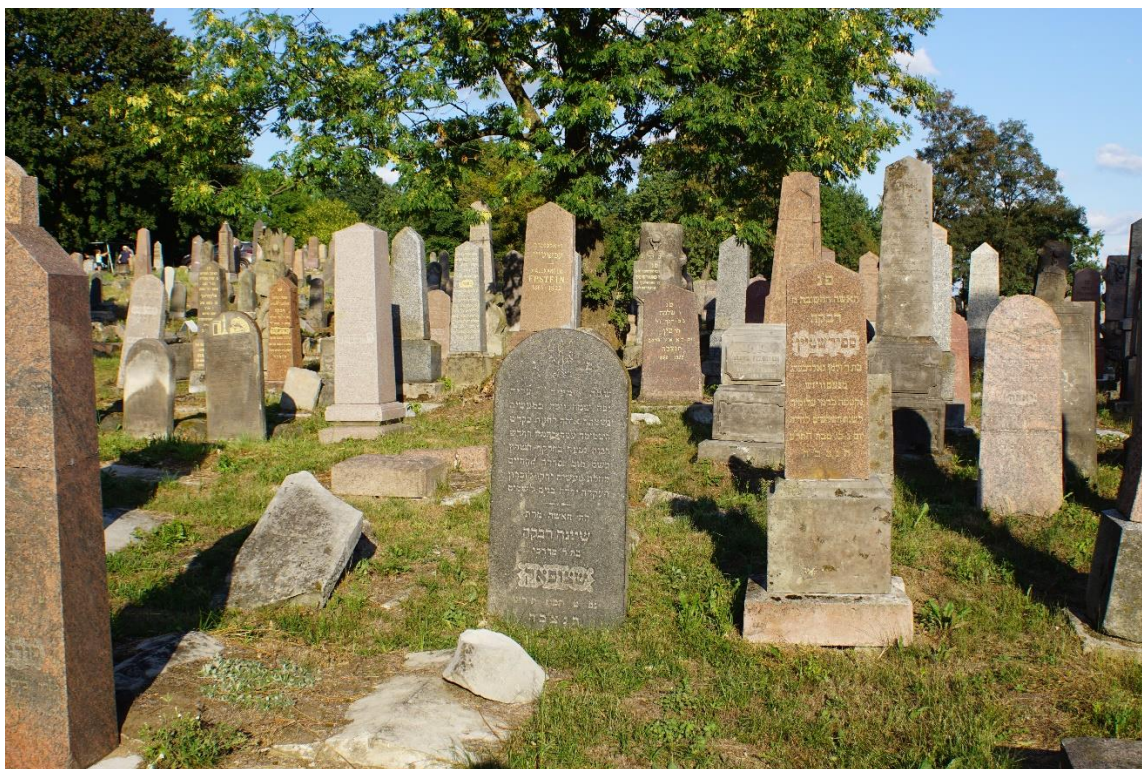


# **Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery**

## **Bialystok, Poland**

### *A Guide*

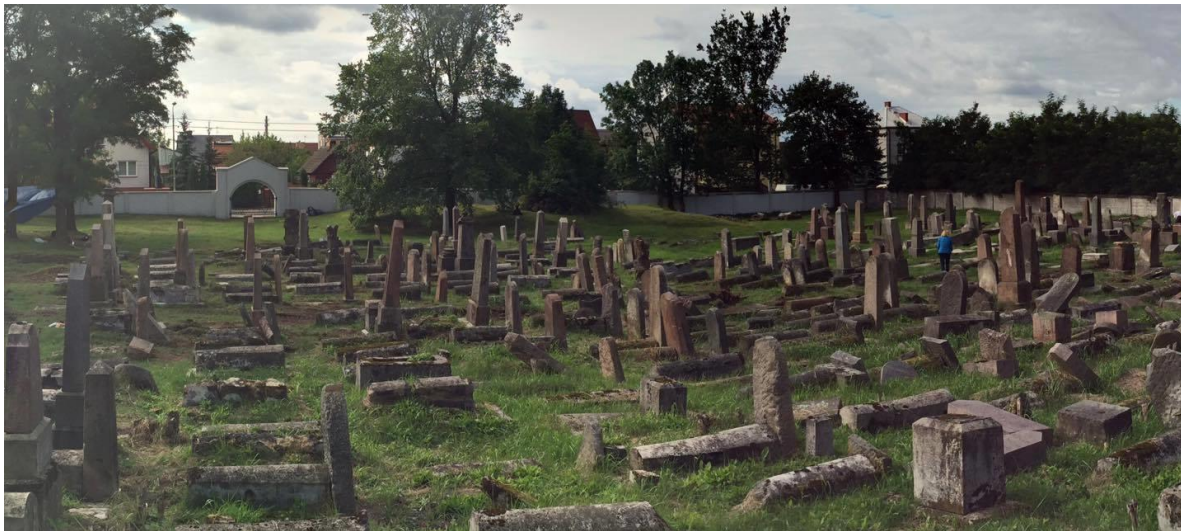


**Heidi M. Szpek, Ph.D.**

**Translated by Beata Piecychna, Ph.D.**

## Introduction

Located in Bialystok, Poland, Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery is the largest extant urban Jewish cemetery in northeastern Poland. In all its details, this cemetery reflects the nature of Jewish life and culture from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until its devastation during the Holocaust and in Post-Holocaust years under Communism. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, amidst the new climate of the Republic of Poland, efforts are beginning to restore what remains of this cemetery to its former dignity. Local and international students and volunteers of all ages, including those with ancestry in Bialystok, come to learn about Jewish life in Bialystok and Eastern Europe while engaging in these efforts. In the process, Bagnowka has become a living museum.



*A view toward the main entrance, with restored sections, 2017.*

This guidebook provides the visitor with essential background information in order to better appreciate the legacy still extant on this cemetery today. *A Short History of Bialystok* explains the establishment, growth and demise of Bialystok's Jewish community. An overview of the setting, structure and nature of *Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery* is also provided, offering further insight into the significance of this institution. Information on the *Jewish Epitaph: Prominent People and Surnames* discusses the value of its tombstone inscriptions. *A Gallery of Surnames* allows visitors interested in genealogical research to explore extant ancestry on Bagnowka. This cemetery is also rich in its artistry, as the traditional Jewish world encountered modernity. Thus, information on the *Art of Bagnowka* also is provided as is a *Gallery of Art*. Finally, *A Cemetery Tour* guides the visitor to key locations throughout this cemetery.

## A Short History of Bialystok

Bialystok is situated beside the Bialy River, which encouraged its founding and the economy of the other towns along its meanderings. This river also lends its name *biały* to the city of Bialystok, meaning “white slope” (Polish *biały*, *stok*). Established in 1322, Bialystok became the largest city in northeastern Poland as well as the capital of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, and a major center in the later Grodno Gubernya. The designation Grodno Gubernya refers to the former Imperial Russian administrative region that encompassed northeastern Poland, northwestern (current day) Belarus and a small portion of southwestern Lithuania. The gubernya system was created by Imperial Russia in the early eighteenth century and adapted for Poland while under Russian control in the early 1800s. Between World War I and World War II, the area formerly known as the Grodno Gubernya held 15 percent (ca. 194,100) of the Jews in Poland, the highest concentration of Jews in any gubernya. Just prior to the onset of World War II, Bialystok, the largest city within the Polish side of this former gubernya, contained the largest percentage of Jews in any Polish city. Approximately 52 percent of Bialystok’s population was Jewish (ca. forty thousand).

The first Jewish emigrants to this region of the Grodno Gubernya arrived in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, but it was not until the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries that they were officially allowed to establish settlements. Thus, though Bialystok was founded in 1322, the earliest record of Jewish settlement in this city dates to 1588 and official Jewish settlement in 1658. When the first Jews settled in Bialystok, two authorities held sway – Polish nobility and the Jewish *kehillah* (council) of Tykocin. The small village of Bialystok was governed first by Stefan Czarniecki, the Polish nobleman to whom King Jan Kazimierz had bequeathed the land beside the Bialy River. Dominion of Bialystok passed to Count Jan Klemens Branicki in 1703. As Branicki established his permanent royal residence in Bialystok, he invited Jews to settle further on his lands, bringing commerce and trade.



Model of Tykocin, seat of the Jewish regional authority until the late 18th century. Distinct Christian (background) and Jewish quarters (foreground) are still in evidence today. Muzeum Kultury Żydowskiej-Tykocin, 2010.



*Model of 18th century Bialystok. The Jewish district was just left of the Clock Tower (upper right), located on the Rynek, with the Rabbinic Cemetery beside this district. The Branicki Palace Complex is near center and the Cathedral Basilica at middle-right. Muzeum Historyczne w Białymstoku, 2010.*

Though granted town rights in 1729 by Branicki, the Jews of Bialystok religiously still remained under the Jewish authority of Tykocin (Yiddish Tiktin). In town records, Bialystok was called "Bialystok-upon-Tiktin," indicating its subsidiary status to this regional Jewish seat of authority, established in 1522. In 1749, Bialystok was awarded town status by the Polish King Augustus III; in 1765, Count Branicki gave Jews rights equal to Bialystok's Christian citizens. Yet the Jewish community of Bialystok still remained subservient to the *kehillah* of Tykocin. As early as 1718, the Tykocin *kehillah* had allowed Bialystok to construct a *beth midrash* (house of study) and *mikveh* (ritual bath). Yet it would be decades before a synagogue, a poor house, and a cemetery were built in Bialystok and before the Jewish community could break away from Tykocin's religious authority. On the death of Count Branicki in 1771, Bialystok was one of six regional cities sold to the King of Prussia. During the period of Prussian control, Jewish Bialystok finally broke away from the authority of Tykocin, becoming the district capital. Freedom from the Tykocin *kehillah*, however, simultaneously saw anti-Jewish legislation from Prussian authorities, with legislation that sought to limit the number of Jews settling in Bialystok and to restrict the number of professions in which Jews could engage.

Prussian rule was lost to Napoleonic rule, but by 1807 the city was annexed to Russia as Russia proved victorious in the Franco-Russian War. The Jews of Bialystok remained under Russian control until the First World War, which continued and intensified the restrictive measures

enacted under Prussian rule. Jews could not marry, change occupations or residences without permits; they were required to adopt surnames. Russification of the calendar, of surnames and even of Jewish educational institutions, from the *cheder* (children's Hebrew and religious school) to the gymnasium levels, was imposed. In the cities, Christian-Jewish competition was encouraged by the Russians, but in the rural areas oppressive measures were enacted against the peasantry. Jewish response was to flee to the city. Thus, the years 1825 to 1835 and again in 1845 saw migration of Jews from the countryside and neighboring villages to Bialystok. The result of this movement was a tremendous increase in Jewish commerce, especially the textile industry.

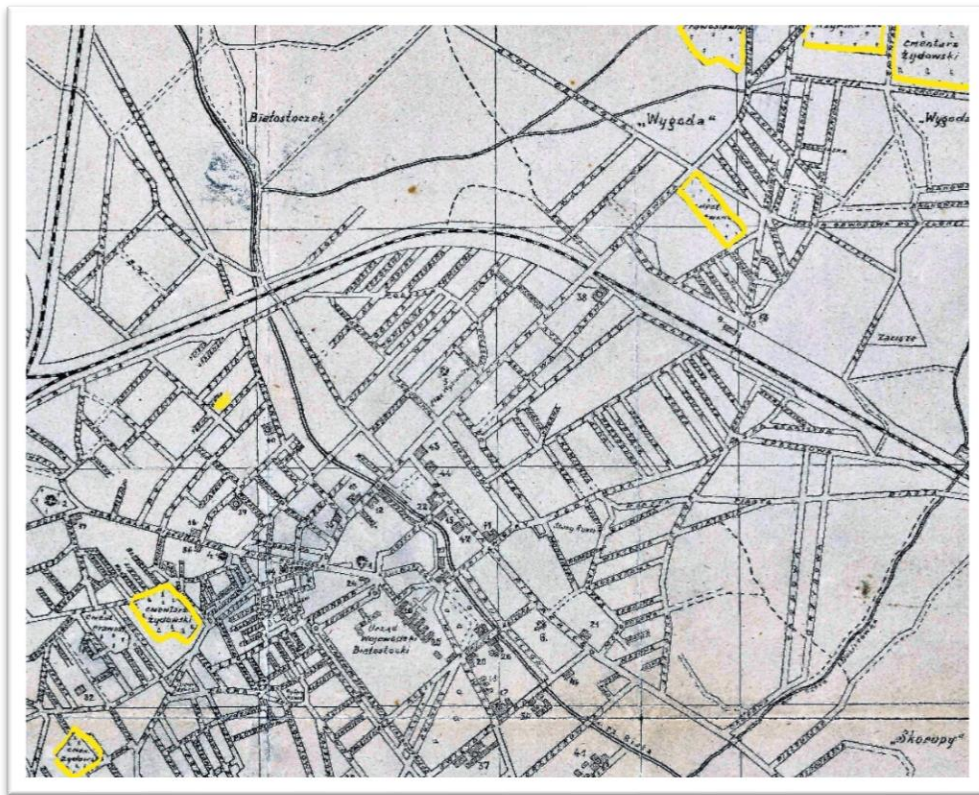
Census records of 1878 indicate that Jewish Bialystok had over twenty thousand inhabitants. By 1897, two decades later, the Jewish population had nearly doubled, comprising 64 percent of the total population. Moreover, Jews dominated the city both in business and commerce, as employers and employees. Earlier (1832 and 1835), Russian legislation was passed, allowing Jews to become honorary citizens, contingent on exceptional contributions to education, business or commerce. Such legislation increased Jewish relations with Russia but also brought animosity with their Polish neighbors. After the failed Polish Uprising against Russia in 1863, Russification intensified and Jews strengthened ties with both Russia and Germany in business and commerce. Thus, in the centuries prior to the turn of the twentieth century, anti-Semitism took the form of restrictions and subjugation to ruling authorities. As Bialystok moved into the twentieth century, physical violence, including massacres and pogroms, were now part of anti-Semitism. During World War II and the Holocaust, Jewish life and heritage were nearly destroyed in Bialystok. Today, the Jewish population of Bialystok is five.



*Original Ghetto Memorial. Bialystok, Poland, c. 1950.*  
(© Heidi M. Szpek)

## Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery

Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery, established in 1892, was the last of five Jewish cemeteries in Bialystok. Situated then on the outskirts of Bialystok, Bagnowka adjoined a complex of three Christian cemeteries and a later city cemetery. The district of Bagnowka was then only a small village, located on the periphery of the burgeoning urban center of Bialystok. Its name Bagnowka (Bagnówce in Polish), meaning “a deforested expanse,” offers a visual sense of the setting in which this cemetery was situated. Historically, Jewish and Christian cemeteries were located at opposite ends of a town, each within their respective quarters, as in the regional town of Tykocin today. Thus, placement of a Jewish cemetery in such close proximity to three Christian cemeteries was a radical move even though now necessitated by Tsarist legislation. Nearly 40 acres (16 hectares) in size, arranged in what eventually would be 100 sections, Bagnowka had the potential to cradle 35,000 Jews of Bialystok and nearby communities, thus becoming the largest urban Jewish cemetery in northeastern Poland.



*Jewish Cemeteries in Bialystok, 1937. Bagnowka is situated in the northeast corner, adjoining the Catholic Cemetery in close proximity to the Russian Orthodox Cemetery. Just south is the Evangelical (Lutheran) Cemetery. The City Cemetery is just north of this complex. At city center, (north to south) are the (approximate) Ghetto Cemetery, the Old Rabbinic Cemetery and the Cholera Cemetery. A poor house cemetery once stood on the town square, east of the Old Rabbinic Cemetery. (Bialystok: ilustrowany informatory i plan miasta, 1937. Podlaska Digital Library.)*

Bagnowka Jewish Cemetery was also unique because of its nature. It began as a traditional, rabbinic cemetery when Bialystok and Congress Poland were still part of the Russian Pale of Settlement. The term Pale of Settlement is the designation given to a vast region, established in 1791 under Catherine the Great, in which Jews were permitted to settle. As Poland moved to regain its independence (1918), this cemetery was transformed by the historical processes of its time into a quasi-modern cemetery. Modernism now confronted traditionalist practices in respect to burial patterns, styles of tombstones and their art, the use of vernacular languages, and the epitaphic tradition. Thus, it used traditional Ashkenazi tombstones with lengthy Hebrew inscriptions and folk art designs, alongside bilingual inscriptions in Hebrew and German, Yiddish, Russian or Polish on modern-style tombstones.

Families did not buy adjacent burial plots (though still paying a burial tax); rather burial was by date of death, beginning in the sections nearest its three entrances, moving inward over time. Family members, who are buried in close proximity, typically died about the same time, as for example, three members of the mercantile Trop family, who died in 1902. Historical records, for example, also indicate that a wife was buried on the Old Rabbinic Cemetery in Bialystok, while her husband was buried on Bagnowka. In keeping with Jewish tradition, burial of priests is typically near the cemetery's entrances, a practice that sought to preserve the ritual purity of priestly visitors. As time progressed, however, descendants of the priestly class were buried throughout Bagnowka. While men, women and children are buried within each section, an attempt at gender separation is achieved by maintaining individual rows for men and women in each section, with children typically buried at the back of a section. In the Memorial Complex, however, symbolic tombstones for victims of the 1905 Massacres and the 1906 Pogrom were erected in distinct areas for women and men.

Bagnowka cemetery was in operation until 1969, with few burials during World War II. It is peculiar to have several burials on Bagnowka in 1941–44 as burial was restricted to the Ghetto Cemetery. Today, only about 15% of this cemetery's original tombstones remain due to devastation during the Holocaust and under Communism. Thus, what remains is so valuable as Bagnowka is the last remaining Jewish cemetery in Bialystok and a source of great historical significance both for Jewish heritage and the history of Bialystok.

The story of Bagnowka does not end with situating this cemetery in its historical past, both in respect to Bagnowka as a religious institution and its tombstones and epigraphs as markers of past history. With the establishment of *Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej Polska-Izrael* in Bialystok, under the direction of its President, Lucy Lisowska, who also serves as the Bialystok representative to the Jewish Community of Warsaw, care for Bagnowka took on new directions at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A large gap in the cemetery's western wall was repaired. An extensive wall adjoining the Catholic Cemetery was rebuilt; the wall on Wschodnia Street was repaired and repainted. Cleanup efforts were initiated and maintained through *Centrum*, often with the assistance of local school children. Restoration efforts also ensued with the volunteer efforts of international students from the United States, Israel and Europe, coordinated by Lisowska. From 2010 to 2015, *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste* (ASF) held six summer camps on Bagnowka, devoted to restoration. In 2016, a summer camp organized by Amy Halpern Degen (Massachusetts, USA), who lost relatives in the burning of

the Great Synagogue in Bialystok (June 1941), and her husband Josh Degen, a stonemason, engaged a new strategy of restoration, utilizing mechanized equipment to more quickly uplift and reset tombstones. In 2010, Heidi M. Szpek, Ph.D., Emerita Professor, Central Washington University (Washington, USA) also began collaborating with *Centrum*, in 2013 with *ASF*, and in 2016 with the Degens in their efforts, serving as translator, epigrapher and historian of Bagnowka.

## The Jewish Epitaph: Prominent People and Surnames

The Jewish epitaph typically preserves a basic formulaic pattern that records the decedent's name, paternal lineage (rarely maternal lineage) and date of death (occasionally, date of birth). This biographical information is often conjoined with brief epithets praising the deceased as, for example, "a perfect and upright man" or "a modest and important woman." These words are framed by an opening abbreviation (פ"י), meaning "Here lies," and a closing abbreviation (תנצב"ה), meaning "May his/her soul be bound in the bond of everlasting life" (I Samuel 25:29). In pre-1920 inscriptions, it is not uncommon for a poem to be added. This poem is often arranged as an acrostic (a poem crafted using a person's name) that either praises the decedent or laments the family or community's loss.

Information preserved in the epitaph can be a valuable source of community history but especially significant for genealogy. The tour provided below offers examples of epitaphs as historic documents. At present, about 3000 epitaphs are extant, with approximately 25% of these lacking surnames. Nearly 1000, however, record the surnames of Bialystok's Jews. (See **Gallery of Surnames**) These names owe their origin to paternal ties (e.g. Abramowicz "son of Abram"), to ancestral homes (e.g. Tiktin) as well as to the Yiddish, Prussian/Germanic, Russian and Polish cultures that infused this community. They are written predominately in Hebrew characters in accordance with Yiddish spelling. At times, it is often difficult to determine the proper equivalent in German, Russian or Polish for given names and surnames. Some epitaphs are bilingual and thus helpful for reading names.

Among the extant epitaphs, surnames of prominent individuals and Bialystok families are attested, including:

**Avraham Ber Gotlober** (d. 1899), renowned poet and writer of the *Haskalah* (Section 1)

**Pelte Halberstam** (d. 1893), eldest daughter of Bialystok's foremost businessman and entrepreneur, Izak *Zabludowsky*, and wife of *maskil* Eliezer Halberstam, who brought the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) to Bialystok (Section 1)

**Sheyna Chaya Halpern**, daughter of *Sender Bloch*, early Bialystok textile developer (d. 1897) (Section 1)

**Sora, wife of Josef Zamenhof** (d. c. 1900), aunt-by-marriage to Ludwig (Lajzer) Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto (Section 1)

**Chaim Hertz Halperin**, Chief Rabbi of Bialystok, 1900-1919 (d. 1919) (*ohel*)



**Moshe Wallach** (d. 1894), father of *Maxim Litvinov*, Soviet diplomat, and Foreign Secretary, and Ambassador to the United States (Section 5)

**Dr. Zalman Flatte** (d. 1921), Bialystok physician for over 20 years (Section 7)



*Tombstone for Moshe Wallach, father of Maxim Litvinov (d. 1894). (Section 5)*



*Tombstone for Sora, wife of Josef Zamenhof, brother of Ludwig Zamenhof, creator of Esperanto (d. c. 1900) (Section 1)*



*Tombstone for Sheyna Chaya Halpern, daughter of Sender Bloch, early Bialystok textile developer (d. 1896) (Section 1)*

## Gallery of Names

The surnames as recorded in the Bagnowka corpus of epitaphs vary significantly, at times, in their spellings. Often the surname (and full inscription) offer little to no evidence as to whether a surname's spelling should follow Hebrew, Yiddish, Prussian/German, Russian or Polish conventions. Thus, individuals seeking familial names should not be deterred from further genealogical exploration if such spelling variation is present. Thus, for example, Hebrew/Yiddish באראש may be written Barasz or Barash; אינשטיין may be Aynstajn, Ajnsteyn, Ajnstein, Einstein, etc. As restoration proceeds each year, additional surnames may be recovered for this Gallery:

**Abramicki**, Abramowicz, Abrasz, Adler, Adlerstein, Aharonowicz, Aijn, Aijnbinder, Aijzensztadt, Ajzensztejn, Ailiwicki, Aizykowicz, Ajdelzon, Ajlbert, Ajnotker, Alcha, Alterlewi, Ambasz, Amdurski, Amiel, Anes, Anj-man, Apelbaum, Apelroyt, Aperstein, Araman, Arkin, Arler, Arman, Ostkowski, Asz, Atlas, Atlasowicz, Augustowski, Aviron, Avrasz, Awal

**Babkes**, Bachnacki, Bachrach, Baczakowski, Badilkes, Bancewski, Banisz, Baraks, Baran, Barash, Barenboim, Bartnowski, Barunski, Barszcz, Barszewski, Baruchowicz, Basz, Beber, Beiderman, Beidl, Beingelsdorf, Bajnish, Beker, Bekritzki, Beloch, Bendet, Bendetowicz, Berenstein, Bereziński, Brzeziński, Berger, Berkman, Berkowicin, Berkstein, Berlinski, Berman, Bernstein, Besel/Becel, Betzler, Bialystocki, Bielzski, Binder, Birnbaum, Birpas, Bliaska, Bloch, Blumenkranz, Blostein, Blum, Blumawicz, Blumberg, Blumene, Blumenfeld, Blumenstein, Babrowicki, Boaz, Bojarski, Borczewski, Borenbum, Borislawski, Borland, Borenstein, Borodowicz, Borowski, Borunski, Borwitz, Bowkes, Brandhendler, Branski, Bregman, Brener, Bresler, Brezinski, Brisker, Brodacz, Broide, Bronstein, Bubrik, Buch, Bukszczelski, Bulatewicz, Burlakow, Burnbaum, Burnstein, Burstein, Butenski

**Cackin**, Caitzpianski, Calewicz, Capet, Ceitlin, Cemachowicz, Chamdah, Chanrowski, Charlap, Chawatz, Chawes, Chawostawski, Chazan, Cheitowicz, Chernichowski, Chwoles, Ciechanowiecki, Cieslik, Cimerinski, Citlin, Citron, Clachter, Cohn, Cukerman, Czarne, Cszlenow, Cyrolnik, Cywilski, Czackowski, Czaplinski, Czapnizki, Czeszla, Czyżewski

**Dajnes**, Davidowitz, Dayan, Dikles, Dimentstein, Dines, Dinesohn, Dinowicz, Diszka, Dlubowski, Dobroniewski, Dobriman, Dojlicki/Dolicki, Domeratzki, Doncig, Donitz, Doroszka, Dorozko, Dreier, Drozdowski, Dubinski, Dublanski, Duniec, Dyszkin, Dziekonski

**Efrat**, Efron, Ehrenberg, Eigensztot, Elianowicz, Elkes, Emanuel, Engelman, Epelbaum, Epstein, Erdreich, Etkes

**Fabrikant**, Fajgin, Fajn, Falkner, Falkowicz, Faniman, Farber, Farbstein, Feibert, Feigusz, Feinberg, Feineman, Feingold, Feinsod, Feinstein, Feinstein, Feinzil, Fener, Ferder, Ferges, Figowski, Finkelstein, Fishbein, Fizeles, Fisher, Fiawicz, Flatte, Fleisher, Frank, Freidkes/ Frejdkes, Freidkin, Freidman, Freiman, Freinkel, Frejdkin, Freidman, Frokman, Frumawski, Furman

**Gabaj**, Galanty, Gamberg, Gambrud, Garber, Garfinkel, Gawze, Gdański, Geddyn, Gelberg, Gelblum, Gelbord,

Gelczynski, Gelerod, Gelman, Gendelman, German, Gerszowicz, Gewanowicz, Gilad, Gilele, Ginzberg, Glastein, Glaz, Gliaz, Glikfeld, Glity, Gluk, Gluzman, Gniecucki, Goburin, Gojdzman, Golberg, Gold, Goldszmid, Goldbaum, Goldberg, Goldblat, Goldfarb, Goldfein, Goldman, Goldst, Goldstein, Goldwicz, Golgenisker, Golomb, Golombowicz, Golub, Goniądz, Goniadzka, Goniądzki, Goralnik, Gordon, Goss, Gotkowski, Gotlieb, Gotlober, Gowircz, Gożański, Gozawski, Gredizki, Greinhoiz, Greenberg, Grynszpan, Grabowski, Grochowski, Grodecki, Grodzienska, Grokow, Grokop, Grondowski, Grosman, Growbowski, Grozinski, Grudski, Gric, Gricman, Grinzweig, Gubawolski, Gurwicz, Gutelan, Guterma, Gutman, Gwirc

**Hababli**, Hachnoch, Hackles, Halberstam, Haller, Halperin/Halpern, Hawot, Hefner, Helerstein, Helman, Hendler, Hepstein, Herman, Hertz, Hetsalski, Heublum, Hindes, Hindowski, Hirschmann, Hirschhorn, Hirszwor, Horowicz, Hochman, Howes, Hubinski, Hurwicz (26)

**Izbicki**, (1) **Jafe**, Jakobman, Jakowlewicz, Janasowicz Jankelewicz/Yankelewicz, Janowik, Jarocki, Jarmolowski, Jarosławski, Jaelewski, Jasinowski, Jaskolka, Jastreblianski, Jasionowski, Jaworkowski, Jehialcik, Jeruzalimski, Jesgor, Jewreiski, Jezernicki, Joblanski, Jochnowezki, Joelman, Johniwezki, Jokacz, Jonasawicz, Jorawski, Josem, Jozpe, Jowazki, Józefowicz, Jurowiecki

**Kacyner**, Kacalik, Kaczalski, Kaderlan, Kadlubik, Kadszko, Kaftantinowski, Kagan, Kaganowicz, Kahana, Kalesznik, Kalmanowicz, Kaltgrod, Kamienowicz, Kamieniecki, Kamnumeski, Kanel/Konel, Kantor, Kantorowicz, Kapel, Kapelman, Kapil, Kapilsohn, Kapitowski, Kaplan, Kaplanski, Karofial, Karak, Karchewka, Karton, Kaszczenewski, Kaszman, Katlior, Katowicz, Katszalski, Katz, Kaufman,

Keiles, Kempner, Kersnowski, Kessler, Kleinerman, Klecszka, Kleinstein, Klink, Knyszyński, Kobrinski, Kobylinski, Kohn, Kolieski, Kolesnik, Kon, Kolicz, Kolinski, Komelski, Komeniezki, Komiczeski, Kona, Kondawski, Konica, Konopiacze, Kontorowicz, Konucki, Kopciewicz, Kopecki, Kopite, Korach, Korenblum, Korlanski, Kos, Kosawicki, Kosewicz, Kosowski, Kostomolocki, Kostorszewski, Koszczenik, Koszewski, Kotliar, Kowolski, Kozak, Kramer, Krawczow, Krawczyk, Kraweczk, Kreczmer, Kreindlik, Kremer, Krenker, Kriawcewicz, Krofial, Krogliak, Kruglak, Krok, Królewiecki, Kronenberg, Krosowski, Krowkowski, Krownik, Krugman, Krupnicki, Kruszewski, Krywiański, Kudric, Kulesz, Kulwarski, Kurcharn, Kurianski, Kuricka, Kurkin, Kurlandski, Kurycki, Kusnierzycki, Kustin, Kuzman, Kwiat

**Laginiecki**, Lajman, Lajkin, Lampert, Langbord, Lapidot/Lapidus, Lapin, Lapowski, Lasz/Losz, Latkewicz, Layzki, Lekawicz, Leibowicz, Leijew, Leisgold, Leiwin, Lejn/Lin, Lenczner, Lew, Lewanderstein, Lewicz, Lewin, Lewinski, Lewinsohn, Lewitan, Lewkowitz, Liberman, Libkowski, Lichtenstein, Lieb, Liebermann, Liersawicz, Liew, Liewinski, Lijbowski, Liker, Liktenstein/Lichtenstein, Limone, Lin, Linder, Linewski, Lintczewski, Lipkowski, Lipkes, Lipstein, Lipshitz/Lipszic, Lis, Listokin, Litwinski, Litwak, Loks, Lom, London, Londynski, Lostowski, Loszczanski, Łowski, Lubelski, Lubicz, Lublinski, Lubzowski, Lukasz, Lunski, Lusternik

**Magid**, Majer, Makawski, Malawski, Malcberg, Malec, Malmed, Maltyc, Mandels, Manes, Mankowski, Margolis/Margulis, Markowicz, Markus, Martos, Maryński, Masrer, Mates, Matinski, Matjnka, Mazie, Mazor, Medownik, Meirsohn, Meizler, Melamed, Melamdowicz, Melcer, Melinrazewicz,

Melnizki, Menachowski, Mendels, Menkes,  
Merownik, Midler, Midrasz, Mikilowski,  
Milbeker, Milner, Minc, Mindeljem, Mines,  
Mokliar, Moklis, Mokowski, Moller,  
Morgensztern, Mordezki, Mostowicki,  
Mostowicz, Motilski, Mozawicz

**Najmark/**Nejmark, Najdus, Natansohn,  
Nazbulski, Nebel, Nejman, Nemcov,  
Nienzira, Niezbrucki, Nimcowicz, Nizanski,  
Nocmenik, Nosowicz, Nowal, Nowik,  
Nowikalski, Nowinski, Nowit

**Oben,** Oijberman, Oitkowski, Okawski,  
Okes, Olkenitzky, Olszkawski, Onekski,  
Onochowicz, Openheim, Opeiria, Orlanski,  
Orlowski, Osder, Osepovich, Ostrowicz,  
Ostrinski, Ozder, Ozra

**Pajn,** Pakciar/Fakciar, Panicz, Papirmeister,  
Parnsz, Palsowski, Pastrigacz, Paszkowski,  
Pat, Patrow, Pawelinski, Pawlowicki,  
Pazalucki, Peinc, Peisachowicz, Pekalok,  
Peker/Feker, Pener, Penes, Peraj,  
Percowski, Perelstein, Perelzon, Perer,  
Peretski, Perlis, Perlowicz, Peszczanicki,  
Piarka, Piekor/Fiekor, Pikarski, Pines, Pirig,  
Pitkowski, Platowski, Plitnik, Plonski,  
Pochaczewski, Pocinke, Podorowski,  
Podrabinek, Pojzner, Poktar, Poliak, Polies,  
Polir, Pollender, Polok, Polokewicz,  
Polonski, Polter, Porozowski, Portnoi,  
Potok, Potokski, Poznanski, Prancow,  
Praszkiar, Preifstein, Prenski, Pres, Preszel,  
Priloker, Prin, Pruzanski

**Rabinowicz,** Rabinowinziak, Rabinsohn,  
Ravkowicz, Radak, Rafałowski, Rajces,  
Rajzkin, Rayskya, Rapalowski, Rapaport,  
Reichmahn, Reinerman, Reibord, Reitbord,  
Remen, Rendl, Repelski, Reznik, Rivlin,  
Rinterman, Risgorski, Riskind, Ritkin,  
Rodak, Robinski, Rodzinower, Rogawski,  
Rogieniezki, Romeratski,  
Rosanow/Rożanow, Rosenthal, Rotenberg,  
Rotstein, Rowicz/Rowic, Rozanski  
/Rózański, Rozeblum, Rozen, Rozenbaum,  
Rozenberg/Rosenberg, Rozenblat,  
Rozenblum, Rozentel, Rozenthal, Rubin,

Rubinow, Rubinowicz, Rubinstein,  
Rubynawski, Rudawski, Rudski,  
Rybalowski

**Salman,** Salpe, Samaj, Sandler, Sapirstein,  
Sapozinski, Sarne, Schwartz, Segal,  
Segalowicz, Serlin, Shelfer, Sheines,  
Sheinfinkel, Sheinman, Shulman,  
Skolnik/Szkolnik, Sibirski/Sybirski,  
Sidrijnski, Sidronski, Siemiatycki,  
Simenauer, Sirate, Słobocki, Slomianski,  
Slon, Slonimczik, Slonimski, Slusker,  
Slutski, Slutzkit, Sluzki, Smetjoch, Sobol,  
Sokalof, Sokol, Sokolnizki, Sokołowski,  
Sokolski, Solnicki, Solowitzik, Somolski,  
Son, Soposzniak, Sopockawski, Sorowski,  
Sorwer, Sowicki, Spasinski, Spekter,  
Srolewicz, Starinski, Stein, Steinberg, Stern,  
Sternfeld, Strikowski, Stoliar, Stulor,  
Sturman, Stupler, Suchawolski, Sulket,  
Supraski, Surawicz, Surazski,  
Surbicki/Serbicki, Swieczkowski, Swirski,  
Szabfisz, Szackis, Szakwasacik, Szalmuk,  
Szapiro/Shapiro, Szapliniski,  
Szapron/Szafran, Szaronszawer, Szcirin,  
Szczupak, Szechenowicz, Szeifeiroz,  
Szeinkin, Szekarski, Szer, Szereszewski,  
Szermeister, Szestokowski, Szimilewicz,  
Szimszuwicz, Szlachter, Szlagman,  
Szletyńska, Schlecter, Szleser, Szliapak,  
Szlipke, Szmerkes, Szmidt, Szmukler,  
Szmul, Szmurok, Szmusz, Sznajder,  
Szostakowski, Szuszyzki, Szowzin, Sztefler,  
Szteiper, Sztumer, Szturmak,  
Szturmakewicz, Szturman, Szulmeister,  
Szwartzenberg, Szwartzgorn, Szwec,  
Szyniak

**Tapelanski,** Tcheszlikowicz, Telewyczki,  
Teliszkowski, Tenenbaum, Tewelewicz,  
Tibermas, Tikocki, Topcer, Toperowicz,  
Topolski, Torgawlie, Tortaczki, Tregowski,  
Trekowski, Trejwasz, Treszczanski,  
Tribiasz, Trinkowski, Trop, Turon, Tykocki,  
Tyktin/Tiktin

**Waczeczski,** Wajnoker, Wajrblud, Waks,  
Wa(l)lach, Waldman, Wole, Walk, Walman,

Waneski, Waniewski, Waran, Warhaftig,  
Warsawski, Waserstein, Wasilewski,  
Waszlikowski, Webman, Weider,  
Weiderman, Weilenski, Weilerstein,  
Weilimowski, Weinagrod, Weinagrodski,  
Weinberg, Weinciar, Weiner, Weinstein,  
Weinsztok, Weisberg, Weistein, Weitzman,  
Weller, Wendel, Wendelewicz, Werblud,  
Wider, Wieryszk, Wigarski, Wigdorawicz,  
Wilczik/Wilchik, Wilenski, Wilimowski,  
Wilk, Wilner, Winik, Wistinezki, Witkes,  
Wizerman, Wojlfzon, Wolie, Wolk,  
Wolkomirskaya, Wolkowicz, Wolman,  
Wolowski, Worot, Wrono, Wygodski,  
Wysocki

**Zabackowski**, Zabłudowski/Zabludowsky,  
Zabludowicz, Zachariasz, Zadworonski,  
Zagilowski, Zajancz, Zajanski/Zojanski,  
Zajonc, Zakheim/Zokheim, Zalcborg,  
Zalcer, Zalcman, Zalkin, Zamenhof,  
Zamkewicz, Zanshein, Zaszczinski, Zaszuk,  
Zawacki, Zawalewski, Zawacki, Zbor,  
Zelenka, Zelig, Zeligzon, Zelikowicz,  
Zelman, Zelmans, Zelwianski, Zilberberg,  
Zilberblat, Zilberdik, Zilbert, Zletynska,  
Zobawski, Zokaricz, Zubacz, Zuc,  
Zukerman

*Individual records available at:*

Foundation for Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland:

[http://cemetery.jewish.org.pl/list/c\\_91](http://cemetery.jewish.org.pl/list/c_91)

JewishGen and JOWBR: <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/>

## Art on Bagnowka

Symbols from the realm of Jewish funerary art are frequent on Bagnowka Beth Olam. Some are crafted in the fanciful manner of folk art while others are executed with minimal effort, especially after 1920, reflecting the transformation of Bagnowka from a traditional to a modern cemetery. The provenance of specific symbols displays a direct link to the regional art of the synagogue, while regional Polish influence is also suggested for the worlds of flora and fauna.



*Playful folk art symbols and simple etched renditions are both in evidence.  
(Section 18 and Section 83.)*

Some symbols are typically used for men, others for women, while yet others are used irrespective of gender or age:

#### *Men*

**Priestly hands** in position of benediction: descendent of the priestly class (*ha-cohen*).

**Levitical pitcher** held by a hand, pouring water into a bowl: descendent of the Levitical line (*ha-lewi*), assistants of the priests in the days of the Temple.

**Book(s)** with/ without bookcase: associated with Torah scholarship and teaching.

**Lion of Judah** from the biblical text, especially representing the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9) and thus the Jewish people. Use: (1) image-name association for deceased named Judah, Arie (lion) in Hebrew or Leyb (lion) in Yiddish; (2) signifies power, strength and boldness derived from Jewish teachings; (3) combined with books suggests a scholar protecting the Law; (4) two lions, in heraldic style, flanking a crown of the Torah, as protectors of Torah; and (5) beside a broken tree suggests the strength of death that cuts life short.

**Deer** in image-name association for deceased named Tsvi (deer) in Hebrew or Hersz in Yiddish.

#### *Women*

**Siddur** “prayer book”, faithfulness to religious tradition

**Candle(s)**, candelabrum, *menorah* (seven-prong), *hanukkiah* (nine-prong for Hanukkah); traditional woman’s role of lighting the Sabbath candle but also of daily lighting the home (see Prov. 31).

**Braided prongs** of the *menorah*: reminiscent of preparing the *challah* (Sabbath) bread.

#### *Non-gender/age specific*

**Star of David**, quintessential symbol of Judaism today. Its history in Jewish art and on tombstones, in particular, is relatively recent. In 1897, the Star of David was adopted as the symbol of Zionism and gained in its frequency of use to symbolize Judaism.

**Charity box** with a forearm and hand; emphasizes this virtue in both women and men.

**Bird** plucking branch from tree or taking flight with branch; suggests plucking the soul from the metaphoric tree of life or transporting the soul from earth.

**Broken tree** or broken branches, symbolic of a shortened life, including the willow tree.

**Poppy**, familiar Polish flower, is also prevalent in Christian funereal art: possibly rejuvenation after death or decorative.

**Cornflower**, thrice on Bagnowka, is more frequently found in the Jewish cemetery of Choroszcz in the Bialystok region, just nine kilometers west of Bialystok; decorative.

**Acorn** flanked by leaves symbolizes the greatness of life after death.

**Floral or feather plume**, flanking a coat-of-arms, also appears on thirteen extant tombstones, dating from 1896 to 1913, significance uncertain.

Rare symbols include: *batei midrash* (study houses), **gryphons** with flowering urns; **hat** for deceased with Russian surname Gut but no longer extant, **photographic niches**, and **cameo**

**porcelain inlays. Torah scrolls**, rolled on staves, adorned with a Star of David, are also occasionally found, serving as a powerful symbol of scholarship. For women, it may represent *Megillat Esther* (Book of Esther).

**Traces of paint** can also be found on Bagnowka's tombstones. Modern monuments typically had the inscription and any symbol painted in gold. The traditional Jewish Ashkenazi *matzevoth* (tombstones), however, used a variety of colors for the upper ornamental register and on the inscription register, in keeping with the nature of folk art on the Jewish cemetery in Eastern and Central Europe. The traces of paint that remain suggest that the gray Ashkenazi tombstones were originally painted black with the inscription in white; or the inscription background in white with the text in black. Evidence from other Jewish cemeteries (e.g. Kolbuszowa) suggests the deceased's name and acrostic may have been painted red. The ornamental register background was a light blue with green, brown, bronze, gold, yellow, and red used for various symbols.



*Substantial traces of black and white paint remain on the memorial matzevah of Shimon Einstein, victim of 1906 Pogrom.*

# Gallery of Art



Priestly Hands (Section 3)



Lion (death) destroys trees (life).  
(Section 26)



Hanukkah (Section 2)



Levitical Bowl & Hand (Section 26)



Deer in forest (Section 56)



Candelabrum (Section 2)



Scholar's Books (Section 10)



Woman's Domain (Section 7)



Broken tree (Section 31)





Cornflower (Section 95)



Star of David (Section 18)



Hat (A. Levy, 1923)



Floral ornamentation (Section 26)



Plumed Coat-of-arms (Section 15)



Photograph Niche (Section 8)



Gryphons flank urn (Section 14)



Beth Midrash (Section 21)



Cameo Insert (Section 90)



1. **Main Entrance.** In Jewish tradition, a cemetery is frequently termed a *beth olam* “house of eternity.” Bagnowka is designated as such in the Aramaic prayer, written on the gray metal plaque, which is affixed atop the whitewashed, plastered gateway at this cemetery’s southern (main) entrance on Wschodnia Street:



*Main entrance on Wschodnia Street features an Aramaic prayer.*

House of eternity (*beth olam*), Bagnowka. Blessed are you, O Lord, Our God, King of the World, who fashioned you by right and sustained you by right and brought you to death by right and knows your total number [of years] and is ready to restore and bring you back to life by right. Blessed are you, O Lord, who revives the dead.

Beneath this plaque, reminding the visitor of the sacred realm that lies ahead, are the black wrought-iron gates through which the visitor gains access to and a first glimpse of the largest Jewish cemetery in northeastern Poland – forty acres (ca. sixteen hectares) in size, with the *potential* to cradle thirty-five-thousand burials at its peak in the early 1930s. Ahead, the panorama reveals about half of the one hundred nearly uniform-sized sections of this *beth olam*, with each section delineated by grassy alleys that run both north-south and east-west.

Another secondary entrance is found farther east on Wschodnia Street with a third (service) entrance at its northeast corner. This cemetery was established in 1892 and functioned until 1969, with few burials, however, during WWII when burial was restricted to the Ghetto Cemetery. Today, about 15% of gravesites are still marked with tombstones.

**2. First Sections of Restoration.** Directly on entering, at right, are Sections 3–5. These were the first sections of intense restoration by ASF from 2010–2013. In these sections, the visitor will find representative styles of tombstones, symbols and inscriptions that remember the varied nature of Bialystok’s Jewish community. At the front corner of Section 3, stand three more elaborate burials (decorative sarcophagi and tombstones) for the mercantile Trop family of Bialystok. Here, too, is found the humble gravesite of Moshe Wallach, father of Maxim Litvinov, Soviet diplomat, and Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the United States (Section 5).



*Three burials for mercantile Trop family (d. 1902). (Section 3)*

Here, too, is found the humble gravesite of Moshe Wallach, father of Maxim Litvinov, Soviet diplomat, and Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the United States (Section 5).

**3. Site of Caretaker’s House and Burial Society Buildings.** Just within the main entrance, at left, is a large grass-covered hill. A recent test trench as well as a 1937 map, found on the informational plaque on the exterior wall near the main entrance, reveal that two brick structures are buried here. One is a



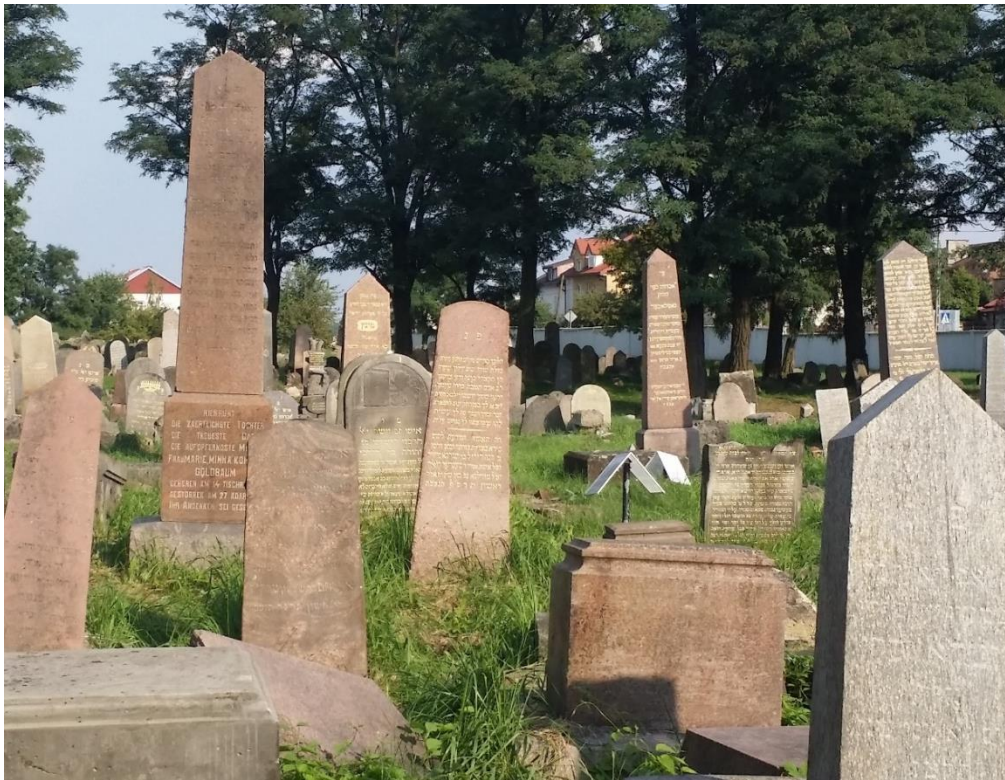
*Caretaker's and Burial Society Cottages beneath hill.*

*Just to the right are stacks of tombstones awaiting placement in a memorial wall, 2017.*

Caretaker’s Cottage, typical of rural Jewish cemeteries; the other may very well be the burial house used by the *Hewra Kadisha* (Burial Society) to prepare and care for the body until burial. An extant 1916 Postcard of the Cholera Jewish Cemetery on Bema Street in Bialystok records one such structure. The distance from the city of Bialystok and Bagnowka may have initially required a caretaker to live onsite, thus necessitating two structures. Beside this hill are stacks and individual tombstones returned from various locations throughout Bialystok. They probably once stood on the Old Rabbinic Cemetery or in the Cholera Cemetery in Bialystok. Here, too, is a large megalithic boulder, the last tombstone from the Old Rabbinic Cemetery,

now Central Park. This tombstone was situated on the hill opposite the current Opera House. These fragments and tombstones will eventually be set within a memorial wall on Bagnowka's interior wall.

4. **Section 1.** Restored from 2013–2016, this section holds some of the oldest gravesites of Bialystok's most distinguished community members. Here we find, for example, the tombstones of Avraham Ber Gotlober (d. 1899), one of the original *maskilim* (intellectuals), who made Bialystok one of his homes; Naphtali Hertz Neymark (d. 1893), merchant and founder of the Neymark Beth Midrash, with the longest inscription on this cemetery that records his accident with a trolley in St. Petersburg and the resulting exaction that provided funds to establish his *beth midrash*; and Pelte Halberstam, eldest daughter of the foremost Bialystok entrepreneur and businessman, Izak Zabłudowsky, and wife of Eliezer Halberstam, who brought the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) to Bialystok.



*The small tombstone of merchant Neymark stands beside an informational tablet (at right, d. 1893). Behind his tombstone is the tall obelisk of maskil Avraham Ber Gotlober (d. 1899). (Section 1)*

Near the front of this section is also the gravesite of Sora, wife of Josef *Zamenhof* (d. c. 1900), aunt-by-marriage to Ludwig (Lajzer) *Zamenhof*, the creator of Esperanto. The megalithic monument of the bank director Dor Chwoles (d. 1906), recently restored, stands near the front of this section. After decades lying face down in the earth, this tombstone was re-erected in 2016. Using a small back hoe, a crew of five men re-erected this monument in place. Standing at over seven-feet high and weighing almost 1.5 tons, it is the largest extant monument on Bagnowka.



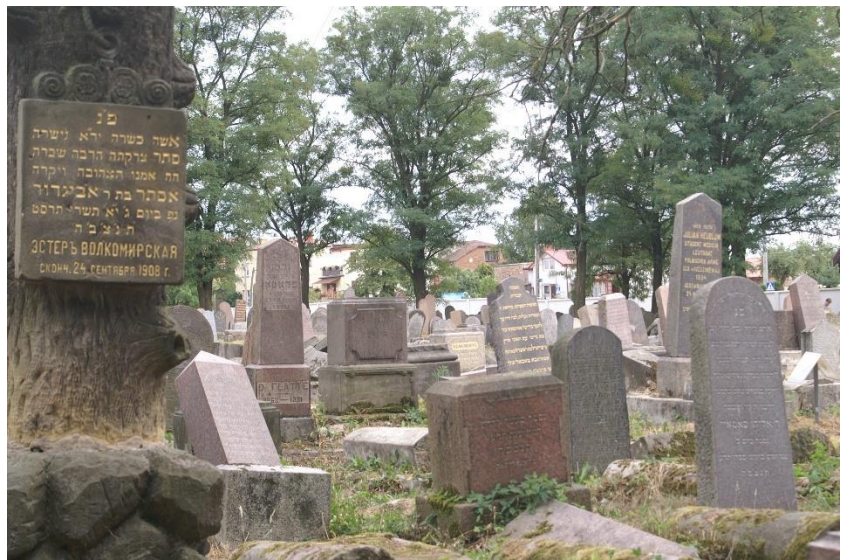
*Chvoles bilingual Hebrew-Russian inscription reads:*

“(Hebrew:)  
Matzevah for the  
grave of Reb [Mr.]  
Dawid, son of Reb  
Aharon Chwoles,  
one of the  
remaining  
intellectuals of the  
former generation.  
A hand and name  
is his among the  
wise of Israel. He  
was born in the  
city of Vilna. He  
died 21<sup>st</sup> Tevet  
5667 in the 72  
years of the days  
of his life. His toil  
and the  
celebration of his  
work can  
undoubtedly be  
seen in his fruitful  
life. May his soul  
be bound in the  
bond of  
everlasting life.

(Russian:) Bank  
director,  
David Aron  
Khvoles,  
died 25th  
December 1906  
in the 72nd year of  
his  
charitable life.  
Peace to your  
ashes,  
Dear husband and  
father.”

© Photo, Daniel  
Zamojduk 2017

5. **Section 7.** Restored from 2015–2018, this section (at near center) offers distinct rows for professionals. Inscriptions remember, for example, Dr. Zalman Flatte (d. 1921); Professor Eliyahu Shmuel Gluk (d. 1902); textile manufacturer Kopel Zabłudowsky (d. 1898); the merchant Nathan Faulkner (d. 1896), who hailed from Odessa and Taganrog; Lieutenant and medical student, Julian Heublum (d. 1920); and Dr. Sophia Garfunkel Kuricki (d. 1919). The visitor will also find a number of folk art panoramas that highlight a women’s domain. And, in this section, are also preserved several megalithic tree-style monuments that seem to be used for young women of Russian ancestry.



Partially restored Section 7 features the tombstone of Lieutenant and medical student Julian Heublum (at right, d. 1920), megalithic tree-style monument for Ester Wolkomirskaya (d. 1908) and the tombstone of Dr. Flatte (d. 1921), Bialystok physician for over 20 years.



Tombstone of the merchant Tsvi (d. 1911). (Section 12)

Just to the left of Section 7, at the edge of Section 12 is also the restored tombstone of the merchant Tsvi, featuring two 12-point bucks (*tsvi*) in combat. His inscription is entitled “the land of Tsvi.” Tsvi Konica’s inscription is crafted as an acrostic poem that remembers his profession through the language of travel, including his sudden death in a train station, the 20<sup>th</sup> century gathering place of merchants and of the affluent. His inscription reads:

The land of Tsvi.

[TsV] The host of his days were filled while living on the road.

[Y] The road was great but the thread of his life was shortened.

[B] The train stations (houses of highways) were an eternal highway for him.

[N] He stretched out to rest there but from there he walked to his eternal life.

[MR] Bitterly his wife and sons wept and howled.

[D] His pride and progeny cannot be given compensation for their glory was taken.

[KhY] Alas, in the desolation of his days!

It is he the precious scholar, the honorable merchant, our teacher R. Tsvi, son of R. Mordechai of blessed memory, Konica, from the settlers of Slonim.

He died on the eve of the Holy Sabbath 17 Adar year 5671 [4 March 1911] as the abbreviated era/תנצבה.

6. **Section 2.** Restored from 2015–2017. The last row of this section offers poignant commentary on one harsh reality of life for women – death related to childbirth. Here are eight tombstones that remember women who died while “in-confinement” at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recorded in their inscriptions. At the far left in this row, cause of death is unclear for a Nehama Lea Berenbaum (d. 1908), who is called ‘bubele’ (grandmother or precious one) and whose epitaphs conclude with the admonition in Yiddish “Children remember your mother!” Two rows before this row of women’s burials is the tree-style tombstone for a Pinhas Topolski (age 18), who died in 1903. Adjoining the Memorial Complex, at the near center of the cemetery, the visitor will find another tree-style monument that tells the fate of Pinhas’s three younger brothers.



Women who died “in-confinement” at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Section 2)  
In background, right, is the main entrance.

7. **Viewpoint.** Standing on the knoll on the main north-south arterial, halfway between the main entrance and the *ohel* (mausoleum) of Rabbi Halpern, offers the visitor a most provocative 360’ view of this cemetery and its surroundings. Areas of restoration are immediately apparent as are the extensive restoration efforts still needed. Nonetheless, a hint of the cemetery’s former grandeur is present. Beyond the cemetery walls, the order of the Catholic Cemetery is readily apparent as well as the day to day life that transpires in the surrounding residential streets.





A view of the main entrance from the knoll, 2017.

**8. *Ohel* of Chief Rabbi Chaim Hertz Halpern and burial site of Chief Rabbi Shmuel Mohilewer.** Upon this knoll is perched the *ohel*, the tent-like mausoleum, of Rabbi Chaim Hertz Halpern, a visual reminder of Bialystok's traditionalist beginnings. Rabbi Halpern served as a rabbi in Bialystok for over fifty years and as Chief Rabbi of Bialystok from approximately 1900 to 1919. His followers erected this structure over his grave in 1922, as recorded in the once-faded inscription on the *ohel's* whitewashed southern wall, an inscription replaced in 2013 by a granite plaque. Rabbi Halpern's inscription is no longer extant within the *ohel*; however, it is preserved within Abraham Samuel Herszberg's *Pinkos Bialystok (Chronicle of Bialystok)*:

Our Master, our teacher, our rabbi, the *gaon*, righteous and humble, of the chain of distinguished rabbis, an awesome *gaon*, the splendor of the generation and its crown, the Ariel of measures and the seal of truthfulness, an image of discretion and of support, a wise mouth, compassionate, the dew (which) gives life to hard days and to humbled soul(s). His heart is pure, a fountain of love, compassion and loving-kindness for his people and for all creatures. At (more than) sixty years, God's court welcomed him in comfort and into the plain. As an angel of God walked to and fro in his midst, God took him. Our Master, Chaim Hertz Halpern, a *tsaddik* of blessed memory, first head of the *Beth Din* of his congregation, son of the *gaon*, the righteous is the everlasting foundation, Our Master, Raphael Yom Tov Lipman, a *tsaddik* of blessed memory, father of the *Beth Din* of Bialystok. He was born 8 Shevat 5601 [18 January 1841]. He died 6 Iyar 5679 [7 January 1919] as the abbreviated era. תנצבה.

Rabbi Shmuel Mohilewer became Chief Rabbi of Bialystok from 1883 until his death in 1898. He dedicated this cemetery and served as an early advocate of religious Zionism. He was buried on Bagnowka in this same section near the *ohel* of Rabbi Halperin. Mohilewer's advocacy of Zionism was remembered when his bones were disinterred from Bagnowka and reburied in Israel in the late twentieth century in Petaḥ Tikva, the town in which he had first encouraged Bialystok pioneers to settle. Restoration efforts in 2018 revealed that the remaining extant tombstones in this section are also of rabbis and rabbinic scholars.



*Ohel of Rabbi Chaim Hertz Halpern (d. 1919), who served as Chief Rabbi of Bialystok from c. 1900 to 1919. Nearby once stood the gravesite of Chief Rabbi Shmuel Mohilewer (d. 1898), who served in this role from 1883 to 1898.*

**9. Memorial Complex.** In the center of this cemetery stands a black pillar that serves as a memorial to the victims of violence in 1905 and 1906. The names on the pillar remember the eighty Jewish men, women and children, who were killed in the Pogrom of 1906. Those who died in the months preceding this pogrom, as anti-Tsarist forces struggled with the Polish and Russian armies in Bialystok, are also recorded on the pillar: forty-two Jews slain in the massacre of 30 July 1905, and five Jews killed in the storming of the city jail on 31 October 1905. On the western façade (main side), at top, is a historical description of the Pogrom:

A memorial of sorrow for us, inhabitants of Bialystok and for all the house of Israel, this pillar is a witness for us and for our sons that on the 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 to the month of Sivan year 5666 (1–5 June, 1906 [OC]) the inhabitants of this city fell upon our brothers, the sons of Israel, plundering at noontime and plundering houses and possessions and they murdered about 80 men and women and children, by shooting, by *shehitah* (ritual cutting of throat, slaughter), by strangling, by burning, and for the remainder by dying from wounds.

At the bottom of this same façade is a poem of great pathos, entitled “Pillar of Sorrow” by Zalman Schneour, ancestor of Shneur Zalman of Liady, the founder of the Chabad (ultra-Orthodox) movement. In addition to this Memorial Pillar, memorial *matzevoth* stand before this pillar and in the adjoining Section 26, serving as symbolic gravesites to the victims. Before the pillar also stands a memorial to 25-year-old Bundist, Ester Riskind, who died in the June 1905 (Sabbath Nahamu Massacre), erected by her friends on the fifth anniversary of her death. Several deceased remembered on these memorial *matzevoth* are also remembered by epitaphs on tombstones in sections outside the memorial area, indicating that not all victims were buried in a mass grave beneath the pillar. The Memorial Complex was restored in 2014–15 but work

still remains, especially in the adjoining Section 26, where preliminary work has revealed victims of violence after 1906.



*Front façade of black pillar remembering victims of the 1905 Massacres and the 1906 Pogrom. Memorial matzevoth stand before the pillar; the memorial to Bundist Ester Riskind stands to the right of the pillar in this photo. This complex was (nearly) restored in 2014-15.*

In the adjoining Section 31, stands the tombstone of Alfred Simenauer, a soldier who died in the Battle of Waniewo in 1915 but was not brought to Bialystok for burial until 1930. Nearby also stands a tree-style monument for the three young Topolski brothers, ages 4-8, who perished in a fire that may have occurred in their home above the family glassware factory in February of 1908. Future restoration may reveal that the Memorial Complex extends to victims of other unnatural circumstances.



*Tombstone for WWI soldier, Alfred (Aharon) Simenhauer (d. 1915). Back, left, is the tombstone for the three Topolski brothers "who burnt in a fire" (d. 1908).*

10. **Desolation of 1920.** In Section 60 stand two tree-style monuments to siblings Eliezer (age 21) and Golda (age 17) Zabludowsky, whose epitaphs record their premature deaths amidst “desolate days.” Their ages and the year suggest that they may have been members of a revolutionary group, set against the events of the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921). In the nearby Section 76, stands an inexpensive concrete tombstone that mimics the shape of the traditional Ashkenazi *matzevoth*. The inscription remembers the death of a nine-year-old girl in the August 1920 Pogrom:

A blossom is fresh; a flower is tender. / Before it has fully ripened, it was plucked off, it was killed... Here lies – in the shadow of the field, / the child Dabe, daughter of Reb Chaim Ha-cohen, Kaplanski, takes refuge, who died before (her) time in the ninth year to the days of her life on the 5th day of Elul 5680 [19 August 1920].

Section 60 has been undergoing restoration; Section 76 is seasonally engulfed by forest. These sections tentatively suggest burials are related to the desolate time of war and pogrom in 1919–20.



(Left:) Monuments for siblings, Eliezer (front) and Golda (back) Zabludowsky, who died in the desolate times of 1920. (Section 60). (Right:) Tombstone for the young girl, Dabe Kaplanski, who was killed in August 1920 Pogrom. (Section 76)

### 11. Woods and Cemetery

**Wall.** Several years ago, a young growth forest covered nearly 50% of the cemetery. Progress in clearing today leaves about 30% still beneath a canopy of immature trees and ground cover.

Beneath this dense array of forest and foliage, tombstones can be found in various states of disarray. Some attempts at documenting these tombstones was made in the early 2000s but systematic restoration

efforts are needed. Eventually, this forest gives way to a recently renovated wall that separates Bagnowka from the adjoining Catholic Cemetery.



*Topped monuments, nestled in the cemetery's woods, await restoration.*



*Restored northern wall adjoins the Catholic Cemetery, 2010.*

**12. Empty Sections.** From the secondary entrance on Wschodnia inwards toward the Memorial Complex are sections nearly devoid of tombstones. By the early 1940s these sections would have been packed with row after row of tombstones remembering the Jewish deceased who died (in most cases) a natural death. Restoration efforts in 2018 reveal that tombstones may still recline beneath layers of grass and topsoil today. Today, the appearance of these empty sections

offers an eerily compelling visual commentary on the absence of Jewish life and Jewish heritage in contemporary Bialystok.



*Tombstones for relatives of early Bialystok textile manufacturer, Sender Bloch (Section 4), stand before nearly empty sections.*

**13. Oldest Matzevah.** Just east of the main entrance to Bagnowka Beth Olam is a section that holds more than a dozen of the most ruggedly-hewn, Ashkenazi-style *matzevoth*. Carved out of sedimentary rock, the elements have done much to render illegible many of the inscriptions. One legible although worn inscription may hold the oldest extant words of remembrance on this cemetery today:

Here lies the God-fearing, prominent scholar, our teacher, the Rabbi Pinḥas, son of Mordechai Ha-lewi. He died 4 Nisan 5652 [20 March 1892] according to the abbreviated era. תנצבה.

Rabbi Pinhas died about three months after the dedication of Bagnowka in late December 1891–early January 1892. The structure of his epitaph reflects the most basic formulaic pattern within the Bagnowka corpus of inscriptions, featuring just a name and date of death, conjoined with brief epithets praising the deceased. These words are framed by an opening abbreviation (פ"י), meaning "Here lies," and a closing abbreviation (תנצבה), meaning "May his soul be bound in the bond of everlasting life." New strategies for reading inscriptions on worn stone will hopefully allow the other inscriptions in this section to be deciphered.



*A cluster of the most rugged-style, roughly-hewn tombstones on Bagnowka contains the oldest extant burial site on this cemetery, dating to 1892, just a few months after the cemetery was dedicated. (Section 32)*

**14. The Lions of Bagnowka.** Section 5, restored by ASF in 2010-2013 2018, offers a wonderful opportunity to examine how varied is the folk art on this cemetery. In this section alone, *nine* improvisations of the Jewish Lion of Judah can be found in this region. The Lion of Judah is a symbol derived from the biblical text. It can symbolize the strength of death over life when the lion stands beside a broken tree or just a branch, two flora symbols symbolic of life. A lion may also flank a book(s); the lion is seen as the protector of Torah (sacred Jewish literature and tradition), and may symbolically represent the deceased scholar. In some depictions, the lion scarcely looks like the proud yet terrifying animal it is, resembling rather a bovine. Such variation in depiction suggests a variety of artisans at work, some using the same template to which individual details were added.



Section 5, at right on entering the main entrance, preserves nine unique improvisation of the Lion of Judah.



Two improvisations of the lion (scholar) as protector of Torah. At left, the opening abbreviation takes the place of the book. At right, the inclusion of a broken tree, a symbol of life now gone, indicates that the lion also represents the strength of death over life. (Section 5).

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*Summertime 2017. Crew at work uplifting tombstone with mechanized equipment.*



Summertime 2018. Long-time Polish volunteers (l. to r.) Lukasz Murawiejski, Waldemar Mierzejewski and Andrzej Kondej, Daniel Zamojduk (Germany), with American volunteers (front to back; l. to r.) Ali Flagler, Alia Degen, Josh Degen, Heidi Szpek, Paula Flagler, Iva Gardner, Howie Flager, Frank idzikowski, Karen Pedersen, Amy Degen, Nathan Shafner, Xan Madera, and Peter McDowell.



*Summertime 2015. Local Polish volunteers have been active since restoration began. Here with Belarussian, Ukrainian and German volunteers are Bialystok residents Lucy Lisowska (front row, 2<sup>nd</sup> left; Waldemar Mierzejewski (kneeling); Lukasz Murawiejski and Lukasz Leoniuk (back row, right), 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>; joined by Daniel Zamojduk (Germany) and Heidi M. Szpek (USA), front, right, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.*



*Summertime 2017. Volunteers repainting inscriptions.*



*Summertime 2015. Volunteers clean tombstones.*



*Summertime 2013. ASF volunteers uplift tombstones using tripod and chain system.*



*First Summertime in the 1990s. Netherland volunteers relax after cleanup efforts. (© Miroslaw Slut)*