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Jewish memory, nostalgia and national identity of Jews in Wrocław's Society: The history and heritage of the 19th century Jewish necropolis on Slezna Street in Wrocław (Poland)

Proposal is connected with the history and heritage of the Old Jewish Cemetery on Slezna Street in Wrocław (before WWII Breslau – one of the biggest German city, now in Poland) and the Jewish memory and nostalgia of Wrocław's Jewish Society since nineteenth century to the Second World War. The proposal will present knowledge about this place and its history and heritage. In the Diaspora the family plots at Machpelah were transformed into a public Jewish cemetery. The nineteenth century Old Jewish necropolis on Slezna Street in Wrocław is one of the excellent examples of these public cemeteries. The origin of this cemetery reaches the beginning of the second part of the 19th century. The cemetery was given for the Jewish Burial Society (Chewra Kadisza). Its German name was *Israelitische Kranken-Verpflegungs-Anstalt und Beerdingungs-Gesellschaft* [Jewish Health Care Organization and the Burial Society]. This organization was the oldest of this kind in the city (Wrocław) and was founded in 1726. A few publications exist (regarding the Cemetery on Slezna Street in Wrocław/Poland). The most important are: *Efemerity of Eternity of* Maciej Lagiewski's and *An Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław* (Maciej Lagiewski's). Knowledge about this cemetery and the people were buried comes from Wrocław's archives (from before the Second World War). A few articles were written about Wrocław's cemeteries in general. Their author is the first of all, Leszek Ziatkowski. A few books are very useful to recognize the background of described subject: *Wrocławscy Żydzi (1850-1944)* [*Wrocławian Jews (1850-1944)*] of Maciej Lagiewski, *Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu* [*History of Jews in Wrocław*] of Leszek Ziatkowski; *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na Śląsku* [*From the History of Jews in Silesia*] (Krystyn Matwijowski's edition). Presentation will focus on the history of The Old Jewish Cemetery on Slezna Street in Wrocław, its Jewish heritage, specially Jewish but also non-Jewish

(because of strong integration of many Breslau Jews to German community in the 19th century) symbolism on the tombstones. The Old Jewish Cemetery on Slezna Street in Wroclaw is evidence of many changes in Wroclaw's Jewish Community because of Enlightenment movement and assimilation of German Jews to Prussia. However, from the other hand, the necropolis shows how memory and nostalgia for fatherland's tradition was also very strong in that time. Today the status of the eternal rest places in Judaism is seen through the foundations of the Citizens' Committee for the protection of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments (for example in Poland) and many other real efforts to give suitable protection and provide appropriate and comprehensive restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Europe. There are obvious signs of professional conservation efforts in Wroclaw's magnificent cemetery. The cemeteries are also very important for today's Jewish memory and nostalgia. Rafael Scharf states that people interested in their familial history travel to see the places of eternal rest of their family. He argues that not only places such as Auschwitz, but also what he named "real" cemetery is objects for interest for people. According to Krajewska, the cemetery in Judaism has the same status as the synagogue and they are 'indispensable' elements of Jewish traditions. These places maintain a visible history of the existence of Jewish societies in Europe. A walk along the Wroclaw Jewish cemetery alleys can be an excellent lesson of the history of Wroclaw's Jews and at the same time history of this city. The Jews buried here played a significant role in the history-making of Wroclaw's society. A profile of the eternal Wandering Jews (always to their death) appears in this cemetery's nostalgia and memory (expressed in many signs at the Jewish tombstones). Wroclaw's Old Jewish Cemetery maintains a visible evidence of the 19th century Jewish memory and nostalgia beside assimilation and emancipation of Wroclaw's Jews at that time.

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