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**The Trauma of the Holocaust as a Post-Traumatic  
Phenomenon in Israel-Poland Relations  
in the Years 1989-2020**

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## Content

Abstract	4	
Preface	10	
Chapter 1		
Historiography (Outline)	15	
Chapter 2		
The History of Polish Jewry		
2.1. Preface	27	
2.2. The Period from the 10 <sup>th</sup> to the 16 <sup>th</sup> Centuries	28	
2.3. The Period from the 17 <sup>th</sup> Century till the End of First World War		32
2.3.1. The Jews of Poland under Austrian Rule	35	
2.3.2. The Jews of Poland under Russian Rule	36	
2.4. The Hasidut Movement	38	
2.5. The History of the Zionism	56	
2.5.1. The Formation of the Zionism	59	
2.5.2. The First Zionist Congress in 1897	62	
2.5.3. The Zionists Between the Years 1900-1948	63	
2.5.4. The Zionism and the Zionist Organizations after 1948	65	
2.6. The Jews of Poland after the First World War till 1939	69	
2.6.1. The Tragic Years 1939-1945: World War II and The "Shoah"		78
2.6.2. The Polish Society and the Extermination of the Jews	80	
2.6.3. The Jews in Poland after 1945	81	
2.6.4. The Jews in contemporary Poland	83	
Chapter 3		
Poland-Israel Relations 1989 to 2020	84	
3.1. Re-establishing the relationship between Poland and Israel	88	
3.2. The Discourse on the Holocaust as an Element in the Collective Memory in Israel	97	
3.3. State Discourse in Israeli Society	101	
3.4. The Struggle Over the Narrative or What is the Truth	105	
3.5. The Fight on the Narrative in the Academia	142	
3.6. A Storm Following the Presentation of Falsified Pro-Russian Content at the International Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem	151	
3.7. Delegations by Youths, Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces ("uniformed Witnesses"), Students and Adults in Extermination Camps in Poland	153	
3.8. The Air Force Flights Over Auschwitz	160	
Chapter 4		
Representations in Art Related to Jews-Poles Relations and Israel-Poland Relations in the 2000s	163	
4.1. "Galicia – A Jewish Museum"	164	
4.2. On the Connection Between the Architecture of the Museum and Holocaust Museums	168	
4.3. What is the Connection Between a Holocaust Museum and a Museum that Deals with Local Judaism?	171	
4.4. On the Permanent Display of the Museum	174	

4.5. Exhibition: "Demons" - Contemporary Artists from Poland and Israel and the Spirits of the Time, Bat Yam Museum of Art, Israel 2008	187
4.6. Past Life – A Film by the Israeli Director Avi Nesher	192
4.7. The Film "Demon" as a Representation of the Relationship Between the Poles and Jews.	195

## Chapter 5

Epilogue. What Efficient “Memory Work” Can Be Done in Order to Improve the Relations Between Israel and Poland and Between Jews and Poles? 204

Appendix: Email from Tomasz Strug 216

Bibliography 219

## **Abstract**

This work will describe and analyze the presence of the Holocaust in Israeli-Polish relations between the years 1989-2020. The cultural and political dialogue between the two countries has known ups and downs in these years. This work will focus on examining the interrelationships between ideological and political processes that took place in the two countries and between processes that brought about changes in the memory of the Holocaust and consequently in the dialogue between Israel and Poland.

In this work, I will refer to the collective memory of Polish society and of Israeli society with regard to the events of the past which affected the relations of Poles and Jews, especially during and immediately after World War II. How does collective memory affect political moves that are supposed to be rational and free from any element of irrelevant sentimentality, and how do we explain the destruction of political moves designed to benefit the two countries in the present by the ever-changing memory of the past.

With regard to collective memory, it is clear that a society can never remember all the information pertaining to past events and therefore has to perform various sorting processes. The choice, it should be noted, does not fall on pleasant events and the public often chooses the horrors of the past as the basis of the collective consciousness, in recognition of the ideological and psychological function that this choice fulfills.

Much has been written about the relationship between memory and history<sup>1</sup>. But two opposing polar perceptions can be distinguished. One sees memory and history as two completely opposite forms of perception of the past and history can push memory aside. The other view rejects this position because it emphasizes the adaptive nature of collective memory, an element that adapts itself to changing circumstances.

Referring to the collective Jewish memory, Yerushalmi points out two basic metaphors that shape the collective Jewish consciousness - the Exodus from

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, London: Public Affairs Press, 2005.

Egypt and the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, historical events penetrate the collective memory only to the extent that they can be understood as part of the two paradigms - "from slavery to freedom" or "from destruction to redemption". "The State of Israel tends to compare the Holocaust to destruction and the establishment of the State of Israel to redemption."<sup>2</sup>

The memory of the Holocaust is indeed a key factor in Israeli culture and its prominent symbols even well reflect the trauma of the Holocaust. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the reference to the memory of the Holocaust has changed over the years. In the first decade of the state of Israel existence, for example, the issue of the Holocaust was ignored because of understandable reason, it was necessary to build a new consciousness of a people building a new society in which the negation of the exile mentality is a fundamental principle. Only following the Eichmann trial (1961) did a reversal emerge<sup>3</sup>.

In Poland, too, World War II is still present in the discourse. The question of the attitude of the Poles towards the Jews is still controversial in Poland. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir coined the expression "the Polish national obsession of no guilt"<sup>4</sup>. Were the Poles victims, were they perpetrators or simply indifferent to the fate of the Jews. Jewish history was absent from the conception of the Polish national past and its inclusion in memory began by activists only in 1989. The second generation of memory activists in Poland call for the inclusion of the Jewish past in Polish history but these aspirations are blocked by other groups seeking to preserve the dominant narrative of Poles as victims, and moreover since the Conservative government elected in 2015.

The rhetoric of the leaders of the two peoples has known many upheavals. In 2001, following the publication of the book "Neighbors"<sup>5</sup>, Polish President Alexander Kwaśniewski addressed a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary

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<sup>2</sup> ירושלמי י., זכור, היסטוריה יהודית וזכרון יהודי, תל אביב, עם עובד, 1988. (Yerushalmi, 1988)

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. H. Arendt, *Eichmann w Jerozolimie. Rzecz o banalności zła*, Kraków: Znak, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> טוקרסקה – באקיר, "אובססיה של אי אשמה" – החשבון הפוליטי, עימות עם זיכרון. מ. פז עורכת, תל אביב, 2007. (Tokarska, 2007)

<sup>5</sup> Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, Poland, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

of the massacre of Jews in Jedwabne and commemorating the erection of the monument there, saying: "Thanks to a poignant national debate on crime committed in 1941 much has changed in our lives in 2001, the first year of the new millennium. Today, Poland has the courage to really look straight at a nightmare that overshadowed one of the chapters in its history. We are aware of our responsibility for our attitude to the black pages in the past."<sup>6</sup>

The Polish-born Israeli ambassador to Poland, who was rescued by a Polish family, described at the same time the life of the Jews in Poland in the most idyllic way imaginable: "Close your eyes and try to imagine this place, this square, as it was over 60 years ago. Imagine the horse-drawn carriages and the children playing between the stalls. Jedwabne, this beautiful town, where Poles and Jews lived together, was so typical of Poland of those days - a multicolored and colorful world, a place where Polish and Yiddish were intertwined then alternately."<sup>7</sup>

The rhetoric changed significantly in early 2018. On January 27, 2018, at the unfortunate time of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the lower house of parliament in Warsaw voted in favor of an amendment to the "Institute for National Remembrance" law or as it became known in Israel as the "Holocaust Law". The law stipulated that public statements that the Polish nation or Poland as a state had assisted Nazi German criminals would be a criminal offense punishable by three years in prison. The law forbids attributing to the Polish people or the Polish state a responsibility or partnership in responsibility for Nazi crimes, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The law states that the responsibility of the "real perpetrators" of these crimes must not be diminished. The explanatory memorandum to the law states that it was intended to fight expressions such as "Polish extermination camps" which, according to the Polish legislature, were intended to place the blame for the crimes of the Nazis on the Poles<sup>8</sup>. Eventually, following a crisis in relations with Israel following the law and negotiations between the two

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<sup>6</sup> שבח וייס, ימי שגריר, יונה שוידובסקה משוחחח עם שבח וייס, הוצאת הקיבוץ המאוחד, ישראל, 2003.  
(Weiss, 2003)  
<sup>7</sup> שם. (Weiss, 2003)

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. discussion presented by Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015.

countries, changes were made in the law and today it is not possible to sue on criminal offense but only civil ones.

Following the law on February 17 of that year, during a confrontation with Israeli writer and journalist Ronen Bergman over the Polish Holocaust law at a national security conference in Munich, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki compared Jews to Poles by saying, among other things, "it would not be criminal to say there were Polish criminals, Jewish, Russians or Ukrainian criminals - not just Germans." By saying this Morawiecki has put everyone on the same scale<sup>9</sup>.

Polish Senate Leader Stanisław Karczewski has called on Polish organizations around the world to "document and respond" to anti-Polish "opinions and statements" that tarnish the country's good name<sup>10</sup>.

Andrzej Zybertowicz, one of the advisers to the Polish President, claimed that Israel's extreme reaction stemmed from "feelings of guilt about the passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust."<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, on February 14, 2019, Netanyahu was quoted in the Jerusalem Post as saying that the entire Polish nation collaborated with the Nazis (Netanyahu, by the way, later denied saying so) while Israel's foreign minister quoted former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir as saying that the Poles sucked Anti-Semitism with their mother's milk."<sup>12</sup>

On September 27, 2017, it was reported in News 12 in Israel that Polish President Andrzej Duda claimed that Israel was responsible for the recent anti-Semitic attacks in Poland and that the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the country occurred following the Israeli Foreign Minister's remarks.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that the Holocaust is in the collective memory and discourse of both Israel and Poland. But the question that should be asked is how the Holocaust

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<sup>9</sup> Morawiecki, [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%9F+%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%9E%D7%9F+%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9+%D7%9E%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%AA+%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9F](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%9F+%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%9E%D7%9F+%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9+%D7%9E%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%AA+%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9F)  
<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5115327,00.html> .17.2.2018 , YNET אתר <sup>10</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5115327,00.html>

<sup>12</sup> Jerusalem Post, February 14, 2019; Israel TV News channels, 20 September 2019.

<sup>13</sup> TV News Channel 12, Israel, 27 September 2019.

is expressed in the discourse that is taking place in Israeli and Polish society and how this discourse affects the relations between Poland and Israel. When we talk about the concept of discourse, one must distinguish between language and discourse. Language is an abstract system of constitutive laws that creates a credible objective description of its objects. Discourse on the other hand uses language to emphasize subjective meaning within the intersubjective system between speakers. In this work I would like to examine how the historical, social and cultural discourse is subordinated to the political and personal needs of those in power both in Poland and in Israel and how they try to create a single and dominant narrative that has the power to shape reality in the present<sup>14</sup>.

This study examines the major events that occurred in the years 1989-2020, speeches and interactions between leaders, political events, social and artistic initiatives, activities of social entrepreneurs and examines them in light of the memory of the Holocaust in both nations. To what extent is the memory of the Holocaust dominant in political statements, political, social and other ventures, whether and how things changed during the period and whether there is a connection between the two countries as dictated by elected officials and what actually happens between the two nations.

These questions were examined in the technique of content analysis and based on sources that include written and online press, speeches by public figures, works of art, statements by activists and research sources from the fields of history, political science, sociology and art.

The contribution of this study is on emphasizing the dominance of the Holocaust remembrance in shaping the relations between the two countries and by raising the spotlight on it a suggestion in the last chapter on how to

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<sup>14</sup> This questions were discussed by numerous authors: Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997; Tomasz Szarota, *On the Threshold of the Holocaust*, Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 2015; Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989; Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996; M. Adamczyk-Grabowska, H. Duda, *Terminy Holokaustu, Zagłada i Szoa oraz ich konotacje leksykalno-kulturowe w polszczyźnie potocznej i dyskursie naukowym*, in: *Żydzi we współczesnych badaniach polskich*, Vol. 3, Kraków 2003, pp. 237-253; A. Milchman, A. Rosenberg, *Eksperymenty w myśleniu o Holokauście*, Warszawa 2003.



remember the past, to process it, but also find the way to a better future in the relations between Poland and Israel.

## **Preface**

The history of Polish Jewry is as long as the history of Poland itself. Historian Norman Davies (2014) claims that Jews lived in Poland even before Poland began to exist.<sup>15</sup> There are dubious records of Jews who traded in the area of Poland during the 8th and 9th centuries, but as far as it is known, Jewish settlement in Poland began in the 10th century. In the late 11th century, many Jews fled eastward from the persecutions of the Crusades that took place in German-speaking countries such as Germany, Bohemia, and the Czech Republic of today. The dukes and kings of Poland, who in parallel with the spread of Christianity in Poland tried to integrate Poland into Central Europe, invited Jews to settle in Poland to advance its economy<sup>16</sup>.

For centuries Poland was the home of the largest Judaism community in the world and was even called the "*paradisus Judaeorum*" which means "Paradise of the Jews" thanks to the long period of statutory religious tolerance and social autonomy which ended after the partition of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The history of Polish Jewry included periods of tolerance, religious and cultural flourishing, alongside periods of severe anti-Judaism (later anti-Semitism), persecution, riots and deportations culminating in its almost complete annihilation in World War II<sup>17</sup>.

On the eve of World War II, Polish Jewry was the largest in Europe. It numbered about 3.4 million people and even more if we include the Jews of the historic territories of Poland, who became citizens of other countries as a result of the frequent changes of Poland's borders. At the end of the war, only

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<sup>15</sup> Norman Davies, "Jewish-Polish History and Memory", Lecture at Beit Hatfutsot, Tel Aviv [Hebrew], 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Recently Hanna Zaremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej Polsce. Gmina krakowska*, Warszawa 2011.

<sup>17</sup> David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, New York, NY: Norton, 2013.

about 50,000 - 120,000 Polish Jews survived. Over 90 percent of Polish Jews were murdered in the Holocaust<sup>18</sup>.

There is no dispute that Polish Jewry was extremely dominant in the years preceding the founding of the State of Israel and even in the establishment of the state. Many of the leaders of the State of Israel were born in Poland and educated there. Prime ministers like Yitzhak Shamir and Menachem Begin are just one example of this. Many intellectuals and ideologues from the left wing to the right wing, from the ultra-Orthodox to the Communists were natives-born of Poland and a product of ideologies they had absorbed in Poland. All of these played a key role in shaping the face of the State of Israel.

In the years 1945-1948 after the war, Poland supported the Zionist claim to the establishment of a sovereign state in the Land of Israel. This position was reflected in Poland's support for the vote on the UN Partition Plan on November 29, 1947, which later led to the establishment of the State of Israel as a sovereign state. Poland was one of the first countries to declare official recognition of the State of Israel and its willingness to establish diplomatic relations<sup>19</sup>.

In the years 1948-1956 - Poland's accession to the Soviet Bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union led to a negative change in the relations between Israel and Poland, there were limited diplomatic relations but Jews were forbidden to immigrate to Israel. Unlike other countries in the communist bloc during Stalinism, Poland did not conduct an anti-Zionist campaign and did not hold antisemitic show trials<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004; P. Johnson, *Historia Żydów*, tł. M. Godyń, M. Wójcik, A. Nelicki, Kraków 1993; *Żydzi w Polsce. Dzieje i kultura. Leksykon*, red. J. Tomaszewski, A. Żbikowski, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Łukasz Tomasz Sroka, Jarosław Garliński, *Between Attraction and Repulsion, Disaster and Hope: Jews, Poland, and the Land of Israel before 1948*, *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 35 (2023), pp. 69-87.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. J. Adelson, *W Polsce zwanej ludową*, in: *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, Warszawa 1993, p. 387-478; A. Grabski, *Kształtowanie się pierwotnego programu żydowskich komunistów w Polsce po Holokauście*, in: G. Berendt, A. Grabski, A. Stankowski, *Studia z Historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, Warszawa 2000, p. 67-102; J. Czerniakiewicz, *Przemieszczenia ludności polskiej z ZSRR 1944-1959*, Warszawa 2004; G.

With the rise of Władysław Gomułka to power in 1956, he lifted the ban on the immigration of Polish Jews to Israel. As a result, about 50,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. This "Aliyah" became known as the "Gomolka Aliyah"<sup>21</sup>. The Six Day War, which broke out in June 1967, led to a crisis in relations between the two countries. On June 6, the day after the fighting began, Poland severed ties with Israel. This was an official position which was largely dictated to Poland by the Soviet Union. The rift in relations between the two countries also led, for the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel and the establishment of official relations between the two countries, to the launch of an anti-Zionist campaign which led to the expulsion of Jews from power in Poland and the abolition of membership in the ruling Communist Party. There is also documentation of a significant increase in the number of manifestations of anti-Semitism throughout Poland during that period. The anti-Zionist drift worsened with the "March 1968 events" following student demonstrations in Warsaw that protested at the expulsion of two Jewish students, further demonstrations took place, and in response the government came out against the students claiming they were working in the world Zionist service and intensified the persecution campaign against the Jews. The Jews were again forced to leave their Poland. About 15,000 Jews immigrated between 1967 and 1969<sup>22</sup>. Relations between the two countries did not reunite but only following the fall of the communist regime in 1989. In that year, between 5,000 and 10,000 Jews remained in Poland, some of whom hid their identities

This work will focus on Polish relations in the years 1989-2020. In these years a close and partnership relationship was established between the two countries. Especially in the first decade of the 21st century. There were political, economic, security and cultural collaborations, there were reciprocal

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Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950-1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce*, Gdańsk 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993; L. Olejnik, *Żydzi łódzcy w latach 1956–1972*, in: *Spółeczność żydowska w Polsce przed kampanią antysemicką lat 1967–1968 i po niej*, ed. G. Berendt, Warszawa 2009, p. 123-136; A. Stankowski, *Nowe spojrzenie na statystyki dotyczące emigracji Żydów z Polski po 1949 r.*, in: G. Berendt, A. Grabski, A. Stankowski, *Studia z Historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, Warszawa 2000, p. 103-151; B. Szaynok, *Polska-Izrael 1948-1967*, in: *Brzemie pamięci. Współczesne stosunki polsko-izraelskie*, ed. E. Kossewska, Warszawa 2009, p. 15-30.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. D. Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968*, Warszawa 2000.

visits by prime ministers and presidents and elected officials of the highest rank. There were also various initiatives for the recognition of Jewish culture in Poland such as the establishment of the Jewish Museum in Warsaw on 2005, as well as various festivals celebrating Jewish culture in Warsaw and Krakow and even smaller places throughout Poland. In Israel from May 2008 to May 2009 was declared the Year of Friendship of Israel Poland and dozens of upcoming initiatives were held throughout the country including an exhibition attended by Poles and Jews bearing the memory of the Holocaust. From 2015, the cooling of relations between the two countries began, and after the application of what is called in Israel the "Holocaust Law" at the beginning of 2018, there was a significant deterioration in relations that have not actually returned to normal to this day. The work is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter I review the historiography with an emphasis on historiography of Polish Jewry written by Jews. The historian Shimon Dubnov (1866-1942) was the first to realize that there was a place for writing the history of Polish Jews in Eastern Europe by Jews. And he did write the history of the Jews of Eastern Europe in three volumes. I also referred to his students and successors - Ben Zion Dinur, Shalom Baron and later Shmuel Ettinger. I also referred to the unique contribution of Emanuel Ringelblum, founder of the Ringelblum Archive which includes one of the most important collections for the history of Holocaust research in Poland. I referred as well to contemporary scholars such as Jan Gross, Jan Grabowski, Havi Dreifuss and others.

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The second chapter is an introduction that reviews the history of the Jews of Poland over 1000 years, with an emphasis on history in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 19th century, major currents in Judaism were created in Poland that exist to this day, not only around the world but also in Israel and affect the life in Israel and, of course, its politics. These groups such as Hasidim and the Hasidim-opponents have continued to struggle to this day.

The third chapter discusses Israeli-Polish relations between 1989-2020. The chapter reviews political, economic and security relations and discusses upheavals that occurred during these years from the premise that the collective memory of the Holocaust is a key for understanding the relations and is also what creates the discourse. In this chapter I will discuss the central

question which is what is a collective memory, how it is built and how the different narratives produced by the two nations were so dominant in the relations of Poland-Israel 75 years after World War II - in such a way that they managed to damage the two countries' relations despite their contemporary interests.

The question of memory versus history was examined in the light of scholars such as Halbwachs, Nore but of course also from an Israeli perspective of the Holocaust memory by scholars such as Yerushalmi, Don Yehiya and Shapira and from the point of view of Polish scholars such as Tokarska-Bakr and Irwin-Zarecka.

In reviewing the events, I relied on articles from the press, and the Internet, and even on Twitter tweets from the leaders of the two countries. Major books that have led me are the books of Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski and various articles by historians in Poland and Israel such as Prof. Yehuda Bauer, Prof. Havi Dreifuss and Prof. Grzegorz Berendt.

In the fourth chapter I have chosen a number of artistic representations created in the years 2000's in Israel and Poland. I chose representations that represent the spirit of the period and the spirit of relations between the two countries in those years. The intention is not to examine the quality of the works in the light of the history of art but only as representing the spirit of the period.

I chose to discuss the permanent exhibition at the "Galicia Museum - a Jewish Museum", and at the museum itself, which was founded in Krakow in 2004, as well as a joint exhibition of Israeli and Polish artists called "Demons" which was presented in 2009 in Israel. I also focused on the Polish film "Damon" made in 2012 and the Israeli film "Sins" from 2016.

All the works I analyze in this chapter discuss questions of memory. What do we remember? What do we erase? What do we want to remember and what do we want to forget? What is the dialectic of remembering and forgetting? What is the place of art and aesthetics as part of the process of memory and forgetfulness?

The fifth chapter discusses the activism of memory following Yifat Gutman's research "The Role of Memory Activism in Reconciliation Processes in a Comparative Aspect." Guttmann defines memory activism as "a strategy for political change aimed at remembering a controversial history in order to influence public debate and current policies for the advancement of reconciliation, peace, and democracy."<sup>23</sup>

In Gutman's study she cites the case of Jews-Poles and consequently Israel-Poland as a unique case in international research on reconciliation in conflict areas. First, the Jews hardly live in Poland today and secondly the Jews do not share a common border with Poland and of course do not represent a case of the return of violence or the return of the population.

The struggle between the Jews and the Poles and therefore between Israel and Poland is a struggle for memory. On the memory of the Holocaust and the truth about the history of the Holocaust in Poland. In the final chapter of the work, I discuss the question that is currently a challenge for both countries, how to remember the past but at the same time produce good and productive bilateral relations between Israel and Poland.

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<sup>23</sup> יפעת גוטמן, תפקיד האקטיביזם של הזיכרון בתהליכי פיוס בהיבט השוואתי, מרכז תמי שטיינמץ למחקרי שלום, אוניברסיטת תל אביב. (Gutman)

## Chapter 1:

### Historiography (Outline)

The historian Shimon Dubnow (1860-1941) who grew up and was educated in Russia has shown interest in the history of the Jewish people since the dawn of his youth<sup>24</sup>. In 1891, Dubnow (1860-1941), who was a young intellectual, came out calling on the Jewish people to recognize that they had a history of their own. Although he spent his life in late Tsarist Russia, currents of liberalism, nationalism and Western European philosophy had a great influence on him<sup>25</sup>. In addition, Russia also had a national ideological conception that also had an influence on him<sup>26</sup>.

Dubnow farther claimed that the Jewish history has been neglected and might have been forgotten and therefore everything must be done to find and preserve for future generations certificates, community registers and books ("building materials" as he called it) that belong to the Jewish people who survived in cities and towns throughout the Russian Empire. Dubnow published this in the press and claimed that while Jewish scholars in Central Europe such as Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), Isaak Markus Jost (1793-1860), Heinrich Hirsch Greetz (1817-1891) and Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport (1790-1867) dealt with the history of the Jewish people for decades, among the Jews of Poland and Russia the desire to reveal their historical mysteries, how their ancestors lived in exile for eight hundred years since the Jews came to Poland and later to Russia. He was troubled by the indifference to the history and roots of contemporary Judaism that was characteristic in all the

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<sup>24</sup> M. Szulkin, *Szymon Dubnow – wybitny historyk żydowski*, Biuletyn ŻIH w Polsce, 1975, no. 93, pp. 3-25.

<sup>25</sup> Simon Dubnov reflected in his ideas, by nature, the life of the late Tsarist environment from which he came, and yet the subject of his attitude towards Russia is not as simple as we might think. In his memoirs and other studies, Dubnov emphasized the European influences that left his mark on him, especially those of the English philosopher John Stuart Mill, the German Jewish historian Heinrich Greetz, and the French writer Ernest Renan. This is reflected in Dubnov's memories as cited for example in *Kniga Zhizni: materialy dlia istorii moego vremeni, vospominaniia i razmyshleniia*, Moscow-Jerusalem 2004, pp. 113-116, 154-156, 181-185.

<sup>26</sup> For example in the "Silver Era" which refers to the cultural renaissance in Russia which took place in the years 1890-1921.



communities in Eastern Europe<sup>27</sup>. Dubnow hoped that the history of the Jews in Russia and Poland would become a discipline in itself, and indeed he researched and wrote about the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe in a book published in three volumes: "The History of the Jews in Russia and Poland". But what began to grow gradually into Jewish historiography ceased with the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of the communist regime in Russia. Dubnow himself was murdered by the Germans in 1941. Dubnow's successors in the study of the history of Jews in Eastern Europe are Ben Zion Dinur (1881-1973), who was a student of Dubnow, Shalom Baron (1895-1989) and Shmuel Ettinger (1919-1988).<sup>28</sup> Ettinger engaged beyond his research of the history of Eastern European Jewry, in studies of anti-Semitism in Europe in all its aspects<sup>29</sup>.

The changes in the paradigm of scientific research undertaken by Jewish historians, who had to define all the most important concepts (e.g., nation, society, language, identity), were also reflected in artistic works. Historians wrote about the formation of a modern Jewish nation with ancient roots in scientific language. But similar dilemmas were reflected in literary and artistic works, when a poet or writer tried to use other forms of language to describe the same processes<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> שמעון בפולין וברוסיה", פרדס, א, אודיסה 1891, עמ. 226. (Dubnow, 1891).

<sup>28</sup> Another historian who is considered to be the greatest scholar of the history of Polish Jewry is Meir Balaban, whose main research and publications were in the first half of the twentieth century. Like Dubnow, he is also involved in scientific activities with public activities that focused mainly on education and the Jewish-community institution. Amongst his books it is important to mention:

מאיר בלבן, תולדות היהודים בקראקוב ובקאז'ימייז' (1868–1304), תרגום דוד וינפלד, עורך מדעי יעקב גולדברג, ירושלים, הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י"ל מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית, 2002; מאיר בלבן, ביבליוגרפיה על תולדות יהודי פולין והארצות השכנות: מחקרים אשר ראו אור בשנים 1900–1930, מבוא: ע. מנדלסון, ירושלים, הוצאת הפדרציה העולמית של יהודי פולין, תשל"ט; וכמו כן, מאיר בלבן, תולדות עם ישראל וספרותו, כרך א', ברלין, הוצאת ילקוט, תר"ץ.

<sup>29</sup> Ben Zion Dinur in his essay "Exiles and their Destruction", *Kneset*, 8, 1943, pp. 46-60, mentioned that Ettinger has devoted much of his historical discussion to the external conditions that influenced the process of mental fixation of anti-Semitism in Europe and in the European culture. However, as he himself wrote, "with all the importance of the circumstances in which things took place, we can not ignore the cause of the spiritual heritage and the Jewish stereotype."

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. Michael A. Meyer, *Rabbi Leo Baeck. Living a Religious Imperative in Troubled Times*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Julian Tuwim (1894-1953) was born in Poland but managed to escape from Poland after being occupied by the Germans during World War II and moved to the United States. Tuwim was a Polish poet, or in other words a Polish Jewish poet. In April 1944, various events took place to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Tuwim wrote the essay "We are the Jews of Poland" in which he expressed his close connection to Poland but also to the Jews of Poland. The essay he wrote is a lament for the destruction of Polish Jewry in which he tried to explain how World War II and the Holocaust of European Jews, which had not yet ended then, cast new content in his identity as a Pole and as a Jew.<sup>31</sup>

And so he wrote:

"To be Polish - it is not an honor, nor glory, nor right. It is like the breath. I have never met a man who is proud of fact that he is breathing.

Polish - because in Poland I was born, raised, educated, learned, because in Poland I was happy and miserable, (..)

Polish - because of a sensitive ancient sentence, which I cannot explain in any sense or reason, I strive after my death to swallow and absorb the land of Poland, and not other land (...)

But first and foremost - Polish, because I want to.

In response to this, I hear voices: Well, but if a Pole, then why "we are the Jews"? And I am honored to reply: Because of the blood (...) not the theory of race. Quite the opposite.

(..) The blood of the Jews (not "Jewish blood") is flowing in the widest and deepest streams.

Its dark waves turn into a stormy and foaming river – and in this new Jordan River I am immersing the Baptism of Baptisms: A Brotherhood of Saints, fiery blood covenant with the Jews.

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<sup>31</sup> יוליאן טובים, אנו, יהודי פולין, מפולנית יהודית רבן, המרכז לחקר תולדות יהודי פולין ותרבותם באוניברסיטת ירושלים והוצאת מאגנס, ירושלים, 1984, עמ. 15-17. (Tuwim, 1984)

Accept me, brothers, into this honorable partnership of shed blood. I want to be a part of this community from this very day".

There is no doubt that the things he wrote in the essay "We are the Jews of Poland" cannot attest to the attitude of Polish Jews towards Poland and Poles. The worldview of Tuwim, who even before the war was known for his close ties with Polish culture and his reservations about the Jewish public, was quite unusual<sup>32</sup>. The circumstances of the writing of a public figure like him who managed to escape from a Nazi occupation to the United States are not similar to the circumstances of the life of someone who experienced the Holocaust and later immigrated to Israel. Is Tuwim's statement: "We are the Jews of Poland" detached from reality<sup>33</sup>?

Quite a few articles and books have been written about the history of Tuwim's life and examining the changes<sup>34</sup> that took place in his identity during the war.<sup>35</sup>

Professor Havi Dreifuss in her book "We are Jews of Poland?" claims that it is natural that studies that have dealt with the relationship between Jews and Poles over the generations have examined the attitudes on both sides of the barricade: alongside a study of the attitude of Poles towards Jews, the perception of Poles by Jews by was examined but more narrowly.<sup>36</sup>

In her view, the studies can be generally divided into three main periods. Studies dealing with the life of the Jews in the Polish monarchy between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries analyzed the attitudes of power groups in Polish society towards the Jews, including the Polish monarchy, the nobility and the church. Studies dealing with Poland in the years when it lost its independence and was under occupation by Russia, Austria-Hungary and

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<sup>32</sup> M. Urbanek, *Tuwim. Wylękniony bluźnierca*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Cfr. Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006, pp. 233-237.

<sup>34</sup> אוגניה פרוקופ יניץ, "התיתכן שירה פולנית-יהודית?: הספרות הפולנית היהודית ותרבות היהודים אחרי תקופת ההשכלה", חנא שמרוק ושמואל רסס (עורכים), *בין שתי מלחמות העולם, פרקים מחיי התרבות של יהודי פולין ללשוניותיהם: 1919-1939*, הוצאת מאגנס, ירושלים, 1997, עמ. 287-320. (Prokop-Janiec, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> נתן כהן, *ספר סופר ועתון: מרכז התרבות היהודית בוורשה 1918-1942*, הוצאת מאגנס, ירושלים, 2003. (Cohen Nathan, 2003)

<sup>36</sup> חווי דרייפוס, "אנו יהודי פולין?", *יד ושם המכון הבינלאומי לחקר השואה*, 2009, עמוד 15. (Dreifuss, 2009)

Prussia (1772-1918) discussed the crystallization of Polish nationalism and the place of the Jews, or their lack of place, in a nation that had just regained independence. And the third group is of studies on the period of the Second Polish Republic (1939-1918) that examined the political expressions that the Jews received from the various parties. Alongside these detailed studies, which examined the attitude of Polish society towards the Jews who lived in it over the generations, there are also essays dealing with the Jewish aspect of this relationship and how Jews perceived their Polish environment socially, politically and culturally<sup>37</sup>. Dreifuss argues in her book that although the study generally tended to focus on the Polish majority group's attitude toward the Jewish minority, the Jewish perspective on Poles was also reflected in the study literature, albeit to a lesser extent<sup>38</sup>. For example, in 2006 a comprehensive study by Joanna Michlic which examined the mythical image of the Jews in the minds of Poles as "others" that threaten the essence of the Polish nation. Michlic traced the prejudices against Jews that prevailed in Polish society and developed in it from 1880 to the present day, and insisted on their role in shaping Polish identity<sup>39</sup>. Many other articles and studies can be mentioned, including an article by Marcus Zilber from 1999<sup>40</sup>, a study by Israel Bartel<sup>41</sup>, a book by Mauritz Gottlieb and more<sup>42</sup>.

Dreifuss argues that comparisons were rarely made between the images that existed among Jewish society and the images created in Polish society. A unique example is the comparative study of Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartel, who analyzed Polish and Jewish literary works dealing with the Polish

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<sup>37</sup> Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800*, Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973; Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988 [Polish original: 1961]; Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. 1-2, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984; Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850-1914*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> שם, עמ' 16-17. (Dreifuss,)

<sup>39</sup> Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jews from 1880 to the Present*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> מרקוס זילבר, "שפולין החדשה תהיה אם טובה לכל ילדיה; יהודים ופולנים בפולין 1916", *זמנים*, 65, 1998-1999, עמ' 78-83. (Zilber, 1999)

<sup>41</sup> ישראל ברטל, *הלא יהודים וחברתם בספרות עברית ויידיש במזרח אירופה בין השנים 1856-1914*, חיבור לשם קבלת התואר דוקטור לפילוסופיה, האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים, ירושלים, 1981. (Bartal, 1981)

<sup>42</sup> מאוריצי גוטליב, *אמנות, היסטוריה, זיכרון*, מרכז זלמן שזר לתולדות ישראל, ירושלים, 2006. (Gottlieb)

uprising of 1863. It turns out that these works describe similar events but interpret them in different ways, thus serving as a tool for examining the "brotherhood" between Poles and Jews, which failed according to Opalski<sup>43</sup>.

Dreifuss brings up a very interesting finding. She claims that an examination of researches on the relationship between Jews and Poles in the Holocaust shows that surprisingly it was during the Holocaust that this issue was almost completely abandoned. Although a parallel analysis of Polish attitudes towards Jewish attitudes is necessary for understanding the historical reality of Poland, during this period, the many studies done on the Holocaust of Polish Jews, including studies directly dealing with Jewish-Polish relations, neglected the Jewish position, or rather the attitude of Jews towards the Poles in World War II.

It is difficult to pin down the reason for this in the scope of the studies, since dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been devoted to relations between Poles and Jews in the Holocaust. Moreover, the centrality of the Jewish community in Poland on the eve of the war, is almost complete annihilation by Nazi Germany and the location of most of the murder sites on Polish soil, made the question of Polish-Jewish relation, one of the central issues in the Holocaust of Polish Jews. Emanuel Ringelblum, the founder and director of the "Oneg Shabbat" – (עונג שבת) archive, collected materials and documents documenting daily life in the community and created important research on the subject<sup>44</sup>. The "Oneg Shabbat" Archive, also known as the

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<sup>43</sup> Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews – A Failed Brotherhood*, NH: Brandeis, University Press, Hanover, 1992.

<sup>44</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-1944) was born in eastern Poland to a poor family. He studied history at a university of Warsaw. He was deeply involved in the life of the Jewish community and was active in the charity funds and in the JDC. In August 1939 he participated in the Zionist Congress in Geneva as a delegate and representative of Polish Jewry; cfr. E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego. Wrzesień 1939 - styczeń 1943*, wstęp i red. A. Eisenbach, przeł. A. Rutkowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1983; E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Uwagi i spostrzeżenia*, oprac. i wstęp A. Eisenbach, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1988; *Archiwum ważniejsze niż życie. Losy Żydów polskich w czasie II wojny światowej w dokumentach konspiracyjnej grupy Oneg Szabat*, oprac. B. Borys, A. Duńczyk-Szulc, A. Kajczyk, O. Szymańska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2019; S. D. Kassow, *Kto napisze naszą historię? Ukryte Archiwum Emanuela Ringelbluma*, przeł. G. Waluga, O. Zienkiewicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017; Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oneg Shabbat Archive*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007; Joseph Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!...: Selected Documents from*

Ringelblum Archive, is one of the most important collections for the study of the history of Polish Jews during the Holocaust<sup>45</sup>, and as such UNESCO included it in 1999 in the list of important archives in world history<sup>46</sup>.

The archive, which was founded as early as 1939, aimed to document the fate of the Jews of Warsaw and Poland during World War II. Emanuel Ringelblum even sought to give the archive the character of a public enterprise. To this end, he recruited a group of activists who documented the effects of the German occupation on the lives of individuals and Jewish society in Warsaw and the countryside<sup>47</sup>. This group also intended to process the information gathered for a summary work towards the end of 1941. This plan did not materialize due to news that began to reach the "Oneg Shabbat" archivists about the murder of Polish Jews and the establishment of the extermination camp in Chelmno with the aim of exterminating the Jews with gas. Following this the members of Oneg Shabbat focused on collecting documents that included deportation and extermination. Although not all the information gathered by members of the "Oneg Shabbat" archive was revealed at the end of the war<sup>48</sup>, this archive is still used today as the most complete and important source of information regarding Jewish life and activities during the Holocaust, in occupied Poland in general<sup>49</sup> and in Warsaw in particular<sup>50</sup>. On

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*the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." ["Oneg Shabbath"]*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986; E. Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, edited and translated by Jacob Sloan, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958.

<sup>45</sup> ישראל גוטמן, "הציווי האחרון של עמנואל רינגלבלום", *יד ושם קובץ מחקרים*, הוצאת יד ושם, כרך לא, תשס"ג, עמ' 6-7, ירושלים. (Gutman, 2013)

<sup>46</sup> עמנואל רינגלבלום, *כתבים אחרונים: יחסי פוליטיים-יהודים, ינואר 1943-אפריל 1944*, הוצאת יד ושם, ירושלים, 1994. (Ringelblum).

<sup>47</sup> In Raphael Sharaf's article in *Etmol*, 9 (d), 1984, pp. 19-20, Sharaf mentioned Ringelblum's studies at the University of Warsaw and the great influence of his teacher and historian Yitzhak Schiffer, who placed special emphasis on the importance of preserving documents and historical material. This issue had a great influence on the way Ringelblum thought and acted in building the archive.

<sup>48</sup> When the conditions in the ghetto worsened and when the danger increased to the extent that the archivists might be seized, Oneg Shabbat people decided to bring all the material on August 3, 1942 to a hiding place in the basement at 68 Nowolipki Street, where it was packed in 10 tin cans. Additional certificates were brought to the basement in a milk jug in February 1943. The entrance to the basement was sealed. A third collection of certificates was hidden by Mark Edelman in a building at 34 Schwintowska Street.

<sup>49</sup> Ringelblum himself managed to escape from the ghetto but returned to it with the outbreak of the Warsaw ghetto revolt. He was captured and sent to the Travniki camp from which he managed to escape but was captured on March 7, 1944 and executed. Of all the Oneg Shabbat members, only two survived the war. Rachel Orbach (died in Israel in 1976) and

the work of the archive, historical writing and analysis of the treatment of the subject, Samuel Kassow<sup>51</sup> wrote in his book that raises the question "Who Will Write Our History?" in 2007<sup>52</sup>. With the resumption of historical research in Poland at the end of the war, a number of scholars raised sharp questions about the nature of relations between Jews and Poles under Nazi occupation.<sup>53</sup>

The resumption of research should depend on the activities of the historical committees, including the Central Committee of Jews in Poland<sup>54</sup>. The historical committees, which were established from the beginning to gather evidence against German criminals, later led to the renewal of research by the Historical Jewish Institute in Warsaw and even established the basic infrastructure of the Institute for Holocaust Studies. The first body to deal with this issue was the Jewish Historical Commission (Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna) which was established in 1944 and in 1947 was replaced by the Jewish Historical Institute. Confirmation of the centrality of the question of relations between Jews and Poles can be found in the activities of

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Hertz Wasser. On September 18, 1946, the first boxes were taken out of hiding in the ghetto. Four years later the second hideout was found. The third part has not yet been found and is probably lost. Wasser was one of Ringelblum's closest associates and a partner in all the collection and research work. In an article by Professor Israel Guttman in *Moreshet*, Vol. 75, pp. 81-85, 2003, he quoted from a letter sent by Ringelblum apparently written on March 1, 1944, 7 days before he was caught in his hiding place on Grojecka Street in Warsaw and executed. The letter is addressed to the "Jewish Scientific Institute" in New York in which he wrote "I do not know if we will go through the war alive but I feel obligated together with you and Vodnitsky (this is Wasser) to give full report of our cultural work throughout the war."<sup>50</sup> נחמה טק, "עמנואל רינגלבלום ההיסטוריון העלום", *ילקוט מורשת*, תעוד ומלקר השואה, ירושלים, 2003, כרך 75, עמ. 65-79. (Teck, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Kassow, *"Who Will Write Our History?": Emanuel Ringelblum the Warsaw Ghetto and the Oneg Shabes Archive*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Dalia Ofer, in her article "only and public as a research topic in historiography: Ghettos in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust", *Holocaust Heritage Book and Antisemitism*, Editor Graciela Ben Dror, Volume 100, December 2020, Jerusalem, p. 46-68, pointed out additional questions that arose following the research on the Holocaust and the reference to the "Oneg Shabbat" archive. Questions that mainly addressed the issue of emotional distance from writing and documenting. Is it possible to write simultaneously from a real and critical approach at the same time about the individuals in society who are in extreme situations? The historian is committed to writing that has both distance and approximation, something that the philosopher of history Robin Collingwood called "historical empathy." In Dalia Ofer's article, there is a reference to this issue in the analysis of Ringelblum's research, while noting that despite the inhuman and extreme conditions in which he operated, he met this criterion.

<sup>53</sup> Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, *Instrukcje dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej*, Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1945, pp. 13, 20-21.

<sup>54</sup> A. Grabski, *Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce (1944-1950). Historia polityczna*, Warszawa 2015.

the Jewish Historical Committee in a pamphlet published as early as 1945. This pamphlet details the goals of the Jewish Historical Committee along with instructions for collecting and publishing information from Jewish survivors. This also includes a number of questions regarding the relations between Jews and Poles during the war years.

Most of the early articles published following the work of the Jewish Historical Committee were limited in scope, they reviewed the history of the Jews during the occupation in a particular area, and they were accompanied by appendices containing German documents and preliminary testimonies<sup>55</sup>.

With the expansion of the research of the Jewish Historical Committee, the studies began to devote more extensive space to the issue of the place of the Poles<sup>56</sup> in the Jewish tragedy<sup>57</sup>. The reason for the dying out of the balanced interest in this subject can be attributed to the changes that took place in Poland and in the world of the Jews in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which diverted the discussion to a new direction. The Soviet takeover of Poland, the pogroms against the Jews that took place there at the end of 1946, the escape movement that followed and the establishment of the State of Israel - all diverted the discussion of Jewish-Polish relations from the research to the polemical aspects and created two parallel apologetic narratives. Some of them, mostly Jewish and not a few even Israeli, focused on the involvement of Poles in the persecution of the Jews. Echoes of this concept and researches can be found in articles and books of Kermish<sup>58</sup>, Ettinger<sup>59</sup>, Robinson<sup>60</sup> and some others<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Cfr. Filip Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich*, Łódź, Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1945, p. 6; Gerszon Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich*, Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946, pp. 15-30.

<sup>56</sup> Szymon Datner, *Walka i zagłada białostockiego getta*, Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946, pp. 13, 17, 22-23; Josef Kermisz, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim (19 kwietnia – 16 maja 1943)*, Łódź, Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, pp.47-56.

<sup>57</sup> לייב זילבערבערג, א ייד פון קלעמענטאוו דערציילט, יידישע היסטארישער קאמיסיע, ורשה, לודג', קרקוב 1947, עמ. 47, 48, 65. (Zilberg Lieb)

<sup>58</sup> יוסף קרמיש, "פועלה של המועצה לעזרת היהודים (מועצת ז'גוטה) בפולין הכבושה", *נסיגות ופעולות הצלה בתקופת השואה*, הוצאת יד ושם, 1976. (Kermish, 1976)

<sup>59</sup> שמואל אטינגר, *תולדות עם ישראל בעת החדשה*, דביר, כרך 3, תל אביב, 1969, עמ. 303-305, 309-315. (Ettinger, 1969)



The second narrative, which developed mainly in Poland, dealt mainly with the share of Poles in rescue and assistance organizations for Jews operating in Poland<sup>62</sup>. This bipolar preoccupation with the approach of Polish-Jews relations lasted for more than two decades and only during the 1980s and 1990s did it change and return to focusing on the complex relations of Polish-Jews and especially the attitude of Poles towards Jews under the Nazi regime<sup>63</sup>. Jan Błonski's essay "Miserable Poles Looking at the Ghetto"<sup>64</sup> and Jan Tomasz Gross's book "Neighbors"<sup>65</sup> discussing the active role of Poles in the murder of Jewish Jews changed the direction of discourse, sharpened it and aroused public opinion in Poland<sup>66</sup>, and within a few years there were publications of books which examined this issue<sup>67</sup>.

Most of the research on Jewish-Polish relations in the Holocaust dealt with the question of the Polish people's involvement in the persecution of the Jews and their responses to the German murders that took place on its land, rather than the way Polish Jews perceived their environment.

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<sup>60</sup> יעקב רבינסון, "השוואה" בתוך ישראל גוטמן וליוויה רוטקירן (עורכים), שואת יהודי אירופה: רקע – קורות – משמעות, יד ושם, ירושלים, 1973, עמ. 196. (Robinson)

<sup>61</sup> ישראל גוטמן (עורך), "דיון", הפולנים נוכח גירוש יהודי וורשה בקיץ 1942, עמ. 381-371. (Gutman)

<sup>62</sup> Marek Arcyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim "Żegota": Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939-1945*, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1983; Władysław Bartoszewski, *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939-1945*, London: Earls Court Publications, 1969; Stefan Korboński, *The Jews and the Poles in World War II*, NY: Hippocrene Books, 1989; Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saved One Life*, New York: Crown Publishers, 1971.

<sup>63</sup> Israel Gutman, Samuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims, Poles and Jews During World War Two*, New York: Holocaust Library, 1986; David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government in Exile and the Jews, 1939-1942*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, pp. 83-113, 203-213; Dariusz Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada: Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940-1945)*, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 1995.

<sup>64</sup> יאן בלונסקי, "פולנים מסכנים מביטים בגטו", *יד ושם-קובץ מחקרים*, י"ט, 1989, עמ. 271-281. (Blonski)

<sup>65</sup> יאן טומש גרוס, *שכנים*, יד ושם, ירושלים, 2002. (Gross, 2002)

<sup>66</sup> Jan Błonski, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994; more about the author in *Błonski przekorny. Dziennik. Wywiady*, zebrał i oprac. Marian Zaczynski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Barbara Engelking, *"Szanowny panie gisto": Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940-1941*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2003, pp.44-51; Tomasz Szarota, *U progu zagłady, Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogrom w okupowanej Europie: Warszawa Paryż, Amsterdam, Antwerpia, Kowno*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2000, pp.19-82; Jan Grabowski, *"Ja tego Żyda znam!" Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie, 1939-1943*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004.

For example, the many research monographs that review the fate of Polish Jews in various cities and areas during the war focus on the actions taken by the Poles while the extermination of the Jews took place. The attitude of the Jews towards the Poles was abandoned<sup>68</sup>.

The lack of a comprehensive study tracing the attitude of the Jews towards Poland and the Poles did not prevent accusations from the Polish public about their behavior during the war, the most common argument was that the support of Eastern Polish Jews for the Soviet invasion in September 1939 expressed the "collective betrayal" of Jews in Poles and in Poland. Thus the Jews were accused of indirectly contributing to the defeat of Poland in the war on the one hand and causing their own loss on the other hand. In this context, quite a few essays were written accusing the Jews of collaborating with the Soviets and even with the Germans, as reviewed, for example, in the books of Lukas<sup>69</sup> and Piotrowski<sup>70</sup>.

Recent studies examining the position of Eastern Poland Jews versus the position of non-Jewish residents of the area have undermined the claim of Jewish infidelity to Poland, but a careful and comprehensive examination of Jewish attitude toward Poland and Poles not only under Soviet occupation, and even more so under Nazi occupation was not done and the book of Havi Dreifuss in this context<sup>71</sup> is the first and important<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> יצחק ארד, *וילנה היהודית במאבק ובכיליון*, יד ושם, אוניברסיטת תל אביב - המכון לחקר התפוצות, ספרית הפועלים, ירושלים ותל אביב, 1976, עמ' 212, 49-55. (Arad, 1976).

ישראל גוטמן, *יהודי ורשה 1939-1943*, גטו, מחתרת, מרד, ספרית פועלים, תל אביב 1977, עמ' 46-74, עמ' 268-269. (Guttmann, 1977).

אליהו יונס, *עשן בחולות יהודי לבוב במלחמה, 1939-1944*, יד ושם, ירושלים, 2001, עמ' 85-87, 149. (Junes, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939-1944*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990.

<sup>70</sup> Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, McFarland, Jefferson and London, 1998, pp. 66-75, 121-151.

<sup>71</sup> דב לוין, *תקופה בסוגריים: 1939-1941 – תמורות בחיי היהודים באזורים שסופחו לברית המועצות בתחילת מלחמת העולם השנייה*, האוניברסיטה העברית – המכון ליהדות זמננו, ירושלים, 1989, עמ' 42-55. (Levin, 1989).

נתן כהן "מציאות הקיום היום יומי והערכת "הגורל היהודי" כפי שבאים לידי ביטוי ביומנים שנכתבו בליטא בשנים 1941-1945", 1988, מוציא לאור לא ידוע (בספריה הלאומית, ירושלים). (Cohen, 1988).

## Chapter 2:

### The History of Polish Jewry

#### 2.1. Preface

It is not possible to summarize the history of the Jews living within the borders of the Polish state for more than a thousand years within the scope of this dissertation. In fact, many authors have attempted to do so, creating works that are extensive and everlasting. It seems necessary to show the events described in later chapters in a historical context, for the relationship between Poles and Jews or between Poland and Israel remains inextricably linked to the past. And the art and architecture created by contemporary artists always refers to the past and is interpreted in this context. From over a thousand years of history, I just wanted to highlight four aspects, each of which is a topic for a series of monographic studies. Taking into account all possible criteria (the number and scale of preserved monuments, the number of Jewish people who once inhabited a given area, etc.) the most important for our considerations remain the lands of the former Austrian partition (Galicia) and the Russian partition, and from the religious-social-cultural issues: the development of the Hasidic movement (Hasidut), which now dominates popular culture as a synonym for Jew, and Zionism, which contributed directly to the creation of the State of Israel and the modern Israeli nation<sup>73</sup>.

The history of Polish Jewry began around the 10th century AD and for quite a few periods the Jewish community in Poland, with its changing borders, was the largest of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora ("Golah"). The Jewish

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תקוה פתל, הציות לחיים, עמידת היהודים בוורשה ספטמבר 1939-יולי 1942 לפי יומנים ועיתונות מחתרת יהודיים, עבודת גמר לשם קבלת התואר בשני, האוניברסיטה העברית, 1988. (Patel, 1988)

ווי דרייפוס (בן שושן), "אנו יהודי פולין?" היחסים בין יהודים לפולנים בתקופת השואה מן ההיבט היהודי, יד ושם. המכון הבינלאומי לחקר השואה, 2009. (Dreifuss, 2009)

<sup>72</sup> Cfr. Jan Thomas Gross, "Ja za takie oswobodzenie im dziękuję i proszę ich, żeby to był ostatni raz," *Upiorna dekada: Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów, 1939-1948*, Kraków: Universitas, 1998, pp.61-92; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Pierwszi po diable, Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce: 1939-1941*, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2002, pp. 27-138.

<sup>73</sup> The historiography on the Jews in the former Prussian (German) partition was critically elaborated by K.A. Makowski, *Siła mitu. Żydzi w Poznańskim w dobie zaborów w piśmiennictwie historycznym*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004.

community enjoyed various periods of equal rights, tolerance and economic, cultural and religious prosperity along with periods of rights reduction, anti-Judaic (anti-Semitic) persecution and extermination during World War II.

On the eve of World War II, Polish Jewry was one of the greatest in Europe and in the world. It numbered about 3.4 million people - and even more if we include the Jews of the historic territories of Poland, who became citizens of other countries as a result of the frequent changes in the country's borders. Over 90% of Polish Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. At the end of the war, only about 50,000-120,000 Polish Jews survived<sup>74</sup>.

## 2.2. The Period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Jews travelers and merchants arrived to Central and Eastern Europe already in the late Antiquity, however first permanent settlements in Central Europe began in the 10th century<sup>75</sup>. From the end of the 11th century, many of the Jews fled East from the persecutions of the Crusades that took place in Ashkenaz, that is, in the German-speaking area that included today's Germany, Bohemia in the Czech Republic, and partly France<sup>76</sup>. The kings of Poland, who in parallel with the spread of Christianity in Poland tried to integrate their country into Central Europe, invited Jews to settle in Poland in order to advance its economy<sup>77</sup>. Jews were warmly received by Polish dukes who issued written charters to the Jews, in which it was stated that the Jews

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Lukas, *Out of the Inferno. Poles Remember the Holocaust*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989, s. 5, 13, 111, 201.

<sup>75</sup> ישראל ברטל, "התהוותה של יהדות מזרח אירופה", בתוך: אלי בר-נביא (עורך), *תולדות עם ישראל מימי האבות עד ימינו*, תל אביב, הוצאת ידיעות אחרונות, 1993, עמ. 118-119. (Bartal, ) (1993)

<sup>76</sup> Cfr. B.D. Weinryb, *The beginning of East-European Jewry in Legend and Historiography*, in: *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. M. Ben-Horin, B.D. Weinryb, S. Zeitlin, Leiden 1962, pp. 445-502; H. Samsonowicz, *The Jewish Population in Poland during the Middle Ages*, *Dialectics and Humanism. The Polish Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 16/1 (1989), pp. 35-42; Shlomo Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades*. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV Pub. House, 1996; Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages*, Library of Jewish Studies. New York: Behrman House, 1980

<sup>77</sup> H. Zaremska, *Pierwsze spotkania, 960-1500*, in: *Polin 1000 lat historii Żydów polskich*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Antony Polonsky, Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2014, pp. 41-86; Her, *The Medieval Period*, in: *Sources on Jewish Self-Government in the Polish Lands from Its Inception to the Present*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 1-61.

were under ducal protection and should not be harmed. Following the split in Poland, after the death of duke Boleslaw III in 1138, every prince in his court tried to have Jews help him with their connections and knowledge in the fields of trade, transport and communications.

In 1264 duke Boleslaw V, also known as "Boleslaw the Hasidic", issued a "privilege", a comprehensive charter in fact, which also regulated the relationship between Christians and Jews<sup>78</sup>. Many other medieval rulers of various principalities in Poland when they took control of his province, they also issued a ratifying decree of the Boleslaw V, stating that the Jews were under their protection<sup>79</sup>. Jewish immigration to medieval Poland increased in the late 13th century, and then following the Black Death in the mid-14th century. Towards the end of the 13th century, restrictions were imposed on the Jews (also following the interest-rate loans they gave) and it was decided that the Jews should bear identification marks and live in separate areas<sup>80</sup>.

Waves of other Jewish immigrants came to Poland, as well as to Lithuania and Russia, following riots among German (and French) Jews in the late 14th century and especially following the expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492. Jews were welcomed in Kingdom of Poland as they brought with them extensive knowledge of trade and economy as well as ties with Western Europe under the control of the Ottoman Empire due to their ties with Jewish communities in these areas. The Jews integrated into the life of commerce and the economy and continued their occupations as lenders but also moved to trade and crafts

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<sup>78</sup> The privilege was edited in *Wybór tekstów źródłowych z historii państwa i prawa polskiego*, zebrał i opracował J. Sawicki, Vol. 1, fasc. 1, Warszawa 1952, pp. 41-43; *Nihil novi. Z dorobku sejmu radomskiego 1505 roku*, part 1: *Wstęp historyczny* (A. Szymanek), part 2: *Materiały źródłowe* (tłumaczył H. Wójtowicz), Radom 2005, pp. 104-113; J. Sieradzki, *Bolesława Pobożnego statut kaliski z roku 1264 dla Żydów*, in: *Osiemnaście wieków Kalisza. Studia i materiały do dziejów miasta Kalisza i regionu kaliskiego*, Vol. 1, Kalisz 1960, pp. 133-142; Z. Kowalska, *Die grosspolnischen und schlesischen Judenschutzbriefe des 13. Jahrhunderts im Verhältnis zu den Privilegien Kaiser Friedrichs II (1238) und Herzog Friedrichs II von Österreich (1244). Filiation der Dokumente und inhaltliche Analyse*, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, Jg 47 (1998), pp. 1-20; J. Wiesiołowski, *Przywileje Bolesława Pobożnego*, *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2006, nr 3; H. Zaremska, *Przywileje Kazimierza Wielkiego dla Żydów i ich średniowieczne konfirmacje*, in: *Małżeństwo z rozsądku? Żydzi w społeczeństwie dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. M. Wodziński, A. Michałowska-Mycielska, Wrocław 2007, pp. 11-34.

<sup>79</sup> מאיר בלאבן, "קורות היהודים בימי הביניים", בתוך: *בית ישראל בפולין*, כרך א, עמ. 8-1. אתר דעת, <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/betisrael/betisrael02.pdf> (Balaban)

<sup>80</sup> דוד דוידוביץ, "בתי הכנסת של היהודים האשכנזים", *מתניים*, צ"ה, 1965, באתר "דעת", (Davidowitc) [www.daat.ac.il/DAAT/kitveyet/mahanaim/batey-kneset/davidovits.htm](http://www.daat.ac.il/DAAT/kitveyet/mahanaim/batey-kneset/davidovits.htm)

in cities and towns.<sup>81</sup> The Kingdom of Poland of that period covered large areas and the emigration of the Jews even served the need to settle uninhabited areas or strengthen small communities. Simultaneously with the Jewish settlement and its establishment, a Jewish community and cultural life developed, yeshivot were established by scholars and rabbis whose fame spread throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Thus, for example, a yeshiva was established in Krakow that excelled in the method of study in-depth debates ("Pilpul" - פילפול), and became an important Torah center<sup>82</sup>. The everyday language of Polish Jewry was mostly Yiddish, with Hebrew being used as a sacred language and prayer. Most of the Jews of the towns were literate, education was religious. Jewish educational institutions were established and included schools for preschoolers ("Heder" - חידר) and yeshivas.

Following the integration of Polish Jews into the economy and society, the status of Polish Jews was defined in special rights deeds on behalf of the king ("privileges"). Among other things, the institutions of the Jewish community were recognized, as well as the leadership institution ("Kahal", "קהל") as a representative of the community. The "Kahal" was the body of the elected representative of the community, appointed wealthy and smart students and played an important role in the development of the religious and general culture of the Jews of Poland<sup>83</sup>.

There were times when there was a retreat in the status of the Jews, mainly due to antisemitic background and their success<sup>84</sup>. For example, in parallel

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<sup>81</sup> Cfr. *Żydzi w średniowiecznym Krakowie. Wypisy źródłowe z ksiąg miejskich krakowskich. The Jews in mediaeval Cracow. Selected records from Cracow Municipal Books*, ed. Bożena Wyrozumska Kraków 1995; cfr. also Rafał Witkowski, *Jews in Medieval Poland. Culture, Religion and Language as Reflected in Sources*, *Studia Historica Slavo-Germanica*, t. 28 (2008-2009) [2011], s. 87-139.

<sup>82</sup> מנחם אלון, *המשפט העברי - תולדותיו, מקורותיו, עקרונותיו*, ירושלים, הוצאת מאגנס, 1978, עמ. 1119-1118 (Alon, 1978).

<sup>83</sup> Cfr. M. Bałaban, *Ustrój kahału w Polsce w XVI-XVIII wieku*, *Kwartalnik Poświęcony Badaniom Przeszłości Żydów w Polsce*, Vol. 1 (1912), fasc. 2, pp. 17-54; his, *Die Krakauer Judengemeinde-Ordnung von 1595 und ihre Nachtrage*, *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft*, 1913, pp. 296-360; 1916, pp. 88-114; J. Goldberg, *Gminy żydowskie (kahały) w systemie władztwa domialnego w szlacheckiej Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Miedzy historią a teorią. Refleksje nad problematyką dziejów i wiedzy historycznej*, ed. M. Drozdowski, Warszawa-Poznań 1988, pp. 152-171.

<sup>84</sup> On the definition of the term „anti-semitism”, cfr. Werner Bergmann, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus*, München: C.H.Beck, 2004; *Czy Polacy są antysemitami? Wyniki badania sondażowego*, ed. I. Krzemiński, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa. 1996; *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań*, ed. I. Krzemiński, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe

with the Jewish establishment in Poland and their integration into the life of the economy, the accusations against the Jews increased on an economic background, and they were presented as taking over the various branches of trade and crafts and robbing the Poles of their livelihood. This led to decrees against the Jews. For example the Jews of Krakow were forced in 1485 to abandon their occupation in these industries. In 1491 Rabbi Yaakov Polak came to Krakow after being forced to leave Prague and established a large yeshiva there and as a result Krakow became an important Torah center. Rabbi Yaakov Pollak's name came from afar and he became famous as "Hatzvi Yisrael Rosh Golat Ariel". One of his successors was Rabbi Moshe Isserlish (Rama) who continued his vision<sup>85</sup>.

In 1572, the attitude of the authorities towards the Jews changed following the election of a new king to Poland with the support of the nobles, which greatly strengthened their status and rule in the various districts in parallel to the weakening of the central government. The Jews were forced to organize in order to preserve their rights and coordinate their struggle on the issue. In 1580 a committee of four territories was established which was called "Waad Arba Aratzot" ("ארבע ארצות")<sup>86</sup>. Its leaders and its sub-bodies - the various provinces committees - served as the supreme central institution of Polish Jewry. Their task was to address the issues and problems common to all the Jewish communities, and especially to regulate the distribution of the tax

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Scholar, 2004; Leon Poliakov, *History of Anti-Semitism*, Vol. 1-4, New York, NY: Vanguard, 1965–85 [French original: 1956-1977]; Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>85</sup> אנציקלופדיה לגדולי ישראל, כרך 3, הוצאת צ'צ'יק, תל אביב עמ. 877-878.

<sup>86</sup> More at Israel Halperin, *Pinkas wa'ad arba aracot. Likutej takanot ketuwim ureshumot. Acta Congressus Generalis Iudearum Regni Poloniae 1580-1764*, Jerozolima 1945; *Ordynacja dla sejmu żydowskiego ziem koronnych z 1753 r.*, wyd. J. Goldberg, A. Wein, BŻIH, no. 52 (1964), pp. 17-34; J. Goldberg, *Żydowski Sejm Czterech Ziem w społecznym i politycznym ustroju dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Materiały z konferencji „Autonomia Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej*, ed. A. Link-Lenczowski, T. Polański, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991, pp. 44-58; His, *The Jewish Sejm: Its Origins and Functions*, in: *The Jews in Old Poland. 1000-1795*, ed. A. Polonsky et al., London-New York 1993, pp. 147-165; Jan Doktór, *Powstanie i likwidacja Waad Arba Aracot – próba nowego spojrzenia na dzieje sejmu Żydów polskich*, *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 2020, no. 4, pp. 787-829.

burden imposed on the Jews by the authorities<sup>87</sup>. This committee was abolished in 1764 with amendments to laws relating to Jews, including the imposition of a direct tax on every Jewish family.

The Jews during this period also served in senior positions in the central government as well as in the various districts in the shadow of the growing aristocracy. Rabbi Shaul Wahl, who was the head of a yeshiva in Poland, served as a senior adviser to the King of Poland<sup>88</sup>. Most Polish Jews lived in towns ("Shtetlech") and engaged in trade and crafts. A minority, mainly in Wohlynia and Ukraine, lived scattered in rural areas, leased estates and flour mills, and engaged in the collection of feudal taxes in the service of the nobles, however the peaceful life and co-existence was sometimes disrupted by acts of violence against the Jews, based mainly on religious reasons<sup>89</sup>.

### 2.3. The Period from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century till the End of First World War

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was deterioration in the economy of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in parallel with the weakening of the central government and the strengthening of the status of the nobles. The collection of taxes in the provinces, due to the feudal system that was practiced in Poland-Lithuania and the ownership of the land that was in the hands of the nobility was actually in the hands of the nobles<sup>90</sup>. The collection of taxes and

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<sup>87</sup> Cfr. Jacob Goldberg, *Dzieje Żydów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej - próba syntetycznego spojrzenia*, in: *Miedzy wielką polityką a szlacheckim partykularzem. Studia z dziejów nowożytnej Polski i Europy ku czci Profesora Jacka Staszewskiego*, Toruń 1993, pp. 337-352;

<sup>88</sup> S. Gąsiorowski, *Legenda o Saulu Wahu czyli Żyd na tronie polskim w 1587 roku*, *Mniejszości narodowe, etniczne*, 1997, no. 5-6, pp. 10-12.

<sup>89</sup> See more Magda Teter, *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011; see also in Polish authors: Hanna Węgrzynek, *"Czarna Legenda" Żydów: Procesy O Rzekome Mordy Rytualne w Dawnej Polsce*, Warszawa: Bellona-Wydawnictwo Fundacji Historia pro Futuro, 1995; Her, *"Was the Catholic Church in Poland Afraid of Conversion to Judaism in the Early 16th Century?"*, *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 2005, no. 1 pp. 5-10; Jacek Wijaczka, *Procesy o mordy rytualne w Polsce: Na marginesie książki Hanny Węgrzynek "Czarna Legenda" Żydów*, *Studia Historyczne*, Vol. 41 (1998), no. 1, pp. 105-112; Guldón, Zenon, Jacek Wijaczka, *Procesy o mordy rytualne w Polsce w XVI-XVIII Wieku*. Kielce: DCF, 1995; also Zenon Guldón, Jacek Wijaczka, *"The Accusation of Ritual Murder in Poland, 1500-1800."* *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 10, (1997), pp. 99-140.

<sup>90</sup> Cfr. Murray Jay Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth During the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990; Salo Baron, Wittmayer Baron, *Poland-Lithuania 1500-1650*. Vol. 16: A



sometimes even the leasing of the lands were in many cases done by the Jews. Frequent revolts by the Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants against the government and the nobility as well as the tax burden always led to a wave of riots against the Jews, who were seen as representatives of the hated government by dealing with money, operating leased land, operating taverns and flour mills, and collecting taxes<sup>91</sup>.

The security of the Jewish communities was often shaky, especially in Ukraine in the southeast of the country. The revolt of the Cossacks and peasants against the Polish government in 1648-1649, led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, was accompanied by a series of pogroms against the Jews, known as the pogroms of 1648-1649 (ת"ח ות"ט) or the Khmelnytsky pogroms. In these pogroms, about 100,000 Jews were murdered and about a third of the Jewish communities in Poland and Ukraine were destroyed. In addition, much property, including holy books, was looted and destroyed. There were Jews who were captured and sold into slavery in the slave markets in South-Eastern Ukraine<sup>92</sup>. There was a crisis among the Jewish communities that was beyond an economic and physical crisis<sup>93</sup>. The spiritual-religious crisis has led to the search for answers from outside community sources that promise redemption and hope, which has led to growing opposition to the control of community rabbis. As a result, messianic movements emerged, the most prominent of which was the Sabbateans שבתאות movement that came to Poland in the late 1660s and later the Frankism movement led by Jacob Frank, which was established in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Poland and was

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*Social and Religious History of the Jews*, New York, London, Philadelphia: Columbia University Press and Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976; Judith Kalik, "Christian Servants Employed by Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 14, (2001), pp. 259-270; Gershon David Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century*, Johns Hopkins Jewish Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992; Murray Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990; Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossacks*, Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2007.

<sup>92</sup> מרדכי נדב, "קהילת פינסק בתקופה שבין גזרות ת"ח-ת"ט עד שלום אנדרושוב 1667-1648", *החברה הישראלית להיסטוריה*, ירושלים, כרך 31 (3,4), 1966, עמ. 153-196. (Nadav, 1966).

<sup>93</sup> משה רוסמן, "דימויו של בית ישראל בפולין כמרכז תורה אחרי גזירות ת"ח-ת"ט", *החברה הישראלית להיסטוריה*, ירושלים, כרך 41 (4), 1986, עמ. 435-448. (Rosman, 1986).

considered a kind of continuation of the Sabbateans movement. Jacob Frank as Shabtai Tzvi converted, did not convert to Islam as Shabtai Tzvi but converted to Christianity in the fall of 1759 along with a group of his disciples. Shortly afterwards he was imprisoned in a monastery in Czeszochowa<sup>94</sup>. This movement posed for some time a threat to the Hasidut movement which I will elaborate later in this chapter.<sup>95</sup>

In the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Poland was divided between Prussia, the Russian Empire and Austria. The process took several years and was carried out in stages in 1773, 1793 and 1795. Prussia, Russia and Austria as part of the "Black Three Eagles Alliance" in a series of wars conquered Poland, divided it and in practice Poland ceased to be independent, except for a short period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until the First World War<sup>96</sup>. Legal restrictions imposed on the Jews were circumvented with the help of personal ties, lobbying and the ability to take advantage of the weak regime in order to evade these restrictions. The partition of Poland led to a fundamental change in the situation of Polish Jews. This change had a significant effect on Eastern European Jewry which had been under Polish rule until that time<sup>97</sup>.

The three divisions of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century also divided Polish Jewry into three groups: most Polish Jews were subordinated to the Russian Empire, a Jewish minority came under Prussian rule and the Jews in southern Poland came under Austro-Hungarian rule.

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<sup>94</sup> Jan Doktor, *Jakub Frank i jego nauka na tle kryzysu religijnej tradycji osiemnastowiecznego żydostwa polskiego*, Warszawa 1991.

<sup>95</sup> ישראל ברטל, "פולין כמרכז רוחני", בתוך: אלי בר-נביא (עורך), *תולדות עם ישראל מימי האבות עד ימינו*, הוצאת ידיעות אחרונות, 1993, עמ' 143. (Bartal, 1993).

<sup>96</sup> *The golden tradition. Jewish life and thought in Eastern Europe*, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1967.

<sup>97</sup> Georg Ziaja, *Lexikon der bedeutendsten Juden in Polen-Litauen 1500-1650*, Leiden: Brill, 2023; Adam Teller, Early Modern Poland-Lithuania, 1507-1795, in: *Sources on Jewish Self-Government in the Polish Lands from Its Inception to the Present*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 62-141; *Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie (XVII-XVIII wiek). Źródła, wprowadzenie i opracowanie* Adam Kaźmierczyk, Przemysław Zarubin, Kraków 2019.

### 2.3.1. The Jews of Poland under Austrian Rule

Galicia is an area in southern Poland that was annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1772 and 1795 and was inhabited by Jews for over 700 years<sup>98</sup>. This province was officially called the "Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria"). Lodomeria is the medieval name for Lvov which today belongs to Ukraine and was the capital of the province. Kraków was then the second most important city in the province, it was known as a university city thanks to the University of Kraków. It was the first university founded in Poland and one of the oldest in Central Europe.

Polish Jewry, which had come under Austrian (later Austro-Hungarian) rule, enjoyed relative prosperity, and a rich cultural life flourished in the Jewish communities, although the authorities aspired to the Germanization of the Jews. A law from August 1787 required the Jews of Galicia to receive, from January 1789, German surnames. The rabbis were required to conduct their affairs in the German language only. An earlier law of February 18, 1787, imposed on the Jews a duty of service in the army. It was only after many efforts that Emperor Leopold amended on July 28, 1790, a decree that instead of actual service, the Jews would pay a considerable ransom (an amount sufficient to recruit a replacement soldier). With the annexation to Austria there was a change in the status of the Jews who belonged to the nobles who owned the cities. Taxes which were paid under Polish law to nobles (such as Count Potocki) were to be transferred directly to the Empire. This provoked friction as the nobles were deprived of a serious source of income and they aspired to continue receiving these funds, so they tried to demand alternative payments from the Jews<sup>99</sup>.

In Galicia, besides Poles and Jews, there were also Ukrainians, Germans, Russians, Armenians and more, in addition to Christians and Jews, Muslims

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<sup>98</sup> In English literature cfr. Jonathan Webber, *Rediscovering Traces of Memory: The Jewish Heritage of Polish Galicia*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010; see also William McCagg, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918*, Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1989.

also lived in Galicia. This ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, political diversified province, especially after the Autonomy was introduced between 1869-1873, created a specific model of social life, unique comparing to Russian and German partitions of Poland.

The province of Galicia ended with the end of World War I in 1918 and this area was given to Poland which regained its independence. At the end of World War II Galicia was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union. The entire eastern part including the provincial capital of Lvov moved to the Soviet Union.



**Plate 5: Galicia Map**

### **2.3.2. The Jews of Poland under Russian Rule**

The Russian government turned out to be less tolerant of its treatment of Jews, and Jews were subject to more restrictions – both compared to the days of independent Poland and compared to their Austro-Hungarian-controlled brethren. As mentioned, most of Polish Jewry came under Russian rule. The situation of these Jews was the most serious of the three empires that divided control of the former Polish territories. Under the rule of the

Russian Empire the Jews were severely restricted in the areas of occupation permitted to them. An order from 1782 forbade Jews to live in the countryside and engage in non-agricultural crafts. The Jews, most of whom made a living from leasing, loans, small trade, etc., were forced to move to the cities.

One of the most prominent restrictions imposed on the Jews was the area of the “T’hum Moshav”. An order issued by Tsar Catherine the Great in 1791 established the concept of “T’hum Moshav” in the Western fringes of the Empire, and only in it were Jews allowed to live and work. The “T’hum Moshav” area included most of the former territories of Poland and Lithuania, which were inhabited by Jewish concentrations.

At the same time the Russian government gave certain concessions and rights to the Jews from time to time. Tsar Alexander I set up a committee to improve the situation of the Jews in 1802, in an attempt to create certain reforms for the large Jewish minority of about 4 million people with the aim of bringing them into Russian society and reducing their social and religious segregation. Among other things, they allowed Jews some freedom in their areas of occupation, although many of the previous restrictions remained. Jews were also allowed to own land as well as study in Russian-Christian educational institutions. In practice, the Jews felt more the implementation of the limiting part of the committee’s recommendations than the improvement part. During the reign of Tsar Nicholas I, the situation of the Jews deteriorated greatly and many other decrees were issued, including the decree of the “Cantonists” from 1827 in which the obligation to enlist in the Empire army was established. The reforms of Tsar Alexander II in 1861 gave some relief to the Jews, although they were still restricted to the “T’hum Moshav” and were subject to employment and ownership restrictions. In 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by revolutionaries. The Jews were blamed for this assassination and as a result the wave of pogroms known as “storms in the Negev” broke out throughout the Russian Empire between 1881 and 1884, which was encouraged by the authorities<sup>100</sup>. Another wave of severe pogroms

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<sup>100</sup> Artur Markowski, *Anti-Jewish Pogroms in the Kingdom of Poland*, Polin, vol. 27 (2015), pp. 219-256; Darius Staliūnas, *Enemies for a Day: Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Violence in Lithuania under the Tsars*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015; Artur

occurred between 1903–1906, mainly in the Western part of the Russian Empire and hit more severely the communities of historic Poland<sup>101</sup>. As a result of these waves of pogroms, about two million Jews left their homes and emigrated to Western Europe but mainly to the United States<sup>102</sup>. At the same time, the pogroms gave a boost to the development of the Zionist movement.

## 2.4. The Hasidut Movement

The frequent changes that Polish Jews went through in these centuries caused significant changes in the relations of intra-communal forces in Jewish society. The rabbis' control over the communities weakened in parallel with the secularization process that some Jews went through under the influence of the Enlightenment movement, liberal ideas and freedom, as well as the national movements that flourished in Central and Western Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, many of the Jews remained faithful to the religion and the educational institutions and yeshivas were held over the years despite the decrees and disturbances that befell the Jewish communities. The changes in Jewish society led to the establishment of institutions such as the Bund (1897) with a socialist ideology whose goal was the unification of workers in the territories of Russia, Lithuania and Poland.

During this period, two new currents can be noted that were at the center of the changes that Jewish society in Europe underwent. In the field of religion a

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Markowski, *Przemoc antyżydowska i wyobrażenia społeczne. Pogrom białostocki 1906 roku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2018.

<sup>101</sup> שמואל אטינגר, *תולדות עם ישראל בעת החדשה*, דביר, תל אביב, 1969, כרך 3, עמ. 43-45. Ettinger, ) (1969

<sup>102</sup> Cfr. S. Ansky, [Shloyme Rappoport], *The Enemy at His Pleasure: A Journey through the Jewish Pale of Settlement during World War I*, trans. Neugroschel, Joachim New York, NY: Metropolitan, 2002 [Yiddish original: 1920]; see also a broader context in Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995; cfr. *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 1: *Literatura i sztuka*, ed. S. Buryła, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN 2018; *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 2: *Studia przypadków (do 1939)*, ed. K. Kijek, A. Markowski, K. Zieliński, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN 2019; *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 3: *Historiografia, polityka, recepcja społeczna (do 1939 roku)*, ed. K. Kijek, A. Markowski, K. Zieliński, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN 2019; *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 4: *Holokaust i powojnie (1939-1946)*, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN 2019.

new current developed in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century of the Hasidic movement led by the Baal Shem Tov and in the secular-political field the Zionist movement developed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will expand on these two streams in this chapter.

The Hasidic movement is a religious revival movement with a clear social emphasis that arose in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Russia in the territories of western Ukraine today and exists to this day. It is a Jewish movement centered on religion, spirituality and social support. Rabbi Israel Ben Eliezer known as Baal Shem Tov is the father of Hasidut movement<sup>103</sup>. The ideas and principles of the Hasidut were influenced by the Kabbalah of Holy AR"י ("האר"י הקדוש"), emphasizing the presence of God in the entire universe, the need to always believe in it and the hidden spiritual dimension of reality.

The successors of the Baal Shem Tov, led by the Maggid of (Dov Ber) of Mezeritch, developed his teachings and distributed it. The Hasidut was never a movement in the sense of a modern centralized organization. In fact, "Hasidut" is a collective name for many different denominations and groups that have been formed over the generations, due to differences in attitudes or ideological-social emphases, as well as due to personal conflicts within the leadership. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the various Hassidic groups are identified with the family lineages that grew their leaders, and they are usually named after the towns in Eastern Europe where they were established and became famous as the "courts" ("חצרות") of those lineages.

There are many difficulties in researching the Hasidut movement. The main obstacle is, the almost complete loss of the original documents – each community kept a few notebooks ("פנקסים"), but only a few of them survived. Several notebooks still existed between the two world wars but most of them were lost and only selected passages remained, re-edited in an attempt to recover the lost passages. It has often happened that the editors wanted to

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<sup>103</sup> Karl E. Grözinger, *Cadyk i Baal Szem w chasydyzmie wschodnioeuropejskim*, in: *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji dedykowanej pamięci profesora Chone Shmeruka*, Kraków 26-28 kwietnia 1999, ed. M. Galas, Kraków 2000, pp. 111-122; *Chasydyzm. Źródła, metody, perspektywy*, red. Marcin Wodziński, Kraków-Budapeszt-Syrakuzy: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2019.

prevent controversial issues or omit unpleasant facts. It seems that other notebooks such as that of Shargorod, which was the center of the Hasidic settlement, the Hasidim tore up pages attributed to senior Hasidic people and they kept the pages as if they were keeping sacred relics. Some of these remains may exist to this day in Eastern Europe or by individuals, but there is no possibility of using them for research purposes<sup>104</sup>.

Many studies have dealt with the reasons for the success of the successors of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezeritch and their absorption into Jewish society. Various scholars have suggested a variety of reasons for this.

In the past, the theories of Shimon Dubnow (1860-1941) were accepted. He has attributed the success of Hasidut to the severe blow the Jews suffered following the pogroms of 1648-1649, and following the Polish-Lithuanian Union the collapse of Jewish self-government with the dissolution of the "Waad Arba Aratzot" organization in 1764<sup>105</sup>.

Ilya Orshinsky wrote in "Reflections on the Hasidut" published in 1871 that the explanation for the spread of Hasidut is that due to the heavy burden of mitzvo's "the masses of the people were pushed into the new camp of teachers who declared more free foundations of religious life."<sup>106</sup>

Pesach Mark argued that the crisis of self-governing institutions prepared the ground for the growth of the Hasidut. Hasidut spread because it gave expression to the wish of people for independence from local government institutions in cities mainly Jewish "Kahal". Raphael Mahler (1899-1977) wrote that "the Hasidut in theory and de-facto reflects the difficult living conditions of the masses of the petty bourgeois Jewish class." The Hasidut's success was that it was a "popular religion", but then came a time when it "lost its original social character"<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> שמואל אטינגר, עיונים בתולדות היהודים בעת החדשה, בין פולין לרוסיה, מוסד ביאליק, ירושלים, 1994, עמוד 200-202. (Ettinger, 1994).

<sup>105</sup> שמעון דובנוב, תולדות החסידות, הוצאת דביר, 1967. (Dubnow, 1967)

<sup>106</sup> שמואל אטינגר, עיונים בתולדות היהודים בעת החדשה, בין פולין לרוסיה, מוסד ביאליק, ירושלים, 1994, עמוד 189-198. (Ettinger, 1994).

<sup>107</sup> [שמואל ייבין](#) עורך, ספר רפאל מאהר: קובץ מחקרים בתולדות ישראל, מוגש לו במלאת לו שבעים וחמש שנה. מרחביה, [ספרית פועלים](#), 1974. (Yeivin, 1974).



As research in this field expanded, new approaches developed and new directions were explored. There were scholars who focused on the pogroms committed against Jews in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as a catalyst for the growth of popular movements. Today's research indicates that the pogroms of 1648 caused the murder of Jews and damage to property that was much smaller than claimed before, and much evidence indicates about the recovery of Jewish life. The claim that the pogroms directly affected the formation of the Sabbateans movement shortly afterwards is also considered excessive today, and especially the development of the Hasidut whose flowering occurred from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>108</sup>. The dissolution of the Four Lands Committee ("Waad Arba Aratzot") in 1764 did not create a continuing violation of the communal autonomy, which was organized on a local basis anyway. It is worth remembering that in the territories annexed to Prussia with the partition of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in which the government did eliminate it, the Hasidut did not have a foothold. Although they suffered restrictions and persecutions during and after the dissolution of the union, there was a consistent improvement in the economic and civil status of the Jews during the period when Hasidut flourished, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>109</sup>.

Other major scholars who studied the Hasidut during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are Ben Zion Dinur (1884-1973) who was a follower of Shimon Dubnow, the philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965) who researched and adapted the stories of Hasidic tales and Gershom Shalom (1897-1982) who explored the Kabbalistic and mystical side of the Hasidut. Samuel Ettinger (1919-1988), the more contemporary, discussed the Hasidut not only in light of the events of the period but emphasized the connection between the ideological and social foundations of the movement and also raised the question of leadership, who were the leaders and what ideas they represented. Most of scholars agree that the nature of the leadership was the key to the success of the Hasidut. Despite the strong mystical tones that accompanied their activities and which aroused fear among their opponents of the messianic movements of the

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<sup>108</sup> שמואל אטינגר, עיונים בתולדות היהודים בעת החדשה, בין פולין לרוסיה, מוסד ביאליק, ירושלים, 1994, עמוד 189-198. (Ettinger, 1994).

<sup>109</sup> אטינגר שמואל, "היהודים בצבת ההשכלה", זמנים, 1980, חוברת 3, עמ. 48-61. (Ettinger, 1980).

Sabbateans and the Frankism, the leadership of the Hasidut refrained from being overly aggressive towards the old elites. They stressed that they did not come to undermine the order of values and leadership. They were conservative and moderate in their base, and in spite of their populism towards the masses, they were careful to maintain an affinity with the strata from which almost all came<sup>110</sup>.

The founder of the Hasidut movement is Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, who was born in 1690 in the northern Principality of Moldova. He spent his early adulthood on voyages in the Carpathian Mountains in present-day southwestern Ukraine - places where diverse spiritual influences such as mystical Orthodox monks secluded in caves and local tribes who preserved ancient shamanic traditions<sup>111</sup>. According to a certain legend that he acquired during this period a reputation as a "famous" folk healer who used herbs as well as amulets, spells and Kabbalistic oaths. In Hebrew "good reputation" means "Baal Shem Tov" from which his name was later derived. Although he was not a member of the rabbinical elite, he was educated enough to gather students in the "Beit Midrash" (a Jewish high school) and marry the rabbi's divorced sister. He secluded himself for ten years in the mountains. At the age of 36 he was given permission from heaven to be revealed as "Mekubal" and as someone who may bring salvation. According to the Chabad tradition, the Baal Shem Tov belongs to a community of hidden righteous people who saw their role as encouraging the masses of the people, strengthening them in their simple and innocent faith and bringing them closer to worshipping God. The members of the group, led by the Baal Shem Tov, wandered in remote villages and settlements and engaged in strengthening the faith in God's private supervision of man, at every step, and they succeeded in instilling in their hearers the recognition of the value of the Judaism. In the 1740s, the Baal Shem Tov settled in Międzybórz, Podolia, established a circle of students, and his name spread throughout the region. Among other things, he often dealt with the presence of God in all of creation and explained that

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<sup>110</sup> Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 3-23.

<sup>111</sup> שמואל אטינגר, *תולדות עם ישראל בעת החדשה*, דביר, תל אביב, 1969, כרך 3, עמ. 55-57. (Ettinger, ) (1969)

because of this, even simple physical deeds such as eating can be charged with spiritual significance and allow for attainment of devotion to God. He was especially known for his ecstatic and long prayers and his strict adherence to intention. In addition, he emphasized the joy and enthusiasm in the work of God and the spiritual transcendence, and rejected the asceticism and celibacy that were prevalent then among Kabbalists and seekers of a higher spiritual rank. One of the students who was attracted to him as a result was Dov Ber of Międzybórz (1704-1772), who according to the legend was disabled due to his severe ascites מה נה The Baal Shem Tov laid the foundations for the doctrine of Hasidut, and developed a way that would offer the masses a simpler and more accessible path to a meaningful spiritual experience<sup>112</sup>. Despite this, he remained all his life the leader of a small elitist circle and never disseminated his teachings to the general public. It was his successors who spread the theory of the Hasidut who attributed to him the formation of the character of the movement.<sup>113</sup>

After the death of the Baal Shem Tov his disciples accepted the leadership of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Meseritch, as mentioned above.

There were a number of students like Yaakov Yosef from Polonne who chose to act in a different way. From his court in Wahlin, the Maggid turned to perfecting and expanding the basic ideas developed by his teacher, as he and his circle of students built a complete and comprehensive doctrine, a process in which the Maggid began but was mostly done only by his successors. The Maggid, who transferred the center of the movement to Mezeritch, introduced changes in the leadership arrangements.

The Baal Shem Tov and those around him used the term "Hasid" in the traditional sense, of a God-fearing person before the law. In the last third of the 18th century, a clear distinction was made between this meaning and the way of the Hasidut that came out of Mezeritsh, and that those who followed it were at that time called "new Hasidim" to differentiate them. The term "Hasid"

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<sup>112</sup> שמואל פיינר, "המפנה בהערכת החסידות", *החברה ההיסטורית הישראלית*, ירושלים, כרך 41 (2), 1986, עמ. 167-210. (Finer, 1986).

<sup>113</sup> Moshe Idel, *R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov "In the State of Walachia"*, in: *Holy Dissent; Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*, Wayne State University Press, 2011.

was so associated with the growing movement that its original meaning was overshadowed by the new, and as such also entered modern Hebrew - in the sense of "fan, admirer" and not of pious.<sup>114</sup> The doctrine of the Maggid and his disciples included many aspects. The most important thing was the prayer and not the formalities such as the exact hour. The words of the Baal Shem Tov about the need to raise impure thoughts in order to deal with them instead of struggling with them were perfected by his successor, who described the process of exchanging bad thoughts and feelings for good as a whole internal process, which could lead a person to higher spheres. The idea of the Hasidic "Tzaddik" was the idea that underpinned the doctrine. According to this approach, the Hasid became a conduit for bringing down abundance to his believers and raising their prayers and requests, and as a moral authority and spiritual guide. After the death of the Maggid from Mezeritch in 1772, about twenty of his circle members set out to spread their ideas throughout Eastern Europe. Aharon the Great of Karlin, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and Shneur Zalman of Liadi operated in Lithuania, Menachem Nahum of Chernobyl operated in the Kiev area, Levi Yitzhak of Berdychiv settled in Podolia, near the center, Elimelech of Lizhensk, Yechiel Michal of Zlotschow operated in Galicia. Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and Avraham HaCohen of Kalisk headed the aliyah of the Hasidim to Eretz Israel, Zosha Manipoli and their joint student Israel Hofstein operated mainly in Poland<sup>115</sup>. The spread of the Hasidut throughout Eastern Europe and the transition to Eretz Israel led to rapid spread of Hasidut after the death of the Maggid. The establishment of Hasidut in Poland is mainly attributed to the disciples of Rabbi Elimelech and by Maggid of Kuznitz and Rabbi Avraham Heshil who spread the Hasidut in Poland, when the leadership was placed on Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Melanzhut, known in his name "Hahoze" from Lublin

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<sup>114</sup> Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov*. University of California Press, 1996, pp. 3-37.

<sup>115</sup> Cfr. Dawid Assaf, *Upadek Widzącego z Lublina: Jedno wydarzenie, dwie interpretacje*, in: *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji dedykowanej pamięci profesora Chone Shmeruka*, Kraków 26-28 kwietnia 1999, ed. M. Galas, Kraków 2000, pp. 123-140.

(the "Visionary from Lublin"), and during his thirty years of his leadership, 1784-1814, he succeeded in establishing the Hasidut in Poland<sup>116</sup>.

The Hasidim are organized in the "courts" ("חצרות"), at the head of each of them stands a Rebbe ("אדמו"ר"), who usually inherits his title. Over the generations hundreds of independent courts, large and small, have been created, each with its own traditions and emphases. The Rebbe is considered a spiritual authority that must be used to draw closer to God. Belonging to a court is usually maintained within the family for generations, and the Hasid is usually born in a particular court and raised on its heritage.

The righteous Hasid's combined charismatic leadership with political sophistication, and gained support among many strata<sup>117</sup>. At the same time, they were careful not to provoke excessive rivalry, and despite their demonstrable populism, encouraged no revolutionary social message and married their children with descendants.<sup>118</sup> The "Hozeh from Lublin", for example, was based in a small town Vinyava, near Lublin after which he is named, worked to strengthen his influence in the Lublin in spite of strong opposition from the Jewish establishment. His wealth and many supporters caused the Jewish leadership to accept him in 1803. A similar process happened elsewhere. The Stiebel, the small and separate prayer quorum that was also the basis for a network of social ties and community activities, served as an effective channel for recruiting new members and supporters. The new movement caused by its organization and dispersal throughout Europe a change in the traditional community model and leadership. The Rebbe's court replaced the authority of the Rabbi and the leadership Committee, and instead of a single and exclusive local body to which all the Jews in the area were subject, many groups belonging to different Hasidic courts existed in the different communities. The Hasidut was the first modern Jewish movement that caused a structural change in the Jewish society and after hundreds of years of stagnation by replacing the old community with

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<sup>116</sup> M. Wodziński, *Groby cadyków w Polsce*, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 1998.

<sup>117</sup> Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, by Oxford University Press, USA, 2006, pp. 26-39, 68-70.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-119.

both a supra-territorial and centralized model<sup>119</sup>, and created a religiosity that was more oriented towards the individual.<sup>120</sup>

The spread of the Hasidut and the changes that led to the structure of the Jewish communities and their hierarchy led to the formation of movements that arose against the Hasidut. The opposition to the Hasidut was led by the Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, "The Gaon of Vilna" ("The genius of Vilna") (1720-1797). Following his actions and sermons, the Hasidut and its people were banned in 1772.

In 1781, during another round of confrontations, the writings of the rabbis of Polona were burned and the Hasidim's in Brody were boycotted. The gradual transition to the Holy AR"l -style prayer instead of the Ashkenazi -<sup>121</sup> (האר"י) style prayer also provided the opponents with a cause for struggle<sup>122, 26, 27</sup>. In addition, the war in the new Hasidic movement was also led by the "old Hasidim", the elitist Kabbalists who lived their lives in segregation (first and foremost to them was the HaGR"a (הגר"א) ).

Severe boycotts, denunciations and clashes took place in the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, but the movement continued to spread and intensify. In the 1780s, the three great works of early Hasidut were published: "Toldot Yaakov Yosef" ("The History of Yaakov Yosef" written by Rabbe of Polonea (ר"י). "Magid Divrei Yaakov" which included the compilations of Magid himself and was published in 1781, nine years after his death and "Noam Elimelech" written by Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk.

In 1798, opponents opposed the arrest of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi ("Baal Hatanya") on espionage charges. The struggle against the Hasidut moderated following the promulgation of a boycott ban in Russia in 1795 and other regulations prevented Hasidic opponents from taking firm action against the

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<sup>119</sup> Saul Shtempeper, "How and Why Did Hasidism Spread" ,*Jewish History*, 27, December 2013.

<sup>120</sup> Murray Rosman ,*Hasidism – Traditional Modernization* ,Simon Dubnow Institute, Yearbook 6, 2007.

<sup>121</sup> עמנואל אטקס, "הגאון מווילנה ותלמידיו כ"ציונים הראשונים", גילגולו של מיתוס", *החברה ההיסטורית הישראלית*, ירושלים, כרך 2015, עמ. 69-114. (Etkes, 2015).

<sup>122</sup> ביטי רואי, "זיקת הגאון מווילנה לספרות תיקוני הזוהר", *דעת: כתב עת לפילוסופיה וקבלה יהודית* , ירושלים, כרך 80\79, 2015, עמ. 33-76. (Bitty, 2015).

movement.<sup>123</sup> In 1804, another development occurred that hurt the opponents of the Hasidut, when Tsar Alexander allowed independent prayer quorums. In the Habsburg Kingdom, the Hasidut enjoyed official tolerance on an ongoing basis, as part of imperial policy, and as early as 1788 its persecution was banned.<sup>124</sup> Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin led opponents to more tolerant defensive practices, such as the establishment of a modern yeshiva institution designed to strengthen youth and provide a spiritual alternative. Some of his corrections are intended to provide a solution outside of the Hasidut to spiritual-religious problems. He canceled the dualism and unity of opposites that exist in the Kabbalah - and their potential to equate the spiritual value of observance to every act done with appropriate intent. A person has nothing but to fulfill what is given to him.<sup>125</sup>

In the beginning of the 19th century there were further changes in the Hasidut. The movement was in spite of the persecutions and boycotts a vital and vibrant movement in which changes and innovations were made in it as it developed and expanded. At the end of the 18th century, the fourth generation of the righteous arose: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Marimanov took the place of Noam Elimelech, who died in 1787 as a leader in Galicia, and the Hahozeh of Lublin succeeded him in Poland. The movement turned from a rising and dynamic movement, non-establishment, to the ruling power in most of Eastern Europe including Lithuania where opponents had a large presence and many towns were given the authority of local righteous people.<sup>126</sup>

As the need to establish and acquire supporters was inevitably replaced by preserving the achievements, so the Hasidut became established and underwent a process of entering into a routine. The emphasis on sweeping charisma has been replaced by a more orderly form of leadership, the

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<sup>123</sup> ישראל ברטל, *מימי האבות עד ימינו*, תל אביב, הוצאת ידיעות אחרונות, 1993, עמ' 54. (Bartal, ) (1993)

<sup>124</sup> Rachel Menkin, *Hasidism and the Habsburg Empire*, Jewish History, 2013.

<sup>125</sup> אסף דוד, *תולדות החסידות*, הספריה הלאומית, ירושלים, 31 אוקטובר, 2020. (David, 2020) <https://www.tau.ac.il/~dassaf/articles/History%20of%20Hasidism-Hebrew.pdf>

<sup>31126</sup> אדמיאל קוסמן, ראשית דרכו של החוזה מלובלין: על עיצובה של אגדה חסידית, עמ' 1-24. (Kosman) [https://humanities.tau.ac.il/media\\_server/Teuda](https://humanities.tau.ac.il/media_server/Teuda)

dynastic model. The first to apply this was Rabbi Baruch of Międzybórz, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov who was appointed Rebbe in 1782 and demanded that the other righteous recognize his superiority based on his pedigree. The lineage soon spread, and rebbe began to describe the principle of inheritance as a binding continuation of the theory of movement. Since the righteous linked spirituality and materiality, it was imperative that his qualities were also found in his very body and passed on to his descendants.

Another side of the transition to a structured routine was a quiet retreat from the practice of mysticism in favor of more moderate expressions of spirituality, and Torah study again took center stage<sup>127</sup>. Conducting ceremonies, miracles and so on remained part of the Hassidic ethos, but alongside a new model of "Rebbe-Rav" began to develop, which combined the ways of the movement with ordinary greatness in the Torah and whose authority rested almost on the same sources of non-Hassidic arbitrators. Rabbi Nachman of Breslev, of the fourth generation, attacked many of the righteous of his generation for their being part of the establishment and harming the way of Hasidut<sup>128</sup>. During the twenty years between 1810 and 1830 the process of institutionalization has intensified and the transition to an established and structured routine that rests on well-organized courts. Many scholars that painted the movement in a romantic light, such as Martin Buber, saw in this is change a sign of "degeneration" and mental decline and hardly dealt with developments from then on.<sup>129</sup> There were even divisions between the true "Hasidut" and the "Rebbe-based" righteousness since.<sup>130</sup> This view had an effect even on the academic perception of the movement, but the late study contradicted both

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<sup>127</sup><sup>127</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Mistyryzm żydowski i jego główne kierunki*, tłum. S. Kania, wstęp M. Galas, Warszawa 1997.

<sup>128</sup> *Puste krzesło. Odnaleźć radość i nadzieję. Ponadczasowa mądrość chasydzkiego mistrza Raniego Nachmana z Braclawia*, opracowanie zbioru M. Mykoff i Breslov Research Institute, przełożył Jerzy Moderski, Poznań 1996

<sup>129</sup> Martin Buber, *Hasidism*, NY: Philosophical Library, 1948; see more about him: Gerhard Wehr, *Martin Buber. Biografia*, przeł. Robert Reszke, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 2007.

<sup>130</sup> דוד אסף, *דרך המלכות: רבי ישראל מרז'ין ומקומו בתולדות החסידות*, מרכז זלמן שזר, ירושלים, 1997. עמ. 100-121. (Asaf, 1997).



the romanticization of early Hasidut and the claim that this institutionalized one lacked spiritual agitation and renewal.<sup>131</sup>

The movement did not have a central leadership since the death of the Maggid, and as time went on it underwent splits and the construction of multiple courts. If earlier it was possible to be a "Hasid" without an accompanying title, then later the name of a particular town in which the Rebbe lived was always attached to this label. An increasingly sharp division also developed between the inner circle of the courts, over the closest Hasidim who lived permanently ("Sitting"), to a much wider stratum that visited them only occasionally and to another circle of the public who lived in towns ruled by the Hasidut and prayed in the Spanish style almost regardless of an institutionalized court. Around the middle of the 19th century, close to a hundred dynasties of rebbe who were connected by marriage connections were the strongest power in the geographical area between Inner Russia (east of the Thum Moshav), Prussia, former Lithuania and the Kingdom of Hungary. Most of the famous courts were founded during this period. Four typical leadership types of courts were created that could be classified according to clear characteristics. In his research, David Assaf described these types of courts and their characteristics, some of which combined the various characteristics.<sup>132</sup> The first, the rabbinical-scholarly, which was based on greatness in the Torah and disciples of sages who served as community rabbis and jurists. The second, the Kabbalistic-mystical, who continued to adhere to the old tradition and emphasize the study of the secret doctrine. The third, the established, which elevated the Rebbe as a revered leader and involved a demonstration of wealth and prestige. And the last, the populist, which focused on making miracles, charity and bringing the general public closer. These styles were not exclusive and were as combinations between them. The more there were more scholar courts with "Rabbis" at their head,

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<sup>131</sup> Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 117-121; Benjamin Brown, *Hasidism Without Romanticism - Mendel Piekarz's Path in the Study of Hasidism*, Nov 11, 2020, pp. 455-457; Katja Pourshirazi, *Martin Bubers literarisches Werk zum Chassidismus*, Peter Lang AG, Bern, 2008, p. 68; Asaf David, "What is New in the Research of Hasidut in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", in *Hasidim: A New History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2018.

<sup>132</sup> David Biale et al., *Hasidism: A New History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2018, pp. 284-286.

like Sanz - whose leader "Divrei Chaim" was the leading Rebbe in Galicia in and the most clear representative of the scholarly righteousness trend, so the tension with the opponents diminished.

The Enlightenment movement that developed among Eastern European Jewry during this period united precisely with the Orthodox movement. From the first quarter of the 19th century, coexistence prevailed among the followers and opponents and replaced the hostility that existed between them. But it was precisely at this time that a new, much more determined and sophisticated enemy of the Hasidut arose than his predecessors - the Enlightenment. The educated of Eastern Europe were against the Hasidut and treated the Hasidut as an anti-rationalist and anti-progressive movement and since they were considered as those who renewed the Hebrew language they despised the limited Hebrew language of the Hasidim. David Assaf notes the fact that the Hasidut was common only in areas where Yiddish was a living language. Distinguished Western Orthodox as Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer despised the Hasidut. In Galicia in particular, hostility towards the Hasidut was the common denominator for the most moderate and radical educated. The Hasidim in response persecuted and boycotted the pro-education and disseminators of its literature. The struggle has established the Hasidut as the most conservative factor in the Jewish arena, just a little more than a generation after being persecuted as anti-establishment. The opponents of the Hasidut, on the other hand, were partially open to education. In Hungary, the Hatam Sofer (חתם סופר) objected to the Hasidut and forbade changing the wording and the style of the prayer from Ashkenazi to Sefaradi, but refrained from going against the Hasidut and preferred to focus on the war against the winds of modernization<sup>133</sup>.

The year 1815 can be mentioned as a turning point in the history of Hasidut.<sup>134</sup> Between 1810 and 1815 many of the zealous opponents of the

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<sup>133</sup> Joanna Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006; see also *Journey to a Nineteenth-Century Shtetl: The Memoirs of Yekhetzel Kotik*, ed. Assaf, David, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002, where life of a Jew can be understood as an example of the changes.

<sup>134</sup> דוד אסף, היבטים היסטוריים וחברתיים בחקר החסידות, צדיק ועדה, מרכז זלמן שזר, ירושלים 2001, עמ. 9-32 (Assaf).

Hasidut died, as well as some of the prominent figures of the Hasidut' leadership of the previous generation<sup>135</sup>. These have been replaced by a new stratum of the righteous, family members or elected students who have come to maturity and publicity. Also from a literary point of view the year 1815 can be mentioned as a turning point. This year saw the publication for the first time, in Hebrew and Yiddish, of two of the most important and cohesive narrative works in the Hasidut. "Praise of the Baal Shem Tov" which is a geographical collection of stories and anecdotes about the life of the Baal Shem Tov and his students, compiled and edited by Dov-Ber Malinitz, whose father-in-law Alexander is one of the Baal Shem Tov's associates. In addition another book was published "Stories and Tales" with symbolic baggage that Nachman of Breslav told his followers. In response to these books, the scholar Joseph Pearl wrote in 1816 the brilliant satire "Revelation of Tamirin" printed only three years later in 1819. These three essays had a great influence on shaping the Hassidut and Enlightenment ethos and refining their messages and they serve to this day as an inexhaustible treasure for the study of the historical and ideological world of the Hasidim and their opponents.

The conservative position of the Hasidut movement was also expressed on prose planes that touched everyday life. Throughout the 19th century, the Hasidim insisted on the preservation of the long traditional clothing that was common to the Jews of the area in the past, while the opponents for the most part gradually switched to relatively modern clothing<sup>136</sup>. The shtreimel, worn hundreds of years before the Baal Shem Tov, became identified as a Hasidic hat. In Galicia in particular, where the Austrian government pressured and encouraged Jews to undergo economic and cultural transformation, the movement became identified with the preservation of popular traditions and the old way of life. The founding father of this traditional approach was the righteous Menachem Mendel from Rimanov, whose extreme conservatism in

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<sup>135</sup> More details available in Marcin Wodziński, *Hasidism and Politics: The Kingdom of Poland, 1815–1864*, Portland, OR: Littman, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> Cfr. more at Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

every detail and hostility to modernity was for the famous.<sup>137</sup> Various Admors even gave spiritual value to the popular food, and Kugel in particular was associated with many virtues.<sup>138</sup> All the above strengthen the image of the Hasidut as a representative of the authentic Jewish popularism, in the eyes of non-Jews.<sup>139</sup> Nowadays the ultra-Orthodox communities are the almost-exclusive users of the Yiddish language as a living language in everyday life when Hebrew is considered the language permitted only to religious practitioners.<sup>140</sup>

The great changes that began to befall the Jews of Eastern Europe in the 1880s were accompanied by the rise of Jewish national movements and mass immigration overseas mainly to the United States and Israel were a major threat to the continued existence of Hasidut. In 1881, riots broke out across Russia. The name of the riots was "Sufot Ba'Negev". Rabbi Shlomo Halbershtam opened the first Hasidic yeshiva in Vizhnitz. Similar institutions were previously used by the opponents. The confrontation between the Hasidut and the opponents was gradually declined. Now the movement had to take similar measures to connect and preserve its youth as traditional society collapsed. Yeshivas were soon established in many courts.<sup>141</sup> As part of the Enlightenment movement among the Jews, many underwent secularization processes. The fear of sweeping assimilation, which were still marginal phenomena but began to erode among the young, brought for the first time educated and national writers to show sympathy for the Hasidut as a popular and rooted movement, part of the spiritual assets of the emerging nation. This re-evaluation was expressed, for example, when Michael Levi Frumkin

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<sup>137</sup> David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy*, University of Alabama Press, 1990, p. 44; Joachim Schoenfeld, *Shtetl Memoirs: Jewish Life in Galicia under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Reborn Poland 1898-1939*, Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985; Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>138</sup> יוסף שלמון, "מבשרי האולטרה-אורתודוקסיה בגליציה ובהונגריה: ר' מנחם מנדל מרימנוב ותלמידיו", *זהויות - כתב עת לתרבות ולזהות יהודית*, כרך 2, 2013, עמ' 25-54. (Shalmon, 2013).

<sup>139</sup> Allan Nadler, *Holy Kugel: the Sanctification of Ashkenazic Ethnic Foods in Hasidism*, Studies in Jewish Civilization, Vol. 15, pp. 193-214.

<sup>140</sup> Marcin Wodzinski, *Hasidism: Key Questions*, Oxford University Publishing, Oxford, 2018, pp. 1-2; Michael Hornsby, *Revitalizing Minority Languages*, Springer, 2015, pp. 291-293.

<sup>141</sup> Asaf David, *Stagnation and Struggle (1880-1918)*, The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe,

[https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism/Historical\\_Overview](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism/Historical_Overview) 14, November 2020.

Rodkinson published in 1863 the anthology "Kahal Hasidim". It presented its objects in a nostalgic and indulgent tone, far from the radical and dark image that had clung to them until then in modern Jewish work. The educated and educator Eliezer Zvi Zweifel established such an approach theoretically in his essay "Peace be upon Israel" from 1868, in which he purified the Baal Shem Tov followers of their negative image and wrote about them in a positive way<sup>142</sup>. The writers of the Enlightenment period such as Y.L. Peretz and Yehuda Shteinberg and others described the Hasidut in sentimental and positive colors<sup>143</sup>, while some scholars of the history of Hasidut, such as Shmuel Abba Horodetsky, in their history writings tended to be uncritical. In 1912, many Admors participated in the Katowice Conference at which Agudat Israel was founded<sup>144</sup>. Agudat Israel sought to protect weakened Orthodox Judaism, while zealous Hasidic communities in Hungary and Galicia opposed Agudat Israel just as much as Zionism, which also began to rise and strengthen. The attitude towards the new Zionist movement among the Hasidim ranges from extreme hostility that described it as an actual act of the devil, especially among courts such as the Munkatch Hasidut and the Satmar Hasidut and those who supported it<sup>145</sup>. For example, the Mizrachi movement, which supported Zionism under the leadership of a number of rebbe, such as Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Friedman and Rabbi Yaakov Friedman.<sup>146</sup>

During the First World War and during the Russian Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Jews were displaced, ending the old Jewish town and the

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<sup>142</sup> Hava Ben-Sasson, *Historiografia ultraortodoksyjna i Holokaust - Mosze Prager jako studium przypadku*, in: *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji dedykowanej pamięci profesora Chone Shmeruka*, Kraków 26-28 kwietnia 1999, ed. M. Galas, Kraków 2000, pp. 391-403.

<sup>143</sup> יוסף דן, "קצה של החסידות הפרומקיניאנית", *מחקרי ירושלים במחשבת ישראל*, כרך ט"ו, 1994. עמ' 3. (Dan, 1994)

<sup>144</sup> Cfr. Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996; Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*, Portland, OR: Littman, 2005 [Polish original: 2003].

<sup>145</sup> L. Wolff, *Galicjyjscy Żydzi. Mity imperialne i tożsamości prowincjonalne*, in: J. Purchla, W. Kos, Ż. Komar, M. Rydiger, W.M. Schwarz (eds.), *Mit Galicji*, Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Wien Museum, 2014.

<sup>146</sup> בנימין בראון, "היהדות החרדית והמדינה", *כשיהדות פוגשת מדינה*, המכון הישראלי לדמוקרטיה, 2018. עמ' 103–110, 148–151. (Brown, 2018)

traditional communities in Russia on which the Hasidut relied<sup>147</sup>. The establishment of the Soviet Union, which persecuted all religions, decimated the movement in most of the territories of Inner Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Between the world wars the various courts still had a huge crowd of supporters, especially in the Second Polish Republic, but it grew older as the young people abandoned the Hasidut and became secular.<sup>148</sup>

The Holocaust wiped out the Hassidic world in Eastern Europe. The Hasidim, clearly identified and culturally isolated from their surroundings, were a particularly easy target for the Nazis. Hundreds of rebbes died with their congregations and many courts were destroyed. The escape of rebbe, such as Rabbis Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar and Aharon Rokeach of Belz, raised accusations of abandoning their disciples behind. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Hasidut seemed on the verge of extinction. A line of leaders that emerged in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century succeeded in halting the disintegration trend and re-establishing the Hasidut as a living force. Along with charisma and organizational ability, they relied on the guilt and nostalgia the Jewish public felt toward them as representatives of the lost heritage of the past, as well as the tolerance and welfare system in Western countries that allowed for cultural isolation and large families with many children<sup>149</sup>. Rebbe Yoel of Satmar established his court in New York and created an enclave with internal welfare and cultural systems. While waving the banner of anti-Zionism and ideological fanaticism, he managed within a few decades to bring his community to speak Yiddish as a primary language and lead a unique way of life. The community grew and as of today there are over 100,000 people in it. The Rebbe Israel Alter re-established himself in Israel and restored the Gur Hasidut from the small nucleus that survived, mainly by bringing closer Lithuanians and national-religious people who belonged to it before, while ruling strict norms that differentiated and kept his people from the general

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<sup>147</sup> Konrad Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005.

<sup>148</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1983.

<sup>149</sup> יוסף דן, דוד אסף, עמנואל אטקס (עורכים), "קצה של החסידות הפרומקניאנית" מתוך *מחקרי החסידות* מחקרי ירושלים במחשבת ישראל, הוצאת מאגנס, ירושלים, כרך ט"ו, 1999, עמ' 3-4. (Dan, 1999)

public. Hasidut Gur also grew rapidly, and at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century included tens of thousands of followers<sup>150</sup>. Rabbi Chaim Meir Hager and the other Rebbe of Viznitz also established courts in Israel and the United States, and Rabbi Aharon Rokeach gathered the Hasidim of Belz around him. Other small courts have been slowly restored as they usually bear the name of the town in Eastern Europe where they were founded and from which they grew.

Other drastic growth processes took place in two unique Hasidut. In 1951, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson was crowned as the Chabad Rebbe. He adopted a very different line from the segregation associated with the Hasidut in general and turned his court into a penitentiary, and many of his Hasidim were sent out of their hometowns to engage in it. The blurring between Hasidim and fans and associates has made it difficult to estimate the size of Chabad, which is estimated at several tens of thousands. After the death in 1994 of Rabbi Schneerson, many of whose followers continue to believe he was the Messiah, no replacement arose for him. Chabad is run by a number of institutions that have central leadership but not a rebbe<sup>151</sup>.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslav did not find an agreed heir after his death in 1810, and his students continued as small groups gathered around teachers who clung to his method. Breslav was a small and persecuted Hasidut for about one hundred and fifty years, but the renewed interest aroused by scholars like Martin Buber in its doctrine led to many converts and made it popular<sup>152</sup>. Breslav numbered over a dozen sub-groups, most of whom were many fans who were not really Hasidim.

Many of the Hasidic courts are anti-Zionist and oppose the existence of the State of Israel, consider its existence a sin and refuse to participate in the Israeli elections or take government budgets for educational institutions. Hasidut Satmar is the most prominent among them. This group is a minority

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<sup>150</sup> Cfr. Yoram Jacobson, *Pierwotny chaos i stworzenie w myśli chasydyzmu Gur lub Szabat, który poprzedził stworzenie*, in: *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji dedykowanej pamięci profesora Chone Shmeruka*, Kraków 26-28 kwietnia 1999, ed. M. Galas, Kraków 2000, pp. 151-171.

<sup>151</sup> Cfr. Wojciech Tworek, *Eternity Now. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady and Temporality*, New York: SUNY Press, 2019.

<sup>152</sup> בנימין בראון, "היהדות החרדית והמדינה", *כשיהדות פוגשת מדינה*, המכון הישראלי לדמוקרטיה, 2018, עמ. 81. (Brown, 2018).

among the Hasidut in Israel, but includes the majority of the Hasidic public in America.

Other Hasidic sects, which generally belong to the Agudat Yisrael, also oppose Zionism, but do not consider it wrong to participate in Israeli politics and to take government budgets for education. This line characterizes courts such as Gur, Viznitz, Chabad and many others. About a dozen rebbes serve on the Council of Torah Scholars of Agudat Israel in Israel, and many more are partners in it. Until the 1970s, there were also influential Zionist rebbes, especially from the branches of the House of Rozin, but these faded and disappeared. However, many among the Hasidim in Israel tend to the right wing of the Israeli politics, sometimes even the extreme right, and oppose the withdrawal from Judea and Samaria.<sup>153</sup>

In the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Hasidut returned from a threshold of loss to the center of the public stage. This was helped by the internal demographic growth and the waves of repentance that strengthened the Orthodox world. Along with its numerical intensification came back the internal conflicts and succession struggles that also characterized the Golden Age of the Hasidut in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.5. The History of the Zionism

The Zionist movement was founded in the second half of the 19th century<sup>154</sup>. The Enlightenment movement in the 18th century brought a change in Jewish society that until then had been religiously Orthodox and conservative. The openness to Christian society and the ideas of secularism and classical culture in parallel with the ideas of the philosophers of the 17th-19th centuries caused some Jews to open up to modern ideas and to become closer and

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<sup>153</sup> בנימין בראון, "היהדות החרדית והמדינה", *כשיהדות פוגשת מדינה*, המכון הישראלי לדמוקרטיה, 2018, עמ' 1–14, 234–236 (Brown, 2018).

<sup>154</sup> *The Zionist idea. A historical analysis and reader*, ed. and with an introd. and biographical notes by Arthur Hertzberg; forew. by Emanuel Neumann, New York: Atheneum, 1973; Nahum Sokolów, *History of Zionism, 1600-1918*, selected and arranged by Israel Solomons; new introd. by Arthur Hertzberg. New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969.



integrated until assimilation into Western European society. Their becoming equal citizens in most Western European countries in the 19th century as part of the emancipation process accelerated these processes. The 19th century was the century of the national awakening of many nations, especially in Europe, which affected mainly the educated Jews. The main idea of the Zionist movement was the "Return to Zion" ("שיבת ציון"), the gathering of the Jews from exile and the renewal of Jewish national freedom and State<sup>155</sup>.

Simultaneously with the phenomenon of the Enlightenment appeared the phenomenon of modern romanticism and nationalism<sup>156</sup>. The national movement that emerged following romantic ideas, argued that the basic identity of the human being is the national identity that exists on the basis of uniformity of language, history and common territory. This thought of the type of identity leads to the conclusion of a need for a state that belongs to every nation. The Jews perceived themselves according to this as the owners of a nation according to their place of living but with another religion, Judaism. This is how the Jews of Central and Western Europe saw themselves, at least in theory, as French, German, English and Hungarian "members of the religion of Moses". The rise of nationalism and the Romantic movement contributed to the images of the Jews as detached from the rising nationalism, without a real affiliation. Intellectuals such as Hess, Graetz, Herzl and others expressed the sense of nationalism of the Jews and the ideological conceptions of Judaism as a nation. For example, Heinrich Graetz in his 11-volume book entitled "History of the Jews from the Earliest Times to the Present Day" (published in 1853-1876) expressed the fact that the Jews are no longer a group of religious Diaspora but that Judaism is a nation with a national history<sup>157</sup>. Such ideas and the like permeated some European Jewry and formed the basis for the formation of the Zionist National Movement, which eventually led to the establishment of a national Jewish state.

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<sup>155</sup> Cfr. Anna Landau-Czajka, Jarosław Garliński, *Zionism in Poland, Poland in Zionism*, Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 35 (2023), s. 88-104.

<sup>156</sup> See more in M. Wodziński, *Oświecenia żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei*, Warszawa 2003.

<sup>157</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol.1 – 11, in Project Gutenberg, Released in 2013.  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43900/43900-h/43900-h.htm>

The spirit of enlightenment and education came to Eastern Europe about a century late, only in the last decades of the 19th century. Eastern European Jews also began late the process of education and secularization because they were more conservative. In Eastern Europe they encountered greater intolerance on the part of Christian society. Opposition to the integration of Jews into society was expressed in pogroms known among them were the "Storms in the Negev" and the "Kishinev Pogroms". Unlike the Jews of Central Europe, the Jews of Eastern Europe did not receive emancipation, so they remained discriminated by law and suffered harassment by the government. On the other hand, a large part of the educated Jews of Eastern Europe participated in the Bund, a Jewish socialist organization operating in Russia. Another part emigrated to Western European countries or to the United States where the spirit of equality allowed them a more comfortable life and with an employment, religious and freedom horizon.

In the early 1870s, massive migration of Jews from Eastern Europe began. By the First World War, the number of immigrants had reached 35 million. The reasons for the large migration were the large increase in the amount of population and the great economic hardship in which the population lived. 2.5 million of the immigrants were Jews who suffered not only from severe economic problems, but also from antisemitic harassment in Eastern Europe. Many Jews immigrated to the United States and a minority immigrated to Israel, as part of the first Aliyah (1881-1904) and the second Aliyah (1904-1914).

There were several reasons for immigration to Eretz Israel: Religious reason - a significant portion of the immigrants among the first and second Aliyah were traditional or religious<sup>158</sup>. Economical reason - Eretz Israel was close and cheap to arrive from the United States. Zionism reason - a national and Zionist worldview of some of the immigrants. During these years, Zionist movements operated in Eastern Europe and especially in Russia, encouraging the revival of the Hebrew language and immigration to Eretz Israel. In 1884, the Katowice Conference was held, during which a united

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<sup>158</sup> Cfr. A. Skorek, *Żydowskie ugrupowania religijne w Państwie Izrael. Polityczna rola ortodoksyjnego judaizmu*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2015.

Zionist movement of many factions was defined, which in fact marked the beginning of Zionism as a national political movement.

The first congress was held in Fuchs, Romania, in early 1882. At the conference, institutions were elected, and a body was elected to organize Aliya to Eretz Israel. In the same year, about 250 immigrants ("Olim") who established Rosh Pina and Zichron Yaacov immigrated to Eretz Israel. The immigrants in the first Aliyah usually came from Eastern Europe, but there was also an Aliyah from Yemen of about 2,500 immigrants. A large number of them settled in Jerusalem<sup>159</sup>.

## 2.5.2 The Formation of the Zionism

The Zionist movement had different currents of ideas, ideology and courses of action. Their ideas were sometimes contradictory in part, but the goal was the same: the aspiration to establish an independent state for the Jewish nation. There were a number of approaches but the three main ones were dominant in the 19th and early 20th centuries<sup>160</sup>.

Political Zionism was the mainstream under the leadership of Benjamin Zeev Herzl (1860-1904)<sup>161</sup> and Max Nordau (1849-1923)<sup>162</sup>. The Political Zionism

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<sup>159</sup> Cfr. on the social and political changes: Yochai Ben-Ghedalia, Naomi Stillman, *Polish Distinctiveness in Jerusalem, Congress Poland, and Western Prussia in the Nineteenth Century*, Polin Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 35 (2023 pp. 51-68; Andrzej Szpociński, *Historia a pamięć społeczna*, w: *Akulturacyja/asymilacja na pograniczach kulturowych Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 1: *Stereotypy i pamięć*, ed. R. Traba, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk i Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny, Warszawa 2009, pp. 29-35.

<sup>160</sup> On the history of this movement: Rafael Medoff, Chaim Waxman, *Historical Dictionary of Zionism*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press; 2000; *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1882-1933*, hrsg. Jehuda Reinharz, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981; *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and beyond*, ed. Michael Berkowitz, Leiden, Brill, 2004; Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, New York; Tauris Parke, 2003; Yosef Salmon, *Religion and Zionism. First Encounters*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2002; David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, New York: Avon Books, 1989.

<sup>161161</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*, Leipzig und Wien: M.Breitenstein's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1896 (cfr. new edition published as Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*; Manesse Verlag, 2006).

argued that negotiations should first take place between the Powers to obtain a charter on the Eretz Israel before immigration to Eretz Israel. The assumption of political Zionism was that a state would be established only after obtaining the consent of the nations of the world to it and accordingly also its leaders acted. The innovation that Herzl brought to Zionist thinking was neither in the originality of his ideas nor in his ability to execute them. His main achievement was that he made the subject into an object of discourse and discussion among world Jewry. He has made the issue of solving the problem of the Jews as a nation and the issue of national home as a subject of discussions all over the world in the various communities, in magazines and as a topic which is discussed by governments and non-Jewish circles. The essence of Nordau's ideas as a writer and journalist was expressed in his speech at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, which he opened with the phrase "Western Jew has bread, but man will not live on bread alone"<sup>163</sup>. This sentence expressed his concept about the Jewish situation in the Diaspora, in spite of the emancipation and following its consequences which extremely increased the manifestations of anti-Semitism throughout Europe and especially in Russia and Poland<sup>164</sup>.

Practical Zionism was the pragmatic stream led by Moshe Lilienblum (1843-1910) and Yehuda Leib Pinsker (1821-1891). In contrast to political Zionism, the leaders of practical Zionism argued that immigration to Eretz Israel and settlement should begin as soon as possible, even before a charter is reached on the Eretz Israel and establish a large-scale settlement in there that will help demand a national home for the Jewish people. Lilienblum saw the pogroms among the Jews of Russia, published a series of articles called "Derech

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<sup>162</sup> Jacek Surzyn, *Antysemityzm, emancypacja, syjonizm. Narodziny ideologii syjonistycznej*, Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014.

<sup>163</sup> *Der Erste Zionistenkongress von 1897 - Ursachen, Bedeutung, Aktualität*, hrsg. von H. Haumann, Basel, Freiburg, Paris, London, New York, New Delhi, Bangkok, Singapore, Tokyo, Sydney 1997.

<sup>164</sup> שלמה אבינרי, הרעיון הציוני לגוניו : פרקים בתולדות המחשבה הלאומית היהודית, עם עובד, רעננה, 1980, עמוד 120. (Avineri, 1980).

Tshuva" ("דרך תשובה") and claimed, among other things, that Jews were foreigners and foreigners would be forever even if they would be educated"<sup>165</sup>.

These two different approaches were later incorporated into one approach called synthetic Zionism. This stream of Zionism, led by Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936) and Martin Buber (1878-1965), supported an approach of combining political activity of the Zionist movement with practical activity of Aliyah and settlement in Eretz Israel at the same time<sup>166</sup>.

Other streams of Zionism can be mentioned, which in many cases stemmed from ideological differences, religious perceptions, etc., and not necessarily from the very ideas of the realization of Zionism. Socialist Zionism whose leaders were Nachman Sirkin, Dov Bar Borochoy, Haim Arlosoroff and Berl Katznelson. According to this approach Zionism should combine values of equality and productive work in the spirit of socialism. Revisionist Zionism led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. The spiritual Zionism that was led was Asher Zvi Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am אחד העם) who advocated the idea of immigration to Eretz Israel slowly and gradually. Following the First Zionist Congress and mainly in response to Nordau's speech, Ahad Ha'am published two articles, "The State of the Jews and the Trouble of the Jews" (1897) and "Flesh and Spirit" (1904), in which he expressed his views on the national issue. Their point is that even if a Jewish state is established and some Jews around the world immigrate to it, there will always be Jewish communities in the Diaspora and therefore Zionism must address those who remain in the Diaspora and suffer from spiritual distress. The religious Zionism that was led by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Raines, the founder of the Mizrachi movement, which

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<sup>165</sup> שלמה אבינרי, הרעיון הציוני לגוניו : פרקים בתולדות המחשבה הלאומית היהודית, עם עובד, רעננה, 1980, עמ. 80-81. (Avineri, 1980).

<sup>166</sup> Martin Buber was the original one of the three. In his book *The Hidden Dialogue*, edited by Dan Avnon, translated by Dafna Bar-On, Am Oved Publishing, Tel Aviv, 2012, Buber argued that Zionism will fulfill the humane heritage of Israel; He stressed his firm opposition to Judaism which is subject to the laws of an oppressive religious establishment; And anchors in Jewish interpretation his reservation about the Zionist enterprise's disregard for Arab existence in the Land of Israel. Reading Buber's writings in the spirit of this interpretive key clarifies the importance he attached to the Torah and heritage of Israel

emphasizes a national revival combined with a religious revival in Eretz Israel<sup>167</sup>.

### **2.5.2. The First Zionist Congress in 1897**

Following the Dreifuss trial, in 1894, Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl, a Jewish journalist from Vienna, who covered the Dreifuss trial, formed the recognition that action should be taken to establish a national home for the Jews. He was influenced by the ideas of a pan-European nationalist movements at the time, but more importantly the failure of emancipation to ensure social equality for Jews, and in parallel from the continuous process of disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which at that time lived in it about two million Jews, as well as the rise of nationalist xenophobic racist movements.

On August 29, 1897, at the initiative of Herzl, the first Zionist Congress convened and, among other things, it was decided to establish the World Zionist Organization. Herzl was elected to head the Zionist Organization and continued his activities while meeting with leaders, writing articles and also publishing his book "The State of the Jews" in which he explained the main points of his ideas and belief in how to act. The first Zionist Congress was in fact the first parliament of the Zionist movement. In this Congress, the principles underlying the Zionist movement were established. This is how the important principle of democracy, of choosing parties and not representatives was determined.

Herzl worked hard for the image and international publicity of the Zionist movement. Herzl took a political course of action in order to advance international recognition and support over immigration to Eretz Israel. Hence the idea of political Zionism. To achieve this goal, Herzl first turned to the Ottoman Empire, to the German Emperor Wilhelm II, with whom he even met

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<sup>167</sup> Cfr. Heiko Haumann, *Geschichte der Ostjuden*, München 1999; Walter Grab, *Der deutsche Weg der Judenemanzipation 1789-1938*, München und Zürich: Piper, 1991; Jacob Katz, *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation*, Philadelphia/New York/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1986; Edward M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, New York: Vintage Books, 1990; David Vital, *A People Apart. A Political History of the Jews in Europe 1789-1939*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

during the emperor's visit to Jerusalem, and to the British Empire. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 given 13 years after his death (1904) was one of his great achievements. In this statement, Britain recognized the national home of Jews in Eretz Israel.

Zionism has undergone developments, changes and internal struggles over the years. For example, in 1903 at the Sixth Zionist Congress, the Uganda Plan (a territory controlled by the British at the time) was presented, which provoked much debate. The focus on Eretz Israel and the decision in which only the National Home for Jews would be established was determined at the Seventh Zionist Congress (1905). As a result of the decision to focus on Eretz Israel, the Palestine Office was established in 1908, headed by Arthur Ruppin, whose role was to begin implementing the establishment of the Jewish National Home. At the same time, not everyone made this decision, and for example, those who were called the "Territorialists", about whom I will expand on later, retired from the Zionist movement.

Another development in the organization was the establishment of the Jewish Agency in 1929, whose role was to carry out the actual establishment of the Jewish National Home. The Jewish Agency became the leadership of the Jewish community in Eretz Israel and began establishing mechanisms that would serve the state in the future<sup>168</sup>.

### 2.5.3. The Zionists Between the Years 1900-1948

The first Aliyah began in 1881, during which thousands of Jews from Eastern Europe and Yemen immigrated. During the years of the second Aliyah between 1903 and 1914, about 35,000 immigrants immigrated to Israel, mainly from Eastern Europe<sup>169</sup>, of whom about a third remained, but the rest, mainly due to the difficult conditions, left for Europe and the United States.

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<sup>168</sup> שמואל אלמוג, *אנטישמיות – מסות מחקרים, ציונות ולאומיות*, הספריה הלאומית על יד ההסתדרות העולמית, ירושלים, 1992, עמ. 52-76. (Almog, 1992).

<sup>169</sup> Cfr. Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012; Grzegorz Krzywiec, *Polska bez*

This migration was largely a continuation of the first immigration. The vast majority of immigrants came from Eastern Europe, mainly from the "Thum Ha'Moshav" and Galicia, and a minority from Islamic countries.

A small minority of the people of the second Aliyah were young and single who came up from socialist and Zionist ideals (pioneering and nationalism). The group of young people imbued with Jewish socialism and nationalism were ready to sacrifice and establish settlement in Eretz Israel. Many of them saw tillage in Eretz Israel as a supreme value. Although they spoke Yiddish or other European languages as their mother tongue, the use of the Hebrew language seemed to them to be extremely important. These immigrants rebelled against Jewish life in the Diaspora and wanted to create a "new society" and a "new person" in Eretz Israel. This group constituted the ideological elite of the people in Eretz Israel. For many years the second Aliyah was identified with this elite, but the study indicates that this group was a minority and did not represent the other immigrants during the second Aliyah period. Among the immigrants in this Aliyah were David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Berl Katzenelson, and A.D. Gordon. A.D. Gordon represented in his conception the ideals of this Aliyah. In his article published in 1911 under the name of "A Little Reflection", he presented two alternatives which were - adhering to the intellectual life and the bourgeois, and the other alternative was the life of creativity and separation from the dependence on the other. He was in fact the flag bearer of Hebrew labor, of a society that produces and satisfies its needs and whose spiritual life is a second priority<sup>170</sup>.

The third Aliyah began after the First World War and the conquest of Eretz Israel by the British. During it, about 30,000 Jews arrived to Eretz Israel, most of them young. Some of the immigrants, including the "pioneers", had a diverse ideology, which included Jewish tradition and religion, nationalism, socialism and communism. Most of the Aliyah people established agricultural settlements and villages. At the same time, the "Hashomer Hatzair" youth

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*Żydów. Studia z dziejów idei, wyobrażeń i praktyk antysemitycznych na ziemiach polskich początku XX wieku (1905-1914)*, Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa 2017.

<sup>170</sup> ישראל קלויזנר, *תולדות הציונות*, מרכז זלמן שזר, החברה ההיסטורית הישראלית, ירושלים, 1976. (Kloizner, 1976)



movement was also established, which has been identified with the socialist left and even with communism since the mid-1920s.

The waves of Aliyah of the fourth Aliyah and the fifth Aliyah which were mass Aliyah's were created by economic pressures exerted in Poland and by the pressure exerted by the Nazis starting in 1932 in Germany. These Aliyah's were not ideological but "more bourgeois." They were mostly urban and later even constituted the intellectual elite of the state. Under the influence of liberal culture their views were more cosmopolitan Western.

The sixth Aliyah was the illegal Aliyah resulting from the pressure of World War II and the extermination of Jews by Germany. These were waves of immigration to Eretz Israel until 1948, despite the ban imposed by the British following the publication of the White Book. The Hebrew undergrounds encouraged this Aliyah and even organized illegal immigration operations in order to smuggle Jewish immigrants to Eretz Israel<sup>171</sup>.

During World War II, in 1942, the Zionist Organization declared the Baltimore Plan, which was the first time that the ultimate goal of Zionism - the establishment of a Jewish state (more precisely - a Jewish community - Jewish Commonwealth) was officially declared in Eretz Israel<sup>172</sup>.

#### **2.5.4. The Zionism and the Zionist Organizations after 1948**

After the establishment of the State of Israel and the War of Independence, and as a continuation of the waves of immigration after World War II, the State of Israel faced many challenges that involved building the state,

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<sup>171</sup> A. Patek, *Żydzi w drodze do Palestyny 1934-1944 Szkice z dziejów nielegalnej imigracji żydowskiej*, Kraków 2009; A. Patek, *Wielka Brytania wobec Izraela w okresie pierwszej wojny arabsko-izraelskiej (maj 1948- styczeń 1949)*, Kraków 2002.

<sup>172</sup> Mordechai Gani in his article "Chapters in the Modern History of the Land of Israel: The Biltmore Plan", *Echo of the Mahar*, 33, Tel Aviv, 2006, pp. 10-11, stated that the uniqueness of the plan was that it united the Zionist movement around the world and sought to expedite the solution "to the entire Jewish people even before the horrible details of the Holocaust became known."

absorbing the many immigrants and maintaining contact with Diaspora Jewry<sup>173</sup>.

The government and the bodies of the Zionist Organization have set themselves the goal of encouraging, supporting and absorbing the Jews who wish to immigrate to Israel, which was also demographically important for the Israeli government to significantly increase the number of Jews in the country.

At the same time, the bodies of the Zionist Organization that were initially supra-politically-party became over the years bodies with a certain political ideology and over time became political parties that had representation in all bodies of the Zionist Organization. These bodies have become the main parties in the State of Israel. The Workers' Party of the State of Israel (MAPA"י, מפא"י), which was formed in the pre-state years, became the largest and dominant party after the establishment of the state of Israel. The Revisionist Party in the State of Israel was established by Jabotinsky as a continuation of the Revisionist stream in the Zionist Organization, as were the religious Zionist parties that were a continuation of the religious streams from the Zionist Organization.

After the establishment of the state, the goals of the Zionist Organization changed and the focus shifted to a number of issues: support for the immigration of Jews from around the world with an emphasis on countries in which they were persecuted or restricted in their lives. Support for the absorption of immigrant Jews in the State of Israel. Help with absorption not only physically but also socially, culturally, language learning and more.

In beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, the question arose again "whether Zionism has achieved its goals" and whether the bodies of the Zionist Organization have actually completed their historical role and that the State of Israel has an obligation to perform all tasks performed by the Zionist Organization. The issue is in dispute till nowadays between all the elements in the Zionist movement and the governing bodies in the State of Israel, in practice without a decision. The disagreement stems mainly from the disagreements regarding the goals of Zionism then and today.

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<sup>173</sup> Cfr. Dominik Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów w Polsce w latach 1944/1945-1950*, Lublin 2020.

The reasons for supporting the approach that Zionism has achieved its goals and therefore there is no reason for the Zionist Organization to continue to exist are: the establishment of a Jewish state has been achieved and that close to half of the world's Jews live in Israel. On the other hand, those who reject this approach, who want to continue the activities of the Zionist Organization and its bodies, argue that most Jews still do not live in Israel, assimilation in the Diaspora is increasing and action must be taken actively, increasing anti-Semitism in the Diaspora requires action and an address for those Jews outside the State of Israel.

Beyond the question of the continued existence of the Zionist Organization's institutions after the establishment of the State of Israel, there are quite a few movements that have opposed Zionism since its inception and some even continue along this line even after the establishment of the state. It is worth remembering that in the beginning of Zionism, the supporters of Zionism constituted a minority group among the Jews, but over time their power increased. After the establishment of the State of Israel, there are groups of Jews who consider themselves non-Zionist or anti-Zionist for religious, ethnic and political reasons.

Opposition to Zionism can stem from various reasons: opposition to the existence of a Jewish sovereign-national entity in Eretz Israel for reasons of principle reasons or for religious reasons (for example, before the Messiah arrives). Opposition to the secular nature of Zionism and fear that the Zionist movement will carry out anti-religious coercion or a preference for political activity with universal values over Zionism, as the best choice for Jews.

As early as the 19th century, there were other Jewish national groups and movements in Eastern Europe that sought an alternative national solution to the Jewish question. In general they can be divided into two groups: autonomists and "Territorialists". The autonomous factions demanded the recognition of Jews as a national minority with a protected culture and collective political rights in their countries of residence. One of the prominent leaders was Shimon Dubnow. The other groups include the Bundists who tended to socialism and the extremist Yiddishists in the Soviet Union. In contrast, the "Territorialists" demanded the emigration of Jews out of Eastern

Europe and the establishment of a state or autonomy overseas. The main group in this stream was the Jewish “Territorialist” Organization headed by Israel Zangwill, which was part of Zionism until it rejected the Uganda Plan in 1903. The “Territorialists” proposed immigration to Australia or South America.

On the other hand, there were groups that supported integration into Western culture and the countries of residence of the Jews. They rejected the idea of Jewish nationalism, the perception of Judaism as a religion rather than a nation, and support for the integration of Jews as individuals within liberal Western countries. The rise of anti-Semitism in the 20th century and the mass migration from Russia and Poland, mainly of Jews with national views, greatly undermined this approach.

At the same time, currents arose that supported the establishment of a Jewish state but not its integration. This is philanthropic Zionism.

Alongside the secular opponents were religious groups that although at one time were part of the Zionist movement but there were also streams that opposed it because of opposition to its secularism. There were groups of more religious extremists who had a principled refusal for any attempt to end the exile before the coming of the Messiah. For example, even today, years after the establishment of the State of Israel, the ultra-Orthodox community of Neturei Karta expresses clear opposition to Zionism, since it violates the religious aspect of the Jewish people.

Today, and especially after the Six Day War, anti-Zionist groups can also be named the post-Zionist groups that have two main currents: one current claims that Zionism was correct at the time, but is no longer relevant, since its main goals were achieved. The state, and not another body, should focus on creating an Israeli civil society that will be an egalitarian, just and peace-loving society. The second stream claims that Zionism is a colonialist movement that has caused injustice to Palestinians and Jews that came from Arabic countries, and therefore its principles must be abandoned, and the State of Israel must be established as a state of all its citizens and on humanistic

principles. Some post-Zionist leftists support the two-state solution, while others support the one-state solution<sup>174</sup>.

## 2.6. The Jews of Poland after the First World War till 1939

Poland's war of independence against Russia was in the years 1919-1921. During this war, territories that had been taken from it during the wars of the 18th century returned to Polish territory. Some Jews took part in the Polish War of Independence in 1918 and joined the forces of Józef Piłsudski, but many Jewish communities chose to remain neutral in the struggle for the establishment of the Polish state<sup>175</sup>.

The years after the end of World War I were years of wars and chaos in Eastern Europe, which greatly affected the situation of Polish Jews<sup>176</sup>. The Russian Civil War that began in the October Revolution of 1917 and ended in practice in 1923, the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918-1919 fought over territories controlled by the dismantled Austro-Hungarian Empire and the war between Poland and Russia in 1919-1921 redefined the eastern borders of the Second Polish Republic. At the same time, the Jewish communities found themselves willingly or unwillingly involved in these wars and political changes. Many Jews on the one hand became citizens of Poland and at the same time others were on the side fighting against Poland in one of these wars<sup>177</sup>.

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<sup>174</sup> A. Ismail-Sabri, *Arabowie a Izrael*, Warszawa 1972; D.K. Shipler, *Arabowie i Żydzi w Ziemi Obiecanej*, Warszawa 2003; M. Avi-Yonah, *A History of Israel and the Holy Land*, New York 2001.

<sup>175</sup> See more at Henryk Chałupczak, Tomasz Browarek, *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce 1918-1995*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1998; Heiko Haumann, *Historia Żydów w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Adamantan, 2000; Ezra Mendelsohn, *Żydzi Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992; *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950)*, red. J. Tomaszewski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993.

<sup>176</sup> Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939*, Berlin: Mouton, 1983; Arthur L. Goodhart, *Poland and the Minority Races*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1920.

<sup>177</sup> *Żydzi bojownicy o niepodległość Polski: 1918-1939*, ed. Norbert Getter, Jakub Schall, Zygmunt Schipper, Lwów: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, 1939.

A significant percentage of Jews supported the Bolsheviks in Russia. As a result, they were attacked by opponents of the Bolshevik regime. During the Polish-Soviet war and the battles around Warsaw, thousands of Jewish soldiers and officers were expelled from their units and concentrated in a concentration camp near the town of Jablonna because they were suspected of supporting the Communists. This period of wars and chaos was accompanied by pogroms against Jews in various places that in the early stages were hidden and not published. Only after news and rumors began to leak to the West, a commission of inquiry set up at the initiative of the President of the United States headed by Henry Morgenthau<sup>178</sup>. The findings of the commission of inquiry were that there were indeed pogroms against Jews, but the number of murders was much lower than the rumors that were circulating, and most of the pogroms were conducted in the territories that were under Ukrainian control. It is estimated that about 300 Jews were murdered in these events<sup>179</sup>.

The Versailles Treaty signed at the end of World War I did not clearly define Poland's eastern borders, which led to the chain of wars in 1917-1921 as mentioned before, but on the other hand there were decisions that addressed minorities in the territories annexed to Poland and among them Jews. The treaty promised Jews equal rights and explicit recognition of the right of Jews to keep Shabbat and a commitment not to hold general or local elections on Shabbat. The new Polish constitution granted Jews the same rights as its other citizens and committed to them for religious tolerance. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, mostly merchants, shopkeepers and professionals who were denied the opportunity to work in Soviet territory, moved to Poland<sup>180</sup>.

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<sup>178</sup> Cfr. M. Urynowicz, *Raport Henry'ego Morgenthau. Przemoc antyżydowska podczas wojny z Rosją bolszewicką*, Biuletyn IPN, 10 (2010), no. 11, pp. 71-78; Szymon Rudnicki, Jarosław Garliński, *The Vilna Pogrom of 19-21 April 1919*, Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 33, no. 1 (2021), pp. 463-494.

<sup>179</sup> Cfr. Israel Cohen, *A Report on the Pogroms in Poland*, London: Central Office of the Zionist Organisation, 1919; *Materjały w sprawie żydowskiej w Polsce*, ed. Izaak Grünbaum, Warszawa: Biuro Prasowe Organizacji Syjonistycznej w Polsce, 1919; Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Raport delegacji Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych R.P. w sprawie wystąpień antyżydowskich we Lwowie*, Przegląd Historyczny, vol. 35 (1984), no. 2, pp. 281-285.

<sup>180</sup> קציעה טביבאן, *מסעות בזמן - משלום למלחמה ולשואה*, הוצאת מט"ח, 2009, עמ' 14. (Tavivan, 2009) שאול פרידלנדר, *גרמניה הנאצית והיהודים: שנות הרדיפות, 1933-1939*, תרגמה מאנגלית עתליה זילבר, ספרית אפקים, הוצאת עם עובד, תל אביב, 1997; עמ' 248-249. (Fridlander, 1997)

In the 1921 a census was conducted in Poland, 73.76% of all Jews by religion declared themselves Jews according to their nationality (and in the 1931 census, 79.9% said that Yiddish was their mother tongue, and 7.8% even stated that Hebrew was their first language, i.e. only a small percentage of Polish Jews said that Polish is their mother tongue)<sup>181</sup>.

The economic situation of Polish Jews between the two world wars was characterized by a prolonged process of economic deterioration. It is customary to divide it into two periods: between the years 1921–1931 and 1932–1939. As mentioned earlier, most Polish Jews in the 1920s, close to 80%, were engaged in trade, peddling and small-scale industry in small workshops. In the 1930s, there was a process of the Jews moving to the liberal professions, which they studied in the universities and they became a great and significant force in the medical, legal and journalistic professions<sup>182</sup>.

The rise of anti-Semitism in Poland in the 1920s occurred following the rise of Polish nationalism supported by the "National Democratic Party" government, as well as due to the non-identification of Jews as part of the Polish people and their differentiation from the Polish population. In addition, some believed that the Jews had a plot to take over Poland and establish a Jewish state there. Poland's official policy against the Jews was reflected in a series of laws restricting the Jews and discriminating against them in the field of occupation and economy. The Polish government headed by Władysław Grabski imposed taxes on Jewish merchants and narrowed their employment opportunities. These laws were called "Grabski Decrees" and included a discriminatory taxation policy, a discriminatory licensing policy, the imposition of difficulties in obtaining government jobs, and a *numerus clausus* that limited the number of Jews in universities to 10%.

The situation of the Jews improved with the rise to power of the conservative leader Józef Piłsudski. Piłsudski advocated a policy called "political assimilation," that is, the examination of citizens according to their loyalty to

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<sup>181</sup> G. Zamoyski, *Mniejszości narodowe na Rzeszowszczyźnie w świetle wyników spisu powszechnego z 1931 roku*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 2 (1994).

<sup>182</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *Rozmieszczenie Żydów w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym. Szkic statystyczny*, Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych, Vol. 50 (1989), pp. 134-144.

the state. During his reign, in the years 1926-1935, the conditions of the Jews improved, mainly thanks to the Prime Minister, Kazimierz Bartel. However, the general atmosphere was unfavorable to the Jews. In the late 1920s and early 1930s came the "Great Depression." The economic situation of most of the Jews was not good and Pilsudski's death was a turning point in the attitude of the Polish authorities towards the Jewish population. At the same time, the Jewish population continued to grow - in the 1931 census there were 3,113,933 Jewish residents in Poland, who made up 9.8% of the population of Poland. In the urban population, their proportion was about 30%<sup>183</sup>.

After Pilsudski's death, a presidential regime was introduced in the Poland, which in many ways was dictatorial. The leaders of Poland who actually led the country were President Ignacy Mościcki, Minister Józef Beck and Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły. This government enacted laws that worsened the situation of the Jews in terms of freedom and economy. Unofficial or semi-official quotas were imposed ("*Numerus Clausus*") in order to reduce the number of Jewish students in universities by half (their rate dropped from 20.4% in 1928/9 to 9.9% in 1937/8)<sup>184</sup>. Many government jobs continued to be blocked for them and in 1937 the trade unions of doctors and lawyers restricted their new members to Polish Christians only and the civil service had already completely ceased to employ Jews. At the same time, there were violent acts against the Jews that included looting of shops (and sometimes houses) and 79 Jews were murdered in the period between 1935 and 1937<sup>185</sup>.

In the years between the two world wars, the British politicians Henry Hamilton Beamish and Arnold Lees, as well as the Dutch Egon van Wingen,

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<sup>183</sup> שאול פרידלנדר, *גרמניה הנאצית והיהודים: שנות הרדיפות, 1933-1939*, תרגמה מאנגלית עתליה זילבר, ספרית אפקים, הוצאת עם עובד, תל אביב, 1997, עמ. 249-248. (Fridlander, 1997).

<sup>184</sup> שאול פרידלנדר, *גרמניה הנאצית והיהודים: שנות הרדיפות, 1933-1939*, תרגמה מאנגלית עתליה זילבר, ספרית אפקים, הוצאת עם עובד, תל אביב, 1997, עמ. 250. (Fridlander, 1997).

<sup>185</sup> J. Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1947*, Warszawa: Fundacja im. K. Kelles-Krauza, 1994; Piotr Gontarczyk, *Pogrom? Zajścia polsko-żydowskie w Przytyku 9 marca 1936 r.*, Biała Podlaska: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rekonkwista, 2000; cfr. also more general views: Bernard Wasserstein, *W przededniu. Żydzi w Europie przed II wojną światową*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Magnum, 2012; Piotr Wandycz, *Wiek XX*, w: *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, red. J. Kłoczowski, Vol. 1, Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2000, pp. 416-531.



who were outspokenly anti-Jewish, raised the idea of deporting Jews to the island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, the eastern coast of Africa. In 1937, the Poles received permission from the French to send a three-member commission of inquiry - Major Mstislaw Lepecki, Leon Alter and Salomon Dick (the last two were Jews) - to examine the possibility of settling Polish Jews there. The Jewish JDC also cooperated with this idea. In a report submitted by the committee, its Polish member recommended this possibility while its two Jewish members objected to its chances of success<sup>186</sup>. The plan ultimately did not materialize due to the outbreak of World War II.<sup>187</sup>

In 1933–1938, Poland took administrative measures to prevent the return of Polish citizens from Germany, and in October 1938, it issued an order revoking the passports of all Polish citizens living outside it who had not received a special permit to enter by the end of the month. In Germany at that time lived 56,480 foreign Jews, citizens of Poland. In response to the Polish order, Germany forcibly deported about 16,000 Polish Jews<sup>188</sup>.

After the First World War, a rich community and cultural life developed among Polish Jewry. The spiritual and cultural center was in Warsaw. The Jewish communities operated many charitable and mutual aid institutions, which included clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, institutions for the disabled, restaurants for the poor and more.

In Warsaw<sup>189</sup>, a number of public and private book publishers were established ("Kultur-Liga", "Ahim Levin-Epstein", "Ahiasaf", "Tzentral" and more), which published many books in Yiddish and Hebrew, mainly by important Yiddish writers such as Shalom Aleichem (שלום עליכם), Mendele

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<sup>186</sup> שמואל אטינגר, *תולדות עם ישראל בעת החדשה*, הוצאת דביר, תל אביב, 1969, עמ' 284-290. (Ettinger, 1969)

<sup>187</sup> Naftali Eilati pointed out in his article "The emigration of the Jews to Madagascar - the "no-chance" plan," *Hatzofe*, October 1986, p. 7-8, the plan had no chance in the first place, at least in the eyes of most of the Zionist leadership.

<sup>188</sup> שאול פרידלנדר, *גרמניה הנאצית והיהודים: שנות הרדיפות, 1933-1939*, תרגמה מאנגלית עתליה זילבר, ספרית אפקים, הוצאת עם עובד, תל אביב, 1997, עמ' 302-304. (Fridlander, 1997)

<sup>189</sup> Cfr. J. Orlicki, *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918-1949*, Szczecin: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1983; T. Kawski, *Żydowskie gminy wyznaniowe w II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium historyczno-administracyjne*, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo UKW, 2014.

Mojcher Sefarim (מנדל מוכר ספרים) Shalom Ash<sup>190</sup>, Y.L. Peretz, Bruno Schulz and others. Magazines, collections and important literary magazines have also been published, as well as holy books and scholarly books and translated literature by the best writers in the world<sup>191</sup>.

Many Jewish newspapers were published, mainly in Yiddish (more than half a million issues a day) as well as in Hebrew and Polish, which described the life and culture of the Jews<sup>192</sup>. Major newspapers were "היינט" ("Today"), which combined quality stories with popular characteristics and became pro-Zionist under the leadership of Yitzhak Gruenbaum; "דער מאמענט" ("The Moment"), which advocated integration into Polish society and later supported the Revisionists and "הצפירה" ("The Siren"), a Hebrew newspaper that became pro-Zionist under the leadership of Nahum Sokolow, brought much news about the life of the Jewish people and attracted educated and religious Jews alike. A number of weekly magazines for adults and children have also been published<sup>193</sup>. The Yiddish theater revived in Poland after the boycott was lifted in 1908<sup>194</sup>. Theaters shows in Yiddish and original productions by Shalom Aleichem, David Pinski, Peretz Hirschbein and others have been staged, as well as works translated into Yiddish by the best foreign playwrights. There were about 350 Jewish actors in Poland. An important group of actors

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<sup>190</sup> Magdalena Sitarz, *Literatura jako medium pamięci. Świat powieści Szoloma Asza*, Kraków 2010.

<sup>191</sup> Salmo Birnbaum, *Yiddish: A survey and a grammar*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979; Emanuel S. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture: The Story of the Yiddish Language Movement*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1987; *The Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, Vol. 1: *Historical and Theoretical Foundations*, Tübingen 1992; Vol. 2: *Research Tools*, Tübingen 1995; Vol. 3: *The Eastern Yiddish–Western Yiddish Continuum*, Tübingen-New York 2000

<sup>192</sup> There is a huge number of major publications on the Jewish literature, composed in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish at that time: Jerzy Ficowski, *Regiony Wielkiej herezji. Rzecz o Brunonie Schulzu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Słowo, 1992; Jerzy Ficowski, *Okolice sklepów cynamonowych. Szkice, przyczynki, impresje*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986; Jerzy Jarzębski, *Schulz*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999; Dan Miron, *The Literary Image of the Shtetl*, in: His, *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000; Katarzyna Więclawska, *Miasteczko Szoloma Asza jako archetyp literackiego obrazu shtetl*, in: *Ortodoksja. Emancypacja. Asymilacja. Studia z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich w okresie rozbiorów*, ed. K. Zieliński, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003, pp. 191-201; Katarzyna Więclawska, *Zmartwychwstałe miasteczko... Literackie oblicza shtetl*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005; Rafał Żebrowski, Zofia Borzymińska, *PO-LIN. Kultura Żydów Polskich w XX w.*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Amarant, 1993, and many more.

<sup>193</sup> שמואל אטינגר, *תולדות עם ישראל בעת החדשה*, כרך ג, הוצאת דביר, תל אביב, 1969, עמ. 304-309 (Ettinger, 1969).

<sup>194</sup> M. Steinlauf, *Teatr*, in: *Żydzi w Polsce. Leksykon*, red. J. Tomaszewski, A. Żbikowski, Warszawa 2001, pp. 498-512.

operating in Warsaw was the "Vilna Band". It staged plays in the style of stage realism by Jewish and foreign playwrights. Its most famous performance was An-Ski's "Ha-dibuk" which was first staged by them in 1920 (and later "adopted" by the Habima Theater in Moscow)<sup>195</sup>. Another important theater was "Central" which later became known as "Wicket" and presented diverse, original and translated Yiddish plays<sup>196</sup>. It is hard to overestimate the importance and extremely fruitful development of the Jewish / Yiddish literature, with numerous authors and splendid works<sup>197</sup>.

Most Polish Jews between the world wars lived in a social and cultural community distinct from the Polish people. Over 75% of them saw themselves as belonging to the Jewish nation and only a small minority of them saw themselves as Poles. They held various Jewish parties that were roughly divided into three blocs: the Zionists (and religious Zionism), the ultra-Orthodox and the non-Zionist secularists.

At the political level, there was lot of Jewish activity. Beginning in the territories that were under Austrian and Russian occupation at a time when Poland was divided, Jews entered the houses of parliament of Austro-Hungary and Russia. And a Jewish faction was formed in the Austrian parliament<sup>198</sup>. This fact was the basis for Jewish political action in a united

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<sup>195</sup> Sz. An-ski, *Dybuk*, przeł. A. Hadari, Kraków 2007.

<sup>196</sup> Cfr. Chone Shmeruk, *Legenda o Esterce w literaturze jidysz i polskiej*. Warszawa: Oficyna Na.ukowa, 2000; M. Brzezina, *Polszczyzna Żydów*, Warszawa-Kraków 1986; *Antologia poezji żydowskiej*. Wybór oraz noty i przypisy Salomon Łastik, redakcja i słowo wstępne Arnold Słucki, Warszawa 1986; Ch. Shmeruk, *Historia Literatury Jidysz*, Ossolineum 1992.

<sup>197</sup> Cfr. David G. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988; *What Is Jewish Literature?*, ed. H. Wirth-Nesher, Philadelphia-Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994; David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995; David G. Roskies, *In Search of Usable Past*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999; *The Field of Yiddish. Studies in Yiddish Language, Folklore and Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. by U. Weinreich, New York 1954; Vol. 2, London – The Hague – Paris 1965, Vol. 3, London 1969; D.G. Roskies, *Literatura jidysz w Polsce*, „Studia Judaica” 2000, nr 1 (5), pp. 1-20; Ruth R. Wisse, *The Modern Jewish Canon. A Journey Through Language and Literature*. New York: The Free Press, 2000; Ch. Shmeruk, *Literatura jidysz*, in: *Żydzi w Polsce. Leksykon*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, A. Żbikowski, Warszawa 2001, pp. 257-279; M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Odcienie tożsamości. Literatura żydowska jako zjawisko wielojęzyczne*, Lublin 2004, pp. 26-49, 60-89, 122-151; *Literatura polsko-żydowska 1861-1918: Antologia*, ed. Zuzanna Kołodziejska-Smagala, Maria Antosik-Piela, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2017; S. Halkin, *Modern Jewish Literature from the Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel. Trends and Values*, New York, 1979; *Warszawska awangarda jidysz*, red. K. Szymaniak, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>198</sup> שלמה נצר, מאבק יהודי פולין על זכויותיהם האזרחיות והלאומיות, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, 1980, עמוד 9. (Netzer, 1980)

Poland. The parties represented the Jewish community in the Polish parliament – “the Sejm”. The Jewish representation, due to the discriminatory laws, was not equivalent to their percentage in the population. In the first elections in 1919, more than 450,000 Jews who marked the division of forces in the Jewish community voted: the Jewish National Movement (Zionists) received half the votes (5 representatives), the Orthodox (ultra-Orthodox) received 2 representatives, the Folkists - 2 and Poalei Zion 1. Most of them united together to a "Jewish bloc." Jewish representation increased in the following final sessions in the 1920s and 1930s to more than 30 representatives who began cooperating with other minorities (Germans, Ukrainians, etc.) and, with the support of Yitzhak Gruenbaum, formed the "Minority Bloc" to ensure the minority rights in Poland. In 1926, a series of "consent" regulations were published, in which the Polish government moderated several anti-Jewish regulations in exchange for the disengagement of Jews from the minority bloc, but the status of Jews in Polish politics diminished over the years and Jewish representatives were mostly ostracized. Anti-Semitism increased against them on the part of the other minorities as well, and especially the "National Democratic Party" fought against them<sup>199</sup>.

The various parties and movements also engaged in comprehensive educational activities for their people that included schools, youth movements, yeshivas and more. While in the 1920s most Jewish children belonged to internal Jewish education, whether in religious primary schools ("חדר") and yeshivas or in educational networks such as the Zionist "Tarbut" (תרבות) or the Yiddish "Zisha", in the 1930s more than half of them studied in Polish schools so that they could be admitted to universities and as an expression of secularism among the Jews of Poland.

The Jewish parties operating in Poland had a Zionist, secular and religious orientation according to the division among the Jewish communities throughout Poland. The Zionist parties in Poland constituted mainly of, but not exclusively, secular Jews, the General Zionists, a very large liberal party in

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<sup>199</sup> Cfr. Issac Lewin, *Udział Żydów w wyborach sejmowych w dawnej Polsce*, Warszawa: nakładem Wydawnictwa "Menora", 1932.

Poland, the Poalei Zion Socialist Party, the Mizrahi movement, which represented religious Zionism, and the right-wing Revisionist Party, led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Among the leaders of the Zionist movement in Poland were Yitzhak Gruenbaum and Yehoshua Tahon. The Zionist parties fostered Zionist education by operating an education network called "Tarbut", in which they taught the Hebrew language and educated for national fulfillment in Eretz Israel (Mizrahi operated a religious-Zionist education network called "Yavne"). The parties also operated the youth movements "Dror", "Hashomer Hatzair", "Hechalutz", "Hechalutz Hatzair" and "Beitar" which trained their members to immigrate to Eretz Israel and pioneer settlement there. Training camps were established throughout Poland, where thousands of young people were trained agriculture, in order to integrate into the working class settlement in Eretz Israel. Between 1933 and 1937, 75,000 Jews immigrated to Eretz Israel, fulfilling the actual immigration.

The Agudat Yisrael party was the representative of the ultra-Orthodox, based in the rabbinical courts and the Hasidic movement, which flourished greatly, as well as the large yeshivas that served many as a Torah authority. The party operated the "Horev" network, which included religious primary schools, yeshivahs and Jewish high schools where thousands of children studied. There was also a network of Beit Yaakov girls' schools. The ultra-Orthodox tried through their new institutions to fight the secularization trend that had developed among the Jews.

The secular-non-Zionist Jewish party was the party represented by "Folkists"<sup>200</sup>. It was a secular Jewish party that advocated national autonomy for Jews and Jewish culture, and the Bund movement, which was a workers' party that advocated the settlement of Jews in Poland and fought for the realization of socialism<sup>201</sup>. It operated an education network called "Zisha", which educated socialism and Jewish culture and the Yiddish language<sup>202</sup>.

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<sup>200</sup> Keith Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

<sup>201</sup> Getrud Pickhan, *"Gegen den Strom" : der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund "Bund" in Polen 1918-1939*, Stuttgart-München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001

<sup>202</sup> Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009; *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Zvi Gitelman, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

In parallel with the general elections, local elections were also held for the leadership of the local Jewish community. In this election, many political lists of the Jewish community competed. The election revealed the great internal split within Polish Jewry, alongside the creation of collaborations between opposing movements, such as the Hasidim and the assimilated Jews against the Zionists<sup>203</sup>.

### 2.6.1. The Tragic Years 1939-1945: World War II and The “Shoah”

As a result of Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed in August 1939, on the eve of World War II, Poland was divided in two in September 1939 - the first month of the war, and ceased to function as an independent political entity.

The Germans invaded Western and Central Poland on September 1, 1939, annexing and sponsoring these territories. The persecution of the Jews began in the areas of the heart of Poland, called by the Germans the Generalgouvernement - the territories of the General Government, under the command of Hans Frank. About two million Jews lived in these areas<sup>204</sup>. For the first two years, the Germans contented themselves with plundering Jewish property, compressing Jews in ghettos, and sending them to forced labor<sup>205</sup>. During this period, the Germans operated among the Jews through "Jewish councils" (Judenrat)<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>203</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

<sup>204</sup> The conditions of life were detailly described taking as an example the ghetto of Warsaw by B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nie-istniejącym mieście*, Warszawa 2013; cfr. also A. Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów*, Warszawa 1961; M.R. Marrus, *Holocaust. Historiografia*, Warszawa 1993; J. Marszałek, *Stan badań nad stratami osobowymi ludności żydowskiej Polski oraz nad liczbą ofiar obozów zagłady w okupowanej Polsce*, *Dzieje Najnowsze*, Vol. 26 (1994), no. 2, pp. 33-40; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews: Third Edition*. Yale University Press, 2003; recently it is worth mentioning the book of Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books, 2010; basic facts available at *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 1-4, ed. I. Gutman, New York – Jerusalem 1999.

<sup>205</sup> Witold W. Mędykowski, *Macht Arbeit Frei ? German Economic Policy and Forced Labor of Jews in the General Government, 1939-1943*, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018.

<sup>206</sup> Cfr. F. Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów polskich w latach 1939-1945*, *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*, Vol. 1, Poznań 1946; Malvina Graf, *The Kraków*

The Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland on September 17, 1939 and the fate of the Jews under Soviet occupation was not identical: one group, of Soviet government loyalists among the Jews, gained two more years of relative security under the Soviet umbrella and in the same time they were attacked by fascist and nationalist elements, in the accusation (with some grounds) that the Jews are assisting the Soviet government. The fascists and nationalists from among the Ukrainians and Poles wished for the arrival of the Nazis and an opportunity to be repaid by both the Soviets and the Jews, an opportunity not soon to arrive when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 - Operation Barbarossa<sup>207</sup>.

The second group of Jews, those that the Soviets doubted their loyalty, were exiled to the eastern Soviet Union, to the Gulag, along with other populations (Poles, Ukrainians) who were also suspected of infidelity. It is estimated that 30% of the million to two million people in Eastern Poland who were deported in 1939-1941 were Jews<sup>208</sup>.

With the occupation of parts of Poland held by the Soviet Union in June 1941, special extermination units called the Einsatzgruppen began operating in these areas by systematically killing Jews, usually near shooting pits, and in many cases with the active assistance of local collaborators. By the time the extermination camps were established and the gas extermination institutionalized, entire communities had already been wiped off the earth.

During the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, Dr. Joseph Biller, who was the "Secretary of State" in the General-Gouvernement, suggested to Reinhard Heydrich that to begin the "Final Solution to the Problem of the Jews" in the General Gouvernement<sup>209</sup>. During this period, the systematic

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*Ghetto and the Płaszów Camp Remembered*, Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1983.

<sup>207</sup> Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979.

<sup>208</sup> Witold Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów: pogromy 1941 r. w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej. Kontekst historyczny, społeczny i kulturowy*, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012; *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939-1941*, eds. Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, Kai Struve, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007.

<sup>209</sup> C. Browning, *Geneza „ostatecznego rozwiązania”. Ewolucja nazistowskiej polityki wobec Żydów. Wrzesień 1939 – marzec 1942*, tłum. B. Gutowska-Nowak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo

extermination of the Jews of Europe began, and the first to be elected were the Jews of Poland, under the supervision of the Nazi Governor-General Hans Frank. The first extermination by gas was in Kulm (Chełmno) camp in December 1941<sup>210</sup>. Six major extermination camps were established: Auschwitz, Bełżec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka<sup>211</sup>, where millions of Jews were exterminated<sup>212</sup>. Out of a population of three million Jews before the war, about three hundred and eighty thousand Jews survived after it<sup>213</sup>. Of whom about fifty-five thousand Jews in Poland itself, who were assimilated in the Polish population, hid in forests and among partisans, and the rest returned from labor camps in the Soviet Union, survived the death marches from the concentration and extermination camps in Germany or fought with the Polish armies – e.g. Polish Army under the command of General Władysław Anders and the military units that cooperated with the Red Army, including Jews who managed to leave for Western countries at the beginning of the war.

## 2.6.2. The Polish Society and the Extermination of the Jews

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Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów Europejskich*, vol. 1-3, tłum. J. Giebułtowski, Warszawa: Wydawca Piotr Stefaniuk, 2014.

<sup>210</sup> Cfr. one of the first accounts: W. Bednarz, *Obóz straceń w Chełmnie nad Nerem*, przedmowa W. Bercikowski, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1948; J. Leszczyński, *Od formuły obozu zagłady – Höpner-Chełmno n/Nerem – do Endlösung*, Biuletyn ŻIH, 1977, no. 1 (101), pp. 41-62; *Ośrodek zagłady Żydów w Chełmnie nad Nerem w świetle najnowszych badań. Materiały z sesji naukowej, Konin, 6-7 września 2004 r.*, ed. Łucja Pawlicka-Nowak, Konin 2004; *The extermination center for Jews in Chełmno-on-Ner in the light of the latest research. Symposium proceedings, September 6-7, 2004*, ed. Łucja Pawlicka-Nowak; transl. Arkadiusz Kamiński, Katarzyna Krawczyk, Konin 2004; recently P. Montague, *Chełmno. Pierwszy nazistowski obóz zagłady*, przeł. T. S. Gałązka, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2014; see the original version: Patrick Montague, *Chełmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

<sup>211</sup> R. Reder, *Bełżec*, Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów Polskich, 1946; R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2010; D. Czech, *Konzentrationslager Auschwitz. Zarys historyczny*, in: *Oświęcim. Hitlerowski obóz zagłady*, Warszawa 1981.

<sup>212</sup> T. Berenstein, *Martyrologia, opór i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie lubelskim*, Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, 1957, nr 21; A Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 1961; recently N. Wachsmann, *Historia nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych*, przeł. M. Antosiewicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Świat Książki, 2016.

<sup>213</sup> The question of terminology (genocide, Holocaust, Shoa) was discussed many times, cfr. recently James Loeffler, *The First Genocide: Antisemitism and Universalism in Raphael Lemkin's Thought*, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 112 (2022), No. 1, p. 139-163.



There is controversy over the role of Poles in the extermination of the Jews. After the fall of the communist regime in Poland in 1989, a free and open debate began in Poland on this sensitive issue, which gained momentum following the publication of Jan Gross' book "Neighbors" in 2001<sup>214</sup>.

During the German occupation most Poles were in a struggle for their very existence. They could not actively oppose the extermination of the Jews. There were many cases of Poles risking their lives in an attempt to save Jewish families and help Jews (Righteous Among the Nations).

Nevertheless, the Polish attitude towards the Holocaust on the part of the population as a whole was at times indifferent, and at times even cooperative. The Germans took advantage of the anti-Semitic feelings of the population. Many betrayed their Jewish neighbors, and some made a living as "Jewish hunters." In the Eastern regions of Poland anti-Semitism was particularly strong, and many accused the Jews of aiding the communist regime during the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland in 1939-1941<sup>215</sup>. In the town of Jedwabne in the Bialystok district, the town's Jews were exterminated by the local population before of German occupation, in July 1941. The details of this incident are still controversial, although the Polish government has expressed regret over the local Poles actions towards the Jews. The Poles killed Jews even after the end of the war, however in Poland there were the most Righteous Among the Nations in Europe.

### **2.6.3. The Jews in Poland after 1945**

After World War II Poland was under Soviet influence. Poland returned to independence but was a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union and part of the Eastern bloc. According to various estimates, between 40,000 and 100,000 Jews survived the Holocaust on Polish soil. About 150,000 Jewish refugees returned to it from the Soviet Union, as well as survivors from

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<sup>214</sup> Cfr. his next book too: Jan Gross. *Fear: Anti-semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*: New York, NY: Random House, 2006.

<sup>215</sup> See more at Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007.

Germany and other countries. In all, about 240,000 Jews were in Poland after the war. Some of the Jews who survived the Holocaust sought to integrate into the new Poland while maintaining their identity. The government agreed to the establishment of religious communities that would deal exclusively with the satisfaction of religious needs, and these began to arise in various cities in Poland.

The Jews in Poland encountered hostile treatment by Poles and in several cities pogroms took place again. Attempts by the communist government to fight anti-Semitism failed, and in the years 1945-1947 some 350 Jews were murdered throughout Poland, including 42 people from the remnants of the Jewish community in Kielce in the “Kielce pogrom”<sup>216</sup>.

The Jewish refugees were densely housed in refugee camps (“DP camps”). Most of them wanted to leave Poland. The Zionist movement organized smuggling operations and transferred more than 100,000 Jews to Eretz Israel. Others immigrated to European countries and the United States<sup>217</sup>.

In 1956, Polish Jews were allowed to leave the country and thus about 35,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, some from the Soviet Union who could prove that they were former citizens of Poland. This Aliyah was called the “Gomolka Aliyah”, after General Secretary of the Communist Party Władysław Gomułka. After the Six Day War, Poland, like the other countries in the Eastern Bloc, canceled its diplomatic relations with the State of Israel and took a pro-Arab and anti-Zionist line<sup>218</sup>.

In March 1968, under the guise of a campaign against Zionism, an organized anti-Semitic campaign began in Poland, during which Jews were fired from government positions, and from the army, the party, universities and media and their citizenship was denied. Thousands of Jews left Poland as a result,

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<sup>216</sup> Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe: Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939-1946*, Wołowiec: Czarne, 2012; Her, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*, Vol. 1-2, Warszawa: Czarna Owca, 2018.

<sup>217</sup> Cfr. Marcin Szydzisz, *Odpyw. O działalności teatralnej społeczności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku*, „Notatnik Teatralny”, Vol. 56–57 (2009), p. 362-370; His, *Działalność kulturalna społeczności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku*, „Kwartalnik Historii Żydów”, 2011, no. 237 (1), pp. 65-90, where he presented the question of migration in the context of Lower Silesia.

<sup>218</sup> More about the social processes at D. Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989*, Warszawa 2010; B. Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945–1950*, Wrocław 2000.

and the community was almost completely annihilated. With the fall of the communist regime in 1989, between 5,000 and 10,000 Jews remained in Poland, some of whom hid their Jewish origins. In March 2018, at a ceremony marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the persecution and deportation campaign, Polish President Andrzej Duda asked for forgiveness on behalf of his country for the events of that time<sup>219</sup>.

#### 2.6.4. The Jews in contemporary Poland

Today there is a very small community of Jews in Poland, with an estimated size of 7,000 to 12,000 people. There are claims that cannot be proven, that the real number is larger and is about 100,000 people, most of whom do not define themselves as Jews. Nowadays estimate is that 30,000 to 40,000 people have some affiliation, religious or cultural, with Judaism<sup>220</sup>.

Today's modern and democratic Poland, almost completely devoid of Jews, still deals with the commemoration of Jews who are not in Poland any more. The memory and heritage of Polish Jewry, for its glory and destruction, are prominently represented in many places, and even constitute an important component in Poland's tourism industry<sup>221</sup>. Synagogues throughout Poland, which survived the Holocaust and the period of the communist regime<sup>222</sup>,

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<sup>219</sup> שמעון סאמט, "ח" דת ומסורת בין יהודי פולין", *עיתון הארץ*, 15 בפברואר 1946, עמ. 2.  
(Sammet, 1946)

<sup>220</sup> The question of ethnic, religious or national identity was discussed by J. Cukras, *Młodzi Żydzi w Polsce. Socjologiczna analiza tożsamości społeczno-kulturowej*, „Etnografia Polska”, Vol. 47(2003), no. 1-2, pp. 247–266 or E. Banaszewicz-Ossowska, *Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa młodych Żydów wrocławskich*, „Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej”, 2016, no. 24(1), pp. 53-64; Joanna Cukras-Stelągowska, *Identity and Negotiation of Boundaries Among Young Polish Jews*, in: *Boundaries, Identity and Belonging to Modern Judaism*, ed. Maria Diemling, Larry Ray, London-New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 48-62; Jan Lorenz, *Shades of Closeness: Belonging and Becoming in a Contemporary Polish-Jewish Community*, in: *Boundaries, Identity and Belonging to Modern Judaism*, ed. Maria Diemling, Larry Ray, London-New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 63-75.

<sup>221</sup> Cfr. *Byli wśród nas. Żydzi we Włocławku oraz na Kujawach Wschodnich i w Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej*, red. M. Krajewski, Włocławek 2001.

<sup>222</sup> Cfr. Julia Machnowska, *Sprawy synagog i cmentarzy żydowskich tuż po wojnie w dokumentach Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej*, *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, Vol. 15 (2019), pp. 555-574; K. Urban, *Cmentarze żydowskie, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944-1966 (wybór materiałów)*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2006; M. Piechotka, K. Piechotka, *Bramy nieba. Bóżnice murowane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1999; Rafał Witkowski, *Synagogi Wielkopolski. Wczoraj i dziś*, Poznań 2011.

have been renovated and restored, and some of them become museums for the history of the local Jewish community. In 2013, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews was opened in the area where the Warsaw ghetto stood. Delegations of youth from Israel and the Diaspora come every year on tours in Poland to hear and to learn about Jewish life in Poland before the Holocaust and after its destruction<sup>223</sup>.

In February 2018, the Senate approved the "National Remembrance Law" which provoked much criticism in Israel for what was interpreted as an attempt to remove responsibility from the Poles for their part in the Holocaust<sup>224</sup>.

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<sup>223</sup> R.E. Gruber, *Odrodzenie kultury żydowskiej w Europie*, przeł. z ang. A. Nowakowska, Sejny 2004.

<sup>224</sup> עופר אדרת, *החוק הפולני החדש שמעורר סערה בישראל*, באתר עיתון הארץ 1, בפברואר 2018. (<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/1.5784508> Aderet, 2018)

## Chapter 3:

### Poland-Israel Relations 1989-2020

Seventy-five years after World War II, the trauma of the Holocaust underlies Polish-Israeli relations. Every political expression, political action, social and artistic interaction carries at its core the horrific atrocities that took place in Poland over eighty years ago<sup>225</sup>.

The relations between the two countries have known ups and downs since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. In the background of the relationship has always been the terrible shadow of the history of Polish Jews during World War II. Of the three and a half million Polish Jews over ninety percent were murdered in the Holocaust. Poland in World War II was the focus of the Nazi extermination industry: all six major extermination camps set up by the Nazis were established on its land - Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek. Jews from all over Europe were transported to extermination in these camps. On the question of the number of Polish collaborators with the Nazis I will discuss separately as well as the implications this fact has on Polish-Israeli relations to this day. At the same time it must be noted that the number of "Righteous Among the Nations" recognized by Yad Vashem and the fact that they are Polish citizens, is the largest of all the nations of the world and they number about 7,112 men and women<sup>226</sup>.

In the years 1945-1948 after the end of World War II, Poland supported the Zionist claim to the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in Eretz Israel<sup>227</sup>. This support is expressed in the context of sympathetic coverage by

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<sup>225</sup> Cfr. on broader aspect of understanding the Holocaust in Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.

<sup>226</sup> שמות ומספרי חסידי אומות העולם - לפי ארץ ומוצא אתני, אתר יד ושם (Righteous Names)

<https://www.yadvashem.org/he/righteous.html>

<sup>227</sup> E. Osmańczyk, *Polska i Izrael*, Paryż 1988; M. Chajm, *Stosunek rządów polskich do powstania żydowskiej siedziby narodowej w Palestynie w latach 1945-1948*, Biuletyn ŻIH, 2000, nr 3, s. 356-373; B. Szaynok, *Z historią i Moskwą w tle. Polska a Izrael 1944-1968*,

the Polish press as well as in the framework of official statements by senior members of the Polish government expressing support for the Jewish struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel. The Polish authorities also allowed for military training for Jews which took place in Poland in 1947-8 and which decided to immigrate to Israel and take part in the establishment of Israel as a sovereign state. In all, about 2,500 Jews participated in these military trainings. The sympathetic and pro-Zionist Polish position at the time was reflected in Poland's support for the UN Partition Plan on November 29, 1947, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel as a sovereign state. Following the declaration of Israel's independence on May 14, 1948, Poland was one of the first countries to declare official recognition of the State of Israel and its willingness to establish diplomatic relations with it.

In September of that year, the first Israeli diplomatic delegation led by the Israel Barzilai arrived in Poland. On September 26, 1948, the Israel delegation was established in Warsaw, which was the first diplomatic mission established by a newly born Israel.

Poland's annexation to the Eastern Bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union led to an adverse change in relations between Poland and Israel. The restraining order in the rest of the Communist Bloc on the emigration of Jews to Israel, imposed by the totalitarian ruler of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, also affected Poland to some extent and violated the freedom of Polish Jews to immigrate to Israel, as hitherto supported by the Polish government. It is worth noting that even during this period there was a limited immigration of Jews from Poland to Israel. The cooling of relations between Israel and the Soviet Union since the early 1950s, partly due to the growing pro-Western bias in Israel's foreign policy, has also adversely affected Israeli-Polish relations. At the same time, despite the cooling of relations, even during this period, partial diplomatic and economic relations continued to exist between the two countries, in contrast to other countries throughout the Communist Bloc. During Stalinism, Poland did not carry out a large-scale anti-Zionist

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Warszawa 2007; K. Gebert, *Miejsce pod Słońcem – wojny Izraela*, Warszawa 2008; *Stosunki polsko-izraelskie (1945-1967). Wybór dokumentów*, wyd. Sz. Rudnicki, M. Silber, Warszawa 2009; M. Bunton, *Colonial land policies in Palestine. 1917-1936*, Oxford 2007.

propaganda campaign and did not hold antisemitic show trials, such as the Doctors' Trials which was held in Prague in early 1953<sup>228</sup>.

The relations between the two countries have been temporarily renewed since 1956, a few years after Stalin's death, with the rise to power of the Polish president, the reformist Władysław Gomułka<sup>229</sup>. As part of Gomułka's attempts to reform Poland's foreign and domestic policy as part of a comprehensive de-Stalinization process, Gomułka officially canceled the ban on the immigration of Polish Jews to Israel. As a result, about 50,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. This "Aliyah" was nicknamed the "Gomułka Aliyah"<sup>230</sup>.

However in 1958 Poland decided to stop immigration to Israel, and in July of that year Poland expelled the Israeli diplomat Jacob Barmud.

The Six Day War, which broke out on June 5, 1967, led to a crisis in relations between the two countries. On June 6, a day after the outbreak of War, the Polish government announced a complete severance of diplomatic and economic relations between Israel and Poland, following the official Polish position, largely dictated to it by the Soviet Union, expressed in a statement on "full support of Poland in the just struggle of the United Arab states against the aggressive Israel." This took place against the background of a joint decision by all the countries of the Eastern Bloc, in which all the bloc countries severed relations with Israel, with the exception of Romania. The rift in relations between the two countries also led, for the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel and the establishment of official relations

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<sup>228</sup> Cfr. M. Szydzisz, *Spółeczność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku w świetle działalności Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce w latach 1950-1989*, Wrocław-Warszawa 2019; E. Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja Wyznania Mojżeszowego na Dolnym Śląsku na tle polityki wyznaniowej Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej 1945-1968*, Wrocław 1999; P. Wieczorek, *Żydzi w Wałbrzychu i powiecie wałbrzyskim 1945-1968*, Wrocław-Warszawa 2017.

<sup>229</sup> Cfr. K. Kersten, *Żydzi. Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-1968*, Warszawa 1992; Agnieszka Żółkiewska, *Zerwana przeszłość. Powojenne środowisko żydowskiej inteligencji twórczej. Pomoc materialna i organizacja ze strony CKŻP*, Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2017.

<sup>230</sup> Cfr. M. Szydzisz, *Przejawy antysemityzmu i emigracja ludności żydowskiej z Dolnego Śląska w latach 1956–1957*, in: *Państwo Izrael, analiza politologiczno-prawna*, ed. E. Rudnik, Warszawa 2006, p. 112-129; E. Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy!, wyjeżdżamy!?, Alija gomulowska 1956-1960*, Kraków-Budapeszt 2016; W. Władyka, Z. Rykowski, *Polska próba. Październik 56*, Kraków 1989; Miri Freilich, Sharon Levinas, The Polish Exodus of 1968: Antisemitism, Dropouts, and Re-emigrants, *Nowiny i Kurier*, Polin Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 35 (2023), s. 337-352.

between the two countries, to the launch of an anti-Zionist campaign which led to the expulsion of Jews from power in the country and the abolition of membership in the ruling Communist Party. There is also documentation of a significant increase in the number of manifestations of anti-Semitism throughout Poland during that period<sup>231</sup>.

The anti-Zionist drift among the Polish government worsened in the wake of the "March 1968 events." The events began following a student demonstration on one of the campuses in Warsaw protesting the expulsion of two Jewish students from the university. Subsequently, there were further demonstrations by students in other cities in Poland who expressed disgust at the manifestations of anti-Semitism in Poland with an emphasis on the anti-Semitism of the establishment. In response, the Polish government launched a frontal propaganda attack against the students, claiming that they were acting in the service of "World Zionism" and thus intensified the persecution campaign against the Jews including those who lacked any real affinity for Judaism or Zionism. While hundreds of Jews were expelled from jobs and an unknown number of Jewish students were expelled from universities, an extensive migration movement began from Poland. About 15,000 Jews emigrated from Poland until 1969 with the official encouragement of the Polish government<sup>232</sup>.

Relations between the two countries did not really reconnect, but only following the fall of the communist regime in 1989. In that year, between 5,000 and 10,000 Jews remained in Poland, some of them hiding their identities.

The next period, in which this research will focus, is a period in which empowering events took place for the two countries and the two peoples, and in which different layers broke out and resurfaced that cause both conflicts between the two countries and large-scale collaborations that can only bring hope for a new path of reconciliation and growth.

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<sup>231</sup> אנת פלוצקר, "ארצות מולדת: ניתוק היחסים בין ישראל לפולין, יוני 1967", ישראל, חוברת 20, 2012.  
(Plotzker, 2012)

<sup>232</sup> אנת פלוצקר, "ארצות מולדת: ניתוק היחסים בין ישראל לפולין, יוני 1967", ישראל, חוברת 20, 2012.  
(Plotzker, 2012)



### 3.1. Re-establishing the relationship between Poland and Israel

The discussion was divided in this chapter into several parts. Firstly I'll point out the major events of this period, a kind of timeline. Then I will discuss the social, psychological, political background in Israel before and during the establishment of the relationship, and in the last part of this chapter I will discuss in detail the main events that I mention in the first part of this chapter that took place during these years.

In April 1988, a delegation from Israel with the participation of Education Minister Yitzhak Navon and Minister of Justice Avraham Sharir visited Poland on the occasion of the "First Life March" event and the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. But meetings planned with the parallel echelons of ministers did not take place in the end<sup>233</sup>. Israeli President Navon met with former Polish State Council Chairman Henryk Jabłoński and members of the organizing committee of the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were renewed during Foreign Minister Misha Arens' visit to Warsaw on February 27, 1990, shortly after the fall of the communist regime in Poland, including the outlawing of the Communist Party itself<sup>234</sup>. Immediately afterwards, the Polish government gave its consent to open a transit station in Warsaw, for immigrants from the Soviet Union on their way to Israel; more than 70,000 immigrants arrived this way. The first years were characterized by a number of reciprocal visits, including President Herzog's visit to Poland, President Lech Wałęsa visit to Israel and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to Warsaw to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; Visit of the Prime Minister

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<sup>233</sup> יהודה שיף, דני דור (עורכים), *חמישים לישראל*, אלפא תיקשורת מעריב, 1997. (Shif, 1997)

ברוך מאירי ונורית דברת, "בכיר פולני לשריר: נעשה הכל להעמיד לדין פושעים נאצים", *מעריב*, 17 באפריל 1988. (Meiri, 1988)

על יצחק נבון ומשלחות הנוער לפולין, ארכיון המדינה. (Israel State Archive)

<sup>234</sup> הצעות לסדר היום: עשר שנים לחידוש היחסים הדיפלומטיים עם פולין, אתר הכנסת, ישראל. (Israel Knesset Web)

of Poland Donald Tusk in April 2008; In November 2013, the Prime Minister of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, paid an official visit to Israel, during which he met with the President of the State of Israel, Shimon Peres, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu.

All visits to Israel received very wide media coverage. In all cases, even when the two countries had practical interests - economic, military and political, the preoccupation with the common past was still present in every speech and speech. In all speeches the Holocaust was present in the speeches of the leaders in a hidden or overt manner. The gravity of the past has always been present powerfully both in the content of things and in the pathos of the rhetoric and in a special emphasis on the symbolism in ceremonies. The most scorched visit to the collective Israeli memory is the visit of Lech Walesa to Israel. In 1991, Wałęsa addressed the Knesset of Israel and apologized to the Jewish people. The visit reflects a completely different era in Israeli-Polish relations. During his visit to the President's House, Wałęsa said "Poland has become the most horrific crime scene against the Jewish people – The Holocaust ... The Nazi occupier did not spare the Poles either. In those difficult moments we helped you as much as we could. Many of the Poles were Righteous Among the Nations."

"Jews from all over the world would come to Poland. They found in us hospitality and an atmosphere of tolerance. They found in us a sense of security and conditions for the development of their great culture. Great Jewish scientists and great spiritual leaders worked on Polish soil. Poland was the common home of Poles and Jews alike."

"The Talmud says that everyone who saves a soul from Israel is considered as if he saved a world and its fullness, and whoever takes the life of one person is considered as if he killed a world and its whole. There were evil groves near us. I am a Christian, and I cannot judge in human being tools 20 generations, and 20 centuries of injustice in both our people. Here in Israel, the cradle of your culture, I ask you for forgiveness."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> הנאום המלא של ראש ממשל פולין, הטלוויזיה הישראלית, כאן 11, (TV KAN, 2017) <https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=27477>

On January 17, 2017, Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, visited Israel as a guest of honor of Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein. During the visit, a wreath was laid on the grave of Yoni Netanyahu, the brother of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. At the beginning of his visit, Duda said that "anti-Semitism is a despicable act."<sup>236</sup>

On February 1, 2018, the Polish Senate approved a bill banning accusations of Poles for involvement against Jews in the Holocaust. The law drew sharp criticism in Israel<sup>237</sup>. The crisis between Israel and Poland intensified after Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki was asked about the law and replied that Jews cooperated with the Nazis just as the Poles cooperated<sup>238</sup>.

In September 2019, Polish President Andrzej Duda claimed that Israel was "responsible" for the attacks on Jews and the rise in anti-Semitism in the Poland, after Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that Poles would suck anti-Semitism out of their mother's milk<sup>239</sup>.

In January 2020, no Polish representative attended the event marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which was attended by representatives from more than 40 countries.

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<sup>236</sup> עופר אדרת, "נשיא פולין: פולנים שרצחו יהודים הוציאו עצמם מהעם הפולני", אתר הארץ 17.1.2017.  
(Aderet, Jan 2017)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/.premium-1.3256034>

<sup>237</sup> אריק בנדר, "יריקה בפני ישראל - במערכת הפוליטית זועמים על החוק הפולני", אתר מעריב, 1 בפברואר 2018.  
(Bender, Feb 2018)

<https://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-620300>

<sup>238</sup> ארז לין וסוכנות הידיעות, "ראש ממשלת פולין: היו גם יהודים שעזרו לנאצים", ישראל היום 17 בפברואר 2018.  
(Lin, 2018)

<https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/536415>

נועה לנדאו, "ראש ממשלת פולין: בשואה היו פושעים פולנים כשם שהיו יהודים", אתר הארץ 17 בפברואר 2017.  
(Landau, Feb 2017)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.5825380>

אנטוניה ימין וגילי כהן, "ר"מ פולין: לנאצים היו משתפי פעולה פולנים כשם שהיו משתפי פעולה יהודים", אתר כאן - תאגיד השידור הישראלי 17 בפברואר 2018.  
(Yemin, 2018)

<sup>239</sup> החדשות 12- נשיא פולין, "ישראל היא האחראית לתקיפות האנטישמיות האחרונות", חדשות 12, 27 בספטמבר 2019.  
(TV News 12, Sep 2012)

[https://www.mako.co.il/news-world/2019\\_Q3/Article-dc0243770317d61027.htm](https://www.mako.co.il/news-world/2019_Q3/Article-dc0243770317d61027.htm)

The following is a list of crucial events that I will elaborate later in the research:

1989 - Establishment of the Lauder Foundation

2000 - Jan Gross published his book "Neighbors"<sup>240</sup>.

2001 - Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski expressed remorse over the massacre in Jedwabne on the 60th anniversary of the massacre.

2011 –Jan Grabowski published his book "The Hunt of the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in Poland during the German Occupation"<sup>241</sup>.

Until 1975, there were almost no economic relations between the two countries, largely due to the diplomatic rift between the countries, as well as a pressure of Arab countries, as part of the Arab boycott of the State of Israel. In the years 1975-1986, there was limited initial trade between the two countries, at a low volume, which ranged around \$ 1.5-2.5 million a year.

Beginning in 1986, economic relations between the two countries began to gain momentum. Among other things, following the first buds of the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, which allowed Poland to increasingly disregard the dictates of the Soviet Union with regard to its foreign policy. In 1987, Poland established for the first time an official business representation in Tel Aviv, which was intended to assist in promoting economic relations between the two countries. In 1989, regular commercial flights began between the two countries - which contributed greatly to the establishment of reciprocal trade relations<sup>242</sup>. During 2006, the flight agreement was upgraded and allowed the existence of charter flights between the two countries without restriction<sup>243</sup>.

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<sup>240</sup> Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, Poland, Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>241</sup> Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 2013.

<sup>242</sup> פרסום משרד החוץ הישראלי, התרחבות יחסי המסחר עם פולין, 1989. ( Israel Foreign Ministry, )  
(1989)

[https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry\\_of\\_foreign\\_affairs](https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry_of_foreign_affairs)

<sup>243</sup> ערוץ 7, "בקרוב טיסות שכר ללא הגבלה בין פולין וישראל" ערוץ 7, 16 במרץ 2006. ( TV Channel 7)

Following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1990, the volume of mutual trade between the two increased considerably, thanks in part to the signing of a tax treaty between the two countries, which was signed on May 22, 1991<sup>244</sup>.

During June 2003, during a conference on business development between Israel and Poland, held at the Sheraton Hotel in Tel Aviv, chaired by Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Michael Ratzon, it was revealed that the volume of Israeli investments in Poland at that time was about \$ 1 billion<sup>245</sup>.

During February 2004, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor and Deputy Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert paid an official visit to Poland, during which he met with senior members of the Polish regime, including Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski. Poland offered to support Israel's request to join the Organization of Developed Countries. This happened in part, due to the Polish interest in Israeli technological knowledge and experience including homeland security technologies<sup>246</sup>.

In 2011, the volume of trade between the two countries was estimated at more than half a billion dollars a year, of which the annual import from Poland to Israel was \$ 283 million, and the annual export to Poland of Israeli products was about \$ 269 million. The main areas in which mutual trade is concentrated are the field of electro-mechanical industrial products (about 35% of the volume of trade between the countries) and agricultural and food products (about 19% of the volume of trade between the countries)<sup>247</sup>.

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<https://www.inn.co.il/News/Section.aspx/1/80>

<sup>244</sup> אמנה למניעת כפל מס בין פולין לישראל, אתר ממשלת ישראל, 22.5.1991. (Israel Gov. web, 1991)

[https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/DynamicCollectors/international\\_agreements?skip=0&country=56](https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/DynamicCollectors/international_agreements?skip=0&country=56)

<sup>245</sup> כנס לפיתוח עסקים בין ישראל לפולין, אתר משרד הכלכלה, יוני 2003. (Israel Gov web, 2003)

[https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry\\_of\\_economy](https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry_of_economy)

<sup>246</sup> פגישות אולמרט בפולין אתר משרד הכלכלה, 2003. (Israel Gov. web, Olmert, 2003)

[https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry\\_of\\_economy](https://www.gov.il/he/departments/ministry_of_economy)

<sup>247</sup> שיתוף פעולה כלכלי בין פולין לישראל, אתר שגרירות פולין בישראל. (Israel Gov. web)

The Foreign Trade Administration of the Ministry of Economy of Israel operates an economic attaché in Warsaw that works to promote trade between the two countries and assists Israeli companies interested in doing so in Poland<sup>248</sup>.

November 2013 as part of an official visit by the President of Poland to Israel, representatives of Israel and Poland have signed a memorandum of understanding regarding scientific cooperation. The signing took place following the visit of the Minister of Science, Technology and Space, Yaakov Perry, in June of that year to Warsaw.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of Israeli real estate tycoons invested in construction projects in Poland. Prominent among them was Motti Zisser, a Holocaust survivor from Lodz whose company Plaza Centers built ten malls throughout Poland. In those days construction for Israeli entrepreneurs was very worthwhile, as the costs for Israelis were very low in Poland and because of the credit terms they received. This entrepreneurship in Poland contributed to both Israeli and Polish entrepreneurs. In 2008 with the world real estate crisis, this entrepreneurship has diminished and many of the entrepreneurs have moved to cheaper countries in Eastern Europe like Hungary and Romania or to countries in the Far East such as India. At the same time, there is currently an Israeli construction company "Ronson" operating in Poland that builds apartment buildings and there are Israelis who buy apartments mainly in Warsaw due to the low cost compared to Israel and the rents that increase over the years.

There are close security relations between Israel and Poland, including between the Polish secret services and the Israeli intelligence community, which work together as part of the war against terror<sup>249</sup>. The IDF holds joint exercises with the Polish army, which since 2012 also include joint air exercises. During November 2013, and during the Polish President's visit to

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<sup>248</sup> טל הרמלין, בבלוג מינהל סחר חוץ. (Hermelin) [www.israel-trade.net](http://www.israel-trade.net)

<sup>249</sup> אמנון ברזילי, "ישראל ופולין יילחמו במשותף בטרור", אתר הארץ, 21 במרץ 2002. (Barzily, 2002)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.781367>

Israel, it was stated that Poland is interested in increasing cooperation with Israel's defense industries, and signing huge deals, amounting to hundreds of millions of Euros<sup>250</sup>.

The glorious cultural history of Polish Jewry has been widely recognized among Polish governments since the fall of Communism. The governments of Poland, with the assistance of Jewish organizations and especially the Lauder Foundation, devote much effort to the preservation and presentation of Jewish culture in Poland. Among other things, the Polish government budgets an annual sum intended for the preservation and restoration of ancient synagogues in the country and also maintains a subsidy program for cultural institutions in the country, including Jewish theaters in Yiddish<sup>251</sup>.

In 2000, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Polish Institute in Israel, which aimed to promote and disseminate Polish culture in Israel. As part of its activities, it holds various events in all areas of culture, conducts courses in Polish and has an extensive library in Polish.

The large number of Israeli citizens who came from Poland led to the establishment of a large number of independent associations, which work to commemorate the memory of the Jewish communities in Poland. These organizations include the Association of Polish Expatriates in Israel, which is constantly working to hold commemorative events as well as to reconstruction synagogues and Jewish public buildings throughout Poland. This is in cooperation with members of the Jewish community in Poland and with the support of the Polish government.

The extensive cooperation between the two countries led to the declaration of 2009 as "the year of Poland in Israel." The project began in 2008 and lasted

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<sup>250</sup> יוסי מלמן, "פולין ביקשה להגביר את שיתוף הפעולה עם ישראל בתחום המל"טים", מעריב סופשבוע, 8 בנובמבר 2013. (Melman, 2013)

גילי כהן, "צפו: חילות האוויר של ישראל ופולין מתאמנים", אתר הארץ, 14 במרץ 2012. (Cohen, 2012)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1663944>

<sup>251</sup> גל הורוביץ, פולין האחרת, אתר ישראל היום 22 ביולי 2011. (Horovitz, 2011)

<https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/37154>

until April 2009. It was a joint initiative of the Israeli Ministry of Culture and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the project was to contribute to strengthening the ties between Israeli society and Polish society, by strengthening the cultural, economic, scientific and tourism ties between the citizens of the two countries<sup>252</sup>. During this year, the Polish government supported more than 140 different cultural projects, in the total sum of 3 million Euros. In November 2013, the Polish Institute in Israel initiated Polish Food Week, which hosted over 40 events in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv, events that received extensive media coverage in Israel.

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<sup>252</sup> פולין וישראל מפיקות בול משותף, אתר ניוז 1, נובמבר 2018.

<https://www.israelpost.co.il/postboolaee.nsf/HanpakotView/BEB816C50C010989C225835800416058?OpenDocument>



### 3.2. The Discourse on the Holocaust as an Element in the Collective Memory in Israel

It is impossible to discuss Israeli society without understanding that the Holocaust is basis of the Israeli collective consciousness and memory. It is not surprising then, that after almost thirty years of attempts and also successes for cooperation between Poland and Israel, in the last two years (2018-2020) the past has emerged in full force on both sides and sabotaged what has been built.

Professor Moshe Zuckerman argues that it is never possible to remember all the information pertaining to the past event of a given social unit. This memory becomes even more complex and multidimensional, with the public having to make some decision that pertains to the memory of events that have some degree of internal contradiction or about which there are different versions. The decision is made through processes of sorting and selection. The choice, it should be noted, does not always fall on pleasant events, but rather the public often chooses the horrors of the past as the basis of the collective consciousness, in recognition of the ideological and psychological function that this choice fulfills. Zuckerman further argues that the concept of collective memory is related to a cultural array and both are characterized by a distance from the everyday world of life while having a prominent and clear affinity for major events related to a nation's past<sup>253</sup>.

On this issue of the relationship between memory and history, Schwartz argues, different approaches can be discerned, one known as radical and represented by Halbwachs and the other, known as conservative and represented by Durkheim and Schiles<sup>254</sup>. Halbwachs (1980) argues that history and memory are two opposing forms of expression of the past. The study of historical sources is perceived by him as detached from the pressures of socio-political reality, while collective memory is an organic part

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<sup>253</sup> 29 משה צוקרמן, שואה בחדר האטום – השואה בעתונות הישראלית בתקופת מלחמת המפרץ, מפעלים אוניברסיטאיים, תל אביב, 1993. (Zukerman, 1993).

<sup>254</sup> B. Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington", *American Sociological Review*, 1991, Vol. 56 pp. 221-236.

of social life. Therefore, collective memory is a knowledge that is in the process of change and transformation in accordance with the changing needs of society. A different kind of knowledge is sensitive to the present commandment and deciphered according to the social code<sup>255</sup>.

Shapira (1994) presents a similar position by saying that historians are nothing but "memory agents". These shape the past according to present consumers and project this image back to historical research. It sometimes emphasizes that mechanisms such as the press or cinema have a greater impact on the formation of the past, compared to historical studies that are pushed to the margins of the public consciousness<sup>256</sup>.

In Halbwachs' view the only way to understand an individual's memory is to refer to the social framework<sup>257</sup>. In saying this he is based on Durkheim's conception of the existence of social facts, which are known to have two salient features: first, they exist outside the consciousness of the individual, and secondly they dictate the behavior of the individual<sup>258</sup>.

Therefore, the collective memory cannot be seen as an arithmetic collection of the memories of the individuals that make it up, society expresses its worldview through institutions, laws, norms, rituals and everything that is a cultural product.

Referring to cultural memory, Nore (1993) emphasizes the gap between memory and history, memory is a living thing and is therefore always subject to processes of recollection and forgetfulness, to turmoil, to manipulation. History is the presumed reconstruction of what is no longer there, while memory is always an actual phenomenon. History is seen as an intellectual and secularization act that invites critical discourse. Memory places the

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<sup>255</sup> M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York, Harper and Row, (1950) 1980  
256 אניטה שפירא, "היסטוריוגרפיה וזיכרון: מקרה לטרון תש"ח", *אלפיים*, 10, עמ' 9-41 (Shpira, "Alpaim")

<sup>257</sup> M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York, Harper and Row, (1950) 1980.

<sup>258</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Methods*, New York, Free Press, 1964.

recollection in the realm of the sacred while history shakes it away. Memory is absolute while history is relative<sup>259</sup>.

The conservative approach represented, as stated, by Dirckheim and Schils emphasizes the continuity that exists between the past and the present and therefore one can speak of a certain stability in the collective memory.

Schwartz (1991) argues that there is no place for presenting these two theories as two conflicting models to be decided between, since historical reality shows that different groups choose between these two patterns according to their needs<sup>260</sup>.

Referring to the radical conception, Schwartz (1986) argues that it overemphasizes the adaptive element of collective memory, an element that adapts itself to circumstances that change so much that it undermines historical continuity, he argues that there is no possibility of producing a past because of documented history, but It can only be used selectively so that it will serve the present<sup>261</sup>.

Zerubavel (1994) emphasizes the discourse that takes place between the past and the present and its ability to give power to the collective memory and maintain its vitality. Nor does she accept Nore's conception (Nore, 1989) that historiography pushes memory to the point of opposing it, since the counter-pressure that memory exerts on history can be proved in the same way. The basic argument of Zerubavel is that even historical researches cannot shatter myths that represent popular perceptions about the past<sup>262</sup>.

Referring to the collective Jewish memory, Yerushalmi (1988) argues that the basic metaphors that shape the collective Jewish consciousness are the Exodus from Egypt and the destruction of the Temple. These elements have

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<sup>259</sup> Pierre Nore, "Between Memory and History Les Lieux de Memoire", *Representations*, 1989, Vol. 26, p. 12-14.

<sup>260</sup> B. Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington", *American Sociological Review*, 1991, Vol. 56 pp. 146-164.

<sup>261</sup> Schwartz B., Zerubavel Y. and Barnett B. M., "The Recovery of Masada: A Study of Collective Memory", *The Sociological Quarterly*, 1986, Vol 27, pp. 146-164.

<sup>262</sup> זרובבל י., "מות הזכרון וזכרון המוות, מצדה והשואה כמטפורות היסטוריות", אלפיים, 1994, עמ. 42-67. (Zrubavel, 1994).

the power to legitimize various events, in the sense that historical events penetrate the collective memory only to the extent that they can be understood as part of two paradigms: from slavery to freedom or from destruction to redemption, in this context the State of Israel compares the Holocaust to destruction and the establishment of Israel to redemption<sup>263</sup>.

The collective memory of society finds its expression in various channels, one of the main of which is the socio-cultural discourse. Foucault (1984) argues that the discourse serves as a particular tool in conserving power and disseminating the value system of the ruling group in a given society. He refers to the essence of the discourse through two main concepts: "the archeology of knowledge" and "the archeology of discourse" according to his conception the connections between the past and the present are the connections of language and not of reality, so they are forced. Foucault makes it clear that discourse is an institutional power structure and therefore those with knowledge have the legitimacy to determine the truth. He therefore chooses to distinguish between two groups of historians: those called "historians on behalf" and working for national movements and therefore they provide, within the existing discourse, scaffolding for the national story, and critical historians tend to see nationalism as a human invention of a story designed to satisfy certain needs<sup>264</sup>.

The suspicion of the validity of the narrative led various scholars to engage with a different aspect of the narrative, i.e. not within us but according to the fact that a particular group was concerned with adopting the particular narrative or version. Lyotard (1988) points on the existence of two types of discourse whose presence side by side encourages continuous confrontations between the parties. It actually describes two types of discourse that maintain a competitive relationship between them, which one discourse becomes dominant while the other remains expressionless. Lyotard is basically dealing

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<sup>263</sup> ירושלמי י., זכור, היסטוריה יהודית וזכרון יהודי, תל אביב, עם עובד, 1988. (Yerushalmi, 1988)

<sup>264</sup> M. Foucault, The Other of Discourse, in M.J. Shapiro (ed.) *Language and Politics*, New York University, New York, 1984. (Oxford, Blackwell), pp.108-138.

with a situation where individuals or groups are expelled from the territory of the discourse, that is, they are unable to express their values and positions<sup>265</sup>.

Further, in the research I would like to show how the historical, social and cultural discourse is subordinated to the political and personal needs of those in power both in Poland and in Israel and how they not only build one dominant narrative but also produce it.

### 3.3. State Discourse in Israeli Society

With regard to the cultural-political discourse conducted in a particular society, the ideological-cultural elements that characterize the society in question must be examined. The state discourse dominated Israeli society mainly between the years 1973-1948, but the traces still exist today. Ohana and Wistrich (1996), for example, argues that Israeli society until 1973 was characterized by the sanctification of statehood, contentment with little, the sanctification of collective memory and its preference on the private memory, the sanctification of nationalism, and so on<sup>266</sup>.

It is important to clarify that the state discourse contains many dimensions, such as "the new Jew", "redemption of the land", etc. The present discussion will focus on those dimensions that seem relevant to this research.

The principle of statehood was the central principle that characterized the conception of Ben-Gurion and his contemporaries. Statehood can be defined in various ways, but its clear message according to Don Yehiya (1983) indicates the centrality of the state and its superiority over factors within or outside it<sup>267</sup>. Don Yehiya (1993) defines statehood as "a Hebrew concept that

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<sup>265</sup> J.F. Lyotard, *The Differend – Phrase in Dispute*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988.

<sup>266</sup> ויד אוחנה ור. ס. ויסטריך, "נוכחות המיתוסים ביהדות, בציונות ובישראליות", *מיתוס וזיכרון גלגוליה של התודעה הישראלית*, מכון ואן ליר, ירושלים, עמ. 11-37. (Ohana, "Mitos")

<sup>267</sup> דון יחיה א., "ממלכתיות ושואה: תפיסות של יהדות וציונות והתגובות לשואה במדינת ישראל בשנים הראשונות לקיום המדינה", *בשבילי התחיה, מחקרים בציונות הדתית*, אוניברסיטת בר אילן, עמ. 167-188. (Don Yehiya, Bar Ilan)

establishes the principle that the interests of the state must be given absolute priority." It is no coincidence that this was the principle that guided Ben-Gurion and his contemporaries<sup>268</sup>.

This state perception is expressed in various fields. With regard to the vocation of the Jewish people in general and of the State of Israel in particular, statehood was expressed in statements such as "a people of virtue" ("עם סגולה") and "light to the Gentiles" ("אור לגויים"). In the narrow political sphere, statehood has filed a demand for the concentration of power and authority in the hands of state authorities, at the expense of voluntary particular factors. In the cultural sphere, this perception reflected the tendency to make the State of Israel a focal point for feelings of loyalty and identification with the Jewish people. One of the main means of this was to emphasize values and symbols at the center of the state and its institutions. In those years the attitude towards the memory of the Holocaust was minor although many of the citizens of Israel after the establishment of the state and in the fifties were Holocaust survivors. All this out of a desire to establish a founding myth for the "New Israeli" and his future.

There was a fear in the 1950s that the memory of the Holocaust would "interfere" with the creation of a lifestyle and culture that the state and its leaders wanted to encourage. Whenever Ben-Gurion or his people addressed the issue of the Holocaust, they did so for the purpose of drawing the main lesson from the tragedy, namely, the inability of the Jews to live safely outside the borders of the State of Israel.

Don Yehiya (1993) emphasizes that the Ben-Gurion-style state or state perception was not expressed in a planned forgetfulness of the Holocaust and its victims but in avoidance, an avoidance based on the view that the urgent national missions of the young state's agenda necessitate educating the people, especially the youngsters among them on myths of victory and

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<sup>268</sup> E. Don-Yehiya, "Memory and Political Culture: The Israeli Society and the Holocaust", *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Vol. 9, pp. 139-182.

heroism and not of humiliation and defeat<sup>269</sup>. This position of Yehiya about the attitude of Ben Gurion to the Holocaust is supported also by Shtaubert. His research shows that Ben-Gurion did not participate, for example, in any of the Holocaust memorial events held by Yad Vashem and did not even visit this institution<sup>270</sup>.

Shapira (1999) does not accept this position, but clarifies that the paucity of textbooks on the Holocaust in the first decade of the state's existence as well as the delay in establishing state memory patterns for the Holocaust, are related to the fact that these are the first days of the state, days when no state of memory patterns were established. Even the country's first Independence Day entered the country's collective consciousness as a "non-march." Shapira claims that many urgent matters were on the agenda of the young state, such as the Security Service Law, the State Education Law, the absorption of immigrants and more, and therefore the ceremonies and commemorations were pushed to the margins. Shapira rejects the connection between statehood and the minor importance given to the memory of the Holocaust in the early years of the state<sup>271</sup>.

It is clear that such intense, close and clear trauma and memory cannot be erased over time and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 was a turning point.

Segev (1991) argues that the most significant turning point in terms of Holocaust consciousness was brought about by the Eichmann trial and its continuation can be seen in the Demyanyuk trial that took place in the late 1980s. Segev clarifies that Gideon Hausner, the plaintiff in the Eichmann trial, was aware of the weighty significance of the trial and therefore said, among other things: "Every criminal proceeding also has an educational aspect. It captivates attention, reflects an event and teaches a lesson. I believe that this

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<sup>269</sup> דון יחיה א., "ממלכתיות ושואה: תפיסות של יהדות וציונות והתגובות לשואה במדינת ישראל בשנים הראשונות לקיום המדינה", בשבילי התחיה, מחקרים בציונות הדתית, אוניברסיטת בר אילן, 1993, עמ' 167-188. (Don Yehiya).

<sup>270</sup> שטאובר ר., הלקח לדור שואה וגבורה במחשבה הציבורית בארץ בשנות החמישים, יד יצחק בן צבי, ירושלים, 2000. (Shtaubert, 2000).

<sup>271</sup> אניטה שפירא, "ההיסטוריה של המיתולוגיה – קווים להיסטוריוגרפיה אודות בן גוריון והשואה", אלפיים, 1999, כרך 18, עמ' 24-53. (Shapira, 1999).

goal can be achieved and that the information can be conveyed to the people of Israel and to the entire world, mainly ... through the words of the witnesses." <sup>272</sup>

According to Shapira (1977), the Eichmann trial was the first landmark, other landmarks were: one is the waiting period before the Six Day War and the second period is the Yom Kippur War and after it. In both periods, the collective experience of the horror of extermination was linked to the Holocaust period. The political change of 1977, when Menahem Begin won the elections and became the Prime Minister of Israel, was also seen as significant point in this process. This is a point that in the opinion of Shapira and others is the beginning of the shattering of the "Sabra" myth as perceived until then. The beginning of the search and formation of new images and therefore one of the most notable changes brought about by the 1977 elections was the giving legitimacy to the Jewish immigrants from Arab countries and Holocaust survivors<sup>273</sup>.

It goes without saying that the establishment of the state and the first years after the establishment of the state were in the shadow of the Holocaust. It is true that the Holocaust survivors did not speak many times because they chose to, or were unable to talk about the horrors of the Holocaust and because they did not receive public legitimacy, but the Holocaust as a trauma was present and is still present among the survivors' families for generations<sup>274</sup>. In fact, the Holocaust exists till these days in the Israel in many aspects; in politics, culture and even the basis of the various ideologies that exist in Israel. Beyond the historical reasons as I described earlier, many researchers have described the traumatic and post-traumatic processes including Cathy Caruth who argued that trauma is unrepresentable, markable, but always gets revisited in various forms. Traumatic events will forever resurface from the past. Although after a delay, but will always be present.

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<sup>272</sup> תום שגב, המיליון השביעי – הישראלים והשואה, הוצאת דומינו, ירושלים, 1991, עמ' 320-321. (Segev, ) (1991)

<sup>273</sup> אניטה שפירא, "בין שואה למלחמה", אניטה שפירא (עורכת), יהודים חדשים ויהודים ישנים, עם עובד, תל אביב, 1977, עמ' 104-121. (Shapira, 1977)

<sup>274</sup> More at Kaja Kaźmierska, *Biografia i pamięć na przykładzie pokoleniowego doświadczenia ocalonych z zagłady*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2008.



Caruth talks about a history that is inconceivable and therefore not fully understandable, but will always re-emerge<sup>275</sup>. Ann Kaplan coined the term indirect or secondary trauma. This is the trauma of the relatives of those who actually experienced the trauma. It refers also to therapists, friends, students, but mostly family members of those who had the initial trauma<sup>276</sup>. Marianne Hirsch coined the term post-memory, it is a memory whose connections to the source are not mediated through true memories of things experienced, but result from the completion of open spaces through imagination<sup>277</sup>.<sup>52</sup> Lacan speaks of *das Ding*, of the wound, of what is always left open missing and is also the center of our passion<sup>278</sup>.

The attitude of Israelis as well as of Israel as a state to Poland and Poles cannot be detached from the attitude towards the Holocaust. Relations between the two countries have known ups and downs, as I have already shown in the timeline at the beginning of this chapter, but when I analyze each of the events separately, I would like to show how even in political relations driven by political, economic and other interests, Holocaust trauma and memory are key to examining the relations between the two countries.

### 3.4. The Struggle Over the Narrative or What is the Truth

At the core of Israeli-Polish relations is a wound that is still bleeding for more than seventy years after the Holocaust. Broadly speaking, there is a tendency to say that most Jews think that most Poles were collaborators with the Nazis in one way or another, that they were informers and responsible for their murder both indirectly and directly for the murder of a huge number of Jews

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<sup>275</sup> Cathy Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings (Freud, Lacan and the Ethics of Memory)," in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 91-112.

<sup>276</sup> Ann Kaplan, "Global Trauma and Public Feelings: Viewing Images of Catastrophe", *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 11:1, pp. 3-24.

<sup>277</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetic Today*, 28.1, 2008.

<sup>278</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, Introduction of The Thing*, seminar December 23, 1959.

both during and after the war. It was not a coincidence that many Israelis claim that the vast majority of extermination camps were actually built in Poland. On the other hand, it can be said that many Poles see their people as victims of the actions of the Germans, since their country was occupied by the Germans and about three million Poles were killed in World War II.

With the collapse of Communist rule and the exposure of Poland to the West, a process of seeking Polish identity began and within this process a public discourse on the relationship between the Poles and the Jews. This process culminated with the publication of "Neighbors," the book by Thomas Gross, an American sociologist of Polish Jewish origin<sup>279</sup>,<sup>54</sup> about the horrific massacre in the town of Jedwabne. In his book, Gross describes how the locals beat, murdered, and burned the 1,600 Jewish neighbors, acts that were hitherto attributed to the Germans.

The book, dubbed by Polish historian Jacek Jakowski, "a delayed atomic bomb", sparked a fierce debate about the responsibility of the murder of Jews by the Poles in the Holocaust and right after that<sup>280</sup>. The discussion defined by Poland's Chief Rabbi Michael Shudrich as "a difficult and sincere process"<sup>281</sup> highlighted the polarization in Polish society between the minority trying to deal honestly with the Jewish Polish past and the defensive majority, denying and refusing to examine this past.

In 2011, Professor Jan Grabowski's book "Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland" was published<sup>282</sup>. The name of the book, "The Hunt for Jews" is derived from the German terminology *Judenjaged* which means hunt of Jews. The study is about the phenomenon *Judenjaged* which describes murderous search of Poles for Jews who managed to escape the ghettos and sought refuge with Poles in occupied

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<sup>279</sup> Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>280</sup> An essay by Żukowski, Jacek, translated to Hebrew from Polish,

יאצק ז'קובסקי, "לכל אדם יש שם", *החשבון הפוליטי: עימות עם זכרון*, מ. פז, תל אביב, 2007, עמ' 91.

<sup>281</sup> S. Penn, "American Press Coverage of Poland's Role in the Holocaust". *Rethinking Poles and Jews. Troubled past, brighter future*, Cherry, Orla-Bukowska (eds.) Lanham, 2007, p.61.

<sup>282</sup> Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*, Yad Vashem Press, 2017.

Poland. The *Judenjaged* is actually the title of a daily report made by the German police about how many Jews were caught or killed at that specific day. Grabowski describes the dimensions of population involvement of the Polish locals in the extradition and murder of Jews. More than 200,000 Jews were directly or indirectly murdered by Poles during World War II according to Grabowski's calculations<sup>283</sup>.

Grabowski focused his book on a rural area in southeastern Poland. Dąbrowa Tarnowska. On the eve of World War II, 5,000 of its 60,000 inhabitants were Jews. The vast majority were deported to the Bełżec extermination camp during the Holocaust. Of the 500 who managed to escape this fate and hide among the Poles, only 38 of them survived after the war. The rest, as Grabowski found out, were murdered in direct or indirect actions by their Polish neighbors who betrayed them.

Is the case of Dąbrowa Tarnowska a single case or does it reflect a broader phenomenon? What are the dimensions of the phenomenon? Grabowski says it is very difficult to get accurate numbers, but explains his calculation as follows: "About 10 percent of Polish Jews fled the ghetto eradication in 1942 and 1943. There are about 250,000 people who tried to survive in hiding. At the end of the war, about 35,000 Polish Jews survived the war in Poland itself - not including those who fled to the USSR and returned to Poland after the war." And so if we subtract the number of Jews who managed to escape and hide, from the number of those who survived at the end of the war - 250,000

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<sup>283</sup> See more of the academic dispute at Jan T. Gross, Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, t. 1-2, wyd. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018; David Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946*, Yad Vashem Studies, vol. 26 (1998); Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, New York: Random House, 2006; *Klucze i kasa: O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939-1950*, wyd. Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2014; Yechiel Weizman, *Unsettled possession: The question of ownership of Jewish sites in Poland after the Holocaust from a local perspective*, Jewish Culture and History, Vol. 18, no. 1 (2017), pp. 34-53; Monika Krawczyk, The Effect of the Legal Status of Jewish Property in Post-War Poland on Polish-Jewish Relations, in: *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944-2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014, p. 791-821; Łukasz Krzyżanowski, *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City*, tran. Madeline G. Levine, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020; Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews. The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933-1945*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

less 35,000 Polish Jews -we get what he calls "the extent of the dark area, where Poles, in most cases, were the ones who decided who would live and who would die."<sup>284</sup>

Among other things, he notes that the great majority of the Jews who were in hiding perished in the course of treason. They were extradited, or simply seized and handed over by the locals to the nearest police station or German gendarmerie.

Grabowski describes in the book a complete mechanism by which the Jews were hunted. It operated under German supervision, but its field men were all Poles: villagers who conducted "night shifts", local informants, police officers, firefighters and others. All of these, according to Grabowski, created a dense network, which hardly allowed the hiding-places not to be discovered<sup>285</sup>.

Grabowski emphasizes that the real number of Jews murdered by Poles is even higher than he estimates, because he says, "This account is very conservative, because it does not include the Jewish victims of the Blue Polish police, which was a deadly force not only after the ghettos, but also during"<sup>286</sup>. To bolster his claim, he recruits Emmanuel Ringenblum, the Warsaw Ghetto historian, who claimed that the Polish police were responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands.

In his book, Grabowski also describes other cases of Poles who assisted their Jewish neighbors and paid for them with their lives, as well as cases of Poles who helped the Jews for money and then extorted them with the intention of obtaining more money and eventually murdering them.

Professor Grzegorz Berendt of the University of Gdansk replied to professor Grabowski<sup>287</sup>. Professor Berendt makes two main claims: The first claim is universal and concerns the character of people in general: "No country has

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<sup>284</sup> Ofer Aderet, "Bad Neighbors", *Haaretz*, February 3, 2017, p. 44. An essay published in Haaretz newspaper in Hebrew.

<sup>285</sup> Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*, Yad Vashem Press, 2017, pp. 145-168.

<sup>286</sup> Ofer Aderet, "Bad Neighbors", *Haaretz*, February 3, 2017, pp. 42-45. An essay published in Haaretz newspaper in Hebrew.

<sup>287</sup> Grzegorz Berendt, "The Government warned of Cooperation with the Nazis", *Haaretz*, February 17, 2017, p.7.

succeeded to date, in creating a situation in which all its citizens are decent, law-abiding, and straightforward, nor has this succeeded in any nation that has no state of its own and no religious community. The question is whether to evaluate that civil, national or religious community according to the norms it tries to inculcate among its members or by the behavior of those who ignore these norms. The answer to this question is essential when discussing Polish Jewish relations during World War II.

The second argument is concrete and touches on the specific situation in Poland during World War II and immediately after. Professor Berendt claims that the number that Professor Grabowski speaks of - 200,000 Jews who fled ghettos and camps - is not a correct number. It is now known, that the number of Jews who fled the territory of occupied Poland was at least 50,000 in rough estimation. No other number has been proven.

Professor Berendt ends his article as follows: "There is no argument that thousands of Polish citizens increased the Jewish tragedy because of the occupation threats, anti-Semitism or poverty and greed. However, there is no consensus for extending the responsibility for their crimes to tens of millions of people who did not commit any Crime. In the cultural world, the principle of guilt is not respected according to the hypothesis."

The debate between Professor Grabowski and Professor Berendt is at the heart of the debate on the part of the Poles in the Holocaust, at the center of which is whether the Poles were victims of the Nazis or collaborators with the Nazis - and where to place them in relation to the fate of their Polish-Jewish neighbors. Were the Poles victims, were they murderers or just indifferent?

And the more universal question that arises from this is: Will not every society have cowards, greed, various collaborators and also heroes, and moral men? Is Poland different from any other country? These questions arise in Poland and in Israel again and again seventy years after the war.

As I wrote before, the publication of the book "Neighbors" is considered as a significant milestone in Polish-Jewish relations in recent decades. On July 10, 2001, a ceremony was held to mark the 60th anniversary of the massacre of

Jews in Jedwabne. The fact that ceremony was held, the erection of the monument in Jedwabne and the speech of the President of Poland at the ceremony are also a significant milestone in Israeli-Polish relations. The following are parts from the speech of Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski at the ceremony<sup>288</sup>:

“Sir, Ambassador of the State of Israel, Honorable Rabbi Becker, Representatives of Jewish Organizations, Mr. Mayor, Distinguished Residents of Jedwabne, Ladies and Gentlemen, my people Bnei! 60 years ago, on July 10, 1941, a crime was committed against the Jews on this land, then occupied by Nazi Germany. It was a terrible day. A day of hatred and cruelty.

We know a great deal about this massacre, though not everything yet, we may never know the whole truth, but this does not prevent us from being here today and speaking out loud. We know enough to stand in the face of the truth, in the face of the pain, cries and suffering of those who have been murdered, to stand up to their families here, and to the judgment of our conscience. It was a crime, and nothing justifies it. Among the victims, among those burned, were women and children, the cries of terror of the people locked in the barn, who were burned alive, still paralyze the memory of those who witnessed this crime. The victims were helpless and defenseless. The criminals had a feeling that everything was allowed, and even the German occupiers encouraged them to do so. We know with complete confidence that among the persecutors and executioners were Poles. We have no shadow of a doubt - here in Jedwabne, the citizens of the Polish Republic were murdered at the hands of other Polish citizens ... people to people, neighbors to neighbors, decided their fate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

60 years ago they wanted to erase Poland from the map of Europe, the Polish authorities were not in Jedwabne. The Polish state was unable to protect its citizens from murder committed with the consent and inspiration of the Nazis. But Poland should have continued to exist in the hearts and minds of Poles.

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<sup>288</sup> שבח וייס, ימי שגריר, יוהנה שוידובסקה משוחחת עם שבח וייס, הוצאת הקיבוץ המאוחד, ישראל, 2003.  
(Weiss, 2003)

Its citizens had to act according to the norms of a cultural state, a state with a centuries-old tradition of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different religions and nationalities. Those who took part in the persecution, beat and killed, set fire, committed their crime not only against their Jewish neighbors. They are also accountable to Poland, its long history and glorious tradition.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are standing on a cursed ground called Jedwabne. In a tragic fate for the present inhabitants, the name Jedwabne has become a slogan that evokes in human memory the demon of brotherly murder. It was not only in Jedwabne that prejudices were ignited and became a murderous flame of hatred in the crematorium era. The perpetrators and instigators are responsible for the deaths, tragedy and suffering of the Jews of Jedwabne, Radzilow and all those places where tragic events took place, which cast a gloomy shadow over the history of Poland. We must not talk about collective responsibility that imposes a common guilt on city residents or an entire people. A person is solely responsible for his actions. Sons do not inherit the guilt of their fathers. But are we allowed to say: it happened a long time ago, there were other people then? Nationality means partnership, both of individuals and of generations, and therefore one must look directly at the truth, the whole truth. To say: Indeed it was, it all happened. Our conscience will remain clean if, in memory of those days, we carry in our hearts a moral power. We came here to do a collective introspection, we came to pay our respect to the victims and say: No more! Let us all today be residents of Jedwabne! We will share with them a sense of sorrow, grief, shame and solidarity. After all, Cain could have murdered Abel anywhere and anytime. Every society could stand a similar test. A test of evil as well as of good, of lowliness and of nobility. The righteous is a person who knows how to show kindness when seeing a human suffering. How many are the Poles, also residents of these areas, also from Jedwabne, who deserve the title of righteous! Let us remember everyone, with feelings of respect and gratitude.

Thanks to a national debate on the crime committed in 1941 much has changed in our lives in 2001, the first year of the new millennium. Poland today has the courage to really look straight, at a nightmare that

overshadowed one of the chapters in its history. We are aware of our responsibility for our attitude to the black pages of the past.

We understood that these persuasive denials of the past are the culmination of Achitophel's advice. This position leads to moral loss. We who have gathered here together with all the people of sensitive conscience in our country, together with the moral authorities of secular and clerical people, who strengthen our belief in the basic values, express very deep feelings of grief due to the humiliation of the perpetrators of the massacre. We express our pain and disgrace and express our stubbornness in striving for the study of truth, courage in overcoming the evil past and our unwavering intention for dialogue and consent. Because of this crime we must ask for the forgiveness of the spirits of the dead and their families. Therefore today as a citizen and President of the Polish Republic, I apologize, on behalf of myself and on behalf of all those who believe that one cannot be proud of the great Polish history, without feeling at the same time, shame and pain because of the evil that Poles have caused others.

Distinguished guests! I want from the bottom of my heart that the name of this city will not only remain in our memory just because of the crime, but will also become a sign of poignant introspective, that this city will become a place of conversation. On May 27, the Polish bishops prayed for all those who felt reluctance and disgust for the Jewish people, who would be affected by a kindness that would change their hearts. These words well express the feeling of the vast majority of Poles. Who will give and this change will indeed take place! We will strive for it. The tragedy that took place here cannot be undone. Evil cannot be erased, suffering cannot be forgotten. The truth about everything that happened, will not fix what happened. Truth has no such power, but only it, even the most painful of all, will make it possible to purify the wound of memory. This is our hope, that's why we came here. Today we express words of sorrow and bitterness, not only because that is what human decency teaches us, but also not only because that is what others expect of us, and not because these things will satisfy the murdered, not because the world listens to us. We pronounce these words because that's how we feel, because we need them most of all! We do this to be better, stronger in our



moral power, free from prejudice, anger and hatred. To respect man and love people, to turn evil into good.”

The importance of the speech of the President of Poland, Kwasniewski, is first and foremost in the fact that a solemn ceremony was held in Jedwabne, where a monument and victims were erected there and that the President of Poland came to the massacre place and asked for forgiveness.

At the same time, Kwasniewski is careful to mention that during the pogrom, Poland was not an independent but occupied state, which the Poles encouraged by the Germans to do what they did. And of course the whole Polish people should not be blamed for these acts and that there were many righteous people in Poland. Kwasniewski also makes sure to talk about the test of universality. Such events could occur anywhere and human nature would rise in different forms everywhere. The strength of the speech beyond the fact that the speech was delivered at the massacre place by the President of Poland is that the President of Poland sees in the recognition of truth, in the tragedy that took place in Jedwabne an opportunity to purge the wound of memory and turn evil into good.

Speech by the Ambassador of Israel, Professor Szeivah Weiss<sup>289</sup>:

“Mr. President, thank you for those words. They went out both from the heart and entered our hearts. It is possible that the falling rain is also a symbol. Maybe God wants to cry with us today, after all we are children of God. Mr. President, Mr. Mayor, ladies and gentlemen,

Close your eyes and try to imagine this place, this square, as it was over 60 years ago. Imagine the horse-drawn carriages and the children playing between the stands. Jedwabne, this beautiful town, where Poles and Jews lived together, was so typical of the Poland of those days - a multicolored and colorful world, in a place where Polish and Yiddish were intertwined then together.

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<sup>289</sup> שבח וייס, ימי שגריר, יוהנה שוידובסקה משוחזרת עם שבח וייס, הוצאת הקיבוץ המאוחד, ישראל, 2003.  
(Weiss, 2003)

This reality and the Jewish chapter ended at once, tragically and horribly, on that summer day, exactly 60 years ago.

I, Prof. Szeivah Weiss, Ambassador of Israel to Poland, a native born of this country, was privileged to meet other neighbors in my life as well. Thanks to them, my family and I survived the Holocaust. Thanks to them, I now stand before you. I have also known other barns in my life where Jews were hidden.

In the name of hope for another future, I feel the need to point out this fact here and now. I have come here, in the name of my country, which is an expression of both the resurrection and the resilience of the Jewish people.

We also have Holocaust survivors who went through the war thanks to their Polish neighbors, brave people and beautiful souls.

I came here to this valley of weeping to sharply condemn the criminal murder and to emphasize the fact that no one will ever return the murdered to us.

I know there are many Poles who, with courage and out of historical sense of justice, are investigating this shocking event. I am sure that when the investigation is over, the historical truth, no matter how terrible, it will appear on the memorial plaque, will do justice to the victims.

From this place and at this time I call to all the decent and good people in the whole world and in Poland in particular, especially to the younger generation and the children of Jedwabne: let us join hands and go out in a stubborn fight against any phenomenon of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, evil and cruelty. Thus a better world will be built together, at the center of which is the sanctity of human life and liberty.

So help me God."

Prof. Szeivah Weiss, that was born in Poland who was rescued by a Polish family which received the title "Righteous Among the Nations" following his testimony, delivers an optimistic and hopeful speech like the speaker before him, Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski. His description at the beginning of the speech of the town square Jedwabne, is an idealistic description that has no complexity of the relations of the life between Poles

and Jews, such an idyllic description, that I could not help but think of the abandoned child who always wants to return to his mother's womb.

In the next paragraph Szeivah Weiss says that this reality ended tragically at once, by people who lived and knew each other and were the ones who burned their neighbors, he refrained from explicitly saying that these were Poles. He says he, as a child, had other neighbors thanks to whom he and his family survived. He says that in the name of hope for another future he mentions this. Only towards the end of the speech does he punch the explicit word - Poles. There are Poles who courageously and with a sense of historical justice want to confront the past. He appeals to decent people and Poles in particular to fight for a better world, centered on human sanctity and freedom. Although Szeivah Weiss is not a religious person, he chooses to end his speech with words of a distinctly religious tone "So help me God". These words are meant both to emphasize his Judaism as an expression of pride in his Judaism and to turn to Catholic Poland.

The purpose of both speeches is to bring about reconciliation by confronting the past. As I have shown in both speeches as the desire to discover is present, so is the desire to hide. Is it already possible in these speeches to see buds to what we will see in the future? The answer in my opinion is yes. And as often happens it takes time to break out to thing which are hidden and repressed. A fresh start is always full of goodwill.

After the publication of the book of Jan Gross in English in 2002 it was expected that the feedback and debates will be negative and harsh. Antony Polonsky's opinion as reflected in his book "Polish-Jewish Relations since 1984: Reflections of a Participant", is that surprisingly most of the reaction was moderate<sup>290,64</sup>. Moreover, he points out that also from the worldwide Jewish community it was pretty moderate. The fear that this book will lead to accusations that the Poles were responsible for the Jewish mass murder not less than the Germans did not happen. He points out few examples to show that on the contrary, there was a "considerable understanding" by the world

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<sup>290</sup> שבח וייס, ימי שגריר, יונה שוידובסקה משוחחת עם שבח וייס, הוצאת הקבוץ המאוחד, ישראל, 2003, עמ' 107-108. (Weiss, 2003).

Jewish community to the way Polish Authorities and Poles have reacted to those findings.

In 2001, when attending the ceremony in Jedwabne for the commemoration of the monument for the mass murder of the Jews of Jedwabne, the Jewish delegation from USA which consisted of Polish-Americans and American Jews have published a pamphlet. In this pamphlet words of conciliations, understanding and hope for mutual Polish-Jewish future were written and nothing mentioned as for possible responsibility, cooperation and not any theme of blame or accusation towards the Polish people:

*“The need to heal the wounds stretches from President Kwasniewski to the townspeople of Jedwabne.....where the Polish and Jewish descendants seek paths to reconciliation.....If the ghosts of the past are properly exhumed and courageously confronted, and fortunately there are a number of Poles dedicated to this goal with whom we collaborate closely – who knows if there will not be another glorious chapter of Jewish-Polish history ahead?”<sup>291</sup>*

Polonsky mentions the correspondence in the Time Literary Supplement which followed the report and review after Gross’ book was published. Also here Polonsky tend to see and focus on the more moderate reactions which supports his thesis that after all, the shocking revelations in Gross’ book created more constructive and moderate reaction rather than anger and revenge feelings towards the Poles<sup>292</sup>.

Polonsky quotes from the Hebrew addition of Gross’s book few sentences from the prolog written by the translators of the book, Israel Gutman and David Engle. They stress the need and importance of coming to terms with the past and not to hold all Poles as responsible for the massacre<sup>293</sup>.

Polonsky also mentions the conciliating words of Rabbi Jacob Baker from an interview that he gave to Krzysztof Darewicz from *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid. p. 109.

<sup>292</sup> Antony Polonsky, *Polish-Jewish Relations since 1984: Reflections of a Participant*, Wydawnictwo Austeria, Krakow, Budapeszt, 2009, p. 47

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

where also he stresses the importance of reviling the past terrible history in order to rebuilt the new friendship and mutual life between Poles and Jews.

As Polonsky states that it seems to him that in spite of the many discordant voices, the response of Polish society has been positive at that time, and has led to a new awareness of the need to confront the more problematic aspects of the understanding of the Polish-Jewish past, but also Polish-German and Polish-Ukrainian relations<sup>294</sup>.

On January 23, 2020, the Fifth International Holocaust Remembrance Forum was held at the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem to mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The event was held under the title "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Anti-Semitism" to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Previous events of the International Holocaust Forum, in collaboration with Yad Vashem, took place in Auschwitz, Babi Yar and Theresienstadt, with the participation of statesmen and diplomats from around the world.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day of Auschwitz took place on the background of the rise in antisemitic expressions of hatred and violence in the world, especially in Europe. In his speech, the Israeli President Rivlin reflected on the prevailing Israeli ethos: "We shall never support the Deniers, those who try to forget it or seek to rewrite history, neither individuals or organizations, neither party leaders nor heads of state .... The State of Israel is not a nation waiting for salvation, but a state that expects partnership, that demands partnership, a full partnership in the fight against racism and the new old anti-Semitism that is erupting alarmingly today, in the form of perceptions of supremacy, national purity and xenophobia that seep into the heart of leadership.

Anti-Semitism is a chronic disease. Anti-Semitism has not changed, but we have changed. The State of Israel is not a victim. We will always defend

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. pp. 49-50.

ourselves, and as the state of the Jewish people, it will always be a guarantee for the Jewish communities in the Diaspora, for their safety and security."<sup>295</sup>

More than 40 leaders from around the world attended the event. Participants included: Prince Charles of the United Kingdom, US Vice President Michael Pence, French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The President of Poland did not arrive. Political reasons can be pointed out but from the statements made one can clearly see the bubbling wound of the Holocaust over and over again and the war on the narratives associated with it.

Polish President Duda announced that after being invited by President Rivlin and after some deliberation he decided not to attend the International Holocaust Forum. Duda's refusal was on the background of the shaky relations between Poland and Russia, and especially in light of the fact that one of the main guests at the ceremony held at Yad Vashem was Putin, who held a speech during the event.

According to a tweet tweeted by Duda on January 18, 2020, a few days before the ceremony, he refused to come to Jerusalem after learning that he would not be given the opportunity to speak during the event, even though other invited leaders would speak during it and "his country lost the highest number of people in Auschwitz." .

On December 24, 2019, when the Russian president attended a meeting of senior members of the Russian defense establishment, where during his speech he called the Polish ambassador in Nazi Germany, Józef Lipski, an "antisemitic pig" according to archival documents Putin quoted that Hitler met with that Polish ambassador, Lipski, and told him about his plan to deport all German Jews to Africa with the intention of exterminating them<sup>296</sup>.

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שודר בכל ערוצי הטלוויזיה, ישראל, בתאריך 23 ינואר 2020. (Israel TV, Jan 2020)

296 עופר אדרת, הארץ, 29 דצמבר 2019. (Aderet, Dec 2019)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/.premium-1.8323281>

Following Hitler's remarks, Lipski wrote: "I replied to Hitler that if and when he carried out his plan, we would bless him for it and erect a magnificent monument in his honor in Warsaw."

There were also internal Polish reasons for the cancellation. On June 28, 2020, the first round of the Polish presidential election took place in which Duda ran for a second term as president. If he had been forced to attend a ceremony in which Putin speaks in condemnation of Poland, his status in the country could have been harmed. On Hanukkah in December 2019, he did not participate in the candle lighting ceremony with representatives of the Jewish community in Warsaw - as he did in previous years. No official reason was given but it can be assumed that Duda feared that lighting a Menorah alongside rabbis might deter some of his potential voters from the national right.

Diplomatic tensions over World War II and Holocaust remembrance ceremonies began in September 2019 when Poland marked 80 years since the outbreak of the war in a series of state ceremonies. For the ceremonies, which were marked by the Polish suffering and victims of the war, the presidents of the United States and Germany were invited, but the president of Russia was not invited. An Israeli representative was not invited either.

On the background of Putin's non-invitation to the ceremony in Poland, held in September 2019, the debate between Poland and Russia was over the question of responsibility for the outbreak of World War II and the issue of cooperation with Nazi Germany. Poland blames Russia for the outbreak of the war due to its signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact with Nazi Germany, which paved the way for the conquest of Poland by the two countries. Russia accuses Poland of also signing a treaty with Nazi Germany, even before Russia did so. At the same time, Russia is angry that Poland has been demolishing monuments of the Red Army in recent years. In Russia it is claimed that they "liberated" Poland from the Nazis, but in Poland Russia is seen as an occupying army, which replaced the Nazi occupation with the

communist one, from which Poland was liberated only after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

This tension culminated when Putin again accused Poland in December 2019 of having responsibility for the outbreak of World War II, and leader of the lower house of the Russian parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin, has even accused Poland of "collaborating with Nazi Germany 80 years ago."

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called Putin's sayings "lies." The ambassadors of Israel, the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom stood to the right of Poland and declared, each separately, that Germany was responsible for World War II and that Poland was its victim. Israel ambassador in Poland, Alexander Ben Zvi said during an interview in the Polish Television that "One can't blame others for what the Germans did." He added that Poland was the first victim of the war.

It was important for Duda to speak at the conference in order to respond to Putin's remarks, especially in light of the possibility that he would repeat his remarks in Jerusalem as well (which he did not do in the end). Duda requests were declined. This is without taking into account the consequences of the rejection of the requests on Israel-Poland relations or on the strategic interests of Israel affected by Israeli relations with Poland. On January 16, 2020, it was reported that a few days earlier, a meeting had taken place between Duda and representatives of Jewish organizations in Poland, Szeivah Weiss, former Israeli ambassador to Poland and former Yad Vashem speaker, in which Weiss accused Moshe Kantor, the president of the European Jewish Community, and a Jewish-Russian philanthropist who serves as chairman of the International Holocaust Forum, in the rejection of Duda's request to hold a speech in Jerusalem. Weiss said: "This conference was organized by Mr. Kantor and he organized it as a merchant. But history cannot be traded. It is impossible to do that. "

Senior Washington officials have denied the allegations of Weiss stating that Kantor supported the rejection of the request of Poland and Duda but he was not the one who made the decision. The President of the State of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, is the one who rejected Poland's requests not only contrary to



Netanyahu's request but also contrary to the requests of the Trump administration. Of course, this argument does not make sense because in the State of Israel, the president cannot make such decisions without the approval of the Israeli prime minister, and he too is probably in line with the Trump administration, and at the same time the desire to please Putin was greater<sup>297</sup>.

In fact, the event, entitled "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Anti-Semitism," signed the end of the era of the "golden age" of Polish-Israeli diplomacy and the beginning of a "political winter". The absence of the President of Poland was not due to his unwillingness to come. On the contrary, as reported by the newspaper "Israel Hayom" on January 19, 2020, Duda was ready to leave the economic conference in Davos earlier to come to Jerusalem, and it's not that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not want him to come: the State of Israel had a clear interest in Duda's coming, but at the same time Russia and Putin's leader were more important to Israel.

If Duda had come to Israel in the end it would have symbolized an end to a political crisis that lasted from January 2018, when the Polish Parliament enacted a law prohibiting the imposition of Holocaust crimes on the Polish people. The first version of the law even imposed a three-year prison sentence on anyone who improved the law, the prison sentence was canceled about two years ago following diplomatic negotiations. On behalf of Israel, the negotiations were led by Benjamin Netanyahu, who has always wanted to resolve the crisis.

The relations between Israel and Poland began to deteriorate in early 2018. On January 27, 2018, at the unfortunate time of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the lower house of parliament in Warsaw voted in favor of amending the "Institute for National Remembrance" law or as it became known in Israel: "Holocaust Law". The law stipulated that public statements that the Polish nation or Poland as a state had aided the crimes of Nazi Germany would be a criminal offense punishable by up to three years in

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<sup>297</sup> עופר אדרת, "דווח: נשיא פולין מאיים לא לבוא לטקס השואה בישראל בשל נאום פוטין", הארץ, 5 ינואר 2020. (Aderet, Jan 2020).

prison. The law forbids attributing to the Polish people or the Polish state a responsibility or partnership in responsibility for Nazi crimes, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The law states that the responsibility of the "real perpetrators" of these crimes must not be diminished. The explanatory memorandum to the law states that it was intended to fight expressions such as "Polish extermination camps" which, according to the Polish legislature, were intended to impose on the Poles the blame for the crimes of the Nazis.

And this is the language of the law: "Anyone who attributes responsibility or complicity in the crimes of the Nazis, committed by the Third Reich, to the Polish people or the Polish state or (attributes responsibility and partnership) to other crimes against peace, humanity or war crimes, grossly diminishing the responsibility of those Crimes, subject to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years. The trial will be public. This law will apply to Polish citizens and foreigners alike."<sup>298</sup>

The law caused an international uproar and Poland was criticized not only in Israel, but also in Europe and the United States.

The Israeli prime minister attacked the law and said that "the law is unfounded. I strongly oppose it. History cannot be changed, and the Holocaust must not be denied."<sup>299</sup>

Politicians from all corners of the political spectrum in Israel have made similar statements. Israel has also taken diplomatic steps, sending the ambassador to Warsaw to hand over its protest to Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. At the same time, the Polish deputy ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.

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<sup>298</sup> אלכס גרינברג, "החוק הפולני", אתר מידה, 30 ינואר 2018. (Greenberg, 2018)

<https://mida.org.il/2018/01/30/%d7%94%d7%97%d7%95%d7%a7-%d7%94%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%a0%d7%99-%d7%94%d7%95%d7%90-%d7%91%d7%a2%d7%99%d7%94-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9f-%d7%9c%d7%90-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%99%d7%a9%d7%a8>

<sup>299</sup> דרור ליבה, אתר YNET, 19.2.2019. (Liba, 2019)

<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5465853,00.html>

Even in Poland itself, opinions are divided about the law. Not just between nationalists - anti-Semites and left-wing liberals, although this division exists of course. Vitek Duch from the "History" website, for example, supports the law to some extent, emphasizing that the punishment will apply to those who accuse the Polish people as a whole of complicity in Nazi crimes, but not in cases involving certain acts of certain Poles such as Jedwabne. Other than that, the punishment will not be automatic because it applies to a violation of historical truth on which there is no known and clear consent, and hence the court will need the assistance of historians<sup>300</sup>.

On the other hand, the liberal website "Oko" claims that the law is bad in every aspect: First of all, Poland has become entangled with Israel, with Ukraine (the law also applies to Ukraine) and in fact with all of Europe. Second, the site mentions that only in countries like Turkey or Russia there is a criminal penalty for "distorting the historical truth."<sup>301</sup> Third, there is a fear that anyone convicted of the Jedwabne massacre will receive a prison sentence<sup>302</sup>.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki defended the law and explained that its purpose was to prevent accusations being leveled at the Polish people as a whole for the actions of the Germans in the concentration and extermination camps that Nazi Germany had set up on occupied Polish soil. He rejected criticism of the law, saying "that Germany is responsible for all the crimes, all the victims and everything that happened in World War II" he

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<sup>300</sup> Anna Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2012; *Debaty po roku 1989 : literatura w procesach komunikacji*, eds. Maryla Hopfinger, Zygmunt Ziętka, Tomasz Żukowski, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2017.

<sup>301</sup> אלכס גרינברג, *אתר מידה*, 30 ינואר 2018. (Greenberg, 2018).

<https://mida.org.il/2018/01/30/%d7%94%d7%97%d7%95%d7%a7-%d7%94%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%a0%d7%99-%d7%94%d7%95%d7%90-%d7%91%d7%a2%d7%99%d7%94-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9f-%d7%9c%d7%90-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%99%d7%a9%d7%a8>

<sup>302</sup> סוכנות הידיעות רויטרס, וורשה, *עיתון הארץ*, 22.08.2011 16:25. (Roiters, 2011).

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.894858>

added that "we will never agree to claim that Poland was a partner in the Holocaust."<sup>303</sup>

In the same article a letter to the US Congress' "Task Force to Combat Antisemitism" of Krzysztof Szczerski, head of the President Duda's bureau, is quoted in which he claims that the Polish nation helped its Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust and even warned the world about the "final solution" while it was still possible to stop it and that the Nazis exterminated the Polish people as well and not only the Jews. "

In that letter, the Office of the President of Poland outlines the current Polish narrative regarding the behavior of the Polish people during the Holocaust, and reiterates that Poland as a state was occupied by the Nazis and ceased to exist while the Polish people, not just the Jews, were victims of Nazi terror. "The barbaric Nazi ideology was intended for the complete extermination of the Jewish people. However, many tend to ignore it, because it also led to enslavement, deportation and eventually also to the extermination of the Polish people and other Slavic peoples."

In the letter, the President's Office notes the work of 6,700 Poles who saved Jews, risking their lives, and were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, adding that "the list is far from complete." Alongside this, the Office of the President notes that the Polish government-in-exile established the "Council for the Aid to the Jews" (Żegota), which "was intended to save as many Jewish lives as possible."

Regarding the other side of the story - the Poles who persecuted Jews - the Office of the President of Poland emphasized that it recognizes that there were also Poles who persecuted Jews in the Holocaust, but their actions, it said, were not done as part of the "Polish people" but separately. "There is no person in Poland who has a basic knowledge of history who denies that there were Poles who behaved shamefully towards Jews in World War II," the letter said. "We condemn such acts and do not intend to erase them from our past."

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<sup>303</sup> עופר אדרת, אתר הארץ, 19 מרץ 2018. (Aderet, Mar 2018)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/premium-1.6959119>

However, according to the President's Office, "unlike some other European countries in which the governments cooperated with Nazi Germany, these actions were never part of the policy of the Polish government in exile. Poland did not cooperate with the Germans in any aspect. On the contrary, the Polish Government in Exile acted to punish those who persecuted the Jewish population."

"We cannot accept the accusations that the Polish state or the Polish people as a collective, have a responsibility in partnership for the genocide of the Jewish population in World War II, such statements deny the historical truth of the Holocaust."

The leader of the Law and Justice Party, Jaroslav Kaczynski, attacked those who opposed the law, saying that the criticism was "intended to shift the blame for the Holocaust from strong Germany to weak Poland". This conspiracy will be defeated because "we are in the midst of the process of protecting mechanism for truth"<sup>304</sup>.

On March 3, 2018, an interview was conducted on Israel National Television with the Polish-Canadian professor Jan Grabowski, who wrote the book "The Hunt for the Jews." The book describes events in which Poles collaborated with the Nazis. It was an interview in prime time, on the program "Seeing the World". The interviewer was the distinguished interviewer Yaakov Ahimair. The main issue raised in the interview is the so-called "Holocaust Law" in Israel.

And so he said:

"It is very difficult to believe the level of anti Semitic narrative in official Polish media. what can be said, what can be written, what can people get away in state media today....."

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<sup>304</sup> אלכס גרינברג, *אתר מידה*, 30 ינואר 2018. (Greenberg, Jan 2018)

<https://mida.org.il/2018/01/30/%d7%94%d7%97%d7%95%d7%a7-%d7%94%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%a0%d7%99-%d7%94%d7%95%d7%90-%d7%91%d7%a2%d7%99%d7%94-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9f-%d7%9c%d7%90-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%99%d7%a9%d7%a8>

About the Holocaust law prof. Grabowski said:

“This law has to freeze people from doing things that we need to see done. This law through its vague existence, the Ph.D., MA and graduate students in Poland will not touch these things. It will also make journalists like you in Poland to think twice before asking delicate questions about this issue.

We are not talking about individuals but about a segment of the Polish society that took part in the implementation of the German genocide program.

The Germans could not be as efficient as they were without a certain degree of local assistance.

Who would have guess that the Polish Prime Minister while visiting Germany in 17/2/2018 will come up with Jewish murderers in the Holocaust and in the same day will visit the monument of the only Polish brigade which actually collaborated with Nazi Germany and put there flowers. And this is the same Prime Minister that stated that the Kielce pogrom of 1946 was a communist provocation which is simply false.

There was a hunt for Jews and they were treated as animals.”

Here I would like to add that the unfortunate placement of the Polish Prime Minister of Jewish criminals and Polish criminals to the same degree occurred on February 17, 2018 during a confrontation with Israeli writer and journalist Ronen Bergman on the Polish Holocaust Law at the Munich National Security Conference<sup>305</sup>. When the Israeli journalist told about his family leaving Poland and the Holocaust law that angered Israel, Morawiecki replied, "Of course it would not be criminal to say that there were Polish criminals, that there were Jewish criminals, that there were Russian criminals, that there were Ukrainian criminals - not just Germans. It will be impossible to punish due to that." Following this, the Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman was attacked by an abusive network, which, according to Cyabra, a technological company that

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<sup>305</sup> רונן ברגמן, 17 פברואר 2018 (Bergman, Feb 2018)

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%9F+%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%9E%D7%9F+%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9+%D7%9E%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%AA+%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9F](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%9F+%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%9E%D7%9F+%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9+%D7%9E%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%AA+%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9F)

specializes in Cyber attacks, may have been carried out by the Polish government.

The reactions to the words of the Prime Minister of Poland in Israel were very sharp. The then leader of the opposition, Avi Gabay, called Morawiecki a Holocaust denier, and the Israeli parliament member Tzipi Livni said that the comparison between the victim and those who participated in the murder of Jews was shocking<sup>306</sup>.

The following is a description of the Polish behavior by an Israeli who was born in Poland and does not want to reveal his name.

The Germans could not identify Jews in the street without the help of Poles. An average German did not have this ability. Poles could identify Jews, not only by appearance but also by behavior. People did not behave normally, because they were terrified. There were some people who specialized in it, that was their livelihood. In the Polish language there is a special term for people who identified Jews in the street, followed them to a hiding place and then extorted them: "szmalcownik". The word is derived from the word describing pork fat, which Germans provided as a reward for denouncing Jews. They provided products which were in short supply during the war, like pork fat or sugar. Sometimes they paid money. This word has an undertone of contempt in Polish. During the war, the Polish government in exile in London strongly condemned these people and the main underground executed several of them. But there were still enough of those who "supplied the goods" to the Germans. Jews paid money to buy a few more weeks, a few more hours. Jews who crossed from the ghettos to the Aryan side in order to hide usually went with some money, and these people blackmailed them. This ability of Polish collaborators to identify Jews was critical for the Germans. One can safely assume that many thousands out of three million Polish Jews would have been saved without this assistance to the Germans.

A week and a half after the law was approved in the lower house, Polish President Andrzej Duda signed the law, despite many protests in Israel,

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<sup>306</sup> כל ערוצי הטלוויזיה בישראל, 17.2.2018. (Israeli TV, Feb 2018)

however he left an opening for a change in the law, when he referred it to the Constitutional Court for review.

At the same time, the Polish government called on Polish residents around the world to report about public statements against Poles. This is after Morawiecki claims that only in 2017 did Polish embassies around the world receive over one thousand calls about Polish concentration and extermination camps. Camps that of course were Germans. Polish Senate Leader Stanislaw Kaczynski called on Polish organizations around the world to "document and respond" to anti-Polish "opinions and statements" that tarnish the country's good name - and to report this to Polish diplomats abroad<sup>307</sup>.

Andrzej Zybertowicz, one of the advisers to the Polish president, claimed that Israel's harsh response stemmed from "feelings of guilt about the passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust."<sup>308</sup>

In an attempt to lower the flames, special teams were set up on behalf of Israel and Poland, but the legislative process in Warsaw continued, and not long after, on February 2, 2018, the Senate approved the law.

Progress in talks between Israel and Poland took place towards the end of February 2018, after the Polish government agreed to suspend the implementation of the law and expressed a willingness to make changes to it. A delegation led by the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister, with the participation of historians and jurists, arrived in Israel in an attempt to reach agreements. The delegation met with a parallel Israeli team that included Holocaust researchers alongside Foreign Ministry diplomats.

The breakthrough came in June 2018 when the governments in Warsaw and Jerusalem reached agreements on the wording of the law. The Polish government has agreed to delete the clause threatening to impose a prison sentence. In addition, the two governments issued a joint statement that included statements that caused anger in Israel.

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<sup>307</sup> אתר YNET, 17.2.2018. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5115327,00.html>

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5115327,00.html>



"It is clear to everyone that the Holocaust was an unprecedented crime committed by Nazi Germany against the Jewish people, including against all Poles of Jewish descent ... We have always agreed that the term "Polish concentration or extermination camps" is fundamentally wrong and reduces the responsibility of the Germans to establish these camps. "We respectfully remember the heroic deeds of many Poles, especially Righteous Among the Nations, who risked their lives to save Jews."

"We reject attempts to accuse Poland or the Polish nation as a whole of atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators from different nations ... The two governments strongly condemn anti-Semitism in all its forms and express their commitment to fight in all its manifestations. Both governments even express their opposition to anti-Polish and any other negative national stereotype calls for the re-establishment of a cultural and respectful dialogue in the discourse between the two countries<sup>309</sup>.

The above version was published in the Israeli press, while the Prime Minister's Office has the following wording:

"We reject attempts to accuse Poland or the Polish nation in general of the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators from the various nations. The unfortunate fact is that there were certain people regardless of their origin, religion and worldview who exposed the darkest side of this period."

Regarding this wording - even the chief advisor of the Israeli Government for this issue, Professor Dina Porat, argued that it was clear that the reference was to Polish Catholic Christians and the fact that the Israeli Government did not mention it but left it vaguely, can be understood that it refers to different nationalities, and that the Government did not accept her opinion in this matter<sup>310</sup>.

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<sup>309</sup> טל שניידר, "הסכם בין ישראל לפולין", הארץ, 5 ביולי 2018. (Shneider, July 2018).

<sup>310</sup> יואב קרקובסקי, ראיון לכאן ערוץ 11, 8.7.2018, (Krakowski, July 2018).

Also the following paragraph provoked anger. "We respectfully remember the heroic deeds of many Poles who risked their lives for Jews. Both governments condemn both anti-Semitic and anti-Polish attitude. In Israel, an outcry arose over the comparison between anti-Polish attitude and anti-Semitism. Professor Porat explained that there was no intention to compare these two things to each other. This is a poor phrasing. "The Poles complained that there are hard feelings for them in Israel, while the Germans bought forgiveness from Israel with money. Poles claim that Israelis who visit Poland think that the extermination camps are Poles and not German. The Poles said - we have anti-Semitism and you have "Anti-Polish attitude, let's try to fix it."

The following paragraph provoked anger as well: "We recognize the fact that the Polish underground's branches of the Polish government-in-exile created a systematic system of assistance to the Jewish people and that the government-in-exile courts punished Poles who cooperated with German occupation authorities, including extradition of Jews." Professor Porat defends this paragraph and argues that there are new studies that support this position<sup>311</sup>.

On the other hand, many Holocaust researchers in Israel, some of the world leaders in Holocaust research, completely reject this position. First and foremost, they are shocked by the fact that the Israeli government has given legitimacy to the Polish false narrative<sup>312</sup>.

On July 5, 2018, Yad Vashem issued a statement ten days after the Polish parliament approved the amendment of the Holocaust law. The amendment removes the criminal threat. But despite "the repeal of the criminal sections in the law, its essence remains intact." And that they fear the "possibility of

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<https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemId=33438>

<sup>311</sup> יואב קרקובסקי, ראיון לכאן ערוץ 11, 8.7.2018. (Karkowski, July 2018)

<https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemId=33438>

<sup>312</sup> טל שניידר, אתר הארץ, 5.7.2018. (Shneider, July 2018)

actual harm to scholars, in free research and in the historical memory of the Holocaust."<sup>313</sup>

Holocaust scholars at Yad Vashem, historians Dan Machman, Havi Dreifuss and David Zilberklang stressed that the wording of the statement backs up the narrative refuted by research, which is that the Polish government in exile and its underground arms acted constantly, in occupied Poland and outside occupied Poland, in attempt to prevent the extermination of the Jews. In this framework they created a systematic assistance to the Jewish people, and even acted aggressively towards Poles who betrayed Jews. According to Yad Vashem, the existing documentation as well as the decades-long historical research paints a completely different picture: the Polish government in exile, which was based in London, as well as the "Delegatura" (the acting arm the Polish government in exile in occupied Poland) did not act decisively throughout "The days of the war for the Jewish citizens of Poland. Significant parts of the Polish underground not only did not help the Jews, but were often actively involved in their persecution."

Regarding the sentence in the statement that "certain people, regardless of their origin, religion or worldview, have revealed their darkest side", beyond the outrageous hidden meaning that even Jews expressed their darkest side during this period, in the context of the specific law at hand, a law seeking to fight the accusers of the Polish nation - there were no people without identity. These were ethnic Catholic Poles, who collaborated with the German occupier in persecuting the Jewish citizens of Poland.

The Netanyahu government was harshly criticized and historians advised it to give its assent to a convoluted wording that diminished the role of the Polish nation in the persecution and extermination of Polish Jewry in the Holocaust. Moreover, it is a law that effectively imposes censorship on any research. The critics emphasized that even in its softened wording, the law allows for the filing of defamation lawsuits against anyone who claims responsibility for the Polish nation or state. Such a possibility, it should be noted, also existed

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<sup>313</sup> אתר יד ושם, 5 יולי 2018, (Yad Vashem, 2018) <https://www.yadvashem.org/he.html>

during periods of central and liberal governments in Poland, and not only under the nationalist government of today. The Israeli government defended itself by arguing that the change was substantial and guaranteed freedom of academic research in all areas of the Holocaust. The prime minister's team, which co-drafted the statement, said: "Yad Vashem's chief historian, Professor Dina Porat, accompanied the process from its inception and the historical statements of freedom of academic research in all areas of the Holocaust, including the responsibility of Poles appear in the statement."

Politicians from all corners of the political spectrum from left to right have criticized Netanyahu. Minister Naftali Bennett on the right side of the political map in Israel said that "the statement is a complete disgrace full of lies and distortions and desecrates the memory of many Jews who were murdered by Poles."<sup>314</sup>

Prof. Yehuda Bauer, a senior Holocaust researcher around the world, was furious at the joint statement by Israel and Poland, which would help partially repeal the "Holocaust Law" and said: "We sold the memory of the Holocaust for temporary profit; who would dare to investigate now?"

He called the joint Israeli-Polish statement a "betrayal" and claimed that it harmed the Jewish people and the memory of the Holocaust and blamed that "the Poles cheated us" and "it is a small achievement and a very big mistake. It is on the border on betrayal. Israel accepted the Polish narrative and gave it a seal even though it was completely false<sup>315</sup>." He repeated the word betrayal three times and said that "the joint statement is betrayal betrayal betrayal. In the fact that Israel signed it, it betrayed Polish historians who tell the truth. In this he referred to historians such as Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski.<sup>316</sup>"

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<sup>314</sup> טל שניידר, אתר הארץ, 5 יולי 2018. (Shneider, July 2018)

<sup>315</sup> עופר אדרת, הארץ, 30 ביוני 2018. (Aderet, June 2018)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.6222280>

<sup>316</sup> אסף גולן, ישראל היום, פורסם ב: 05.07.2018 15:51. עודכן ב: 05.07.2018. (Golan, July 2018)

"An Israeli government that harms the memory of the Holocaust is a disaster" he said. "What they have done here is just to cancel the criminal part of the law against those who will research the crimes that were conducted by the Poles during the Holocaust and not the civilian part that enables placing a lawsuit in a civilian Court and demand for compensation. That is, anyone who claims that in any Polish city, village or town a crime was committed and that the local police have turned Jews over to the Germans will face a civil lawsuit. In this lawsuit the burden of proof will be on him and not on the plaintiff."

"Who would dare in Poland today - with the law in its current form - to continue to truly investigate history without prejudice and without ignoring the part that many Poles who collaborated with the Germans in the Holocaust had to be really crazy to continue investigating. Any archival official who discovers new documents - and there are many - will not tell anything about it, he will only be harmed by it. This is a very important point for the historical truth that will now disappear. After all, large parts of the research in Israel are based on studies conducted by our Polish colleagues who want to reveal the truth, even when it is unpleasant. Now it will be stopped".

Prof. Bauer explains that in Poland over the years an attempt has been made to hide the past, as it has not been convenient for locals to tell about the anti-Semitic phenomena and aid to the Germans. "Only people with devotion have acted against the current, and now it will all cease completely," he says. "There is a fatal damage to the memory of the Holocaust, to the knowledge of reality and to facts, and at the same time to a damage to the memory of the Polish Righteous Among the Nations, who at the self-risk of their lives saved Jews. People in Israel should and must understand the mood in Poland in those days - if you saved then a Jew in Poland you should not have been afraid only of the Germans but of all your neighbors.<sup>317</sup>"

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<sup>317</sup> Cfr. what the literature proposes M. Ruta, *Pomiędzy dwoma światami*, Kraków 2003; M. Ruta, *Jidyszkajt w PRL, czyli dawne i nowe opowieści Lili Berger*, „Midrasz. Pismo Żydowskie” 2008, no 10, pp. 22-26; M. Ruta, „Przez cień i blask”. *Twórczość poetycka*

"The Polish police and many other elements systematically assisted in the murder of the Jews. For example, the first armed underground commander of the Poles, General Rubecki, who was not anti-Semitic at all, warned the Polish exile government abroad during the war, asking it not to condemn the Jews persecution or declare on equal rights for Jews at the end of the war. He explained that then Government would lose its national-popular support because the Polish people were mostly anti-Semitic. This is an existing official document."

Prof. Bauer claims that the recent decisions of the new Polish government, which he defines as "a kind of right-wing Bolshevism, for extremist nationalism", who want to block the truth, intend to act against all liberal elements in Poland: "This is a dark wave, which is part of world-dark-wave anti-liberal democracies based on extremist nationalism. This wave, the pressure to silence the responsibility of the Polish people, a police force that betrayed and persecuted Jews and turned them to the Germans - the Israeli government has now joined this wave."

In Prof. Bauer's opinion, in fact the Israeli government's joint statement with the Polish government contributes to silencing the Polish minority who want to reveal the truth. "Now anyone who criticizes the Polish government about the lawsuits against Polish researchers - what do you want? The Israeli government supports this. If the US or any of the European country tries to protect Polish researchers who want to teach the truth, who want to really show what happened, then the Polish government will tell them, "Israel has agreed to this statement." After all, this is actually an aid, indirectly, to the denial of the Polish part in the murder of the Jews."

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*Binema Hellera w Polsce Ludowej (1947-1957)*, in: *Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich*, Vol. 4, ed. K. Pilarczyk, Kraków 2008, pp. 407-422; K. Segal, *Exodus z Polski*, przeł. M. Ruta, in: *Archiwariusz zabitego Miasteczka*, ed. T. Chomiszczak, Sanok 2008, pp. 100-106; M. Ruta, *Tematyka literatury jidysz w latach 1945-1949. Rekonesans badawczy*, in: *Nusech Pojln. Studia z dziejów kultury jidysz w powojennej Polsce*, ed. Magdalena Ruta, Kraków 2008, pp. 247-276.

The Polish government, on the other hand, said that Netanyahu's signature on the declaration was a "binding" one - and not the Yad Vashem announcement<sup>318</sup>.

Yad Vashem's chief historian, Professor Dina Porat, who accompanied the drafting of the joint statement of Israel and Poland, asked to resign, but this was not accepted. She explained in an interview on TV News that she advised the Government on a private basis and not on behalf of Yad Vashem. Porat argued that "it is very possible that the Israeli prime minister actually made it easier for the Poles." When she was asked if the statement should be changed, she said that "if possible - definitely, but do not cancel it."<sup>319</sup>

"I was not invited to the press conference and did not receive any salary. I did not talk to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the entire process," Porat explained of the advisory team set up by the prime minister and the wording of the joint statement. "No one has pledged to me that every sentence I will correct will be accepted or that I will be responsible for the text. I did not sign the text, my comments were accepted in part - not all. I was able to minimize some of the damage. There is something to fix and add without a doubt."

"The Poles certainly do not want their crimes to be at the center of consciousness or at the center of their identity. This statement certainly adds to their image. Would it have been better without the statement - it is possible. But it is also very possible that the prime minister's negotiations with the Poles have eased them."<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> עופר אדרת, הארץ, 30 יוני 2018. (Aderet, 2018)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.6222280>

<sup>319</sup> יואב קרקובסקי, ראיון עם פרופ' דינה פורת, כאן 11, 10 יולי 2018. (Krakovski, 2018)

<https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=33438>

<sup>320</sup> נועה לנדאו, עופר אדרת הארץ, פורסם ב-11.07.19 (Landau, July 2019)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.7492516>

To this day, about two years after the drafting of the controversial statement by Israel and Poland, the state refuses to reveal the names of the experts who participated in the drafting of the statement.

In January 2018, President Rivlin visited Poland on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day and marched with Polish President Duda at the "March of Life" in Auschwitz. "A great shadow overshadows our relationship," Rivlin said about the Holocaust law, and in a private meeting with Duda Rivlin told him: "We greatly appreciate anyone who gave his life to save Jews, but there were other phenomena. People who murdered and inherited. The atmosphere at that time enabled the Nazis to do whatever they want, not only in Poland but throughout Europe."

On April 17, 2018, Christoph Bock, Vice President of the National Polish Movement, submitted a formal request to open an investigation into the sayings attributed to Rivlin in private conversations, even though they were not included in his official speeches. Bock himself admitted that the request to open an investigation actually was in order to enable his organization to check what the boundaries of the law are<sup>321</sup>.

It goes without saying that no punishment was imposed on the President of the State of Israel. Neither country is interested in further sabotage of relations between them.

For a while, it seemed that the crisis between the two countries was over and that Israel-Poland relations were back to normal. In February 2019, Warsaw hosted the Conference on Peace and Security in the Middle East, and was even scheduled to attend the Visegrád State Conference set up in Jerusalem with the participation of the prime ministers of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

As part of Poland's multilateral strategic vision, it agreed to host in its territory in mid-February 2019 the International Conference on Peace and Security in the Middle East, initiated by the United States. The conference was attended

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(Roiters, April 2018).17.4.2018 סוכנות הידיעות רויטרס <sup>321</sup>



by representatives of Middle Eastern countries opposing Iran's power in the region, along with the United States, Eastern European countries and junior representatives from other Bloc countries (whose opposition to the Polish government's anti-liberal moves and Trump's policy toward Iran cooled their enthusiasm to send senior representatives). The purpose of the conference was to strengthen the pro-American coalition in the Middle East and strengthen the international front against Iranian expansion in the region. For Poland, it was an opportunity to present to the international community and especially to Russia, the neighbor that threatens the depth of its cooperation with the Trump administration. It is no coincidence that close to the opening of the conference, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo came to watch a joint military exercise for Poles and American military soldiers stationed on Polish soil, held just 40 kilometers from the border with Russia. Israel's participation in the conference was also a symbol of partnership with it, but also with the United States.

Netanyahu was hosted in Warsaw and met with his Polish counterpart and other senior officials, but during the visit tensions erupted following Netanyahu's remarks that "Poles cooperated with the Nazis, and I do not know a single person who was sued for this statement" on Thursday, February 14, 2019. He was asked by the Haaretz newspaper, what does he think about the fact that Polish law allows those who attribute responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust to the Polish people, does not include criminal responsibility but still allows a similar lawsuit in civil proceedings. Netanyahu replied that Poles did cooperate with the Nazis in the Holocaust and that he did not know that anyone had been prosecuted for such a statement. Netanyahu's remarks were quoted immediately that day on the Jerusalem Post website as if he had said that the entire "Polish nation" had cooperated with the Nazis and that statement had rekindled relations between the two countries. The Polish prime minister immediately tweeted in response on Twitter that Poland had never cooperated with Germany during World War II and was itself a victim of the Nazi occupation. He even threatened that if things were not clarified he would not come to attend the annual Visegrád

conference. Duda wrote on Twitter that "if Netanyahu said these things, Israel is not a good place to meet."

Following a request from the Polish government, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement on Friday, February 15, 2019, before Shabbat, and in a briefing to journalists, Netanyahu said he was talking "about Poles and not about the Polish people or the state of Poland." The clarifications were to no avail and Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki canceled his arrival at the Visegrád conference in Jerusalem.

While the crisis was at its height, Deputy Foreign Minister Israel Katz added fuel to the fire, just eight hours after being appointed to the post. In an interview with Israeli Channel 9, he said: "I am a son of Holocaust survivors. We will not forget or forgive. There were many Poles who collaborated with the Nazis. Yitzhak Shamir, former Prime Minister of Israel said that the Poles has Injured anti-Semitism with their mother's milk. No one will tell us how to express our position and how to honor the memory of the victims."

Following this, Morawiecki called the remarks of Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz "racist, unreasonable and unacceptable. This is something that cannot be left unanswered."

On September 27, 2019, it was reported in News 12 in Israel that Polish President Andrzej Duda, claimed that Israel was responsible for the recent antisemitic attacks in Poland. And the increase in cases of anti-Semitism in the country happened following the words of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Israel Katz. The remarks were made at a meeting held at the Polish Consulate in New York with Jewish leaders<sup>322</sup>.

The Polish government condemned Katz's remarks and decided to cancel its participation in the Visegrád State Conference altogether. Shortly afterwards, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis announced the cancellation of the conference. Instead of this, only bilateral talks took place. This was a great disappointment and failure for Netanyahu, who saw the holding of the

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<sup>322</sup> ערוץ הטלוויזיה חדשות 12 ישראל, 27 ספט 2019. (TV channel 12, Sep 2019)

Vishgorod Conference in Jerusalem as important and a very important political statement<sup>323</sup>.

Poland is the most powerful country in the EU's Visegrád bloc. The bloc includes four countries - Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These are the four countries most friendly to Netanyahu's right-wing rule in the European Union. At the head of Poland, the bloc countries have successfully acted to dull Brussels' anti-Israel decisions. For example, in May 2018, bloc members voted against a resolution condemning the United States for opening the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem. The Polish government, together with the United States, hosted Netanyahu and the leaders of the Arab states in Warsaw at a security conference that discussed Iran's danger to national security.

In March 2019, Hungary opened a Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem. Representatives of the Visegrád bloc say in closed talks that they were willing to open embassies in Jerusalem and call on the European Union to withdraw from the nuclear agreement with Iran, but would not do so without Poland. Poland, for its part, is unwilling to quarrel with Brussels for Israel, which is perceived as insulting and offensive.

From a strategic point of view, which I explained earlier, Poland in 2007, together with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, agreed to Israel's participation in the Visegrád (V4) state conferences. Today it is common in Israel, especially on the Israeli left that this partnership is a result of the close nationalist right political ideology. But in 2007, these countries were ruled by governments that are closer to the center and less to the national right, and this was also the case in Israel. The main interest then and probably still today is the desire for proximity to the United States that Israel is known to be its most important ally in the Middle East.

Following the events of the conference in Poland and the cancellation of the Visegrád conference in Jerusalem, Benjamin Netanyahu was widely criticized.

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<sup>323</sup> נועה לנדאן, הארץ, 18 בפברואר 2019. (Landau, Feb 2019).

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.6941552>

For example, Shlomo Shamir, who represents what many in Israel think, said: "This is what happens when you choose the wrong friends. On such friends it is commonly to say "God, save me from my friends, from my haters I will manage by myself." The cancellation of the Visegrád conference that was supposed to take place in Israel is a political slap in the face, not so much to the State of Israel as to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu<sup>324</sup>.

"Netanyahu is the one who chose the leaders of these countries as his friends, he is the one who flattered them tirelessly. He is the one who has rummaged through the history of these countries, in a special effort to whiten their history, intertwined with historical chapters and black stains of anti-Semitism and worse than that, in part, of cooperation with the Nazis, historically documented."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu abandoned his relations with major and influential European countries such as France, Britain and especially Germany (which officially acknowledged its Nazi past and paid billions of US Dollars in compensation) and instead of making efforts to convince the EU of its policy towards the Palestinians, and instead of tightening the relations with liberal governments, Netanyahu preferred to focus on efforts to strengthen relations with the former prime minister of Hungary, who in his past was pro-Nazi, and at the same time demonstratively and openly court the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia - countries led by far-right governments.

For Netanyahu, the Visegrád conference was supposed to be the culmination of a series of moves he devised in recent years to establish an alliance with countries in Central and Eastern Europe, such as the Visegrád countries. Netanyahu was looking for a way to be supported by the right wing of the European Union towards Israel on the Palestinian question, a policy he sees as hostile to Israel. Thus, beyond tightening political and economic relations, Netanyahu worked to create close relations with the leaders of those

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<sup>324</sup> שלמה שמיר, "שמור אותי מידידי: ביטול ועידת וישגראד הוא סטירת לחי מדינית לנתניהו", מעריב, 19 פבר 2019. (Shamir, Feb 2019)

countries, members of the European Union, in order to produce pro-Israel positions according to his view, positions that would prevent the union from reaching sweeping decisions against Israel on the Palestinian issue. Many in Israel think both on the left side that they do not like Netanyahu's right-wing moves and on the right side of the map as expressed in the right-wing newspaper "Makor Rishon", for example that establishing ideological and personal closeness has a price: severe effects of distorting the memory of the Holocaust and rewriting historical truth<sup>325</sup>.

Despite of all that, the past that has reappeared again and again even after the recent crises between Poland and Israel, the last of which is Duda's refusal to attend the memorial service in Jerusalem in January 2020, Poland was and still is one of Israel's friendliest countries in the EU. Together with other countries from Central and Eastern Europe, it leads a moderate line in the EU towards Israel and assists in making more moderate critical decisions towards Israel in its institutions. For Warsaw, Israel's proximity to the US administration is a very important asset. Poland has in the past seen Israel as an enemy of the Soviet Union - and hence as its strategic partner, as a country that sees itself as a state constantly threatened by the superpower on its eastern border. In recent years, however, Poland has been following with a certain interest and suspicion the tightening of relations between Russia and Israel, although it shows understanding for Israel's need for Israel's security coordination with Russia in the Syrian arena<sup>326</sup>.

Eldad Beck, a journalist and writer based in Berlin, wrote: "Israel cannot afford to give up relations with Poland - a large, important and central country in the European Union, which, unlike France and Germany, identifies a lot of issues with Israel. The present Poland is closer to Washington than to Brussels. (This was written during Trump's administration), and Israel could have used

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<sup>325</sup> פזית רבינא, מקור ראשון, 24.2.2019. (Rabina, Feb 2019)

<sup>326</sup> צבי רבנר, "משבר פולין: כמו לשפוך בנזין על גחלים לוחשות", *הזירה דיפלומטיה ויחסי חוץ*, 6.3.2019. (Ravner, Mar 2019)  
<https://www.arenajournal.org.il/single-post/2019/02/28/Rav-Ner-Israel-Poland-Crisis?fbclid=IwAR1N7hsd4kMOs2grWOd1feAo3yZYRLFbJbOxCMrBRn-kzEdXF1vVaJc0qMw>

the right-wing government in Warsaw to promote the defense of positions that are important to Israel."

"More than that: there is something distorted in Israeli forgiveness towards Germany that accompanies the imposition of responsibility for the Holocaust on the Poles. Without comparing suffering, the Jews and Poles were victims of Germans, who did not pay enough for their crimes against both groups. There is no reason why the marches of life of Israelis and Jews from around the world should be held only in Poland. They should start in Germany - in Munich, Dachau, Nuremberg, Berlin, Sachsenhausen and Vanessa - and from there continue to the German extermination camps on Polish soil. The financing of those marches would not be an issue: Germany can use the funds that they assist Palestinian organizations such as "Unra" and De-legitimization Palestinian organizations. It will be interesting to see the reaction of the Germans when tens of thousands of young Israelis will march in their cities with Israeli flags raised to the top."

"At the same time, Israel and Poland need to open an academic and public discourse on the period of World War II, a discourse that needs to be conducted with respect and openness. Both sides have much to learn from in-depth and emotionless research on that terrible period and the time to do so is now, before too much precipitation accumulates that will make the dialogue impossible.<sup>327</sup>"

### 3.5. The Fight on the Narrative in the Academia

At the beginning of 2019, the Warsaw Ghetto Museum took its first steps, signaling an emotional outburst in the war on memory and historical truth

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<sup>327</sup> "אלדד בק, אתר מידה, 20.1.2020 (Beck, Jan 2020)

<https://mida.org.il/2020/01/20/%d7%94%d7%92%d7%99%d7%a2-%d7%94%d7%96%d7%9e%d7%9f-%d7%9c%d7%a9%d7%a7%d7%9d-%d7%90%d7%aa-%d7%94%d7%99%d7%97%d7%a1%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%a2%d7%9d-%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9f>

associated with World War II, not only among governments and politicians but among world-renowned Holocaust scholars and of course especially in Poland and Israel.

The Warsaw Ghetto Museum is housed in a building of rare historical and architectural importance. It was a building of a hospital for children (which, of course, also admitted Jewish children). World War II turned Warsaw into ruins. This building functioned as one of the two hospitals in the ghetto, and the dedicated team of doctors who worked in it also conducted, among other things, rare studies of their historical importance on mortality and disease in the ghetto.

In 1944, during the Polish uprising, the building served as the headquarters and center for the treatment of the wounded of one of the Polish underground units that fought in the area against the Nazis.

Israeli historian Daniel Blatman has been selected as the project's chief historian. Following this, he claimed, "Professors Havi Dreifuss and Shlomo Avineri in Israel, and three historians in Poland and Canada marked me as an ally of the devil. The collection of hate speech uttered in Hebrew, English and Polish included a variety of accusations, ranging from blurring the history of the Holocaust or ignoring existing research on the subject (these are the moderate arguments) through the statement that I am a historian in charge of the Polish government, a poster boy, a tool of Holocaust deniers in Poland to the suspicion that I want to turn the museum in Warsaw into an incitement device against Israel<sup>328</sup>."

There were also allusions, Blatman argued in the same interview, against the director of the Jewish Holocaust Museum and against him as if they were continuing a glorious tradition of "court Jews" - some anti-Semitism in the debate over the commemoration of the Holocaust is never harmful."

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<sup>328</sup> דניאל בלטמן, "המאבק על השואה", *הארץ*, 4.1.2019. (Blatman, Jan 2019)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/premium-1.6806589>

The appointment of the Israeli professor Daniel Blatman, the chief historian of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, which is under construction and is expected to open on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, has caused a public outcry in Israel. The academic debate turned into a real war over the pages of the newspaper. The war on historical truth of course does not remain in isolation. How the story of choosing a chief historian for the Holocaust Museum becomes the story of creating a narrative, taking care to disseminate it in the right circles and to have some who will also buy the "right narrative".

Blatman explained in the press why it was right for him to take on the role<sup>329</sup>.

Blatman claimed: The special building of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum is located in the heart of the new Warsaw "City", on a plot of land where quite a few real estate sharks from Poland and other countries stared. The building was to be demolished and put many millions in the pockets of business owners and the Polish state treasury, after setting up offices and businesses. Then the Polish Ministry of Culture decided to intervene and say: Stop. Not skyscrapers that will bring in hundreds of millions of zlotys, but a historical museum in which many millions must be invested from the state coffers. And what is better and more important than a museum of the history of the Warsaw ghetto precisely in this special structure."

He adds that for the past two decades, a small research center for the history of the Holocaust of Polish Jews has been operating within the framework of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Few are his researchers, three or four made Holocaust research the main activity in Poland and presented in their work a new picture of the history of Polish Jews during the Holocaust. The Poles are no longer portrayed as a people of the Righteous Among the Nations, as the communist regime has tried to portray them for many years, but as a people that included, alongside many rescuers, also traitors and collaborators, who were complicit in the murder of thousands of Jews. The contribution of the Center for Holocaust Studies in Poland and of the research partnership he created with Yad Vashem will be invaluable. A small group of

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<sup>329</sup> דניאל בלטמן, "המאבק על השואה", עיתון הארץ, 4 ינואר 2019. (Blatman, Jan 2019)



brave historians who stood with its historical truth in front of a society that does not like to honestly deal with the stinking stains that have stuck to its past. Suffice it to mention the first studies that appeared in Israel and revealed the deportation and expropriation of the Palestinians in 1948. This was the situation in Poland and there it changed.

But researchers at the Warsaw Holocaust Research Center were locked into the above-mentioned historical conception, and it became sacred to them almost as a "crusade": the goal is confronting Polish society with the Holocaust and putting Polish anti-Semitism at the center for its murderous expression. There are scholars out of Poland that hold similar approach. Havi Dreifuss is a key representative of this trend in Holocaust research.

These researchers neglected the treatment of a much more complex reality in Poland. In this story there were not only Jews who were persecuted by Poles, and not only Jews who were exploited by Poles, as others wanted to emphasize. Poland was a large country, where tens of millions of hard-working people lived under Nazi occupation, these people faced a life full of terror, violence, exportations, labor camps and detention facilities. Many died from the same murderers who separated the Jews, imprisoned them in the ghettos and finally sent to concentration camps.

Recently, two Holocaust research experts in Eastern Europe, Christoph Dieckman and Tomasz Friedel, pointed to a long-standing weakness in the field. The almost complete absence of reference to the existential fears of the non-Jewish population in the reality of the Nazi occupation. Friedel also investigated cases in rural areas in southern Poland where Polish farmers murdered Jews who hid in their homes because some Jews who left their hiding places were caught by the Germans reported their rescuers and exposed them to death. Polish historian Marcin Zaremba suggested that instead of dealing only with the existential fears of persecuted Jews, as the researchers in the Holocaust Research Center of Warsaw insist, the common fears of all ethnic groups under Nazi terrorism should be understood. These approaches are brutally attacked by researchers at the Holocaust Research Center in Warsaw.

Blatman asks whether it is really so terrible to tell the history of the Warsaw ghetto from the perspective of the occupied, tortured and destroyed city in which the ghetto existed? Is it so terrible to mention this in a museum housed in a building used by Jews who died in the ghetto of famine and epidemics and by Poles killed in the anti-Nazi heroic revolt - a building that symbolizes the establishment and operation of Polish Jewish existence in Warsaw, late 19th century?

Professor Havi Dreifuss at 1.5.2019 in an interview with the Israeli TV channel "Kaan" she claims that "in the context of memory they (the Poles) are trying to dictate a very specific kind of political memory and to a very large extent to reshape the historical narrative. Recent studies show that Polish society was hostile to Jews<sup>330</sup>."

Havi Dreifuss has been researching everyday life in the Warsaw ghetto for many years. She was also offered a position at the museum, but she refused because in her opinion the attempt to recruit Israeli historians is an attempt to wash away the past. She says: "There were some Polish undergrounds that were not involved in rescuing Jews but a great many of their units were involved in harming Jews, in murdering Jews."

"I was surprised, but I was especially saddened that someone who was once considered a fundamentalist is actually giving a hand in distorting history and serving political statements that come at the expense of history."

One of the sharpest critics of the Polish official narrative is the Polish professor Jan Grabowski who was exiled from his country 32 years ago and is now a professor at the University of Ottawa. He devoted ten years of research to collecting the material he used to write his latest book: "On duty. The participation of the Polish police in the extermination of Jews."

The study led him to archives in Poland, Germany, the United States and Israel, searching for documents, many of which no one had read before,

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<sup>330</sup> חווי דריפוס, בראיון בערוץ "כאן" 1 מאי 2019. (Dreifuss, May 2019)

<https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=51300>

including reports from police stations and diaries of the time. Throughout the research he met with Holocaust survivors who were witness to shocking crimes.

The bottom line is very difficult to read. In an interview with Ofer Aderet on February 3, 2017, Professor Grabowski says: "I was surprised to discover the role played by the Polish police in the murder of Polish Jews - murder, rape, robbery - the scale is inconceivable<sup>331</sup>."

Poland ceased to exist as an independent state after it was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1939. Unlike other countries occupied by the Nazis, no local puppet government was established in Poland that cooperated with the Nazis. An exiled Polish government, pro-Western and anti-Nazi, was established in London, and a Polish underground operated against the Germans in occupied Poland. An exception in this regard was the Polish police, re-established by the Germans in the autumn of 1939, immediately after the occupation of Poland. It was manned by many of the Polish policemen, wearing the blue uniform, who had served in it before the war, alongside new recruits. In the background, says Grabowski, was the German need to enforce order in the Generalgouvernement - Polish territories not annexed to Germany, including Warsaw, Krakow and Lublin.

Grabowski states that the Polish police, as both the Germans and the Jews called it, under German command, became a murderous criminal organization, which became one of the important foundations in the implementation of the "Final Solution of the Jews."

This claim, backed by documents, is a sharp accusation against the prevailing claim on the Polish right-wing today that Poles did not participate in an institutionalized, systematic and organized manner in the murder of Jews, but did so as individuals, as weeds that did not belong to Polish society.

Grabowski's book shows just the opposite. Under German umbrella, but with independent initiative and overzealousness, the Polish police participated in

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<sup>331</sup> עופר אדרת, "שכנים רעים", עיתון "הארץ", 3 פברואר 2017, עמ' 41-45. (Aderet, Feb 2017)

the systematic murder of Jews in cities and villages and in ghettos, indirectly and directly. "Without the assistance of the Polish police, the Germans would not have been able to carry out their plan," says Grabowski in an interview with Ofer Aderet. "The Polish police have become a key player in German extermination policy." Grabowski's claim is that the Polish police, numbering close to 18,000, held a variety of positions, from guarding ghettos in the early stages of the war, to thwarting food smuggling, to liquidating ghettos and hunting down Jews fleeing from them and killing them, by order of the Germans or on their own will.

The participation of the Poles in the work of German murder had a major reason. The Germans found it difficult to distinguish between Jews-Poles and non-Jews. A Jew who managed to escape from the ghetto and assimilate into the local population posed a significant challenge for them. "The Germans were lost and had no idea how to identify Jews as soon as they removed the yellow badge," says Grabowski. The Polish policemen, who knew their Jewish neighbors and the area in which they were hiding, came to their aid.

Grabowski describes in the book many shocking cases with the names of the full victims, the places and circumstances in which women were raped by Polish policemen and entire families were murdered by them. He says: "I cannot say that everyone was a murderer, but it can clearly be said that almost everyone, except for a few, had a contribution to the murder<sup>332</sup>."

In 2017, Grabowski caused a storm when he published his book "The Hunt for the Jews" which dealt with Polish involvement in the murder of Jews in a rural area in southeastern Poland. Grabowski said at the time (and things were quoted earlier in this research) that the number of Jews murdered in the Holocaust with Polish involvement, indirect or direct, could reach 200,000 Jews. This figure, which was published around the world, was also published in Poland and exacerbated Grabowski's delegitimization in his homeland. Today, Grabowski asks to update the data and says: "From the materials I have been exposed to in recent years, it appears that the numbers are much

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<sup>332</sup> Jan Grabowski, Na Posterunku, ebook, ISBN:978-83-8049-986-7, 1<sup>st</sup> addition, March 2020, (in English: On duty. The Roles of "Polish Blue" and the Criminal Police in the Holocaust).

higher. My previous estimate, of 200,000 Jews, was very conservative." He does not specify an absolute number. In the background of his reassessment are the materials to which he was exposed about the role of Polish policemen in the persecution of the Jews. "They were people who made sure there was no escape for the Jews," he says.

At the end of May 2020, following the publication of Grabowski's book in Polish, his face covered much of the front page of the right-wing Polish weekly "Do Rzeczy" in the background of a threatening black-and-white image from World War II. "A lie without punishment" cried the headline in the popular newspaper "In his new book Grabowski accuses Poles of participating in the Holocaust."

One of the reasons for the anger that this book provokes among the Polish right is related to the identity of its "heroes". In contrast to the Polish rural murderers, ideologically distracted and ignorant people who filled out his book "The Hunt for the Jews ", the members of the Polish police were law-abiding and normative, with a high status in Polish society on the eve of the war. According to Grabowski, some of them were even considered the elite. During the war, in parallel with their service in the Polish police under the German rule, many of them also served in the Polish underground, which fought the very same Germans, and are therefore considered national heroes in Poland to this day. "The fact that at that time there were also cruel murderers of Jews shocks me as a Polish historian," says Grabowski.

When asked in the same interview how he explains the phenomenon, he mentions the anti-Semitism that prevailed in Poland even before the Holocaust and the successful German propaganda that made the Jews, in the eyes of the Polish police, from Polish citizens with equal rights to foreigners and finally inhuman.

Policeman Franciszek Benesz is a bright spot in the dark era that Grabowski describes in his story. The policeman Benesz was stationed at the gate of the Krakow ghetto in 1941. However, instead of fulfilling his murderous mission, he smuggled food and medicine to the Jews and in some cases even helped

the Jews escape from it. Yad Vashem recognized him as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Grabowski admits that his intense preoccupation with this charged, sensitive, complex and difficult subject has a price in present-day Polish society. "There are stressful moments. I get a flood of hate-filled emails and unpleasant phone calls. Angry glances stare at me, after state television newscasts say I'm distorting history."

He says he does not intend to give up. "Nationalists do not understand that those who study the Holocaust do not do so out of personal choice. This is a path chosen for you. You cannot turn around and return from there. You have a commitment to the dead and to life." Later on a trial against Grabowski was held in Polish court.

### **3.6. A Storm Following the Presentation of Falsified pro-Russian Content at the International Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem**

Following criticism of the legitimacy given by Yad Vashem to the Russian narrative of Soviet involvement in World War II, Yad Vashem apologized for content presented at the International Holocaust Forum in January 2020 in Jerusalem and a letter of apology was published in Haaretz<sup>333</sup>. The letter of apology states that the videos presented at the time of the event "created an unbalanced impression" and "partially presented facts" the videos purported to be historical, but contained a series of inaccuracies and distortions - some of which look technical and others seem with certain purpose - that portrayed the Soviet Union as having almost exclusively defeated Nazi Germany.

The videos projected on the forum did not mention the crimes of the Soviet Union during World War II and its responsibility to the break out of the war. They did not include any reference to the partition of Poland between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in 1939, following the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the Soviet occupation of Poland and other countries. Alongside this, the maps shown in the videos included incorrect borders of Poland and its neighbors (among others, they did not include Ukraine, Putin's current rival) and confused between concentration and extermination camps and contained additional partial or incorrect historical information.

Professor Dan Mikhman, head of the International Institute for Holocaust Studies, signed the letter: "We apologize for the very unfortunate incident that occurred. These videos do not represent the position of Yad Vashem's research on these issues. Our commitment as a historical research institute of Israel and the Jews people is to the Holocaust memory and its investigation continuous to be to the historical truth as possible to achieve, and to an investigation that is conducted against the attempts to blur and distort the

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<sup>333</sup> עופר אדרת, "יד ושם התנצלו על הצגת תכנים פרו-רוסיים מסולפים בפורום השואה הבינלאומי", עיתון הארץ, ב-4.2.2020 (Aderet, Feb 2020).

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/premium-1.8480705>

political discourse in different countries. In this aspiration we include, out of responsibility, also acknowledging our own disruptions and mistakes and willingness to point them out and correct them, both in this case and in other cases."

The apology that was published did not clarify whether Yad Vashem was involved in videos published on the Holocaust Forum. Prof. Havi Dreifuss, one of the leading Holocaust researchers, published a proper disclosure in the Haaretz newspaper in February 2020, in which she and her colleagues at the Holocaust Institute did not have any involvement in the International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony held at Yad Vashem. "In retrospect, we realized that Yad Vashem invested enormous efforts in organizing the diplomatic event and completely neglected the content projected there<sup>334</sup>."

She further writes in the same article that the diplomatic conference was extraordinary and impressive but will be remembered as one of the low points in the struggle on the historical narrative. "We have strangely found ourselves giving, albeit retrospectively and unintentionally, approval and legitimacy to the Russian government's narrative of World War II. Even if that was not what we intended - we failed."

This case is a clear example of a mix of politics, diplomacy and history. The President of the European Jewish Congress, Moshe Kantor, is an oligarch considered close to Putin. He was one of the prominent organizers of the ceremony, but he was not the only one, Yad Vashem, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs headed by President Reuven Rivlin were partners in the organization. Polish President prior to the ceremony at the Auschwitz extermination camp attended by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, he said that the fact that the Forum organizer Kantor was close to Putin is related to the pro-Soviet content presented there<sup>335</sup>.

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<sup>334</sup> עופר אדרת, "התנצלות יד ושם מתבקשת. כעת עליהם לספר מה קרה באמת מאחורי הקלעים של הטקס", הארץ, 8.2.2020. (Aderet, Feb 2020)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.8492541>

<sup>335</sup> ראובן ריבלין, רשתות טלוויזיה הישראליות, 27.1.2020. (Rivlin, Jan 2020)



This is not the first time in recent years that Yad Vashem has run into an external and internal historical controversy over a mix of politics, diplomacy and history. In 2018, following the publication of the "Holocaust Law," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a joint statement, which he signed with his Polish counterpart, Mateusz Morawiecki. The declaration sought to settle the dispute between the two countries over World War II and Poland's role in it. Netanyahu said at the time that he thanked historian Dina Porat of Yad Vashem (Yad Vashem's chief historian) "for accompanying the process." Following this, three senior historians from Yad Vashem, Prof. Dan Michman, Prof. Havi Dreifuss and Dr. David Zilberklang, sharply criticized the statement and issued their own statement contradicting it, stating that it was "contrary to historical facts." Till today it is not clear what was Prof. Porat part in this controversial declaration. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected a petition for the publication of information on this matter "due to fears of harm to the foreign relations of the State of Israel<sup>336</sup>."

### **3.7. Delegations by Youths, Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces ("uniformed witnesses"), Students and Adults in Extermination Camps in Poland**

The trips to Poland have become one of the most important phenomena in the shaping of Holocaust remembrance from the 1980s to the present day. An extensive academic and public discussion developed around the travels and is part of the discussion on Holocaust education, and on shaping the memory of the Holocaust in Israeli society in general.

Along with youth delegations, delegations from the IDF (uniformed witnesses) and delegations of students and adults leave for Poland every year. The trips are actually held throughout the year. During the week in which is the memorial day of the Holocaust, a march of life is held, which ends with a ceremony in the Auschwitz extermination camp.

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<sup>336</sup> עופר אדרת, "התנצלות יד ושם מתבקשת", *הארץ*, 3.2.2020. (Aderet, Feb 2020)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/premium-1.8492541>

Every year, tens of thousands of youths, schoolchildren and members of Israeli youth movements go on a tour of Poland, mainly to Holocaust-related sites. Youth travel not only from Israel but from Jewish communities around the world, students and soldiers.

The Ministry of Education's annual document distributed among teachers defines the purpose of the trips as "strengthening national belonging and affinity for history and heritage." In addition to learning universal lessons, the delegations are supposed to engage with the memory and remnants of the Holocaust, in studying the history of the Holocaust and the destruction it created. The delegations are supposed to learn more about Polish Jewry, and even about Poland itself.

The first trips to Poland were made in the mid-1960s. The first delegation set out in April 1965, at the initiative of Fredka Mazia, a member of the Jewish underground during World War II, who came up with the idea following her participation in a delegation marking the 20th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1963. In August 1966, a second delegation set out, this time with the support of the Ministry of Education. In 1967 another delegation set out, but after the Six Day War, Poland severed its diplomatic relations with Israel and the travels ceased.

Youth delegations to Poland were renewed in the early 1980s. The first delegation left in 1983 to participate in ceremonies marking the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1988, the first "March of Life" took place, which was founded by Avraham Hirschson, and since then an orderly procedure has been formulated in the Ministry of Education, and thousands of young people participate in it every year. It is estimated that more than ten thousand teenagers go out every year.

The students leaving for the delegation are aged 16-18, in the last 2 years of high schools. Students who want to do this go on a journey and are also the ones who bear the costs. Delegations are usually accompanied by a teacher, who is required to undergo advanced training in preparation for the trip. In addition representatives by Yad Vashem and the Ministry of Education and witnesses - Holocaust survivors join these trips as well and tell their story.

According to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, all delegations are obliged to visit the Auschwitz extermination camp. The other places are determined by the purposes of the journey. The journey usually takes place between the triangle of the major cities of Warsaw, Krakow and Lublin. The students tour the ghettos and former Jewish quarters. Some of the students also visit former Jewish towns such as Leżajsk, Góra Kalwaria (the firing pits in the Żłota Góra forest), Tykocin and more, as well as mass execution sites, such as the Łopuchowa forest and the children's forest. The cities of Kielce and Tarnów<sup>337</sup> are also sometimes included in the journey. Secular school trips also include "respite" sites such as the salt mines in Wieliczka, the Chopin Gardens in Warsaw, the town of Zakopane and more. It is generally common that all delegations hold Shabbat receptions in synagogues in Kraków or Warsaw.

For other sites there are differences between state and religious schools. The state-owned schools also visit Polish tourist sites while the religious schools avoid this and visit sites identified with the various Hasidic sects and tombs of the righteous. The messages during these trips range from universal messages like foreign denial and racism and education to values like tolerance and there are those who place more emphasis on the values of tradition and Judaism.

Throughout the journey, the groups hold ceremonies at important points, such as near the crematorium in Birkenau and the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Warsaw. Improvised ceremonies are often held, usually at the initiative of the students. The ceremonies usually revolve around the familiar format in the high schools in the country: pieces of singing and music usually taken from the common and familiar repertoire at such events. The conduct at such events is also according to a familiar and agreed-upon code: all members of the delegation wear the special shirt of the delegation and

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<sup>337</sup> Cfr. Adam Bartosz, *Tarnowskie judaica*, Warszawa 1992.

flags are carried by the members of the delegation. An integral part is lighting candles at memorial sites<sup>338</sup>.

The program sometimes includes meetings with Polish youth. These meetings have great educational significance, and many students from both Israel and Poland mark them as a meaningful experience<sup>339</sup>.

Since the travels to Poland began, there has been a passionate debate around them, involving many different arguments – educational, psychological, sociological, ideological, anthropological and more. Criticism comes from different perspectives and so it sometimes has contradictory arguments.

The controversy over travel to Poland has spread to every home in Israel that has teenagers. A discussion group called "Stop Sending Children to Poland" has been set up on the social network Facebook, where arguments are being made for and against travel to Poland<sup>340</sup>.

Arguments of opponents of travel: The journey is a pilgrimage but a pilgrimage is distorted, because it from Israel to the Diaspora and not the other way around as it should be.

The journey is a kind of distorted cult of bizarre worship of kitsch and death<sup>341</sup>.

The journeys are a "detour" of Zionism and the messages expressed by the State of Israel, the journeys may create a new Jewish center, an exile center.

The trips to Poland express the failure of the educational system, they are a kind of cover-up designed to hide an educational failure.

The journey is in fact an admission of the failure of Zionism that can no longer provide an identity with roots. There is an erosion in the Israeli-Zionist

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<sup>338</sup> The rituals are often in contradiction to a schoolbook's narratives: cfr. H. Węgrzynek, *Tematyka Zagłady w podręcznikach szkolnych (1945–2009)*, in: F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (eds.), *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944-2010*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Ringelbluma, 2011.

<sup>339</sup> "Youth delegations to Poland", the website of the Israeli embassy in Warsaw.

<sup>340</sup> Cfr. Another context of this question: Urszula Kowalska-Nadolna, *Is Experiencing History Possible? Between "Dark Tourism" and "the Holocaust Industry:" The Case of Terezín*, *Prace Filologiczne. Literaturoznawstwa*, Vol. 9 (12) (2019), pp. 123-134.

<sup>341</sup> תום שגב, המיליון השביעי: הישראלים והשואה, כתר ספרים, עמוד 451-465. (Segev)

experience on the trip to Poland, and the need for an extraordinary experience indicates an acute identity crisis<sup>342</sup>.

The journey is tainted with national political and religious nationalism - the journey as a show of Holocaust tourism is an example of dark tourism, waving the flags of the State of Israel at extermination camp sites as an action that misses the personal centers for Holocaust study and the history of the people of Israel, which are first and foremost the home of the student, his family, the community, Holocaust survivors as witnesses and study sites in Israel and the Diaspora. The trip to Poland is portrayed as another exercise in national formation on a high school trip<sup>343</sup>.

Exile is a cemetery facing it has a devastating and destructive effect. The Holocaust is the result of the "disgrace of exile" and there is no point in returning to the disgrace. The real answer to Auschwitz is Jerusalem. There are those who define travel to Poland as a distinctly religious economic enterprise, creating a need for travel and a whole structure of supply and demand, creating an outline and agents and an entire economic mechanism associated with them, as a religious, political and economic phenomenon. In January 2016, for example, a cartel of travel agencies was exposed by the Israel Police and the Antitrust Authority, on suspicion of adjusting prices and expropriating the costs of travel to Poland<sup>344</sup>.

Exposure to such a difficult subject can cause secondary traumatization. The students are too young for these journeys. In the blog "Temporary Insanity" dated May 29, 2012, neurologist Aviv Maimoni Bloch presents her findings from a large-scale study of adolescents who participated in delegations to Poland and states that in many cases the participants return in a difficult mental state, "with increased anxiety, mood swings, depression, sadness,

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<sup>342</sup> תום שגב, המיליון השביעי: הישראלים והשוואה, כתר ספרים, עמ' 451-465. (Segev)

<sup>343</sup> שרון סעדיה, "לזכור דרך הרגלים: סיור באתרי הנצחה", אתר nrg, 27 בדצמבר 2012. (Saadia)

<sup>344</sup> אתר ממשלת ישראל, "חשיפת חשד לקרטל בתחום אירגון ההטסה והשירותים בהוצאת המשלחות", 18.1.2016. (Israel Gov. web, 2016)

<https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/carteltravelorganization>

crying Immorality, sleep disorders, and ADHD that sometimes last for several months.

The journey is a formation experience, a journey of youth, and it is a characterization that does not match the purpose of the journey. In some cases there were misbehaviors of teenagers in the evenings and in 2016 it was found that a group of boys ordered a stripper to their room in a hotel in Krakow.

The same funds could be used to commemorate the Holocaust in Israel and not in Poland. The price of the trip is very high so it turns out that most of those who participate are students from a high socio-economic background. According to the opponents of the trips to Poland, this situation violates the right of Israeli students to equality.

The emphasis in the trips is on the Holocaust, and they do not teach enough about the vast world of life, culture and creativity that existed during the thousand years of Jewish existence in Eastern Europe. Precisely from getting to know this world, students will better understand the magnitude of the loss.

From the other side those who support these trips bring up the following claims:

There is no substitute for visiting the place where the Holocaust took place and the events happened in terms of the ability to learn and understand the subject of the Holocaust. The presence in the places where the events happened illustrates to the students the history in a way that cannot be achieved in classes or tours in Israel.

The purpose of the journey is to answer the young people's need to create identification and a renewed connection with their Jewish culture. Travel is another way to experience the remnants of the Holocaust that are still available on Polish soil, as a way to deal with the memory of the Holocaust on the emotional level. The campaign strengthens the students' identification with the State of Israel, with its democratic identity, and sensitivity to human rights. The trip to Poland is designed to connect and sharpen the national heritage and universal values, together with the orderly study of the contents related to

the tour<sup>345</sup>. The campaign strengthens the understanding of the importance of a Jewish and independent state before the recruitment to the Army at the age of 18.

The journey enables an introduction to today's Poland and a refutation of stereotypes about Poles and foreigners in general. Some high schools exchanged trips to Poland for trips around Israel<sup>346</sup>, meetings with different populations with special needs, other schools simply stopped participating in these trips<sup>347</sup>.

Adi Ofir claims that the journey is an initiation journey, accompanied by an initiation institution - the Ministry of Education, for its qualified tutors - journey guides, trained by the Ministry of Education, and this institution is also part of a broader framework, built by the Israeli establishment to enable it to claim for a monopoly on the representation of the Holocaust, for building its memory and the lessons to be learned from it. It is a religious move, derived from a growing civic religion, and has concepts of holiness, transcendence and more<sup>348</sup>.

Dr. Jackie Feldman argues that trips to Poland should not be seen as a regular study trip, but as a pilgrimage, within the framework of the Israeli civil religion. The main purpose of the trip is to re-establish the sanctity of the State of Israel and strengthen Holocaust remembrance as a central memory in the ethos of civil religion. The design of the collective memory, conscious and unconscious, is supposed to change the participants in the journeys and "turn

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<sup>345</sup> Cfr. J. Webber, *Dlaczego Polska ma znaczenie dla Żydów i dlaczego mieć je powinna?*, in: I. Głuszyńska, Z. Mach, *Szkice o dziedzictwie kulturowym Żydów*, Bielsko-Biała: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji, 2011; S. Lustig, *Alternatywy dla „żydowskiego Disneylandu” – przykłady możliwego podejścia do przeszłości żydowskiej w europejskich miastach*, in: M. Murzyn-Kupisz, J. Purchla (eds.), *Przywracanie pamięci. Rewitalizacja zabytkowych dzielnic żydowskich w miastach Europy Środkowej*, Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2008.

<sup>346</sup> סקופ ירדן, "תלמידי גימנסיה הרצליה לא ייצאו יותר למסעות בפולין", *הארץ*, 4.4.2017 (Skop, 2017).

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.2903906>

<sup>347</sup> יובל אביבי, "התיכון שקורא תיגר על מסעות תלמידים לפולין", *Al-Monitor*, 26.2.2016 (Avivi, 2016).

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/originals/2016/02/poland-high-school-holocaust-survivors-israel-flag.html>

<sup>348</sup> עד אופיר, "על תחושות שאין להביע במילים ועל לקחים שאין להטיל בהם ספק", *יד ושם*, ירושלים, גיליון מס 7, אוקטובר 1995. (Ophir, 1995).

them” into victims, survivors - winners who re-immigrate to Eretz Israel, and finally to the witnesses of the witnesses, who have a duty to continue telling what they saw in Poland and thus strengthen the narrative as a winning answer to the Holocaust<sup>349</sup>.

### 3.8. The Air Force Flights Over Auschwitz

Since 2003, a number of Israeli Air Force flights have been conducted over Auschwitz. There are many supporters but also opponents of this fact in both Poland and Israel.

The first flight was on September 4, 2003<sup>350</sup>. On September 2, 2003, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum issued a statement that states: "The National Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau opposes the demonstration of Israeli military force there." Despite the opposition, the Polish government cooperated with the Israelis in cooperating with Israel and two MiG-29s of the Polish Air Force even accompanied the Israeli aircrafts.

“The idea for the flight was immediately approved by the Poles but through dialogue with them we reduced the number of the aircrafts so that on the one hand there was a consideration for the Poles who are the sovereign who rules the country and on the other we could perform a historic flight over Auschwitz extermination camp.<sup>119</sup>

The planes flew about 1,500 meters above the camp and over the railroad tracks on which the Nazis conducted, the selections after which hundreds of thousands of Jews were sent to the gas chambers. The plane passed over

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<sup>349</sup> דר' גקי פלדמן, את אחי אנכי מבקש: מסעות בני נוער ישראלים לפולין בעקבות השואה, עבודת דוקטורט, האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים. (Feldman)

<sup>350</sup> עמירם ברקת, "מחאה על מטס חיל האוויר מעל אושוויץ היום", הארץ, 3.9.2003. (Bareket, 2003)

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.907765>



the extermination camp while several dozen IDF soldiers, members of the "Witnesses in Uniform" delegation, marched on the ground.

Israeli Ambassador to Poland Shevach Weiss told Reuters on September 2, 2003, in response to the museum's announcement that this was not a demonstration of power. "They will fly over the camp for about a second, to honor the ashes of their fathers and grandfathers. It will be a very exciting moment for them. They will probably cry on the planes. This is not a demonstration of military force. Our army simply wants to honor the victims."

Colonel Avi Maor said, "Although we arrived 60 years too late - but the State of Israel will make sure that Auschwitz is no more." In the same article, Col. Maor says that each of the pilots and navigators in the delegation was chosen based on his affiliation with Poland. He said both his parents were born in Poland and lost many of their family members in the Holocaust. "My 88-year-old mother was very excited when she heard that I was expected to fly over an extermination camp. For her it is an exciting and symbolic event, she gave me the tallit that belonged to my late father. My father fled from Poland when his tallit was the only thing he took with him. I'll take it with me on the flight<sup>351</sup>."

Poles, Ashkenazi thanked his colleague for Poland's contribution to international efforts to stabilize the region, including the return of Polish forces to the UNIFIL force in Southern Lebanon<sup>352</sup>.

With the fall of Communism, an influx of Israelis to Poland began. It began with travel for the purpose of restoring property, continuing with what is known in Israel as a "roots trip" in which family members from three generations took part. Sometimes documentaries and plays were also made as a result of these travels. One of the most popular plays is Hillel Mittelpunkt's play "A Guide to the Traveler in Warsaw" which tells the story of a mother and son

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<sup>351</sup> איתמר אייכנר, פולנים נגד קמפיין השבת רכוש מהשואה: "היהודים יורקים בפרצופנו", אתר *ynet*, 30.4.2019. (Aichner, Apr 2019).  
<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5501320,00.html>

<sup>352</sup> איתמר אייכנר, "דף חדש? שר החוץ אשכנזי שוחח עם מקבילו הפולני והוזמן לוורשה", אתר *ynet*, 3.6.2020. (Aichner, June 2020).  
<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5741704,00.html>

who travel to Warsaw to try to return the family's property<sup>353</sup>. The play, which addresses the subject in a humorous, sometimes sarcastic way, was a great success. Another form of Israeli tourism in Poland that was very prevalent until the onset of Covid-19, is shopping-spree tourism. Israelis really like to "shop" in Poland, especially for clothes because the prices are lower than in Israel. As the years passed, Israeli businesspeople entered the real-estate business in Poland and later other businesses as well. There is no exact estimate of how many Israelis have chosen to live in Poland in recent years<sup>354</sup>, but the "Israelis in Poland" Facebook group has around 700 members. According to various media interviews they are less interested in the Jewish past in Poland and much more interested in the business opportunities that Poland has to offer them, and in life itself.

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<sup>353</sup> Hillel Mittelpunkt, "The Guide for the Visitor in Warsaw", a play, first show 27 March, 1999.

<sup>354</sup> Poland <https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=27477>

## Chapter 4:

### Representations in Art Related to Jews-Poles Relations and Israel-Poland Relations in the 2000s

In this chapter I have selected a number of artistic representations created in the 2000s in Israel and in Poland. I chose representations that represent the spirit of the period and the spirit of relations between the two countries in those years. The intention is not to examine the quality of the works in the light of history of art but only as representing the spirit of the period<sup>355</sup>.

I chose to discuss the permanent exhibition at the "Galicia Museum - a Jewish Museum" in Krakow, and the museum itself, which was founded in 2004. I will also refer to a joint exhibition of Israeli and Polish artists called "Demons" that was presented in 2009 in Israel. Additionally, I selected the Polish films: "Damon" made in 2012 and the Israeli film "Past life" from 2016.

Israel-Poland relations were re-established with the fall of communism in Poland, but of course relations between the two countries, cannot be discussed detached from the past. All of the works I discuss in this chapter deal with the questions of memory. What we remember. What we forget. What we want or choose to remember and what we want or choose to forget. What is the place of art and aesthetics as part of the process of memory and forgetfulness?<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> For more general information about Jewish art and literature see at: Jerzy Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000; M. Magall, *Kleine Geschichte der jüdischen Kunst*, Köln 1984; Eva Hoffman, *Sztetl. Świat Żydów Polskich*, Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 2001; *Reprezentacje Zagłady w kulturze polskiej (1939–2019)*, ed. Sławomir Buryła, Dorota Krawczyńska, Jacek Leociak, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2021, Vol. 1: *Problematyka Zagłady w filmie i teatrze*, Vol. 2: *Problematyka Zagłady w sztukach wizualnych i popkulturze*; and *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Słownik*, ed. A. Cała, H. Węgrzynek, Ż. Zalewska, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 2000.

<sup>356</sup> These kind of questions were, naturally, discussed many times by historians and anthropologists: J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs J., *Islands of Memory. The Landscape of the (Non) Memory of the Holocaust in Polish Education from 1989 to 2015*, Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków 2020; Aleida Assmann, *Przestrzenie pamięci. Formy i przemiany pamięci kulturowej*, tłum. Piotr Przybyła, in: Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Kraków: Universitas, 2009; A. Assmann, *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu

#### 4.1. “Galicia – A Jewish Museum”

As already described in previous chapters, during the last thirty years, since the fall of communism there has been an understandable process of change of consciousness in Poland. There is a clear process of moving away from the existence and the consciousness of the communism and a complex dialogue with Central and Western Europe and the United States. As part of this process, many museums were established throughout Poland dealing with Polish Jewry and World War II. The largest is the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, whose permanent exhibition was launched on October 28, 2014. But the commemoration of the Jewish presence in the history of Poland that began in Warsaw and Krakow few years after the fall of communism exists today in many smaller cities like Łódź, Poznań, Chełmno and more. The form of commemoration is very diverse, ranging from marking private homes related to Jewish history, renovating synagogues, marking and preserving sites where Jews were gathered for deportation and more. The various museums are part of an attempt to create and reconstruct Polish and international memory.

Millions of tourists now come to Poland. A large part of them are Jews from all over the world, who come there as part of a roots journey. My claim is that most of the commemoration work of the Poles is concerned with emphasizing the good relations between the Jews and the Poles before and during the war,

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Warszawskiego, 2013; S. Kaprański, *Żydzi i zagłada w polskich kulturach pamięci: między antagonizmem i agonem*, Teksty drugie, 2016, no. 6; M. Kucia, *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny. Historia, współczesność i świadomość społeczna KL Auschwitz w Polsce*, Kraków: Universitas, 2005; P.T. Kwiatkowski, L. M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego. Muzeum II Wojny Światowej*, Gdańsk-Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2010; A. Majer, *Socjologia i przestrzeń miejska*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2010; K. Malicki, *70 lat po Zagładzie, Przeszłość Żydów w pamięci zbiorowej mieszkańców Rzeszowa*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2016; K. Malicki, *Europejski uniwersalizm czy polska martyrologia? Spór o przekaz historii w polskich muzeach w latach 2004–2013*, in: A. Szpociński (ed.), *Przeszłość w dyskursie publicznym*, Warszawa: Collegium Civitas, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2013; M. Prokopowicz, W. Wierzbieniec, *Pamięć o Holocauście na Podkarpaciu na początku XXI wieku na przykładzie obchodów rocznicowych*, „Studia Podlaskie”, vol. 24 (2016); I. Skórzyńska, *Inscenizacje pamięci: misteria nieobecności w Lublinie*, in: I. Skórzyńska, C. Lavrence, C. Pépni (eds.), *Inscenizacje pamięci*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007; this list is far from being completed.

and concealing some of their cooperation with the Nazis. During my visits to Poland I have heard many times (especially by artists and intellectuals) almost romantic sentences that speak about the disappointed Polish-Jewish love story and the Polish Jewish symbiosis. My impression is that this is a comfortable narrative that brings with it economic, social and political benefits.

I chose to focus in this work on the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow<sup>357</sup>. It is in fact the only Jewish Museum in Krakow and the second in importance, size and number of visitors after the Jewish Museum in Warsaw.<sup>1</sup>

Since I visited Krakow several times a year I have seen the process of building the museum in Krakow as well as renovating Schindler's factory<sup>358</sup> and turning it into a museum bearing the name "Krakow under Nazi occupation", in which Jews play a central role, even though it is not a Jewish museum<sup>359</sup>. Over the years visiting Krakow, I have witnessed the renovation of memorial sites such as the square in the ghetto where the Jews were gathered and sent for extermination, the renovation and care of the Jewish Quarter, its synagogues and the marking and care of specific buildings that have historical value related to Jews. An absurd situation has arisen in which the Jewish Quarter, perhaps because it was so nurtured, has become the most fashionable district in the city and a trendy entertainment center, of course this area that was neglected and deserted until about twenty five years ago has become a "hot" and one of the most expensive real estate in Kraków<sup>360</sup>.

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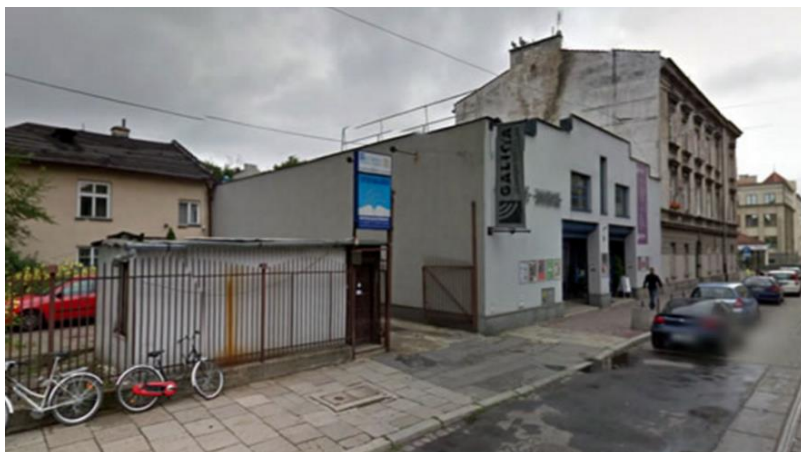
<sup>357</sup> Cfr. On the Jewish monuments in Kraków: M. Bałaban, *Przewodnik po żydowskich zabytkach Krakowa*, Kraków 1935 [reprint 1990]; Eugeniusz Duda, *Krakowskie judaica*, Warszawa 1991; Alicja Maślak-Maciejewska, *Modlili się w Templu. Krakowscy Żydzi postępowi w XIX wieku. Studium społeczno-religijne*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2018.

<sup>358</sup> It is worth consulting the book of Mietek Pemper, *The Road to Rescue: The Untold Story of Schindler's List*, New York, NY: Other Press, 2005 (translated from the German *Der Rettende Weg: Schindlers Liste. Die Wahre Geschichte*, Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 2005).

<sup>359</sup> Cfr. Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*; Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939-1945*, Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, 2014.

<sup>360</sup> Galicia Jewish Museum Catalogue, *a Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past in Poland*, Galicia Jewish Museum, 2015, p. 1.; The Museum of Galicia focuses on the Polish part of Galicia.

The Jewish Museum Galicia is part of a general trend in Poland that seeks to create a new narrative whose main focus is "the Polish national obsession of no guilt"<sup>361</sup>.



**Plate 1: The Museum Building before the Renovation**



**Plate 2: The Museum Building Today**

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<sup>361</sup> טוקרסקה – באקיר, "אובססיה של אי אשמה" – החשבון הפוליטי, עימות עם זיכרון. מ. פז עורכת, תל אביב, 2007, עמודים 79-90. (Tokarska, 2007).

The museum was founded in 2004. The purpose of the museum as stated in bold letters at the beginning of its catalog is "to remember the victims of the Holocaust and to celebrate the Jewish culture of Galicia, Poland<sup>362</sup>."

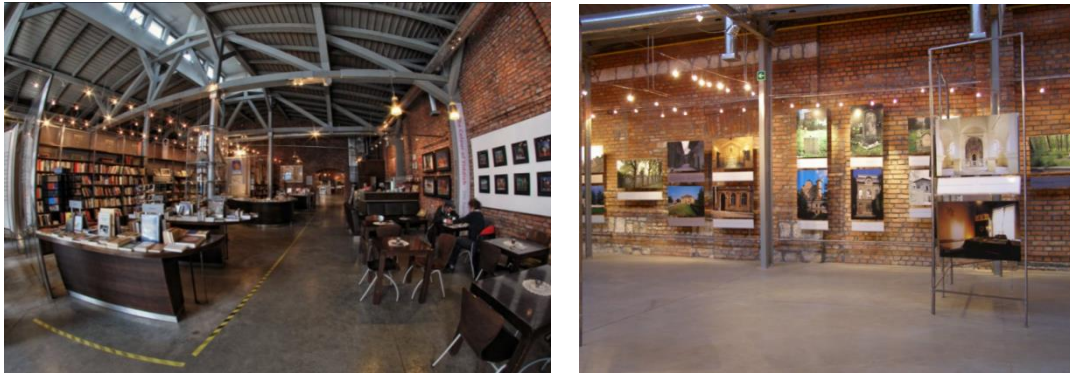
Our goal, it was said at the beginning of the catalog, is to deal with stereotypes and a lack of understanding of the Jewish past in Poland. The goal is to teach both Jews and Poles about their past and encourage them to think about the future. The museum is one of the most visited Jewish museums in Poland. Every year about 25,000 to 30,000 people visit the museum. The museum is located in the heart of Kazimierz, which is the Jewish Quarter in Krakow and also the favorite place of entertainment for both locals and tourists. The museum building has been rebuilt and is defined in the catalog as made in a post-industrial and contemporary style. It is made of materials like metal, glass and wood. However, original elements from the original building have been preserved in it<sup>363</sup>.

I had a long interview with the Thomas Strugg the museum's chief curator (See Appendix A). In response to my question concerning the choice of building, the architect and designer, Mr. Strugg replied that the museum's curators and management were not part of the museum's construction process. The owner renovated the building and only later rented it for 25 years. My feeling is that the answer of the curator at best, flattens the process or worse, it hides a process of choice that is fundamentally political. In any case, the choice of a building that, as stated in the catalog, is "post-industrial and contemporary" is not accidental. This is a building whose design appeals to the contemporary tourist and invites him to visit it in a friendly manner.

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<sup>362</sup> Galicia Jewish Museum Catalogue, *a Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past in Poland*, Galicia Jewish Museum, 2015.

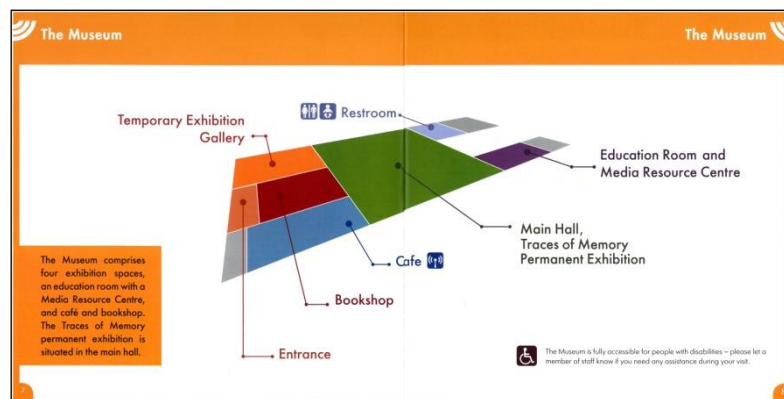
<sup>363</sup> Cfr. *Kazimierz vel Kuzmir (Miasteczko różnych snów)*, ed. M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, Lublin 2010.



**Plate 3 and 4: The Museum Interior**

### **The Museum Structure**

In the entrance lobby, a large bookstore whose main focus is on the Jews in Poland from every aspect. Next to a bookstore is a small cafe. Immediately after entering the museum, the visitors enter the museum's temporary exhibition, then the permanent exhibition and from there the visitors can go to the Media Center and the museum's study center. The museum is not large so the visitor can see everything the museum has to offer<sup>364</sup>.



**Plate 6: The Museum Plan**

## **4.2. On the Connection Between the Architecture of the Museum and Holocaust Museums**

Stephanie Rotem talks about the Jewish Museum in Washington as a prototype for Holocaust museums around the world, and what characterizes them is that it is symbolic architecture, as she found in five museums that

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.



demonstrate this claim.<sup>5</sup> She also notes that these museums are always didactic and the tour of these museums are narrative tours. The visitor follows them in the path set for him according to the development of the narration. I argue that although the museum is defined as a Jewish museum in the end its main focus is on the Holocaust, even though the museum is not a Holocaust museum because it also deals with other periods of Jews in Poland, the museum actually is in between being a Jewish museum and being a Holocaust museum. The structure of the museum is a structure that serves the contents of the museum as in other Holocaust museums<sup>365</sup>.

The permanent exhibition at the museum, called "Traces of Memory," offers a contemporary look at Poland's Jewish past. Photographer Chris Schwartz, a British press photographer, came to Poland in 1981 to cover the story of the Solidarity movement and Lech Wałęsa and returned to Poland with the fall of communism. He returned to Poland and began searching for Jewish remains in villages outside Krakow in Galicia. He met Professor Jonathan Weber, a British anthropologist at Oxford University and together they created this project that deals with a contemporary perspective on the Holocaust and Jewish life before the Holocaust. "Traces of memory" as they called it. Chris Schwartz was also the first director of the museum from 2004 to 2007 until his sudden and unexpected death. Chris Schwartz took about 1000 photographs during his 12 years of work on this project and they are divided in the museum according to the following topics: Jewish life in the ruins, Jewish life as it once was, the Holocaust: scenes of massacre and destruction, how do you remember the past? And people remember today<sup>366</sup>.

The museum, as I have already mentioned and I will elaborate on later, declares itself as a Jewish museum but its main focus is on the Holocaust. Here is the place to refer to Rotem's claim that the move that the viewer

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<sup>365</sup> רותם שוש סטפני, מוזיאונים להנצחת השואה, תפקידה של האדריכלות בהבניית הזכרון הקולקטיבי של השואה, חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטורט לפילוסופיה", אוניברסיטת תל אביב, 2010, עמ' 164. (Rotem, ) (2010)

<sup>366</sup> Jonathan Veber, photographed by Chris Schwarz, *Rediscovering Traces of Memory, The Jewish Heritage of Polish Galicia*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford, Indiana, University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2009, pp. 13-14.

makes while visiting Holocaust museums is "a movement as a journey in consciousness."

"In the architectural design of a narrative museum, an interesting and unusual situation is created. While a person who comes to a conventional museum selects from all the exhibitions his favorite exhibition and chooses his way to it, a process that is personal, varies from person to person and visit to visit. In a narrative museum the visitor starts his visit at a fixed "point", "and walks in the exhibition according to a fixed sequence. The architect can control the experiences that the visitor goes through in this route by manipulating the space, and in this exceptional case also of the time<sup>367</sup>."

The process in this museum is similar, the viewer has no choice and he begins a time travel from the period before the Holocaust, through the Holocaust and he ends with a "revival" that is mainly trips of Israeli youth in Poland and Auschwitz in particular. The paradox is that the viewer goes through this whole journey through contemporary eyes and thus the memory built is based on contemporary views and this serves as an "erasure" of the past.



**Plate 7: The Museum Interior**

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<sup>367</sup> רותם שוש סטפני, מוזיאונים להנצחת השואה, תפקידה של האדריכלות בהבניית הזכרון הקולקטיבי של השואה, חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטורט לפילוסופיה", אוניברסיטת תל אביב, 2010, עמ. 197. (Rotem, 2010)

### 4.3. What is the connection between a Holocaust museum and a museum that deals with local Judaism?

Rotem writes that in cities where there is an active Jewish life, we often find two museums, one is a Jewish museum and the other one is a Holocaust museum. The Jewish Museum usually deals with Jewish religious objects and worship (there is one in Krakow and it is in the city's old synagogue) while the Holocaust Museum focuses on Holocaust events and lessons learned.

"On the other hand, there are dozens of Jewish museums in European cities that, since World War II, do not have a Jewish community at all, or have a regenerating Jewish community consisting mainly of immigrants. In these cities, there is a blurring and merging between the types of museums. Dealing with the Holocaust is inevitable even if the founders of the museum avoid it directly<sup>368</sup>."

"Museum of Galicia - Jewish Museum" is a clear example and one of the most extreme I have seen that supports this assumption of Rotem. The Jewish community of Krakow numbered about 60,000 people. Today it is almost non-existent. Ruth Gruber in her book talks about the "virtual Jew." He grows precisely in places where there are no longer Jews out of the interest of non-Jews and according to their needs and narrative<sup>369</sup>.

And what are the needs here? Firstly, an "easy-to-digest" narrative of Jewish life in Poland. That is, a minimization of the difficulties experienced by the Jews in Poland, and secondly, a complete separation of the Poles from the Germans and their becoming victims just like the Jews.

And the result, of course, should bring with it many visitors, "Holocaust Pilgrims" (an expression coined by Erika Lehrer)<sup>370</sup> usually Jews from the

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<sup>368</sup> רותם שוש סטפני, מוזיאונים להנצחת השואה, תפקידה של האדריכלות בהבניית הזכרון הקולקטיבי של השואה, חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטורט לפילוסופיה", אוניברסיטת תל אביב, 2010, עמ' 225. (Rotem, ) (2010)

<sup>369</sup> Ruth Gruber, "Beyond Virtuality: New Authenticity and Real Imaginary Spaces in Europe", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Fall 2009), pp. 487–504.

<sup>370</sup> Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited, Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, Indiana, University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2013, p. 85.

United States who will bring with them what the West has to offer, wealth and cultural, sociological and political openness. In order to illustrate the process of building the memory - even before I analyze the contents in the museum I will refer to the name of the museum:

Name of the museum: "Galicia - Jewish Museum".

Barbara Kirschenblatt talks about choosing the name for a museum in Warsaw, "The Museum of the History of the Polish Jews" versus the unnamed name Jews in Poland, as part of a strategy designed to present Jews as an organic part of Polish society<sup>371</sup>.

That is, the meaning is that the Jews were first and foremost an organic part of Poland and even more so they were first Poles and only then Jews. In the museum in Krakow, also the name of the place is the first and most pronounced "Galicia" and later - a "Jewish Museum". Here it is worth noting that Weber one of the two chief curators is a professor of anthropology and the name of the museum "Galicia Jewish Museum" implies at least, some kind of anthropological point of view. The name of the museum's main exhibition and permanent exhibition is "A Contemporary Look at the Past of the Jews in Poland"

Does the name imply that the main focus of the exhibition in the past is dealing with the Holocaust. Maybe yes and maybe no, but there is no doubt that this is the immediate association.

Later I will show in detail how the fact that dealing with the past and of course the Holocaust from a contemporary point of view through photographing places as they appear today erases or at least obscures the horrors of the Holocaust and builds a new narrative more convenient for Poles and perhaps even for those whom Erica Lehrer calls "Holocaust pilgrims"<sup>372</sup>.

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<sup>371</sup> Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng, *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, Indiana, University Press, 2015, p. 264

<sup>372</sup> Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited, Heritage Tourism in Unquite Places*, Indiana, University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2013, p. 85.

As in most Jewish museums, this museum also has, in addition to the permanent exhibition, various performances, "Klezmers", bands that play, Jewish theater and even various symposia that deal with Judaism and Jews.

The exhibition on display at the museum is "its Representative Facade," says Rotem. The curators of the exhibition, who as mentioned are not usually Jews, build the exhibition according to their worldview and tell through its exhibits a representative historical narrative of the Jewish community<sup>373</sup>.



**Plates 8 and 9: Performances in teh Museum**

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<sup>373</sup> רותם שוש סטפני, מוזיאונים להנצחת השואה, תפקידה של האדריכלות בהבניית הזכרון הקולקטיבי של השואה, חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטורט לפילוסופיה", אוניברסיטת תל אביב, 2010, (Rotem, 2010)

### 4.3. On the Permanent Display of the Museum

***"To experience something as a beautiful thing means: to experience it necessarily incorrectly"***<sup>374</sup>

Susan Sontag in her photography book "Against, On Photography" writes that images that have unlimited authority in the modern society are mainly images that were photographed. "Such images are able to take the place of reality first of all because a photograph is not only a reflection (as painting is a reflection), is not only an interpretation of the real, photography is also a relic, something that is taken directly from reality, like a traces or a death mask. While a painting, even one that stands the test of similarity to the subject, is never more than a particular interpretation, photography is nothing less than light waves reflected from the objects of photography"<sup>375</sup>.

Not only do the photographs re-interpret to us the raw material of everyday experience, they redefine reality as it is - perceiving it as an item for display, as a certificate for research, as a goal for supervision. Exploring the world and replicating through photography interrupts sequences and feeds in these parts an endless folder and thus they provide possibilities of supervision that could not even be dreamed of in the earlier method of information retention: the writing<sup>376</sup>.

As I have noted 'my argument in this work is that the permanent display of the museum reflects a general trend in Poland of erasure and construction of memory both of the history of Polish Jewry, and moreover, the construction of memory of Holocaust events for Jews, Poles and tourists from all over the world.

The fact that places where executions and massacres took place, photographed as they look today, pastoral and beautiful, actually invites

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<sup>374</sup> סוזן זונטאג, *הצילום כראי התקופה*, תרגום יורם ברומבסקי, ספרית אפקים, עם עובד, 2012, עמ' 179. (Sontag, 2012)

<sup>375</sup> שם, עמוד 151. (Sontag, 2012)

<sup>376</sup> שם, עמוד 153. (Sontag, 2012)

visitors to the museum to experience an aesthetic experience, which has nothing to do with the reality that was in these places other than the accompanying text for pictures. The effectiveness of the combination of image and text is meant for those who know and are able to imagine and not for those who come to learn. It should be noted that many of the visitors to the museum are youngsters and their knowledge about the Holocaust is limited.

Erika Lerer<sup>377</sup> describes herself as a Jew from the United States, a third generation Holocaust survivor who came to Poland for research, as suffering from the same lack of knowledge as Poles on various questions about the Holocaust and what is actually the real "Jewishness". Polish grandparents who knew Jews from everyday life, are very different from the young Polish generation who knows only the "virtual Jew", like Lehrer, a Jew from the United States, and this is an information that should be decisive when establishing a Jewish museum or a Holocaust museum.

I selected five works from the museum's permanent display, each from a different category. The first work is a photograph of the gravestone of a Jewish grave and, as the title suggests, emphasizes the randomness of the memory traces.

The questions raised in the caption below the picture (Plate 10) mainly concern the question what will we remember? Will we cling to the symbolic meaning of the only neglected grave that can represent the disappearance of Polish Jewry, will we remember pre-Holocaust life in Poland by virtue of this tomb being part of a Jewish cemetery, or the fact that the accompanying text states that this place was a concentration camp site. In Pierre Nora's article "Lieux de memoire" he writes: Memory as belonging to life, as opposed to history is open to the dialectic of recollection and forgetting. "Memory adapts only to the details that are convenient to it. It feeds on blurred memories, connected to each other, comprehensive or hovering. Private or symbolic, responds to any transfer relationship, to all screens, to censorship or to the

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<sup>377</sup> Erica Lehrer, Michael Meng, *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, Indiana, University Press, 2015, p. 6.

consequences (projections) of history, because it is an intellectual and secular action that invites analysis and critical discourse<sup>378</sup>. "



**5 A lone Jewish tombstone highlights the randomness of the surviving traces of memory**

For many Jews, this photo of the one solitary legible tombstone of the former Jewish cemetery of Wola Duchacka in Kraków, an area now part of Płaszów, is perhaps as close as one can get to a visual representation of Jewish Poland today—a featureless graveyard, empty except for the occasional chance relic. The Jewish memory of Poland for the most part encompasses merely the poverty, the antisemitism, and the death and destruction of the Holocaust.

In essence, the purpose of this book is to explore this image, through a journey across the territory of southern Poland in the former province of Galicia. It is a difficult and sometimes disorienting journey: things are not always what they seem to be at first glance. For example, this cemetery later became the site of a concentration camp. So does this one tombstone that survived represent the last trace of a normal, pre-Holocaust Jewish world, or is it to be taken as a symbol of the tragic events that engulfed it? There is no simple answer: it seems to mean both things at once.

SEE NOTE ON P. 137

**Plate 10**

My argument is that the choice to display a single grave is a political choice and not just an aesthetic one, it is part of erasing space and time. Jumping into what we see now is actually building a memory whose main result, intentionally or not, is erasing the past. In the written text that accompanies the picture, the question is asked, as I mentioned earlier, what will we

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<sup>378</sup> נורה פייר, "בין זיכרון להיסטוריה – על הבעיה של המקום", *זמנים*, רבעון להיסטוריה, 1993, כרך 45, עמודים 4-19. (Nora, 1993)



remember? Is the only tomb a relic of life in pre-Holocaust Poland, or because it is written in the text accompanying the photograph that in that place was actually a Jewish cemetery and later an extermination camp? The text answers: we will remember both, so the text solves the memory erasure that occurs simultaneously by the image. Nora says in this article: "Memory is always suspicious in the eyes of history, whose real mission is to destroy and repress it."<sup>379</sup>



**9 Derelict Jewish prayer-room, the worshippers long since gone**

A prayer-room inside the ruined synagogue of Dąbrowa Tarnowska. The *aron hakodesh* (the holy ark where the Torah scrolls are kept) is now a gaping hole, partially bricked up. With evident antisemitic intent, someone has scratched the word 'Polska' (Poland) over one of the Stars of David. This little prayer-room was clearly once quite an elegant place of worship, with its wall paintings of the Ten Commandments and of the musical instruments used in the Temple in Jerusalem in ancient times. The Hebrew inscription is still intact: 'Know before whom you are standing— before the supreme king of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he.' But the space is a ruin; the worshippers who used to come here are long since gone.

**Plate 11**

This photo of a ruin (Plate 11) is so beautiful that the viewer almost forgets that it is a ruin. The text emphasizes the contrast between what is written above the rainbow "Know before whom you stand, King of Kings", and the fact that what is left of the synagogue is a ruin. The contrast is between what we do not know or see and the

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

beauty of the image. Who destroyed the synagogue? When? How? Does what we see in the picture are the only remnants? And the most important absentees, where are all the people who used to visit the synagogue? What happened to them? When?



### **31 Mass grave in a forest for eight hundred Jewish children**

The Holocaust was unprecedented, and it came like a thunderbolt. The thriving Jewish life that existed before the war was savagely crushed and systematically destroyed.

It was as if the clock suddenly stopped.

This forest, near the village of Zbylitowska Góra a few miles outside the city of Tarnów, was the site of a massacre. About seven thousand Jews were brought here by the Germans in June 1942, mainly the very old and the very young, and shot to death. Among them were eight hundred children from the Jewish orphanage in Tarnów, whose mass grave this is. The mass murder of children is the defining mark of a genocide.

**SEE NOTE ON P. 148**

## **Plate 12**

Young in his article deals with monuments and memorials and examines how they serve public memory. It challenges their status and examines the use of tombstones as a means of representing abstract and subjective concepts such as memory and time. Young concludes that despite the problematics behind the idea of monuments and tombstones, despite the impossible representation of abstract concepts, the tombstones actually unite private memory with the public and thus promote the moment of contemporary remembrance<sup>380,20</sup>

Here we are discussing not only representation but representation of representation. Is there a moment of significant recollection here?

The composition in the picture is perfect, the games of light and shadow that create an endless scale of greens. What will we remember? Without a doubt the beautiful picture. The text accompanying the photo (Plate 12) states that there was a massacre in this place. This disharmony between the beauty of the place (the picture) and the terrible massacre that took place in this place will strike us. Among those who perished were 800 children. That was in 1942.

Does the image and tombstone in this pastoral place help us to remember or forget?

Roland Barthes in 1961 emphasizes the importance of the connotative message of photography in the context of what he called "the rhetoric of the image."

Barth aimed at a system of symbols based on information and an associative cultural context, an array of markers that the particular combination and order given to them gives the photograph an ideological meaning<sup>381</sup>. In my opinion the collection of beautiful photographs in the exhibition that were all taken in

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<sup>380</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory, Holocaust Memorial and Meaning*, Yale University, Press, New Haven and London, 1993.

<sup>21381</sup> בארת רולאן, *מחשבות על צילום*, תרגום דוד ניב, בית הוצאת כתר ירושלים, 1988, עמודים 29-32 (Barth, 1988)



the present, many years after the atrocities took place in them serves a clear political interest of blurring past events and rebuilding them.

Young speaks of tombstones as a means of presenting but also repressing. Sometimes instead of mentioning events they are able to bury them under national and other myths. From this point of view, tombstones reduce the awareness and do not just create awareness.



**33 Grave marking the mass murder of Jews in the open countryside**

Mass murder of the Jews also took place in the open countryside, as evidenced by this small stone monument near the village of Pruchnik, in memory of sixty-seven local Jews who were shot here. No precise date is given, but it happened very probably in the summer of 1942, which was a time when the Germans were systematically destroying Jewish life in the smaller towns and villages of Polish Galicia. Countless atrocities took place in many locations during those fateful months.

In mid-March 1942 some 75 or 80 per cent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while 20 or 25 per cent had perished. A mere eleven months later, in mid-February 1943, the percentages were exactly the reverse. At the core of the Holocaust was a short, intense wave of mass murder—principally in Poland in 1942.

SEE NOTE ON P. 149

**Plate 13**

From our understanding that tombstones will always be there to “remind us” we are actually abandoning the events they represent. The tombstones do the memory work for us. To some extent Young says “the initial urge to remember

horrific events like the Holocaust may arise or give rise to an opposite urge to it, the longing to forget<sup>382</sup>."

This image (Plate 13), too, serves more the desire to forget than the need to remember.

For decades after the war, photographs of the war were treated not as a document documenting war crimes, but as a means of shaping the collective memory of the war. John Berger points out that the information that past photographs provide the viewer is detached from the historical context and therefore the viewer must supplement the information with "views outside the frame". The mechanism of remembrance implies some process of redemption, what is remembered is saved from nothingness, what is forgotten goes down the drain<sup>383</sup>. It is clear that despite the caption next to the picture the basic unit of human memory is the single picture as Susan Sontag put it and here we aim to see the pastoral landscape picture<sup>384</sup>.

This picture (Plate 14) was a surprise for me. We were more likely to meet such a picture in one of the Holocaust museums in Israel than the myth of the Holocaust and the revival is at the basis of the idea of many of them. On the other hand and on second thought such a picture is understandable if we mention the things I wrote about in the introduction to the work. Addressing the Jews of the United States and of Israel, or as I have already mentioned, is a kind of addressing the "Jewish pilgrimage of the Holocaust" as Lehrer has defined it<sup>385</sup>.

Nora writes: "Memory districts are born and live from the feeling that there is no spontaneous memory and therefore museums, archives and memorial ceremonies must be created. Without mentioning them history would have

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<sup>382</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory, Holocaust Memorial and Meaning*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>383</sup> ברג'ר ג'ון, *על ההתבוננות*, ספרי פיתום, תרגום אסתר דותן, 2012, עמודים 58-60. (Berger, 2012)

<sup>384</sup> סוזן זונטאג, *להתבונן בסבלם של אחרים*, תרגום מתי בן יעקב, מודן הוצאה לאור, 2003, עמוד 33. (Sontag, 2003)

<sup>385</sup> Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited, Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2013, p. 85.

quickly erased them. These are the "supporting fortifications of memory". There was no need to build the "supporting fortifications of memory" if what they protect were not endangered. If those memories were actually experienced there was no need for the "supporting fortifications of memory". On the other hand, if history had not taken the memories, distorted them, changed them, kneaded them and stoned them, these "districts of memories" would not have become memorial sites. It is "like shells on the sand in the retreating sea of living memory"<sup>386</sup>."

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<sup>386</sup> נורה פייר, "בין זכרון להיסטוריה – על הבעיה של המקום", *זמנים*, רבעון להיסטוריה, 1993, 45, עמ' 4-19 (Nora, 1993).



#### 69 March of the Living parade in Auschwitz

The March of the Living, an annual event since 1988, is held on Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day, which in Israel and diaspora Jewish communities is in April). Several thousand Jewish high-school students from around the world, accompanied by Holocaust survivors, Holocaust educators, leading rabbis, and other VIPs from Israel and the Jewish diaspora, march from the Auschwitz main camp to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where remembrance ceremonies are held. The participants usually wear a special uniform and carry Israeli flags; when the groups march out of Auschwitz, they are commonly led by a rabbi carrying a Torah scroll. The purpose of the march is to strengthen the identity of Jewish teenagers by enabling them to internalize the memory of the Holocaust through a personal visit to Auschwitz, where they listen to the words of survivors as eyewitnesses of the events of the Holocaust. Altogether it is a two-week educational programme, including visits to other death camps in Poland as well as to cities such as Kraków where Jewish communities flourished before the Holocaust. In the second part of the programme participants continue on to Israel so as to be there for the celebration of Israel Independence Day, thereby giving them the opportunity to take pride in the existence and achievements of the Jewish state. The intense emotional experience of encountering the reality of both Auschwitz and present-day Israel in a single, structured trip is unquestionably powerful and life-changing for these young people.

SEE NOTE ON P. 172

## Plate 14

Erika Lehrer writes in her two books about the reconstruction of the Jewish world in Krakow (renovation of the Jewish Quarter, renovation of synagogues, Jewish buildings<sup>387</sup> and Jewish museums or related to Judaism)<sup>388</sup>. She sees the world built as part of a postmodern world that simultaneously obscures between the past and the present as well as blurring between different ethnic groups. On the other hand she talks about the fact that dealing with the identity of the other also helps and allows the individual to build, refine and reveal his own identity - something that was possible in Poland only after the fall of communism and was already called post-communist era.

Erica Lehrer claims that there is a consensus among scholars that creating a Jewish scene is first and foremost in the interest of non-Jews in Europe. She quotes Ruth Gruber who talks about how this interest created the Virtual Jew in places where there are no "real Jews." Erica Lehrer asks the obvious question is there such a thing as a "true Jew" in the sense that it is stable, defined and consistent? Obviously not, and then if so we must move on to the following questions: How are ethnic groups formed? Who have the right to engage in constructing their changing identity over the years? We must think instead of identity, of a process built as a result of the construction of memory and of political and intercultural procedures. Erica Lehrer claims that Jewish tradition and culture are often marketed "as kitsch, as a necro-nostalgia," she actually describes a kind of forgery. The most interesting phenomenon that Lehrer is talking about is the phenomenon of Polish-Jewish cooperation that usually stems from political, economic and sociological reasons, but in which there is both a covert and a non-covert war for "ownership of culture"<sup>389</sup>. The Poles just as they want to stay away from any guilt in anything to do with Jews in World War II, so they also claim ownership of the Jewish cultural assets.

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<sup>387</sup> Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited, Heritage Tourism in Unquite Places*, Indiana, University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2013.

<sup>388</sup> Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng, *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, Indiana, University Press, 2015.

<sup>389</sup> Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited, Heritage Tourism in Unquite Places*, Indiana, University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2013.



"The Polish landscape is one big Holocaust museum," says Thomas Strug, a sentence that it is not known who first coined it, but it has been said many times in Poland. What is more right than an exhibition of landscapes in which disasters such as the massacre took place. How can we bring a contemporary look in a different way and how powerful are things when they are accompanied by the accompanying text. "We can not be like other museums in the United States, Israel and even Germany, because here everything happened." (See Appendix A).

About a kilometer from the Jewish Museum, the Poles established the "Krakow in the Occupation 1939-1945" museum in Schindler's factory . Jews play a significant role in this museum. The exhibition there is full of photographs from the days of the Nazi occupation, testimonies, films, an interactive exhibition. It's hard to tell if , the director of the museum is naive, or believes wholeheartedly that it is true that in the only Jewish museum that exists in Krakow, a city that was very central for the Jews, and still a very central city in Poland, the permanent exhibition will contain only contemporary photographs, some are very beautiful and together with the text they can even affect the educated viewer, but in my opinion this emotional and intellectual effect is created only in those who remember, know and "are able to imagine<sup>390</sup>".

In Roland Barth's book on photography he writes: "One day, a long time ago, I came across a photograph of Jerome, Napoleon's younger brother, taken in 1852. At that moment it occurred to me, in astonishment: Here I look with eyes that looked at Napoleon" Barth describes his excitement at the photograph of Napoleon's brother. Jerome's photograph, as Barth presents it, produces excitement, but the excitement is not derived from what is seen in the photograph but from what the subject of the photograph-photograph might have seen<sup>391</sup>.

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<sup>390</sup> סוזן זונטאג, *להתבונן בסבלם של אחרים*, תרגום מתי בן יעקב, מודן הוצאה לאור, 2003, עמוד 13.  
(Sontag, 2003)

<sup>391</sup> בארת רולאן, *מחשבות על צילום*, תרגום דוד ניב, בית הוצאת כתר ירושלים, 1988, עמוד 9. (Barth, 1988)

Barth is not moved by Napoleon himself whom he does not see, but only from the fact that the eyes he is looking at have looked at Napoleon.

What is a "Galicia Jewish Museum"? Is it a Jewish Museum? Is it a Holocaust Museum? As I have already described before, it is something in between these two types of museums. What is certain is that if one uses the images of Barth the viewer is invited to make a way, the way of the Jews from times before, during the Holocaust, and after - but "Napoleon" as Barth described it is not present as in this case - the Jews are not present.

The central question facing the creators of Holocaust museums around the world is first and foremost the question that Ransier asked in his various articles and first and foremost in an article entitled "Are Certain Events Unrepresentable?" He points out that the solution often offered is to turn to the testimony, which is understood in this context not as representative, but rather as indicative of the existence of an absolute and inconceivable otherness. Ransier suggests removing from the testimony the "sacred horror" and recognizing it as part of our world so that it can be used by us as a political tool<sup>392</sup>.

It is clear today that the design of memory is not innocent. It is clearly dictated by the establishment, whether blatantly and directly or indirectly. It is clear that the ruling group selects the events it wants to commemorate, and the heroes who will serve as its model. The role model will be used to refrain confusing or traumatic events. Researcher Barry Schwartz also claims that the "Galicia - Jewish Museum in Krakow" is an excellent example of the fact that although collective memory was built on the basis of the past, it also produces a new narrative, in accordance with the needs of society today<sup>393</sup>. "

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<sup>392</sup> Jacques Ranciere, "Are Some Things Unrepresentable?" *The Future of Image*, Trans. Gregory Elliot. London, New York: Verso, 2007, p. 109

<sup>393</sup> B. Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory", *Social Forces*, 61 (2), pp. 374-402.

#### **4.5. Exhibition: "Demons" - Contemporary Artists from Poland and Israel and the Spirits of the Time, Bat Yam Museum of Art, Israel 2008**

From mid 2008 till mid 2009 was declared as the "Year of Poland in Israel". In the same year, about 70 events were held: concerts, plays, exhibitions, films and modern dance performances, the result of collaborations between Polish and Israeli artists.

In the opening of the catalog of the exhibition "Demons"<sup>394</sup>,<sup>34</sup> the then director of the Polish Institute, Dr. Elizabeth Priester, writes: "The Polish Institute in Tel Aviv, in partnership with the Bat Yam Museum, presents you a product of dialogue. Polish-Israeli dialogue. During the joint work and mutual acquaintance, the Polish and Israeli artists faced the challenge of reckoning with the evil spirits of days gone by, and now they present their works together in the exhibition "Demons", designed to break stereotypes and bring the public together in both countries.

In the opening of the exhibition catalog, the curators of the exhibition Naomi Aviv and Leah Abir write as follows: The exhibition "Demons: Artists from Israel and Poland and the Spirits of Time" presents the site of encounter between Israeli art and Polish art as a 'site haunted by demons' and shaped by a shared trauma"<sup>395</sup>.

The emphasis should be on the words "as a site of trauma, which in the meantime through the acquaintance with the Polish side turns out to be a common trauma for them and us." This sentence could not have been said or written several years before. The majority of the Israelis saw the Jewish people as the only victims in wartime Poland. This discourse has changed a little in recent years and one of its first expressions is this exhibition. There is no discussion here as to whether the Polish people cooperated with the Germans or not. Was the Polish people as a whole a perpetrator or a victim.

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<sup>394</sup> Demons, Contemporary Artists from Poland and Israel and the Spirits of the Time, Naomi Aviv, Leah Abir (curators), The Ben Ari Museum of Contemporary Art, Sep-Dec 2008, Bat Yam, 2008.

<sup>395</sup> H.E. Kreitman, *Taniec demonów* (fragment powieści *Der szejdim-tanc*), przeł. M. Ruta, w: „Akcent. Literatura i sztuka” 2003, no. 3 (93), pp. 97-101.

There are in the exhibition personal stories and an expression of young artists the trauma of World War II as transmitted to them through their parents. Michel Foucault wrote in his text "The Historical A-Priory and the Archive" that the archive cannot be described or understood in its total form. It reveals itself fragmentarily and on certain grounds<sup>396</sup>"

Two Israeli artists who participated in the exhibition told about the process they both went through while working on the exhibition. Israeli artist Shai Ignatz participated in a guided tour with a tour guide in Krakow who specializes in the former Jewish quarter. In the first round her appearance is meticulous and she demonstrates professional integrity and determination to tell the "official" story she tells to all the tourists she guides. Two weeks later, Ignaz insists on going on another tour with her, to the same site. This time she is willing to deviate from her official narrative and search together with the Ignaz's camera for the house where her grandmother lived during the Holocaust. Her grandmother has not lived there since the end of the war. Her grandmother has trauma. She refuses to go through the Jewish Quarter. It turns out that she saw the execution of Jews from the balcony of her house. The tour guide preferred to exclude this story from the formal explanation, it did not seem relevant to her. And here, the very encounter with the Israeli and his video camera creates for her, for the first time, personal openness and even autobiographical curiosity. During the tour she calls her grandmother and asks her to explain exactly where the house from which she saw the execution is. Only then is she ready to sit down and give the testimony of the Polish grandmother.

Guy Goldstein, the exhibition's designer, traveled to Krakow as part of the preparations for the exhibition. He says: In Krakow I visited "Galicia - Jewish Museum". I tried to imagine the Jews who lived in the same neighborhood where the museum is located. I found in the museum only iconic sights I already knew, something that did not really allow me to experience the lives of the people I was looking for.

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<sup>396</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Publications, United Kingdom, 1972.

At the end of my visit to the museum I entered the bookstore. The first book I picked up from the counter was the Auschwitz album. When I opened the book, the first image that struck me was my grandmother, standing on the ramp in Auschwitz a few minutes after she got off the train." The curators of the exhibition say that while curating the exhibition, the ethnic demon surprisingly emerged again and again<sup>397</sup>.

"There is no denying that the ethnic demon's insistence on hurting precisely when we prepared the exhibition that deals with "Polish and Jewish demons....

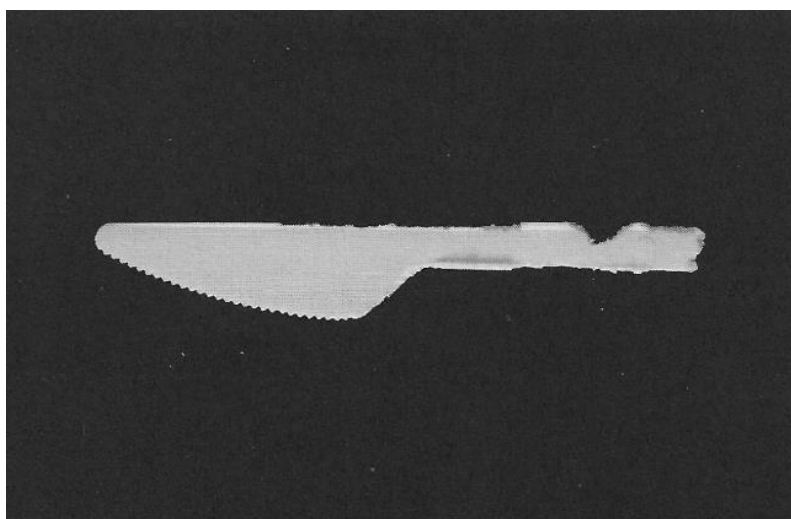
The ethnic demon has an internal Israeli affinity for the "Polish" hegemony that dictated the Israeli narrative ... and the ethnic demon immediately splits into additional, demons, urgent, all related, including the Palestinian demon and the Israeli Arab demon, who also relate to the Polish-Israeli demon through the trauma of the Holocaust itself, which it by itself "Like classic demons, breeds more and more demons."



**Plate 15: Zbigniew Libera**

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<sup>397</sup> Demons, Contemporary Artists from Poland and Israel and the Spirits of the Time, Naomi Aviv, Leag Abir (curators), The Ben Ari Museum of Contemporary Art, Sep-Dec 2008, Bat Yam, 2008, pp. 19-20.



**Plate 16: Guy Goldstein**



**Plate 17: Guy Goldstein**



**Plate 18: Zbigniew Libera**



**Plate 19: Zbigniew Libera**

#### 4.6. Past Life – A Film by the Israeli Director Avi Nesher

The basic question posed by Ranciere on the question of the representation of the Holocaust in the art of "how do we represent the unrepresentable" has received an interesting twist in the last thirty years<sup>398</sup>.

In the 1990s postmodernist thinking also entered cinema. Films that featured alternative narratives about the Holocaust such as Roberto Benigni's tragic comedy "Life is Beautiful" from 1997 or "Inglorious Basterds" of Tarantino released in 2009 are still being made. It also happens that in many cases and the most prominent example of this is Roman Polanski's film "The Pianist" about the life of the Polish Jewish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman there is a certain reversal of roles and we can discuss the "good German" who saved the Jew Szpilman.

In Israeli cinema it was impossible to make a film like "Past Life" before 2016. There is a complete and significant reversal of roles in the film. This is a film that shows the Jewish survivor as the "bad guy" and the Polish protagonist as the innocent victim. Moreover, the film presents an alliance between the younger generation, the son and daughter of the Holocaust victims from Poland and Israel.

The film begins with a concert in Berlin. The choir is Israeli and so is the soloist. At the end of the concert an older woman approaches the soloist and asks her "are you the daughter of Dr. Milch". The soloist answers: "yes" and then the woman shouts at her in Polish "daughter of a murderer! Daughter of a murderer!" She's hysterical.

The young conductor of the choir, who is her son tries to calm her down.

This is an opening for an Israeli film that I think could not have been made earlier. There is a particularly thick hint already at the beginning of the film that the Jewish Holocaust victim may have sinned. What were his sins and how do they affect the next generation - this is a discussion that was impossible in previous years.

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<sup>398</sup> Jacques Ranciere, "Are Some Things Unrepresentable?" *The Future of Image*, Trans. Gregory Elliot. London, New York: Verson, 2007, p. 109.



The plot of the film joins the Hollywood trend of a film based on a true story. Two sisters, Sefi (Joy Rieger) and Nana (Nelly Tagar) set out to explore their father's mysterious past - Dr. Baruch Milch (Doron Tavori) during the Holocaust. All this happens as a result of the meeting of the young singer (Sefi) and the old Polish woman in Berlin. This meeting opens a Pandora's box and sends the sisters destined for greatness by their rigid father on a journey to discover the terrible secret that shaped their lives. When the father realizes that his daughters are on their way to reveal the terrible secret, after meeting several people from his Polish past, he decides to read to them from the diary he wrote while he was in hiding place of a Polish family, where the terrible sin occurred. Nana, the sharp and rebellious sister does not believe what her father told them and thinks she has cancer due to his sins. The younger sister, who is closer to the father, goes on a concert tour in Poland, during which she reveals the whole truth about the terrible secret their father tried to leave behind. In fact we become acquainted with secret after secret after secret when each one of them is subject to interpretation. At first, the father says that when he went to arrange a hiding place in the farmyard of the farmer Zilinski, his wife and son were executed. Was that really the case? He later hid in a pit, in a hiding place arranged for them by the Polish farmer Zilinski. In the hiding with him were also his brother's family, his wife and their baby. From here on there are different contradicting narratives. During a search of the Germans, did the father of the sisters strangled the baby or just tried to silence him. We will never know the answer. How will we judge this act, even if there was a strangulation of the baby who due to crying might have revealed the hiding place of the whole family. Is it possible to judge a person morally at such a time? It turns out there is another secret. It turns out that the film's protagonist, the father, fled to Germany with the daughter of the farmer Zilinski who was pregnant, he promised to marry her. But when he met the mother of the sisters (Sefi and Nana) in Germany, he left the daughter of Zelinski and she committed a suicide. Her sister is the mother of the conductor from Berlin and she is also the one who appears at the beginning of the film and accuses the father of Sefi and Nana in murder. Revealing the secrets ultimately leads to feelings of purification, completion and forgiveness.

It turns out that the alliance between the younger generations is also nourished by the past.

The film tells the true story of two well-known women in Israel. One is a musician and the other is a theater woman who has since passed away. It has great courage and daring, having the ability to look at the victims of the Holocaust both with an eye that raises moral questions and in a way that leaves the victim not only as a victim but also as a choosing personality. The one who creates identification and empathy is the old Polish woman who is the mother of the conductor. Moral questions about Holocaust survivors and victims have already arisen in Israeli films, but more in documentary films rather than feature films. The ability to raise moral questions such as these in an artistic medium and moreover to place a role reversal in which the Poles are the good ones and as for the Jewish hero there is a question, is something that could not have happened even a few years before.

The ability to look at the victims of the Holocaust in a more complex way also allows, in my opinion, a new and healthier look at the younger generation. Also the ending to this movie which is based on a true story as I have already mentioned is a happy ending. The Israeli musician and Polish conductor are collaborating. An alliance is formed between them.

#### **4.7. The Film "Demon" as a Representation of the Relationship between the Poles and Jews.**

The heart of the film deals in the issue whether the Poles were victims of the Nazis or collaborators with the Nazis - and where to place them in relation to the fate of their Polish-Jewish neighbors. Were the Poles victims, were they murderers or just indifferent? And the more universal question that arises from this, is: Will not every society have cowards, greed, various collaborators and also heroes, and moral men? Is Poland different from any other country? These questions arise in Poland again and again seventy years after the war.

Film director Marcin Wrona is one of many creators who raises these questions. From 2012-15, Wrona created the "Demon" in far-right Poland since the fall of Communism, in segregated Poland, which develops xenophobia that has not been for many years. Poland like other Western countries is changing direction.

In 2012, when he was on his way to the filming site of "Demon", Polish director Marcin Wrona's navigation device was broken. "The GPS misled us, and we arrived in a small town we didn't know," he told the "Dziennik Polski Daily" in October 2014. "It was in the middle of the night. Suddenly we found a huge synagogue in front of us. We left the car and didn't believe we had found ourselves in such a mystical environment", he added. "I interpreted this as a sign that this film should be made, but kept in mind that we were touching on a very sensitive and haunting issue here<sup>399</sup>. "Demon" was shot in a small village near Bochnia in Poland. Wrona later testified that the hard work and the subject matter inspired "an atmosphere of suicide." For the Israeli screening of "Demon" at the Haifa Film Festival in the fall of 2015, he was invited as one of the guests of honor but did not arrive. Ten days earlier, late at night, Wrona's partner and the film's producer, found him hanging in the bathroom of the hotel room in the city of Gdynia, Poland, where he had been a guest of the local film festival. The Polish press reported that in the circumstances of his suicide involved alcohol, depression, stress and his disappointment that his film, previously screened at a Toronto festival, did not win an award at the Gdynia Festival.

Wrona was born in 1973 in Tarnów, Poland - a city where on the eve of World War II, half of its inhabitants were Jews, and had been murdered in the Holocaust in Auschwitz, Płaszów, Bełżec and nearby forests. Wrona's father was described as a violent man who beat his wife and abused his children, who used to run away from home every time he went wild. For his livelihood, the father engaged in exorcism, spirits and other debauchery. As a kid, little Marcin used to accompany him to see him in action.

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<sup>399</sup> Ofer Aderet, "The Chilling Story of the film 'The Dybbuk' and the Polish Director's Suicide", *Haaretz*, April 12, 2016. An essay published in Haaretz newspaper in Hebrew.

Wrona studied cinema in Katowice and Krakow and at an early stage was marked as a promising director. He became famous as a director of TV series and films in Poland. His first full-length film, "My Blood" (2009), dealt with a Polish boxer who discovers his days are short and wants to have a child. He does so with a Vietnamese immigrant who agrees to be a mother in exchange for Polish citizenship, and in the process they fall in love. Wrona said it was the first film in Poland to deal with immigrants, a transparent and invisible population in his homeland. His next film, "The Baptism" (2010), deals with a Polish man who arrives to Warsaw, to be his son's godfather and his criminal past persecutes him. Wrona is considered one of the most important film makers in Poland.

"Demon", a film that has been screened in many countries and is appreciated, tells of a young Jew (although his Jewishness is merely hinted) from London returning to Poland with his fiancée to the village where she was born, to marry her and live in the family home, which they decided to renovate. Right at the beginning of the film, a bulldozer reveals the buried remains of the former village people. As in the play "The Wedding" (1901) by Stanisław Wyspiański, by which Wrona was influenced, almost the entire film takes place during the wedding. Suddenly the groom starts to act strangely. He wants to know who are the buried dead in the yard. A doctor, a pastor and the remaining local Jews try to help him in his distress. The Jew is witness to the repressed and forgotten history of the place. The Jew is also the decoder who speaks the voice of the image from the groom's throat; it is a Dybbuk.

As in Wyspiański's "The Wedding" that begins with the words "so what is happening, sir, in politics?" in which a personal and familial framework was intended to criticize Polish society while being a weak, divided and thirsting independence, so too in this film, the family and intimate framework aims to find out the Polish people's attitude towards itself during World War II and in so doing to talk about human nature and the ability to choose between good and evil.

As I have already mentioned, the Poles are very busy with whether they were victims or perpetrators. This question also concerns another question: how

are they perceived by the world? This phenomenon was named "The complex of lack of guilt"<sup>400</sup>. Since the publication of the book "Neighbors" by Polish-American historian Jan Tomasz Gross in 2001, the question of Polish guilt and responsibility is present in Poland and therefore it is not surprising that it is present in many Polish films made on this subject. Gross' book was adapted in 2012 for a film ("Shock") by the Polish director Władysław Pasikowski. A year later, in 2013, the film "Run Boy Run", a German-Polish-French production, was released in adaptation of the book by Israeli Uri Orlev, centered on the story of Yoram Friedman, a Jewish boy from Poland, who fled the Warsaw Ghetto and survived the Holocaust with a false identity<sup>401</sup>.

The most well-known example is the film "Ida" (2013), the Oscar-winning film by British-Polish director Paweł Pawlikowski, which tells the story of a Polish nun who one day reveals that her real name is Ida Levenstern and that her family was murdered in the Holocaust by Polish villagers. Also in this film human bones are buried in the ground, which reveal the tragedy of Polish Jews and depict the murder of Jews by their Polish neighbors.

In February 2016, the film "Ida" was screened by the Polish Broadcasting Authority. It was immediately after the right-wing government had been elected to power and therefore there was a long and tedious discussion about Polish blame. A representative on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League argued that Poland's past should be talked about, but not in a way that hurt the nation. "There is not even a single word in the film that Poland was under German occupation and so the viewer from the outside, who is unfamiliar with Polish history, may think that those who perpetrated the Holocaust are Poles". TVP History Channel director Piotr Gortzen added during a broadcast that

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<sup>400</sup> An essay by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir published in „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 2004. Translation to Hebrew from Polish by M. Paz.

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טוקרסקה-באקיר, "אובססיה של אי האשמה", החשבון הפוליטי, עימות עם זכרון, מ. פז (עורכת), תל אביב, 2007, עמ. 79-90. (Bakir, 2007).

Polish cinema demonizes Polish villages: "Poles feel they have been charged with crimes they did not commit..."<sup>402</sup>

The film was accompanied by a caption: "In Germany-occupied Poland, the Germans imposed a death penalty on hiding of Jews. Nevertheless, many Poles hid Jews and paid for it with their lives ... The number of Poles who received the title "Righteous among the Nations" from Yad Vashem is higher than any other nation."

Professor Gross claims that the Poles who rescued Jews were a marginalized group in Polish society, which they ostracized. Of course, such an opinion was not presented in the TV studio. The director of "Ida," Pawel Pawlikowski explicitly explained that he had wanted to say something universal about humans and belief in the broad sense rather than the limited Catholic meaning.

Poles, he says, like to judge things through historical glasses and a narcissistic complex. "I don't like a film that judges people; I don't like martyrology or idealization. I wanted to make a film that would talk about different points of view"<sup>403</sup>.

The film forces the viewer to be less judgmental. There is no absolute evil or absolute good. The murderer of Wanda's son admits his actions even though he could have accused his father of doing so. He saved Ida when she was a baby because he could. He brought her to the monastery. He was not able to save Wanda's dark-skinned and circumcised son. Perhaps the only choice was to kill Wanda's son before the Germans or the Poles would kill him and his family.

Wanda, the Jewish woman who suffers so much, is not the absolute good. Wanda whose nickname was "Red Wanda" sent many of the opponents of the Communist regime, or those suspected of doing so, to death. Her

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<sup>402</sup> Ofer Aderet, "Subtitle accompanying the broadcast of the film" *Ida* "provoked controversy in Poland", *Haaretz*, February 27, 2016. An essay published in *Haaretz* newspaper in Hebrew.

<sup>403</sup> Jagoda Murczyńska, "Ubranie i Pożądanie", *Kino*, 7 July 2015, pp. 101-2.

emotional life is barren and distinctly self-destructive. Ida is at a crossroads between choosing love for a man or loving God. She chooses the second option. The various narratives generated criticism from all sides of the political spectrum in Poland. The Jews complained that Ida did not choose Jewish life. The right-wing saw the film as anti-Polish, while the left-wing saw it as an anti-Communist and anti-Semitic film, because what choice could Jews have after the Holocaust, apart from choosing a monastery. Life after death, then, is a form of anti-Semitic incarnation<sup>404</sup>.

The director's maintains a postmodern position in which there is no one truth but only different narratives about World War II in Poland. It is problematic because if there is no truth, there is also neither good nor evil. And so the Polish baby killer is not the absolute evil while Wanda's suffering creates so much more misery and more evil. Ida, the faithful nun, experiences unprocessed suffering and chooses to escape life.

The film takes place in 1962, in grim and gloomy Poland. Therefore, the film is also filmed in black and white, as reality then appeared, says Pawlykowski. Many scenes are shot in one-shot, long-shots, focus on the faces, sometimes off-sound as if to emphasize that there is something beyond us.

Wrona filmed "Demon" in 2012, in a much more cheerful Poland. Long-shots with wide lens full of detail and colorful happenings. The dance scene in which the groom is attacked by the Dybbuk is one of the most beautiful in the film.

The cinematic style of "Demon" is the opposite of "Ida". Like "Ida", it brings issues to light that in the past were taboo in Poland and like "Ida" "Demon" exposes different narratives without being too judgmental. So it is also not surprising that many critics in Poland have addressed marginal issues of the context of the film. Some referred to the film as a horror film, pointing to the influence of Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining" on the film. Others thought the film was not scary enough and emphasized the comic scenes in the film. There were many statements regarding the Dybbuk, not always with the understanding of what the Dybbuk is. Often the Dybbuk is described as a

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<sup>404</sup> Sheila Skaff, "Ida w Ameryce", *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, Nr 95 (155) 2016, pp.213-218.

Jewish demon which comes to take revenge in a Polish wedding<sup>405</sup>. Actually according to Jewish tradition, the Dybbuk in the film is a tool to bring up lost memories of the Jewish groom.

The bulldozer plays an important role in the film. Right at the onset of the film is a strange, violent and alienating element in the abandoned and crumbling rural landscape. The bulldozer is the excavator, the discoverer, and the publisher. The bulldozer reveals buried human remains. Who are those people and why were they buried without a grave and tombstone? We don't know. The protagonists of the film also do not know or do not want to know. In the film, the bulldozer would later take on the name Hannah, which is also the name of the Jewish bride whose soul has entered the groom's body. The Jewish young woman who wants to say things that none of the wedding guests want to hear except the old Jewish teacher who knew her. Freud compares the preservation of life of soul to the origins of a city, of Rome<sup>406</sup>. Freud claims that even if the visitor arrives with great historical and topographical knowledge, he will find only meager remains. All ancient finds are still buried in the city or under the structures erected on top of them. It is a way of preserving things from the past as it appears to us. The familiar oblivion comes from the destruction of memory traces, that is, extinction. Freud argues that he is prone to the contrary belief and that everything that has ever existed in the life of the soul is preserved in one way or another, and that it can, under appropriate conditions, for example, in cases of far-reaching withdrawal, be raised again.

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<sup>405</sup> Adamski z Gdyni: "Demon". Zemsta żydowskiego dybuka. RECENZJA  
opublikowano: 17 września 2015 · aktualizacja: 17 września 2015.  
<http://wpolityce.pl/kultura/265675-adamski-z-gdyni-demon-zemsta-zydowskiego-dybuka-recenzja>

Marta Gostkiewicz, Demon: Trza być duchem na weselu /recenzja/, Kino, 2015-10-09.

<http://kulturaonline.pl/demon,trza,byc,duchem,na,weselu,recenzja,tytul,artykul,22454.html>

Michał Nowak, Recenzja filmu Demon: Diabeł czai się w wiosce, AKTUALIZACJA, 18 October 2015.

<http://www.dziennikzachodni.pl/artykul/9006567,recenzja-filmu-demon-diabel-czai-sie-w-wiosce,id,t.html>

<sup>406</sup> זיגמונד פרויד, "תרבות ללא נחת", מתוך *התרבות והדת*, ספרית הפועלים, 2000, עמ' 80. Freud, (2000)



Freud argues that in the skeletal bones of an older man he can mark the child's bone outline, but it by itself has disappeared, since it has become longer and thicker, until it has reached its final shape. Only in our soul we can maintain the various stages of this evolvment until the final shape. We cannot visualize it but we are aware of it. The bulldozer in the film reveals what is hidden. How will the characters in the film relate to the violent past which is on their doorstep? Would they like to know? To deny? "What a tremendous must be the cultural barrier to aggression if the defense from it can cause more misery than the aggression itself<sup>407</sup>."

The characters in the film can be divided according to a generational and sectoral key. Women in the film have a minor role. Unlike the film "Ida" - where the two main characters are women, here women have almost no voice. The bride is the only one who understands the groom's soul, but plays a passive role in trying to save him, while the groom's mother is mainly concerned with "what will they say?".

The groom - the groom is a cheerful young man who comes from London to the birthplace of his bride to marry her. He is young, handsome, happy and carefree. You can sense an androgynous appearance in the groom. Did the director want to see him as an everyman? Or this is the director's way to emphasis that the soul of the dead bride is inside him? During the wedding the groom was attacked by a Dybbuk. The Dybbuk is a distinctly Jewish motif, but in the film, in contrast to Anski's play, the Dybbuk enters a groom and not a bride and it is not the soul of a groom who experiences unrequited love but the soul of a bride murdered in the Holocaust.

Demon is a Christian concept taken from the director's world. His father used to practice witchcraft, and indeed, the priest in the film suggests that there is a possession here, that is, a satanic possession, a phrase that took root from Christianity in the 16th century. The priest tries to escape, but nevertheless he asks the doctor for an explanation from the science world, while the doctor offers an explanation from the mystical world. He says there is possession here.

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

The old Jewish teacher is the only one living in the village during the Holocaust, and recognizes that there is a Dybbuk here. The conceptual system known as incarnation and Dybbuk is a system that connects man and the representations of the world of impurity and death. Man is forced to do so by hidden powers associated with eternal life. It expresses muted sounds and different points of view that are marginalized<sup>408</sup>.

In modern form, we can talk about post-memory<sup>409</sup> about a memory whose connections to the source are not intermediaries. Through real memories of things experienced but arising from the completion of gaping spaces.

The suggestion of the old Jew in the film is to remember. He says: "There is no person without society and no society without memory." He tries to remind the wedding guests who don't want to hear about the village life before the war and during it. Then he expresses in other words, Freud's idea of the human ability to choose between good and evil or in Freud's words Eros and Ananke, the force to create or the force to destroy. The old Jew says "Whoever does not take part in the life of society is God or the beast."

Father of the bride - The father of the bride in the film represents the opposite position to that of the old Jewish teacher. It also represents the strong part of Polish society and of course the establishment. He tries to hide the groom obsessed by the Dybbuk and he tells the guests during the wedding: **"Go and sleep on it and forget what we didn't see. What we saw is a collective hallucination. We think we took part in it but we only think so. I dream you and you are my dream. A dream is just a dream. The wedding was not, you were not here. I was neither here nor was the groom. And never was. Let's forget what we didn't see."**

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<sup>408</sup> דורית ירושלמי ושמעון לוי, אל נא תגרשוני, עיונים חדשים בהדיבוק, ספרא, 2009. (Yerushalmi, 2009)

<sup>409</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetic Today*, 28.1, 2008.

The greater the need to repress and deny, the stronger and more violent the effects of the film are. Towards the end of the film, we witness a young Polish man throwing the groom's car into an abyss. This act is an illustration of the words of the bride's father. "He wasn't here. And never was. Let's forget what we didn't see." In the next scene, the bride seems to be the only one trying to understand the groom and to help. She is sailing in the river in grimy and ephemeral landscapes. In other words, the question which remains open is how do the Polish people refer to its crimes of the Holocaust, and moreover, is the more universal question of what man's reference to the sources of evil within him are, and can he channel them for good or will these forces of destruction thus overwhelm the world?

The key to "good" is memory, as the film shows. As the crudest and most violent characters in the film are also the ones in denial. The only way to transcend evil is memory. Memory is necessary for both the victim and the perpetrator, since their fate in the absence of memory is similar. The Dybbuk in the film dominates both the Jewish groom and the Polish family around him.

The historian Maurice Halbwachs said:

"When the loss is converted in the absence (or encrypted in the over-rationalized absence rhetoric), the result is a deadlock of eternal melancholy, of impossible mourning and of boundless euphoria, blocking or interrupting any process of past processing and historical loss<sup>410</sup>."

Jan Thomas Gross says: "In order to free themselves from the curse, all the Poles need to do is to say: 'Terrible things have happened in my grandparents' generation and shed a tear for those who were killed. That's it. 'Demon' is another step, certainly not the last, on the road to the Polish liberation<sup>411</sup>." The need to remember is not only of the Poles' or of the perpetrators' but also the Jews', as the old Jewish professor says: "There is no man without society and no society without memory."

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<sup>410</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, "From Collective Memory," in: *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, eds. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007, pp. 134-138; see also the Polish translation of his book, Maurice Halbwachs, *Spoleczne ramy pamieci*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008.

<sup>411</sup> Ofer Aderet, "The Chilling Story of the film 'The Dybbuk' and the Polish Creator who Suicide," *Haaretz*, April 12, 2016. An essay published in Haaretz newspaper in Hebrew.

## Chapter 5:

### **Epilogue. What efficient “Memory Work” can be done in order to improve the relations between Israel and Poland and between Jews and Poles?**

In second chapter of this dissertation I discussed the different approaches dealing with memory, the different approaches of researchers like Nora, Halvex, Foucault and others. I have not discussed at length the central idea of memory building which is “memory work” which refers to set up an infrastructure for collective memory to secure a place for the past.

Irwin Zarecka, who coined the term "memory work", researched the collective "memory work" of the past in post-World War II Poland and Berlin. She is very much influenced by Halvex's approach but adds that building a collective memory requires an infrastructure: the preparation of various objects, spaces and texts that will enable commitment and communication with the past<sup>412</sup>. Yerushalmi calls these "vehicles of remembrance"<sup>413</sup>. In Irwin-Zarecka, collective memory is perceived as a process of framing the past in order to understand it in the present tense, relying on these resources<sup>414</sup>. However the process is not irreversible: "collective memory is a terrain especially prone to ... overlaying of different frames ... because it is filled with reused and reusable material."

The meanings change over time, just as our emotional and moral connection with the past changes<sup>415</sup>. In the case of Polish Jews, Zarecka writes in 1989 that this community was absent from the perception of the Polish national past in previous decades, and its inclusion is a process that requires first of all, the creation of a space in Polish collective memory, then the addition of items

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<sup>412</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: the Dynamics of Collective Memory*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994, p. 13.

<sup>413</sup> Yerushalmi Yosef Haim, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, University of Washington Press, Seattle WA, 1982, p. 27.

<sup>414</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: the Dynamics of Collective Memory*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

relevant to this space. Only then the Poles and the Jews will be able to recall the collective memory of their homeland<sup>416</sup>.

Yifat Gutman conducted a study in Poland on "the role of activism of memory in reconciliation processes in a comparative aspect<sup>417</sup>." Gutman defines memory activism as "a strategy for political change aimed at remembering a controversial history to influence public debate and policy in the present, often to promote reconciliation, peace, and democracy." Groups of memory activists began to gain visibility in the 1980s in different parts of the world. Her research in Poland begins at a point where the space and necessary items had already been created by the activist generation of the 1980s and 1990s, who demanded renewed ownership of the pre-war Polish Jewish past<sup>418</sup>.

Gutman found many similarities and cross-categories of conflict and post-conflict between the position of German and Israeli activists versus the Polish and Czech activists. The memory activists who were interviewed by Gutman in Israel and Germany similarly expressed post-nationalist positions expressing universal principles and external ties to their society, while the activists in the post-socialist countries of Poland and the Czech Republic looked inward, in search of a new national identity<sup>419</sup>.

Wagner-Pacufici and Schwartz argue that entrepreneurship is another key element in building a collective memory. Attitudes and interests are translated into commemorative forms through enterprise. Before any event can be regarded worth remembering and before any class of people can be recognized for having participated in that event some individual and eventually some group, must deem both event and participants memorable and must have the influence to get others to agree. Memorial

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<sup>416</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 36; from the Polish perspective cfr. Piotr Forecki, *Od Shoah do Strachu. Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych*, Poznań 2010.

<sup>417</sup> יפעת גוטמן, תפקיד האקטיביזם של הזיכרון בתהליכי פיוס בהיבט השוואתי, מרכז תמי שטיינמץ למחקרי שלום, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, עמ. 13. (Gutman).

<sup>418</sup> Erica Lehrer, Magdalena Waligorska, "Cur(at)ing History New Genre Art Interventions and the Polish-Jewish Past", *East European Politics & Societies*, vol. 27 (3), 2013, pp. 510-554.

<sup>419</sup> יפעת גוטמן, תפקיד האקטיביזם של הזיכרון בתהליכי פיוס בהיבט השוואתי, מרכז תמי שטיינמץ למחקרי שלום, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, עמ. 11. (Gutman).

devices are not self-created, they are conceived and built by those who wish to bring to consciousness the events and people that others are more inclined to forget. To understand memorial making in this way is to understand it as construction process wherein competing "moral entrepreneurs" seek public arenas and support for their interpretation of the past<sup>420</sup>.

"Moral entrepreneurs" are competitors, "seeking to find a public arena and support for their interpretation of the past" may include various agents and "communities of memory" that gather around commemorating an event in an effort to keep its memory alive. But this definition does not include agents seeking "public arenas and public support" for moral and political issues beyond the issue of commemoration. Memory activists are "moral entrepreneurs" who seek to bring the ethical memory of the "other" into the public awareness of their society, often by mentioning its injustices and for promoting progressive values such as pluralism, equality and reconciliation, but not always<sup>421</sup>.

Yifat Gutman argues that memory activists use the practices of memory culture as a mean of raising awareness and influencing the dominant public discourse in their society<sup>422</sup>.<sup>11</sup>

They carry out the commemoration operation mainly at sites where the events mentioned to change them into spaces of appearance in the sense that Hannah Arendt meant of public political action or where the past can be re-imagined and separate from the national paradigm in the present, through visibility and discussion. In their view, this new understanding of the past may change perceptions of present problems and produce a new vision for the future and this is the model of change of activism of memory<sup>423</sup>.

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<sup>420</sup> Robin Wagner-Pacufici and Schwartz Barry, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97 (2), 1991, PP. 376-420.

<sup>421</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: the Dynamics of Collective Memory*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994

<sup>422</sup> יפעת גוטמן, תפקיד האקטיביזם של הזיכרון בתהליכי פיוס בהיבט השוואתי, מרכז תמי שטיינמן למחקרי שלום, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, עמ' 28. (Gutman)

<sup>423</sup> Elżbieta Matynia, *Performative Democracy*, Yale Cultural Sociology Series, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009, p. 166; Jeffrey Goldfarb, *The Politics of Small Things: The Power*

Irwin-Zarecka distinguishes between two waves in Poland. In the 1980s, interest in the past of Jews who lived in Poland before World War II began. At first it was artists, writers and academics from the opposition and the Catholic intellectual class who rediscovered the Jewish past as an anti-communist action<sup>424</sup>.<sup>15</sup> After 1989, this interest began to be expressed in the public sphere as well. In the 2000s, and especially in the second half of the first decade, a second wave of interest and remembrance of the Jewish past in Poland began. Third-generation charities and artists since the war are leading this wave of commemoration in response to a different global and European context, and seek to remember the multicultural past of one of the most homogeneous societies today<sup>425</sup>.

The second wave of commemoration of the Jewish past by Polish non-profit organizations began after the publication of the book "Neighbors" by Polish-American historian Jan Gross in 2000 expanded the public debate on Polish-Jewish relations, about which I wrote in Chapter 2 of this work<sup>426</sup>.

The memorial practices of these associations took place alongside more traditional and formal practices of commemorating this past (such as preserving heritage sites or establishing museums and monuments). The second generation of activists of the memory of the Jewish past was inspired by its predecessors from the 1980s and accompanied by a critical intellectual discourse in the press, literature, art and academia. Activists of the 21st century shared liberal motivation with the first wave and, like it, faced reactions of denial. Yet the second wave, as Lehrer and Waligorska argue,

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*of the Powerless in Dark Times*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958.

<sup>424</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 36.

<sup>425</sup> Erica Lehrer, Magdalena Waligorska, "Cur(at)ing History New Genre Art Interventions and the Polish-Jewish Past", *East European Politics & Societies*, vol. 27 (3), 2013, pp. 510-544.

<sup>426</sup> Magdalena Marszałek, *Visualizing Past Diversity: How Polish Literature and Art Make Former Multiethnic Space Visible*, Paper Presentation at the Conference "Competing Histories and Conflicted Spaces", University of Haifa and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, October 2012.

also challenged traditional forms of commemoration and the silences that remained in central collective memory in Poland<sup>427</sup>.

Yifat Gutman argued that just like other groups that she has researched that deal with the activism of memory, the groups in Poland combine political activism for reconciliation and human rights with cultural practices and recognizable and dominant symbols in Polish society. They are engaged among other things in the restoration of pre-war Jewish sites, especially cemeteries and the creation of archives of testimonies. These activities exist in all major cities in Poland but also in small places. There is also a deliberate development of artistic and educational projects in the community, in places and spaces where Jews lived or historical events related to them took place<sup>428</sup>.

Since 2006, there have been more than 500 local initiatives to commemorate populations that lived in Poland before the war, were destroyed and displaced during it. 77 of them were grouped together for the first time in the "Project for Tolerance" "Tolerancyjni. To się dzieje!". In 2006-2009 the program was funded both by the Ford Foundation and managed by the Warsaw Stefan Batory Foundation in Warsaw and by the Polish branch of the Soros Foundation (established in 1988 by the American philanthropist of Hungarian), in collaboration with the "Organization for Creative Initiatives", it was decided that the project would be joined by cultural initiatives that deal with minorities in the periphery and "work for tolerance." Initiatives that met the set criteria were selected to participate in the project. The initiators of the selected projects met for a three-day workshop in Warsaw before setting out for advice. Most of them focused on Polish-Jewish relations and the struggle against anti-Semitism, and some on marginalized groups of minorities.

The initiators of the project who applied for the program were not experienced professionals or memory historians, nor were they knowledgeable about the

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<sup>427</sup> Erica Lehrer, Magdalena Waligorska, "Cur(at)ing History New Genre Art Interventions and the Polish-Jewish Past", *East European Politics & Societies*, vol. 27 (3), 2013, pp. 510-544.

<sup>428</sup> יפעת גוטמן, תפקיד האקטיביזם של הזיכרון בתהליכי פיוס בהיבט השוואתי, מרכז תמי שטיינמץ למחקרי שלום, אוניברסיטת תל אביב. (Gutman)



local history of minorities who wanted to present. The first Jewish person they ever met was a representative of the Ford Foundation, the program director noted<sup>429</sup>. Most often they stumbled upon a remnant of Jewish culture in their city and wanted to know more. Even those involved in the restoration of Jewish cemeteries before the war, a particularly popular practice among memory activists in Poland, did not know how to do so in practice. They had to learn what the gravestones of Jews looked like, what the burial customs were in Judaism and how the space of a Jewish cemetery was organized.

Another project was in the town of Międzyrzec Podlaski, with about 17,000 inhabitants. A meeting between local firefighters and an Israeli who returned to visit his hometown led to the erection of a monument in the town's main square and the publication of a Holocaust survivor's book. This initiative created a change of consciousness in the townspeople and exposed them to shared memories of the past along with former "locals" who no longer live in the place.

Some of the changes take place through the documentation of the local past: in Radom, for example, an hour-long documentary about the city from the pre-war period was discovered with the help of Yad Vashem, photographing Jews who immigrated from the city as well as Jewish residents and institutions from 1936. There is a great importance to find the traces of the local past in light of the feeling that all memories were lost in the days of the communist regime<sup>430</sup>.

The biennial program of the project, which provided funding and guidance to the local initiatives, was extended to a third year, which was devoted to consultation and meetings between the local entrepreneurs due to the need to create a new network of contacts. Several supervisory organizations such as Step were also established to assess the impact of the program. The project took place during a period of changing attitudes towards the Jewish past, and also helped in shaping it: "When we started the project there were almost no other projects, and when we finished it we felt there were other bodies

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>430</sup> This kind of changes can be also observed in the local publications, cfr. P. Kwiatkowski, *Spoleczne ramy tradycji. Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Mazowsza Płockiego w publikacjach regionalnych 1918–1988*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990.

providing funding for this type of project", the project manager explained to Gutman in a 2012 interview. "During this period, the curriculum in the schools changed, and such a change in depth creates an effect for the coming years as well<sup>431</sup>." This lasting effect also applies to local authorities, which did not oppose memorial initiatives as they might have opposed them in 2006, as a refusal to commemorate the Jewish population in 2012-2013 was considered politically incorrect. It can be assumed that this mindset has changed since the 2015 elections, which brought with it a conservative political discourse that seeks to curb historiography and critical voices about Polish-Jewish relations. However, even in the years 2012-2013, local authorities that were not interested in the subject ignored it by diminishing the Jewish past of their city from the official signage, or the official website of the city. Over time, it is difficult to find Polish residents of former Jewish towns who still remember their Jewish neighbors.

Restoration of pre-war Jewish cemeteries is a complex operation, occurring in several stages: First, old tombstones taken from cemeteries during and after the war are found throughout the town, for example for paving roads and stairs or for fixing flour mills as millstones. Then they try to read the inscription in Hebrew on the gravestones and identify the name of the deceased and only then return the gravestones to the burial site and place them as is customary in the Jewish religion. The next step is to mark the site that is often in the open field, using signage and a memorial service.

In the "Tombstones in Everyday Life" project, the artist Łukasz Baksik documented from 2008 to 2011 the daily uses made of Jewish tombstones taken from cemeteries throughout Poland since the war. He testifies that the removal of tombstones for daily use as building materials or paving of roads was done not only in the small towns but also in the park in Warsaw and other cities. His exhibition was shown in Warsaw and Krakow. He asked his association for creative initiatives to accompany his photography activity in small towns with local information activities on the phenomenon. The project titled "Instructions for Restoring Tombstones" by Baksik included instructional

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

signs hung in ten towns that had previously been "Steitel"s. The instructions detailed how the tombstones could be returned secretly and without identification, in order to assist in the restoration of the local Jewish cemetery.

The local activity for the restoration of Jewish cemeteries before the war is an example of the creation of knowledge that is contrary to that produced by the education system, or to that which is openly discussed in the local public discourse. Contra-informative knowledge of this kind emphasizes the selectivity of the dominant knowledge available to the public by the government. But challenging the "truth" in the dominant discourse on the past in Poland can be problematic, as in small towns activist memory activities may be perceived as aimed at criticizing local residents' behavior with their Jewish neighbors in the past, or even accusing them of silencing the city's Jewish past. Asking local residents about their attitude towards Jews, or remembering the Jewish past, is still perceived as a threat among many locals because they see it as both an attack on their good name and a threat in a lawsuit to return Jewish property to its owners. The suspicion that the activist represents a Jewish resident seeking to claim his property back is evident in many meetings between activists and local residents<sup>432</sup>.

In the "For Tolerance" project and "The Dialogue Among Nations" organization working for a dialogue on the Jewish past in Poland, researchers were hired to examine whether the memory initiatives they nurtured had a positive or negative impact on the local population and how to quantify them. Gutman writes that despite her repeated requests, she was not given any results.

In other cases, activist groups sought to examine what in the local past might be perceived as non-threatening, and how to attract local audiences to participate in memorial activities instead of alienating them. The solution they found was, in many cases, to emphasize the "nicer" sides of pre-war Polish Jewish relations rather than the negative or violent ones - or to combine the positive and the negative - through creative or educational projects and

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62.

events, which included a celebration or ceremony for children and adults. Part of these activities was the production of a film based on Jewish stories.

The project initiative Magdalena Kawa from the Homo Faber Foundation in Lublin explained that through filmmaking experience, local high school students were exposed to Jewish history and learned about local Jewish traditions that existed in their city and life in the state before the war.

Another project by Emil Majuk, founder of the Panorama of Culture Association, took place in the town of Wojsławice in the Lublin region in 2008. Majuk turned the house where he grew up into a space dedicated to the memory of the Jew who owned it in the past, the shoemaker Fawka. He invited artists, teachers and musicians for a folk music event in which they discussed how to mark the local memory the Jewish past of the many "Steitel"s who were in the district.

Another activity of the Homo Faber Foundation was a walking tour following Jewish and even Ukrainian populations. Visits in Orthodox churches destroyed by Poles after World War II. The project was accompanied by informal programs in schools.

The use of the Jewish past sometimes focuses on culture. For example, a cultural festival based on the writings of the American Jewish writer of Polish descent Bashevis Singer puts on plays based on his short stories, which revolve around life in former Jewish towns in the Lublin area<sup>433</sup>. The festival is accompanied by an informal educational program throughout the year. It includes production of films produced by the students in which they interview and record the elders of the city.

In such small town with limited resources, which have no tourists at all, the Jewish Culture Festival is an attraction and provides extracurricular, educational and artistic activities for children and parents with poor means.

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<sup>433</sup> Cfr. Agata Tuszyńska, *Singer. Pejzaże pamięci*, Kraków 2010; Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Związki literackie Isaaca Bashevisa Singera*, in: *Literackie portrety Żydów*, red. E. Łoch, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1996, pp. 173-184; Richard Burgin, *Rozmowy z Izaakiem Bashevisem Singerem*, Gdańsk 1992; R. Kuwałek, *Dziadek Isaaca Bashevisa Singera - rabin w Biłgoraju*, Na przykład, 1995, nr 22; *Biłgoraj, czyli raj. Rodzina Singerów i świat, którego już nie ma*, red. M. Adamczyk-Garbowska i B. Wróblewski, Lublin 2005.

The activity attracts local visitors from nearby urban centers as well as volunteers and artists from major cities or from abroad.

Large annual festivals of Jewish culture attract many visitors, thus helping the region's economy, business and image of the city. However the more entertaining the event, the more likely it is that it will serve as a target for critique by researchers and writers. Criticism is that the various festivals intensify the disregard and silence of the atrocities caused by the Poles to the Jews. The critique does not touch on the actual activity but only on the positive way in which one chooses to remember the local past.

To also outline new paths for the future, some of the activities focus on the contribution of Jewish neighbors to local history, such as emphasizing published local figures and teaching the Jewish past to teenagers through subjects that are attractive to them, such as film, history and journalism. Like memory groups operating in Lublin such as Well of Memories, Panorama of Culture Brama Grodzka, there are other groups that focus on urban spaces where Jews and Poles lived together in the past. The groups associate these coexistence with the encounter that takes place in the present city with other minorities, such as migrant workers and refugees<sup>434</sup>.

In Gutman's study about the role of memory activism in reconciliation processes in a comparative aspect, she cites the case of Jewish-Polish relations as a unique case in international research on reconciliation in conflict areas. Firstly, the Polish Jews hardly live in Poland today, and secondly the Jews do not share a common border with it and of course do not represent a case of danger of the return of violence or the return of the population. Also the reconciliation between Poles and Jews does not correspond to the conditions of mutual recognition of past injustices, the aggression was often directed unilaterally by Poles towards Jews.

Verdeja argues that a democratic public debate is the basis for reconciliation. Institutional reform can take place in conjunction with a public debate on the

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<sup>434</sup> From numerous publications printed by local authorities, cfr. Marta Kubiszyn, Adam Kopciowski, *Żydowski Lublin. Źródła – obrazy – narracje*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2021.

controversial past, its victims, the perpetrators of injustices and their consequences. Veredeja and his supporters see the public debate on responsibility, collective memory, national identity, historical justice and redress of injustices as a necessary component of the act of reconciliation. They think that the discussion must include the surviving victims in addition to currently excluded minority groups. The victims' participation in the public debate on the past and present gives validity to their basic rights and aids in their reintegration into society as moral and political agents<sup>435</sup>.

Gutman's research raises more complex conclusions. She argues that while reconciliation experts say the basic condition for reconciliation is recognition of past wrongs, in practice none of the test cases she examined had such a possibility. The findings of her research place the dialogue and renewal of relations at the pole opposite to a genuine confrontation with past injustices. Findings suggest that the expert model, which sees dealing with past injustices as a necessary condition for reconciliation, is problematic because in practice it may prevent reconciliation. The second finding, according to which the renewal of the relationship comes at the expense of dealing with the injustices of the past, also turns out to be unrealistic in her research.

Also what is often seen as a positive development of the younger generation in the transition from ignorance to knowledge of past injustices, is revealed as a controversial move in the public debate, where power is also invested in ignorance, denial, disregard and boycott.

This study shows that over the past thirty years there has been a clear link between the institutional relations of Israel and Poland (various centers of power such as government, military, Parliament and academic establishment) and voluntary and sporadic activism of memory. As already written extensively during the work, hundreds of initiatives that discuss memory out of understanding and a desire to build relationships in all areas - art, society and politics were founded both in Israel and in Poland. In recent years, and especially since the beginning of 2018, diplomatic relations have deteriorated

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<sup>435</sup> Ernesto Verdeja, "What is Political Reconciliation?", Mobilizing ideas, Feb 3, <https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/what-is-political-reconciliation/>

(this was discussed in details in the second chapter of the work). Along with the deterioration of relations, the various collaborations between the two countries have greatly diminished. Even if there is no comparison between anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism and there were those who were perpetrators and those who were the victims, there are now governments in both countries that try to get public support by spreading and encouraging hatred<sup>436</sup>. In Poland there are wonderful people and organizations who are not afraid to face in courage and integrity, even with difficult chapters in the collective past of their people, and they are the ones who pave the way for the possibility of better relations between the countries and the nations.

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<sup>436</sup> Similar opinion in M. Ziółkowski, *Cztery funkcje przywracanej pamięci*, „Studia Socjologiczne”, Vol. 4 (1999), pp. 55-76; cfr. also M. Napiórkowski, *Powstanie umarłych. Historia pamięci 1944–2014*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2016.

**Appendix: Email from Tomasz Strug**

**Subject: Re: A Research for Tel Aviv University about Jewish Museums in Krakow**

Dear Liora,

sorry for delays... I do am snowed under with the work.

Some quick answers here:

Q: The museum was established in 2004. When did the idea to establish it come first to mind and who were the initiators?

A: It was created by British photographer Chris Schwarz. Chris was also director of the museum until his premature death in 2007. For over a decade prior to the opening he was involved in the project of researching Jewish Poland - namely he was taking photographs to illustrate research of Professor Jonathan Webber. At one point, and with enough material, he decided to find permanent place for his work in Kraków. Subsequently, with Jonathan Webber they created exhibition "Traces of Memory" (core exhibition of the museum)

Q: What was first (1) the architecture of the building OR (2) the decision of what will be shown content-wise.

A: First was the idea to have a permanent exhibition in Poland, then, the search for possible venue started.

Q: How this building was chosen? What options were for its reconstruction and renewal and how, at the end, you have chosen the present concept?

A: At the time the Museum was created there were not many sufficient large spaces in Kazimierz. The building was undergoing the renovation right around the time Chris Schwarz decided to have an exhibition in Kraków. The renovation was done by the owner of the building (we have long-term lease).

Q: Was there any contest between different architects? If yes - Who were the architects? Who was chosen? Do you have the alternative proposals that were not chosen?

A: No contest, and I do not have any archival materials from that time.

Q: The subject of the main catalogue is "Rediscovering Traces of Memory of Jewish



History of Polish Galicia".

In the museum you do have a contemporary view that deals in the memory of the past and less in the history itself.

Was this the idea from the beginning or did you have other thoughts and ideas? If you had other ideas in mind – what were those other ideas for concepts?

A: I'd say it deals with both, showing the history, contemporary processes and memory using medium of contemporary photographs. That was the idea from the beginning as far as the core exhibition goes.

Actually we are now in the process of updating this exhibition, which is another story...

Q: The images in the permanent exhibition deal with the memory of Jewish past life in Galicia.

My feeling is that some of the images are so beautiful that in a way they actually hide the terrible memories rather than highlight them.

What do you think about this?

A: Not sure if I understand this question... what do you exactly mean by hide and present in this context?.

Q: In the post communist Poland, there are in the recent years many museums that deal with Judaism in Poland.

There is a feeling that the Holocaust period and the suffer of the Jewish people in Poland is presented on a smaller scale, while leaving enough room showing the integration between Jews and Polish people, and in a way disregarding the anti-Semitic issue.

The Galicia museum, maybe, has followed this kind of trend by ignoring actual visuals of the past, as it was. What is your opinion about this?

A: This is very complex issue, and I do not think we do ignore facts - on the contrary. One needs also be very careful with saying "suffer of Jewish people in Poland" - it was German-occupied Poland in most. Of course there is an issue of antisemitism and pogroms, even after the WWII - we have photographs showing this also. How can one show the place of mass killing using contemporary photograph: the simple forest monument and insightful caption can be more powerful than showing historical images.

Also - I don't think Holocaust museums like in USA, Israel or even Germany can be implemented in Poland - for the very simple reason: the Holocaust took place right here, you can visit camp sites/camp sites museums and countless places where Jews were murdered. Someone said that Polish landscape might be considered one

big Holocaust

museum and there is some truth in such statement. But Jewish life here flourished for hundreds of years. This also is a story worth telling.

Q: When looking at the names of the founders, if I am not mistaken, there are no Jews in this list. Is it true? Do you see any problem with that? i.e. with the fact that the Jewish narrative is not presented (also) by Jews?

A: As mentioned above, co-curator and author of all texts in our core exhibition is distinguished Jewish scholar Jonathan Webber.

Hope that helps,

let me know if I should provide you with more information.

You can also check some facts on Museum's history here:

<http://www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org/museum-history.html>

best/Tom

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