848 Jewish emancipation in Prussia.

1849 Jewish emancipation in Austria.

1852 First synagogue sermon in Polish delivered in Warsaw.

1859 Polish newspapers in Warsaw initiate first anti-Semitic media campaign.

1860 The *Chibbat Zion*, a proto-Zionist movement, established in Russian Poland.

1860-1864 Jews are participating actively in the Polish national movement, which is followed by the January Uprising. In particular, a student of the Warsaw School of Rabbis, Michael Landy, was killed by Cossack fire during a patriotic demonstration in 1861 in Warsaw, while carrying a cross he picked up from the hands of a Catholic participant, shot moments earlier. The funeral of the Four Dead (two Catholics, a Protestant and a Jew) killed that day became a patriotic and ecumenical manifestation; churches and synagogues closed down in protest against tsarist brutality. The authorities eventually deported Warsaw rabbi Ber Meisels, responsible for much of the activism.

1862 Jews are given equal rights in the Russian partition. The privileges of some cities forbidding Jews to settle down in them are denounced.

1868 Due to restriction of Jewish rights of residence beyond the Pale, thousands of Russian Jews move to Russian Poland, where they are criticized by Polish opinion as encouraging Russification.

1870 Mendele Moycher Sforim's *Die klatche* (The Mare) published, initiating contemporary Yiddish literature.

1876 Jan Jelenski publishes his pamphlet "The Jews, the Germans and us" which becomes the first manifesto of modern Polish anti-Semitism.

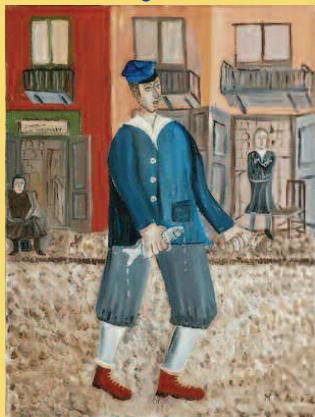
1878 Naphtali Hirsh Imber, from Galitzia, writes the words of the *Hatikvah*.

1878 The Great Warsaw Synagogue opens. It will be destroyed by the Nazis in 1943. It housed a major library, which would become a forerunner of YIVO.

1880 World Jewish population numbers around 7.7 million, 90% of which is in Europe (mostly Eastern Europe), and around 3.5 million in the former Polish provinces.

1881-1883 Pogroms in Russia, including Russian Poland, follow the assassination of reformist tsar Alexander II by revolutionaries.

1881 Eliezer Ben Yehuda, pioneer of the Hebrew revival, born in Lithuania in 1858, arrives in Palestine.



"Boy with Herring"



"The Hunchback's Wedding"



"Water-Carrier"

Illustrations from
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www.mayerjuly.com

1882 First Zionist rally held in Lwow.

1886 First Yiddish play, Abraham Goldfaden's *Shulamit*, performed in Warsaw.

1887 *Numerus clausus* introduced in educational institutions in Russia, including Russian Poland.

1881-1914 Mass Jewish migration to the United States and elsewhere under the pogroms in the Pale of Settlement.

1892 Workers' strike in Lodz turns into anti-Semitic riot.

1897 The first Russian census numbers 5,200,000 Jews plus 4,900,000 in the Pale. Russian Poland has 1,300,000 Jews or 14% of its population.

1897 The Bund (or General Jewish Workers Alliance of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia) is founded. Its main tenets are Socialism and a commitment to Yiddish language and culture.

1897 Polish delegates participate in the 1st Zionist Congress in Basel.

1898 Pogroms in Galitzia.

1901 First Jewish sports club established in Lwow.

1902 The Mizrahi religious-Zionist movement established in Vilna.

1902 Zionism banned by tsarist authorities.

1904 Founding conference of Zionist-Socialist movement *Poalei Zion*, held in Krakow. Among the delegates was David Ben Gurion, born in Russian Poland in 1886, who was to leave for Palestine in 1906 and become the first Prime Minister of Israel in 1948.

1905 Abortive revolution in Russia. Pogroms ensue, but fail to reach Russian Poland; the only one, in Bialystok, was conducted by Russian troops.

1905 Jews refuse to support anti-Semitic Polish national-democratic (*endek*) candidates in elections to the Duma, the Russian Parliament, and the *endeks* retaliate with a boycott of Jewish businesses. The conflict will become even deeper during the elections in 1912.

1908 Mass-circulation Yiddish newspapers: *Hajnt* and *Moment* established in Warsaw.

1880-1924 More than one and half million Jews emigrate from Russian Poland, the Pale of Settlement, and Galicia. During the period between the two World Wars, Jews accounted for 10% of Poland's population.

1911 "The Hasidic Woman and the Apostate" becomes the first Jewish film produced in Poland.

1913 Zionist-Socialist youth movement *Hashomer hatzair* established in Galitzia.

1914 World War I breaks out. It was to be a disaster for Polish Jewry, as most battles on the Eastern Front were to be fought on Polish soil. Some 400,000 Jews flee early Russian advances in Austrian Poland, while the Russian authorities, accusing Jews of pro-German sympathies, deport up to 600,000 deep into Russia.

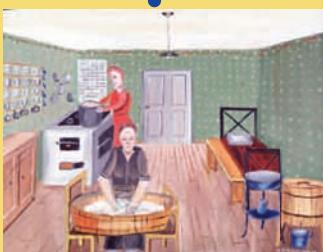
1915 Much of Russian Poland occupied by Germany and Austria. The Jewish community in Warsaw condemns the anti-Semitic hostility of Polish organizations.

1916 Polish branch of Agudat Israel – dedicated to preserving rabbinic authority – is founded with Hasidic support.

1917 Pale of Settlement abolished. (Overthrow of Russian Czar)



"Chimney Sweep"



"Jadwiga Washing Laundry"



"Rinsing the Laundry"

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V. Between Wars: 1918-1939

1918 Poland gains independence. Partitioned areas reunited as Polish Republic. Josef Pilsudski, temporary head of state, invites Jewish parties for coalition talks.

1918 Polish pogrom in Lwow after Poles win battle with Ukrainians for city leaves 150 dead.

1918-1919 Ukrainian armies of ataman Petlura commit mass pogroms of Jews in formerly Polish eastern territories. An estimated 100,000 Jews perish from violence at the hands of different Ukrainian, Russian and Polish forces.

1919 Jews in Vilna, contested between Polish and Ukrainian forces, declare for Poland. When Polish forces take the city from Lithuania, they commit a pogrom.

1919 Polish forces commit a pogrom in Pinsk.

1919 Jewish Delegations' Committee represents Polish Jewry at Versailles peace conference. The conference obliges newly independent states, including Poland, a treaty guaranteeing minority rights. Poland strongly resents this.

1919 First parliamentary elections give 11 seats to Jews. Jews will, in successive parliaments, hold from 3 to 34 seats in Sejm and from 1 to 11 seats in Senate. Against Jewish protest, Sejm legislates compulsory Sunday rest, adversely affecting Jewish businesses that stay closed also on Shabbat.

1920 Polish-Soviet war. Polish Jewish army volunteers interned by Polish authorities as untrustworthy.

1921 Polish-Soviet peace treaty in Riga. Polish constitution established. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, especially shopkeepers or other professionals forbidden to work in the Soviet Union, move to Poland and are eventually granted citizenship.

1922 Poland's first President, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected by Sejm with i.a. Jewish votes. Denounced by the Right as a traitor, he is assassinated two days later.

1923 Sejm Education Committee passes resolution imposing *numerus clausus*. Though rejected as unconstitutional, the measure will be eventually largely implemented.

1923 "Nasz Przeglad," largest Jewish daily in Polish, starts publishing in Warsaw.

1924 Immigration gates to United States close.

1924 2,989,000 Jews according to a census by religion in Poland (10,5% of total). Jewish youth constitutes 23% of students of high schools and 26% of university students.

1925 Agreement between Jewish parties and PM Stanislaw Grabski's government – the only such agreement in Polish history – signed but never implemented.

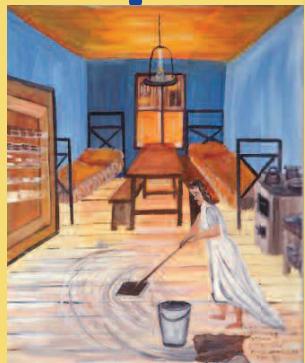
1925 YIVO scientific institute founded in Vilna.

1926 Polish government officially declares support for the Balfour declaration. Polish official support for Zionism will intensify over the years.

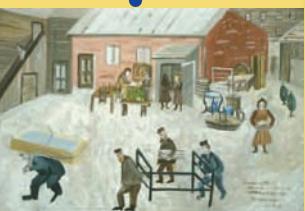
1926 Marshall Josef Pilsudski takes power in a bloody coup and introduces an increasingly authoritarian regime. A former Socialist sympathetic to Jewish concerns, he is supported not only by the Left, but also by Jews.

Between 1927 and 1938, 200,000 more Jews leave Poland for Palestine, Argentina, and France.

1928 The BBWR, formed as ruling party, obtains the support of the Agudat.



"Nakhete: Washing the Floor in Wedding Gown on Friday Afternoon"



"Leaving Apt."



"Boy with Hoop"

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1930 The world Jewry population numbers 15,000,000, of which the largest numbers live in the USA (4,000,000), Poland (3,500,000 = 11% of total), Soviet Union (2,700,000 = 2% of total), Romania (1,000,000 = 6% of total) and Palestine (175,000 = 1% of total).

1930 Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin founded in Lublin by Rabbi Meir Shapiro opens as a worldwide center of Orthodox learning. The building, taken over by the State after the Shoah, will be rededicated for Jewish use in 2007.

1931 Clashes in universities in Vilna and Lwow between anti-Semitic endek groups and Jewish students leave one Polish student dead. Tensions at universities will increase.

1933-1939 German Jews attempt to emigrate, but almost all countries close borders for Jews, including United Kingdom and USA. Most Jews find a temporary asylum in Poland.

In the early 1930s, the worldwide economic depression hits Poland hard, leading to massive unemployment. Anti-Semitic measures restrict employment of Jews and in 1938 block them from the legal profession.

1933 The Polish ambassador in Berlin vainly intervenes with German authorities to protect Polish Jewish citizens living in Germany.

1934 The National-Radical Camp, a Polish fascist organization, is set up and promptly dissolved by the authorities on grounds of incitement; it will continue to operate in semi-secrecy and orchestrate anti-Jewish violence.

1935 Museum of Jewish Art opens in Lwow.

1935 Josef Pilsudski passes away, greatly mourned by Jews.

1936 Pogrom in Przytyk with first a Polish member of a boycott mob killed by a Jew, and then a Jewish couple killed in revenge by the mob. Perpetrators of both crimes sentenced by Polish court. The pogrom drew widespread condemnation far beyond the Jewish community alone. Other pogroms ensue.

1936 ONR leader Adam Doboszynski organizes a march on Myslenice, a small shtetl near Krakow. His militia occupies the town, disarms the police, plunders Jewish shops and attempts to set fire to the synagogue. He is arrested and sentenced to 3.5 years in jail.

1936 Parliament passes a law limiting *shitta*.

1936 PM Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski officially endorses economic boycott of Jews, but condemns violence.

1936 Primate August Cardinal Hlond endorses boycott of Jews, but condemns violence.

1936 Zionist-Revisionist leader Vladimir Zabotynski calls for 750,000 Jews to be "evacuated" to Palestine over 10 years. The plan is rejected by most Jewish opinion as unrealistic, but the Polish government tightens ties with the Revisionists, while entertaining other "solutions of the Jewish question," such as emigration to Madagascar.

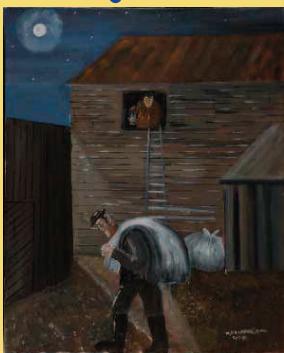
1936 First congress of Polish progressive Judaism.

1937 Bench ghettos officially introduced in Polish universities, opposed by the Left and part of the academic body, while the Right and other academics demand *numerus nullus*.

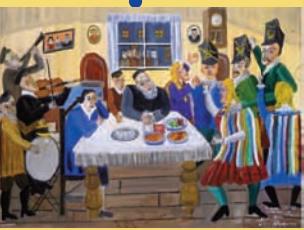
1937 The number of Jewish publications in Poland reaches 130.

1937 *The Dibbuk*, the greatest hit of Polish Jewish cinema, opens in Warsaw to critical acclaim.

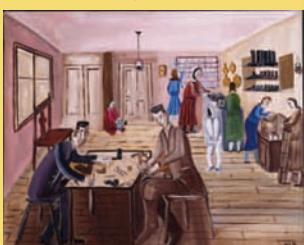
1938 The Sejm passes a draft law banning *shitta* by 1942, invalidated by the Sejm being dissolved. Discussion about this law will continue in the next Sejm, occupying in 1939 17% of Parliament's time.



"Stealing the Laundry"



"Purim Play 'The Krakow Wedding'"



"Boy in the White Pajamas"

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1938 The Sejm passes a law permitting Polish citizens residing abroad to be stripped of their citizenship. When Germany deports 17,000 Polish Jews to the border, they will initially be denied admission, but eventually allowed in. Poland officially protests against the deportation.

1938 The ruling OZN, a successor to the BBWR, adopts a declaration condemning "nefarious Jewish influences"; the Agudat breaks away from the OZN.

1938 Hersh Grynszpan, a Polish Jew, assassinates a German diplomat in Paris, in outrage over the persecution of Polish Jews in Germany. This assassination will provide the Nazis with the pretext for the Kristallnacht.

1939 Polish-German agreement enables the partial restitution of the property deported Polish Jews left in Germany; Poland readmits over 12,000 new deportees.

1939 As war looms, Polish Jewry massively supports the Polish war preparedness effort.

VI. Holocaust

1939 Germany invades Poland, and immediately targets the Jewish community. The Soviet Union invades Poland from the east, and the two countries divide it in half.

1939 Jews constitute over 10% of Polish military casualties in the September campaign.

1939 In Warsaw, historian Emmanuel Ringelblum starts recording what will become the underground chronicle of the Warsaw ghetto.

1939 First ghetto in German-occupied Poland established in Piotrkow Trybunalski.

1939 "Swit," short-lived first Jewish military underground organization, set up in Warsaw.

1940 Jews constitute 18% of the Polish Army set up in exile in France.

1940 Zionist Ignacy Schwartzbart joins Polish National Council, or parliament in exile.

1939-1945 Holocaust (Ha Shoah)—more than 3 million Jews perish under Nazism, more than 90% of Polish Jewry.

1940 Mass deportations of Polish citizens, up to 30% of them Jews, begin in Russian-occupied Poland.

1940 YIVO Scientific Research Institute relocates to New York.

1940 Soviet authorities murder interned Polish officers in Katyn and other locations. 10% of the victims are Jews; the chief rabbi of the Polish Army is one of them.

1940 Warsaw ghetto, largest in German-occupied Poland set up. Underground activity, including the publishing of 51 underground newspapers, begins soon.

1941 Nazi Germany invades Soviet Russia. Pogroms ensue, including one in Lwow, claiming up to 4,000 victims. Einsatzgruppen murder hundreds of thousands. Polish PM in exile warns Polish population against participating in German atrocities against Jews.

1941 Poles murder hundreds of their Jewish neighbors in Jedwabne in northeastern Poland, the largest such massacre in occupied Poland.

1941 Polish Army in exile set up in Russia under General Anders. Due to anti-Semitic discrimination, Jews make up only 6%. The Anders army will eventually be evacuated to the Middle East; some 3,000 Jews desert in Palestine.

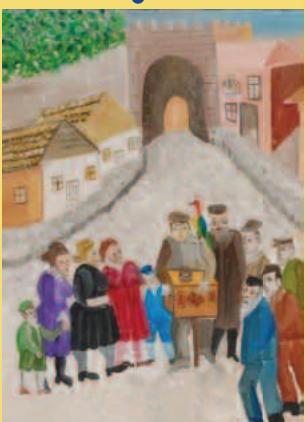
1941 Death penalty for Jews leaving ghettos and for Poles helping them introduced by German occupation authorities; several hundred Poles will be executed for this "crime".



"The Human Fly"



"Goose-Feather Pluckers"



"Organ-Grinder"

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1941 Chelmno, the first death camp, set up.

1942 United Partisan Organization set up in Vilna ghetto.

1942 First Jewish transports reach Auschwitz. The death camp will eventually claim 1.1 million victims, including 90,000 non-Jews.

1942 Polish government in exile emissary Jan Karski secretly parachuted into occupied Poland. He visits i.a. the Warsaw ghetto and the Izbica camp. Flown out of Poland, he delivers first credible report on the mass murder of Jews to Polish government in exile, the British and American governments, Jewish organizations and personalities. He is met with widespread disbelief.

1942 Antifascist Block set up in Warsaw ghetto.

1942 He-halutz ha-Lochem underground partisan organization set up in Krakow ghetto.

1942 Polish national Council in London launches appeal to Allies to prevent what it calls the German attempt to murder all Jews in Europe. German policy identified for the first time, appeal vain.

1942 Mass deportation from Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka death camp initiated; the camp will ultimately claim 850,000 Jewish victims.

1942 Polish underground Council to Help the Jews set up. It saved 2,000 Jews hiding on the "Aryan" side in 1943, and 4,000 in 1944. Its initiator, pre-war writer and anti-Semite Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, had published in the underground press an appeal condemning on moral grounds Polish inactivity in the face of the Shoah. Other noted pre-war anti-Semites also saved Jews, though a large percentage of the population denounced them, and most remained indifferent. Poles make up the single largest national group among the Righteous of the Nations, over one-third of their total number.

1942 Jewish underground organizations in the ghettos subordinate themselves to the Polish underground, but receive very little practical help in return.

1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising triggers smaller, similarly doomed uprisings in Bialystok, Czestochowa, Bedzin and Krakow. In Warsaw some Polish underground units stage attacks to support the ghetto uprising.

1943 New, Communist-dominated Polish Army set up in Russia under General Berling. It is largely commanded by Soviet officers, including many Russian and Polish Jews.

1943 Shmuel Zygelboim, Bund member of the Polish National Council, commits suicide to protest world indifference to the mass murders of Jews.

1943 Jewish partisans led by Tuvia Bielski and Soviet partisans kill over 100 Poles, including some women and children, in the village of Naliboki in what is now Byelorussia; the village was suspected of collaborating with the Germans, but the claim is doubtful. A similar massacre occurs in the village of Koniuchy.

1944 Last transport from the Lodz ghetto, the second largest in Poland, reaches Auschwitz.

1944 About 1,000 Jews participate in the doomed Polish Warsaw uprising; several dozen killed by Poles.

1945 Germans destroy remaining death camps in Poland and force-march survivors into Germany.



"Butcher Carrying a Calf"



"Father Leaves in Secret"



"Apt 'Nobility': Bashe Rayzl with Her Brood"

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VII. After the Holocaust

1944 As eastern Poland is liberated by the Red Army and the Polish Army under general Berling, Central Jewish Historical Commission established, which is the first in the world to conduct Holocaust research. A Communist-dominated government is set up, which cedes Poland's eastern territories to Soviet Russia. An agreement to repatriate ethnic Polish and Jewish citizens from these territories to Poland proper is signed with Moscow. The Bund, the first of 11 Jewish parties to re-establish themselves (three of them, including the Agudat, illegally) supports this government, which is opposed by a majority of the Polish population. Jewish Communists become prominent in the new State apparatus, including especially the dreaded secret police. As suspected opponents are jailed and deported, civil war breaks out. The government sets up the Central Committee of Jews in Poland to represent the Jews.

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the government, but denied the right to pre-war communal property. A government decree legalizes the seizure of Jewish property previously seized by the Nazis, under the banner of "German and abandoned properties."

1945 Some 250,000 Polish Jews start returning from Soviet Russia, and are met with growing hostility. Most resettle in former German territories in what is now western Poland, granted to Poland by the Allies, and from which the original German population is being deported. Some 30,000 survivors of the German occupation register with the Jewish Committees.

1945 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint) granted the right to function in Poland. It will largely finance the reconstruction of Jewish life.

1945 First post-war pogrom in Krakow, others follow. By April 1946 the number of fatalities is estimated at 800.

1946 The Kielce pogrom claims 42 dead. Some members of the pogrom mob are sentenced in summary trials. The pogrom is widely suspected to have been a Communist provocation to divert attention from the Communist power-grab, but this has not been proven to date. Over 100,000 Jews flee Poland by the end of the year. The government authorizes mass Jewish emigration and consents to the setting up of an armed Jewish self-defense.

1947 Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum established at site of death camps through an act of Polish Parliament. It is to commemorate "the martyrdom of the Polish and other nations". Jewish suffering at Auschwitz is systematically underplayed; this will be corrected only after Poland regains independence in 1989.

1947 Jewish Historical Institute is established in Warsaw to collect and preserve records and artifacts of Jewish life.

1947 Hagana training camp set up in Bolkow under Polish Army auspices provides military training for 2,500 volunteers who then move to Palestine.

1947 Poland actively supports the UN Lake Placid resolution on partitioning Palestine.

1948 Tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors begin leaving Poland for Israel and the United States. The remaining Jewish population is estimated at 100,000.

1948 Memorial of the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto unveiled at the site of the main bunkers of the Jewish Combat Organization.

1949 As Stalinism increases, the Bund and other Jewish parties are disbanded. Emigration to Israel blocked.

1950 Joint forbidden to function in Poland.

1950 Authorities set up the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association as sole legal Jewish organization apart from the Religious Congregations; both organizations still exist.



Monument to the Warsaw
Ghetto Uprising.



Nozyk Synagogue,
Warsaw



Jewish Historical Institute,
Warsaw.

- 1951** *Yidish Buch* publishers start publishing mass editions of Yiddish classics.
- 1953** Israeli consul expelled.
- 1956** De-Stalinization brings both increased anti-Semitism and new repatriations of Jews from Soviet Russia. Aliyah becomes legal, and Joint allowed to operate again. By 1960, only some 45,000 Jews remain.
- 1957** Trial of five former high-ranking secret police officers, all of them Jewish, finds them guilty of torture and sentences them to jail.
- 1958** Jewish museum opens in Krakow.
- 1964** Jewish-Christian relations are given a new turn by the Catholic Church's Vatican II Council.
- 1967** In the wake of the Six-Day War, Poland breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 1968** Communist regime-sponsored anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. Most of the remaining Jews of Poland (estimated at some 20,000) emigrate. Joint again forbidden to operate. Jewish schools and *Yidish Buch* disbanded. Jewish organizations practically fold down till the mid-Seventies. Jewish Historical Institute and Jewish Theatre in Warsaw only Jewish institutions to maintain activity.
- 1972** Last rabbi in Poland, Wawa Morejno of Lodz, emigrates.
- 1975** Poland co-sponsors the UN's Zionism-is-racism resolution.
- 1977-1983** Reconstruction of Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw, devastated during the occupation.
- 1978** Krakow cardinal Karol Wojtyla elected pope. As John Paul II he will spearhead a breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations, by clearly and consistently calling anti-Semitism "a sin," and seeking out ties with Jews.
- 1978** Polish-born Isaac Bashevis Singer wins Nobel Prize in Literature and becomes widely published in Poland.
- 1979** The unofficial Jewish Flying University set up in Warsaw, spearheading the future Jewish revival. It holds fortnightly seminars and organizes unofficial ceremonies of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.
- 1981** The Solidarity movement condemns anti-Semitism, but it also manifests itself within its ranks.
- 1981** Civic Committee on Jewish Cultural Monuments set up, the first Jewish interest organization to be legalized since 1950.
- 1983** As Poland remains internationally isolated after the military coup of December 1981, the Communist authorities invite Jews worldwide, including from Israel. Former uprising deputy commander and Solidarity activist Marek Edelman calls on visitors to boycott the official ceremonies. His appeal remains unheeded. Unofficial ceremonies disrupted by police; Solidarity spokesman Janusz Onyszkiewicz jailed for six months for reading out a message of support from Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa. The anniversary is widely covered in the Polish official and widely distributed underground press and spurs a publishing boom of books of Jewish interest, which will continue unabated.
- 1984** First informal contacts between Polish and Israeli governments.
- 1984** Carmelite convent set up on the site of the Auschwitz death camp to Jewish protests.
- 1986** A truncated version of Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* shown on Polish State TV. Debate in official and underground press ensues.

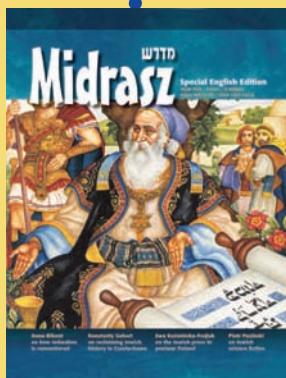
Mid 1970s-present, revival of Klezmer music signals Jewish cultural revival.



Lauder Morasha School,
Warsaw.



Jewish Culture Festival,
Krakow.



Midrasz magazine.

1986 Poland and Israel establish interest sections in the Dutch embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish PKO bank Tel Aviv branch.

1987 First major public discussion on wartime Polish-Jewish relations spearheaded by the publication in Catholic and opposition weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* in Krakow of an essay by Jan Blonski, stating that Poles bear a moral responsibility for having been witnesses to the Shoah, and have not lived up to it.

1987 Catholic Church and Jewish organizations sign an agreement on the Auschwitz convent, which is to be moved in 1989.

1988 Inaugural summer program of the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, organized, and mainly attended by non-Jews. It is eventually to become Europe's largest festival of Jewish culture.

1988 Direct air link between Warsaw and Tel Aviv established.

1988 March of the Living held for the first time in Auschwitz.

1988 Anti-Communist opposition commemorates 45th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising by a several thousand-strong rally at the Ghetto Monument in Warsaw. Police do not intervene.

1989 Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. Many synagogues, cemeteries and commemorative monuments built and restored in the post-Communist era.

1989 Menachem Joskowicz, Polish-born Israeli, becomes Poland's first Chief Rabbi since the 1960s.

1989 Joint allowed to operate in Poland again.

1989 Ronald S. Lauder Foundations starts operating in Poland; it will bankroll much of Poland's Jewish revival.

1989 First Jewish kindergarten opens in a private apartment in Warsaw.

1989 First semi-free elections since the war eventually bring the anti-Communist opposition to power.

1989 Poland volunteers to replace Hungary (which withdrew under terror threat) to become main transit point for Russian Jews moving to Israel; dozens of thousands transit through Warsaw without incident.

1989 As Auschwitz convent has not been moved, New York Rabbi Avi Weiss stages a sit-in at the site, is beaten up and condemned by the Primate of Poland, Josef cardinal Glemp, in an anti-Semitic sermon. The incident polarizes Polish opinion.

1990 Poland becomes the second ex-Communist country, after Czechoslovakia, to reestablish diplomatic ties with Israel.

1990 In presidential elections, Solidarity leader gets elected using anti-Semitic innuendo against his rival Mazowiecki. This is condemned by a large segment of public opinion.

1991 Catholic Church publishes pastoral letter deplored anti-Semitism.

1991 President Walesa visits Israel; in speech to Knesset he asks for forgiveness of wrongs committed against Jews in Poland.

1992 Israeli President Chaim Herzog visits Poland. High-level ties will be consistently maintained in future years.

1989-present, Reestablishment of several Jewish communities in Poland, most notably in Warsaw, Krakow, Gdansk and Wroclaw. Numerous committees and foundations established to protect Jewish heritage in Poland, including the reinvigorated Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.



Poster of Jewish Culture Festiva, 2002



Members of Czulent:
Jewish youth group,
Krakow.



Groundbreaking of the
Museum of the History of
Polish Jews, Warsaw.

- 1992** Poland co-sponsors the repeal of the UN's "Zionism is racism" resolution.
- 1993** Under pressure from the pope, Auschwitz convent finally relocates.
- 1993** 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising commemorated with the participation of Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and Israeli PM Yitzchak Rabin.
- 1994** Lauder Morasha Elementary Jewish School opens in Warsaw, the first of its kind since 1968. It will eventually grow to include high school, and spawn a smaller similar educational institution in Wroclaw.
- 1996** At commemorative event for the 60th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom, Polish PM Leszek Miller expresses contrition.
- 1997** Sejm passes an act on relations between the State and the Jewish Religious Communities, allowing for the partial restitution of pre-war Jewish communal property seized after the war by the State. No law still regulates the restitution of such individual property, regardless of ethnicity of owner.
- 1997** Midrasz Magazine launched, the first Jewish monthly to be published in Poland in several decades.
- 1998** Extreme right activists set up hundreds of crosses on the site of the former convent in Auschwitz, after rumors that a big cross already there will be removed, as requested by Jewish organizations. Eventually the crosses will be removed by the Polish government, but the big cross stays.
- 2000** The publication of Jan Gross's "Neighbors," documenting the 1941 wartime massacre of Jews by Poles in Jedwabne, sets off an anguished public debate. As Institute for National Remembrance (Polish Yad Vashem) confirms the brunt of Gross's findings, most Poles accept the truth.
- 2001** Polish President Kwasniewski at commemorative 60th anniversary event in Jedwabne expresses contrition. The town boycotts the ceremony, however, and so does the Catholic Church – which, however, held earlier a penitential service of its own, attended by half of Poland's bishops.
- 2005** Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland, established by Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture in 2004, opens Warsaw office.
- 2007** Jewish Genealogy Learning Center established at the Jewish Historical Institute.
- 2007** Groundbreaking ceremony for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, scheduled to open in Warsaw in 2011.
- 2007** U.S. House of Representatives votes for funds to support the establishment of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.