

HAYNT

PRESERVE EDUCATE PROMOTE



Australian Society of Polish Jews
and their Descendants

SPRING 2026 ISSUE 24



Professor Dariusz Stola
Director of Polin Museum

Preserve Educate Promote

“Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants (ASPJ) is dedicated to preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to fostering understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities”

The ASPJ coordinates with the established Jewish and Polish communal bodies, religious leadership, governmental, parliamentary and diplomatic bodies, as well as historical, cultural and educational organisations in both Australia and Poland.

Polish–Jewish dialogue in Poland today is growing, particularly among the post-communist, educated young. There is a growing understanding and acceptance of the past, both the good and the bad. A new spirit of positive cooperation has emerged. Young Catholic Poles, more than ever before, are expressing an interest in the Jewish history of their country. This dialogue and interest needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

We organise educational and cultural events that cover the broad range of Polish–Jewish relations.

Our Haynt magazine is published twice a year, showcasing cultural, social and political articles of interest to Polish and Jewish communities.

ASPJ is a resource for educational material and offers a speaker service in a variety of topics relating to Polish–Jewish relations.

The Henryk Slawik Award is bestowed by the ASPJ to a person or institution that helps foster a deeper understanding of Polish–Jewish history and relations.

ASPJ Oration invites national or international speakers who can address complex and relevant issues regarding Polish–Jewish concerns.

Based in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, we invite all people, Jewish and non-Jewish, whose roots lie in Poland, to join our organisation.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of ASPJ or its members.

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From the President



Ezra May
President ASPJ

Shalom, dzień dobry, and welcome to our latest edition of Haynt for 2026.

This year has continued to be marked by widespread reporting of antisemitism, much of it arising from submissions and testimony presented to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, established in the aftermath of the Bondi attacks of 14 December 2026.

For many, the near-daily accounts of lived antisemitic experiences can feel overwhelming and disheartening, and some are even questioning the place and viability of Jews in Australian society. Yet I prefer to focus on the support shown by so many individuals and organisations across Australia. While it remains essential to expose and confront instances of antisemitism — and to implement effective strategies to combat it — we can also take comfort in the silent majority who now recognise the importance of speaking up and standing with the Jewish community.

Throughout 2026, the ASPJ has continued to deliver its full program of webinars and events. A highlight was the visit of Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski, Secretary of State of the Republic of Poland. The ASPJ co-hosted his major public address, The Revival of Jewish Life in Poland after 1989. We were also fortunate to enjoy a working lunch with Minister Bartoszewski and Karolina Cemka, Chargée d'Affaires a.i. of the Republic of Poland in Australia.

Other ASPJ events this year have included webinars on the role of Polish Posey books and on the latest archaeological research from the Warsaw Ghetto. As I write, our next webinar will feature Katarzyna Person, Director of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, who will speak about the new museum currently under construction and scheduled to open in 2027.

The ASPJ's Statement of Purpose is: to preserve and promote the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland, and to foster understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities.

As we approach Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, it is our fervent hope that Australia continues to be the welcoming land of opportunity for which it is renowned — a country of religious freedom and protection, where people of all backgrounds live together without hate or fear, contributing to a vibrant and prosperous multicultural society that benefits us all. We pray for a Sweet New Year filled with peace and security for all, especially for Israel.

I invite you to enjoy this latest edition of Haynt, and extend our sincere thanks to our editor, Izi Marmur, for his dedication and effort in producing another outstanding issue.

Shana Tova & Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku.



From the New South Wales desk



Estelle Rozinski
Vice President ASPJ NSW

Dear Friends,

The past six months, following the tragic events of Bondi, have been a time of grief and reflection. While many of us have been following the Royal Commission with trepidation special mention should be made of the NSW government-supported community initiative, One Mitzvah for Bondi, which emerged in the aftermath of the Bondi attack.

The initiative grew from an emergency meeting of the NSW Faith Affairs Council convened by Steve Kamper (NSW Minister for Multiculturalism) on the day following the tragedy. Among those present were Rabbi Nochum Schapiro and Rabbi Benjamin Elton. When asked how Australians could support the Jewish community, Rabbi Schapiro suggested two responses: that Australians stand unequivocally with the Jewish community and that each person undertake one mitzvah; an act of kindness, charity, or compassion that brings light into the world.

It is moving and significant that the NSW Government embraced this profound Jewish concept and transformed it into a broad civic invitation, encouraging the wider Australian community to

respond to these hateful acts with kindness, empathy and meaningful action.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/community-services/one-mitzvah-for-bondi>

In other news board member, Rita Nash, produced two informative and engaging webinars. The first, with Dr Jacek Konik titled Voices of a Murdered City: Archaeology of the Warsaw Ghetto, examined objects discovered during the archaeological excavation beneath the ghetto's Mila 18 site. The second was a vignette into the beautifully transcribed poems and remembrances shared in the Polish Poesy Books, with Marta Kubiszyn and Janina Holc. If you have missed these presentations they are available to watch at your convenience: <https://www.polishjews.org.au/online-aspj-events/>

For those of you in Melbourne, Sydney composer Anna Hirst Friedman, will be presenting a talk on her composition, Amidah, at the "Negotiating Belonging: Leadership, Resistance and Culture in an Age of Exclusion" conference on the 22nd September 2026, at Glen Eira Town Hall (please see this edition of HAYNT for further information).

Meanwhile the Sydney Board is slowly reviving, with plans underway for a range of engaging, in-person workshops, talks and contemporary webinars for 2027.

Shana Tova Umetukah,

May you all enjoy a New Year full of sweetness and light

Wishing you all well over the fast,

Estelle

on behalf of the ASPJ Board, NSW

Dariusz Stola has been appointed Director of POLIN Museum



Professor Dariusz Stola

Professor Dariusz Stola has been appointed Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews for a five-year term. He received his nomination from Marta Cienkowska, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, on 19 February. Professor Stola will succeed Zygmunt Stępiński, whose second term as director comes to an end on 28 February.

Professor Stola is a historian specializing in contemporary Polish history and Polish–Jewish relations. He is the author of more than 130 scholarly articles and six books, as well as an experienced cultural institution manager. He previously served as Director of POLIN Museum in the years 2014–2019, which is when the Core Exhibition was opened. The program he co-created—the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of March '68 in particular—helped confirm the institution's standing as one of Europe's leading history museums.

Professor Stola serves on the boards of several academic and museum institutions. Since 2024, he has chaired the International Auschwitz Council and, since 2023, he has been a member of the Academic Council of the Institute of Political Studies at the

Polish Academy of Sciences. He has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the Irena Sendler Award (funded by Taube Philanthropies) and the City of Warsaw Award in 2020. In 2025, he was honored with the Silver Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis.

Dariusz Stola emphasizes that the mission of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews is to restore and preserve the memory of the history of Polish Jews, to build mutual understanding, and to counter antisemitism. His goal is to further strengthen the Museum's position as a leading European center of knowledge on Polish–Jewish history—an institution committed to reliable public debate, open to diverse audiences, and actively engaged in international cooperation.

The program for the years 2026–2031 envisages the continuation and development of the Museum's existing strategy. The new director highlights some of the key priorities: modernizing selected elements of the Core Exhibition, expanding the Museum's digital offer, enlarging and systematically developing both material and digital collections. Professor Stola also plans to implement an ambitious temporary exhibition program, beginning in 2027 with the first exhibition in Poland devoted to Barnett Newman, American abstract painter of Polish descent. Education will remain a priority—the continued development of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign, programs for teachers and young people, and an innovative youth engagement initiative. Another important objective will be to support local initiatives dedicated to the preservation of Jewish heritage across Poland through the POLIN Award.



The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland, is an immersive, interactive institution dedicated to

preserving the 1,000-year history of Jews in Poland. Located on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, the museum focuses on celebrating Jewish life and culture alongside documenting the tragedies of the Holocaust.

The Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants

The POLIN Museum: Seven Years Later

with **Professor Dariusz Stola**

Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews



POLIN Museum was established to tell in an interesting and engaging way about an important part of Polish culture and history—the one connected to the Jewish community.

The initiative to establish the Museum of the History of Polish Jews was born in the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute and gradually gained recognition both in Poland and abroad.

Professor Stola is a historian specialising in contemporary Polish history and Polish–Jewish relations. He is the author of more than 130 scholarly articles and six books, as well as an experienced cultural institution manager. The program he co-created helped confirm the institution's standing as one of Europe's leading history museums.

Photo: M. Jaźwiecki: Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Tuesday 8th September 2026 at 8.00 pm AEST

<https://tinyurl.com/ASPJStola>



Australian Society of Polish Jews
and their Descendants

For more information: info@polishjews.org.au

Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

By Maximilian Henner

1. My name is Maximilian Henner and I was born on 21 June 1920. I am almost 106 years old. I have prepared this submission with assistance, but it is in my own words. I have been in Australia since I was 38 years old.
2. I consider it important to pass on my experience to the Royal Commission. My submission is about antisemitism and how it was used as a process in the country I was born in, Poland. I still cherish and value Poland a country that my family lived in for many generations.
3. I hope it gives some warning to non-Jewish communities that it is important for them to know how antisemitism is used eventually against them as much as antisemitism is used against Jews. This concerns Australia as much as any other country.
4. I haven't experienced antisemitism in Australia, except for some occasional remarks. But I experienced it with significant consequences in Europe.
5. Before 1935, the leader of Poland was Józef Piłsudski who believed Jews were equal and important citizens of Poland. When he died in 1935, I was in school in my teens living in Przemyśl a town in eastern Poland.
6. After his death, antisemitism in Poland started to grow under the slogan that 'Jews are not true Poles'. A nationalist party called ND [National Democrats] became more prominent. Antisemitic slogans started appearing on walls around Poland just as we have seen in Australia recently.
7. In 1936 a Polish merchant organisation started promoting the slogan 'Don't buy from Jews'. Cameras were put on tripods in front of Jewish stores and Jewish owned businesses to frighten away customers. The effect was dramatic because many Jewish stores eventually lost their business as a result.
8. There were other forms of antisemitism amongst students. There was an anti-semitic policy that was widely adopted called 'Numerus clausus', meaning only a limited number of Jews could be accepted by the universities. Student organisations introduced the 'bench ghetto', meaning that the Jews at the University had to sit separately and these practices were tolerated by the government of the day.
9. Poland in those days was flirting with the antisemitism of Hitler's Germany and people even tried to follow their example by marching through the streets with anti-semitic slogans.
10. Until that time Jews had been a substantial part of the city dwellers in Poland. There was a time when Jews were invited to Poland by one of the Polish Kings who wanted to raise the level of culture by including Western Jews. Jews became an inseparable and integral part of Polish society culture and life in its many forms. At that time before WW11 Jews formed approximately one third of the population of the cities.
11. Within a few years, the country which had been friendly to Jews suddenly became the opposite. And Poland as a country, affected by the wave of antisemitism, became a fractured divided and weakened society. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, this weakened divided society collapsed within 2 weeks and the rest is history.
12. With my age and remembrance, I identify the mechanism of antisemitism as a political tool for weakening another country or even one's own country. When I see what is happening now in Australia and around the world I see similarities with Poland between 1936 and 1939. Antisemitic propaganda and attacks have intensified since October the 7th 2023. Antisemitism is a very convenient tool for those who have in mind not the good of Australia, but who wish to harm the social cohesion. Jews of Australia are going to continue to live in Australia. It is important to counteract antisemitism for their sake as well as for the interest of all Australians. Australia should act against the so-called nationalistic tendencies expressing themselves in an antisemitic way as was the case with the people in Europe.
13. Fomenting hatred and conflict within any community or country amongst its own citizens is highly destructive to that community. Mutual cohesion brings about wellbeing, prosperity and growth and healthy development for all.

Visit of Polish Minister of State Władysław Bartoszewski



Polish Minister of State Władysław Bartoszewski giving a lecture at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum.

On Sunday May 3, 2026, the ASPJ, in conjunction with the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, and facilitated by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, hosted a lecture entitled "The Revival of Jewish Life in Poland After 1989", delivered by Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Minister Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski.

A large and engaged audience heard Minister Bartoszewski present an inspired and inspiring overview of the 1,000+ year history of Polish-Jewish relations, emphasising the importance of preserving historical memory and strengthening dialogue between the Polish and Jewish communities. Minister Bartoszewski then highlighted some of the remarkable developments and growth, since 1989, of the new generation of Jewish communities in Poland.

Following the lecture, the documentary "The Granddaughter," produced by the Warsaw Ghetto

Museum, was screened, which provided an emotional reflection on the power and impact of individual choices, even under trying situations.

President of the ASPJ, Ezra May, closed the event commenting how, despite the devastation of the Holocaust, the traditions of Polish-Jewish life endure in communities like Melbourne, but are now also revived in Poland.

Minister Bartoszewski then met and engaged in discussion with many members of the audience, who greatly appreciated his wide knowledge and commitment to defend and strengthen Israel and Jewish communities throughout Poland and internationally.

A recording of the address can be found on our website: www.polishjews.org.au/bartoszewski

The Revival of Jewish Life in Poland after 1989

Remarks of ASPJ President Ezra May at Minister Bartoszewski event.



L-r Polish Minister of State Władysław Bartoszewski and ASPJ President Ezra May

It is my great honour to thank Minister Bartoszewski for his address this afternoon.

It is a privilege to hear from someone shaped by a father who witnessed first-hand the darkest chapters of European history—and yet chose to become a builder of its moral recovery.

As we heard earlier, from his role in the Polish Underground, including Żegota, to his later public service, including on the National Council for Polish-Jewish Relations.

His was a life guided by conscience and responsibility – and awarded by being declared a Righteous Gentile. Values clearly upheld by his son.

The revival of Jewish life in Poland after 1989 is an extraordinary story. Not dismissing the post-7 October challenges, but it's not merely the reopening of long-closed institutions. It is something far deeper: a powerful affirmation that the thousand-year history of Polish Jewry does not end in destruction.

After the annihilation of three million Polish Jews during the Holocaust, and decades of silence and expulsion under Communism, many believed that Jewish life in Poland had been extinguished forever.

And yet, as we heard, something remarkable has occurred: a demographic, religious, and cultural re-emergence. Jewish life in Poland today is multi-dimensional. It encompasses pockets of Hassidim seeking their natural habitat. But for the vast majority it is not a reconstruction of what once was, but a new generation rediscovering identity, reconnecting with heritage, and building a modern, living community.

For us here in Australia, this resonates deeply. Much of Australian Jewish life—especially here in Melbourne—was built by survivors from Poland. They rebuilt not there, but here: in our synagogues, schools, and institutions—often founded upon and shaped by the traditions of pre-war Polish Jewry.

Indeed, the Herald Sun observed in a 27 June 2024 article that Caulfield is the closest thing to Pre-War Krakow existing anywhere in the world today.

For many years though, Poland was associated more with Jewish loss than with life; with the past and not the future.

But that is no longer the full story. Today, Poland is not only a place of remembrance, but increasingly a place where Jewish life is re-emerging. And this renewal matters—not only for Poland, but for the Jewish people as a whole.

That is why the work of the Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants is so important. Its Statement of Purpose — To preserve and promote the heritage of Jewish life in Poland, and to foster understanding between current and future



ASPJ lunch meeting with I-r Peter Schnall, Ezra May, Estelle Rozinski, Izydor Marmur OAM, Ms Karolina Cemka, Chargé d'Affaires and Polish Minister of State Władysław Bartoszewski.

generations of the Polish and Jewish communities — speaks directly to the bridge between past and future, and between Poland and Australia.

There is something deeply powerful in knowing that while Jewish life flourishes here in Melbourne — though the recent surge in antisemitism makes that ever more fragile — it is also now finding new strength in Poland.

In many ways, these are two centres of Polish Jewish continuity—different, yet forever connected.

Minister Bartoszewski, your words—and the powerful documentary *The Granddaughter*—remind

us that history is shaped not only by forces, but by choices.

The choices of individuals. Courageous choices. The choice to remember. The choice to rebuild. The choice to begin again.

And that is perhaps the enduring message of this afternoon: That even after its devastation, Polish Jewish life does not simply survive—it renews.

Not in memory, but in living communities.

Not only in Melbourne and other cities

internationally, but once again in Poland.

Minister Bartoszewski, thank you—not only for your address today, but for a lifetime of moral courage. For helping ensure that what was nearly lost is reborn. And for your efforts to publicly defend Israel from unfair attacks both domestically in Poland and globally.

Thank you to our partners: the Embassy of the Republic of Poland and the Melbourne Holocaust Museum for allowing us to host Minister Bartoszewski.

Minister, thank you once again.

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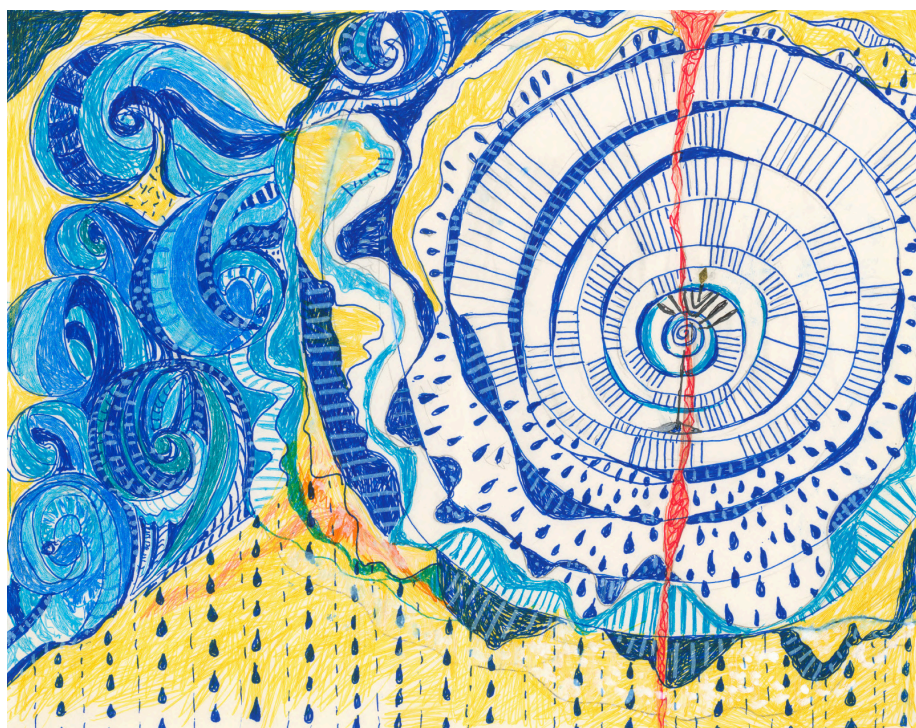
Polaron
European Citizenship

Amidah, A Silent Prayer

Performed Bondi Pavilion, Sydney 4 August 2026



Artwork by Dan Friedman



From the visual diary of Estelle Rozinski

Amidah, a silent prayer began as a song cycle of 10 short works for male voice and piano, composed by Anna Hurst Friedman over a 15 month period in the aftermath of October 7th 2023. After works, the compositions that followed, were composed between January and December 14th 2025.

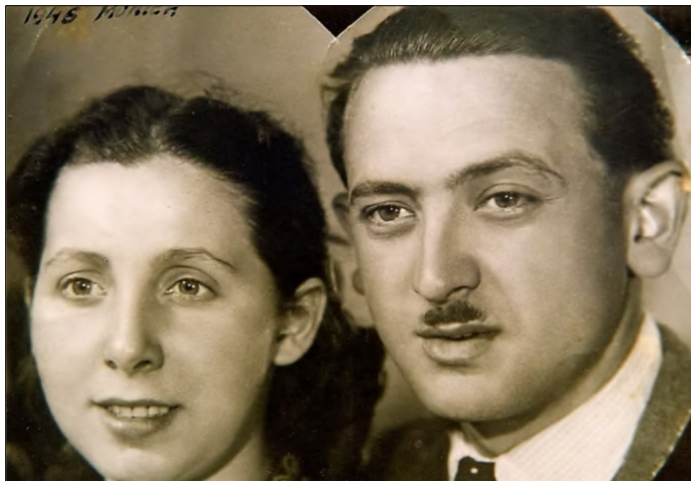
The compositions touch on themes of children in war, the plight of hostages and grieving families, and the rise of antisemitism within Australia. August's performance presented a reimagining of the work which featured new compositions, including the piece December 14th Bondi.

The musical performance was brought to life by baritone Dr. Simon Lobelson, violinist Lara Goodridge and pianist Natalia Valentyna, set against a backdrop of digital imagery created and projected by Dan Friedman and Estelle Rozinski.

This production blended live music with performance art, introducing Joanna Weinberg's clown character Hepzibah, alongside Anna Hirst Friedman's own physical theatre persona, the Pain Statue.

Through this unique artistic dialogue, the performers navigate the complex terrain of trauma, loss, resilience and humour which ultimately captured the delicate tension between enduring pain and hope.

Goodbye Marysia, Goodbye our Angel



Mum and Dad. Munich 1946

By Jane Korman

It has been over a month since my mother, Marysia Kohn, passed away on 20/5/2026 at the age of 102.

For those who were unable to attend her funeral, I wanted to share her eulogy together with photos from her remarkable life.

Thursday 21/5/26 Springvale Jewish Cemetery

Welcome everyone

I've been thinking about this moment for a very long time — how to find the right words to honour our beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend, Marysia Kohn.

Mum was a shining star.

She lived to the grand age of 102 or 101, depending on which family member you ask.

Reaching such an age is a gift in itself, but it was how Mum lived her life that made her years so extraordinary.

From tragic beginnings, she created a life rich in love, generosity and meaning.

Mum was many things.

She was kind and open-hearted.

A tireless advocate for anyone in need.

Fiercely independent — a bit of a tomboy — and genuinely fearless.

She was endlessly curious, with a love of music, art, and learning.

And she was playful and cheeky, with a cackling laugh that could fill a room.

She was also a Holocaust survivor — one of the last of a generation who survived the war and then went on to rebuild their lives in a new country

Celina and I never knew our grandparents, so we feel especially fortunate that our own children and grandchildren truly knew their grandmother, and felt such a deep connection with her.



Marysia, aged 10 with her mother, Cecilia, 1933

Anyone who knew Mum knew of her great love for her own mother, Cecilia, who was murdered in Auschwitz.



Just before Cecilia was taken, she slipped her ring into Mum's hand.

The ring was stolen in the camps, yet thirty years later, in the 1970s, Mum miraculously found it again in a diamond museum in Amsterdam.

She wore it for the rest of her life and referred to it as 'her mummy'. She believed it watched over her, and she'd kiss it whenever she needed strength or comfort.



Mum still wearing the ring at 102

When I was young, Mum often dragged me along to visit her elderly friends.

I once asked her why she was so devoted to caring for them.

She replied: I like to imagine my own mother is still alive somewhere in the world, and I hope some kind person is caring for her, just as I care for others.



'Go through life with the one you love'

Mum's other great love was Dad — her darling Adolek.

Their marriage was arranged almost by accident after the war, yet it grew into a 70-year partnership that friends described as dynamic, devoted and creative.

When Mum and Dad arrived in Melbourne in 1949, they worked very hard. Starting from simple beginnings, weaving scarves and ties, they had built a thriving knitwear business within ten years.

Eventually they reached a level of comfort that finally

allowed them to travel.

Their first trip was to Israel, where they reunited with family they hadn't seen since the war.

Because it was difficult for both of them to leave the factory at the same time, Mum often travelled on her own.

Dad later joked that it was thanks to 'his hard work' that Mum enjoyed such freedom.

And so, in the early 1960s, Mum's adventures began.

She spread her wings, exploring faraway places and unfamiliar cultures.

There's a wonderful photo of her standing on our dining table before one of her solo trips — this one to Africa.



Off to Africa, 1966

She's dressed in safari gear, clutching a wooden rifle, smiling as her friends laugh below her.

That photo captures her perfectly — fearless, playful and full of life.

Mum's travels shaped my life too. I still treasure her photos and postcards —from Babi Yar, from the markets of Teheran, and from China, where she's dressed in a blue military-style uniform in the 1970s.

Occasionally she took me with her. When I was 12, we travelled through India and Asia together.

Those journeys opened my eyes to the harsh realities of a world so different from Melbourne. Mum understood that it was the best education she could give me.

Mum and Dad were famous for their fancy-dress



Dress-up parties with friends

parties in North Balwyn, when our home on the hill came alive. Their friends – mostly fellow survivors – danced, feasted and celebrated late into the night.

Dad prepared the music on large audio tapes, and filmed every moment, while Mum brought colour, games, prizes and warmth.

Their friends became our aunts and uncles, and we grew up with their children, who felt like cousins to us.

Thanks to Dad's filming, we now have a treasured archive of those gatherings, frozen in time. Before Dad died, he had one request – that I would look after his tapes. I have digitalised the personal ones, the rest now line the walls of my home.

Maybe Mum and Dad didn't fully realise it themselves, but I think those celebrations were their way of overcoming the darkness that stayed with them long after the war.

When Mum and Dad retired in the 1980s, their home became a kind of open-house café, always filled with visitors.



Jack & Esther Rosenberg, Mietek Gringlass, Janek & Rena Birner, Mum & Dad.

Mum, the charismatic hostess, seated guests around the large oval table, fluttering about to make sure everyone felt completely at home.

Her table was set like a masterpiece, covered with delicious food served on her best English china.

Those gatherings were full of warmth, laughter and deep conversation. I popped in whenever I could. I loved listening to their friends' gripping stories from the world of their past.

Sometimes I brought my own friends along because I wanted to share Mum and Dad's colourful world, their hospitality, and their history.

But as vibrant and social as Mum was— she also cherished solitude.

In the early 1970s, she and Dad bought a simple cabin near Warburton, by the Yarra River. She called it Marysia's Majatek — 'Marysia's Treasure'.



Marysia's treasure

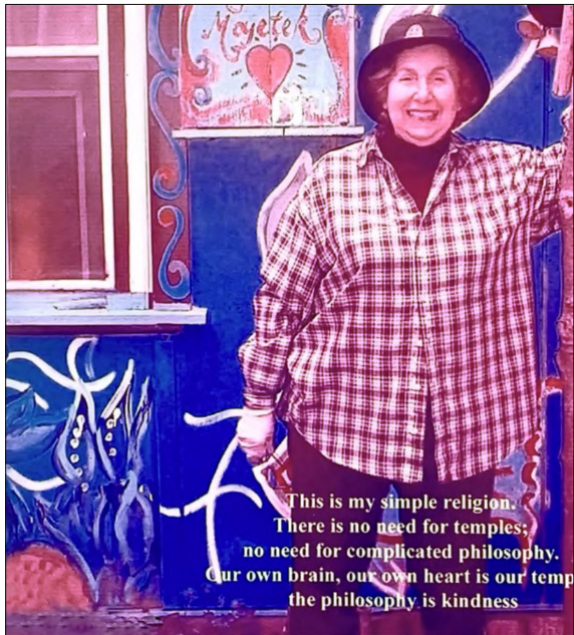
Out of the blue, she would suddenly announce that she needed *tchicho* —'quiet'— and disappear to her hut for a few days, reminding Celina and me not to forget to give Dad his chicken soup.

Inside the hut is a guest book, now more than fifty years old. On the first page Mum wrote an introduction, explaining that during the war— in the ghetto and the camps — she often dreamt of a tiny house in the forest, with a loaf of bread on the table and a knife to cut as much as she wanted.

It was a dream she never believed could come true.

But it did.

This modest hut became her dream come true.



A card from around 2010. I thought this quote defined her spirit and values: ...Our own brain, our own heart is our temple, the philosophy is kindness.



The tall trees, the blue sky—it all belongs to us.

There, Mum would sit by the fireplace reading, or wander outside — in awe of the tall eucalyptus trees, the fresh air and the blue sky.

Nowhere else but there, did she feel she had truly realised her dreams. It was her Paradise.

But life did not begin in Paradise.

Mum was born in Zgierz, near Lodz in Poland, in 1923 or 1924 — the only child of Cecilia Messing and Yaakov Wodyslawski. Although the family was materially comfortable, her early years were marked by her parents' unhappy marriage. .

She also faced antisemitism from a young age. Mum often told a story from her childhood:

In her hometown, three young brothers waited in the gutter each afternoon to beat up Jewish children walking home from school. One day, when Mum was about eleven, she'd had enough. She grabbed a wooden bat, marched outside, whacked each boy on the head, then raced home and hid under her bed.

Soon afterwards, the boys' father, a butcher wearing a blood stained apron, came storming to the door shouting: 'Where's your daughter!? She nearly killed my boys!'

From that day on, whenever Mum appeared, the three bullies ran to the other side of the street.

Mum was fifteen when war broke out. She and her parents were forced into the Lodz Ghetto. At first she



Mum whacking the bullies on their head. Artist: Sid Sledge

plaited straw for German army boots, and later worked on machines producing metal parts for time-bombs.

Her father, by then living separately, died of hunger. Mum sat shiva alone beside his body through the freezing night.

After four bitter years, Mum and her mother were deported to Auschwitz.

On arrival, Mum was sent to the right, while her mother was sent directly to the gas chambers.

Mum survived six harrowing weeks before being transferred to the Halpstaat labour camp [in Czechoslovakia], where she was liberated by the Russian army in 1945.



Dr Mengele selecting who lives and who dies at Auschwitz.
Artist: Sid Sledge

Soon after liberation she met Dad.

He recognised his sister Madja walking outside the camp — and with her was her friend — Mum.

The three joined a group of young survivors planning to leave Poland and study in Russia.

When Mum told her surviving aunty of the plan, her aunt insisted on first meeting one of the group. Mum chose to take along Dad because he was always kind to her, and saved food for her whenever she returned



Lodz, about a year after the war

late from work.

Her Aunty famously told Dad: If you marry my niece, I'll allow her to travel with you.

And so, at 4 o'clock that very afternoon, under four broomsticks and a towel for a chuppah, with a borrowed ring and a so-called Rabbi, Mum and Dad were married.

They reached Russia but were turned back at the border because the guard said no Jews were allowed to enter. Instead, they eventually made their way to Munich, where Dad studied architecture, and Mum worked as a nurse.

Celina was born there in 1947, named after our grandmother, Cecilia. In 1948, Dad's cousin managed to purchase permits for them to migrate to Australia. Originally they had planned to emigrate to Palestine with Dad's sister and brother, but by then Mum wanted to get as far away as possible from Europe and its hatred of Jews — and Australia seemed far enough away to be safe.

They boarded the cargo ship *The Eridan*, and travelled for nine long weeks as stateless immigrants.



Baby Celina & Dad, Munich 1947

They arrived in Sydney in January 1949, sleeping on tables at the Salvation Army hostel, and using the curtains for blankets. The next morning they caught the train to Melbourne.

Mum later recalled staring out the train window at the wide Australian bush and feeling real freedom for the first time in years.

Of that time she said: 'We were two poor students and a one-and-a-half year old child, with a few pounds and a small suitcase full of nappies.'

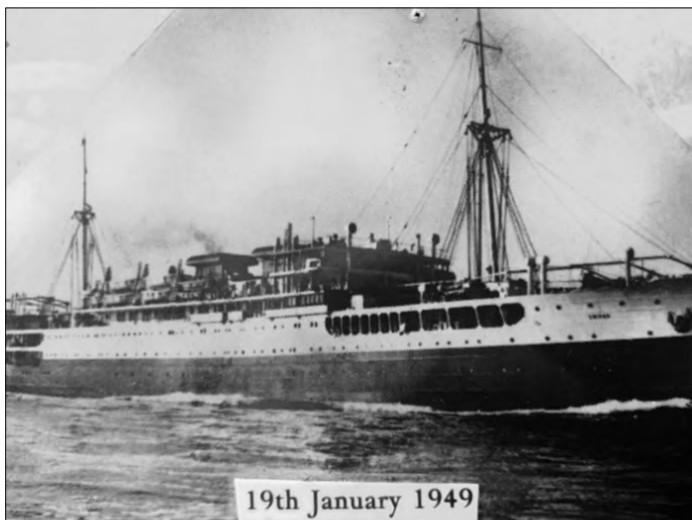
But at least we were safe’.

Their early years here were tough. Dad’s architectural degree was not recognised, so he had to find work in a textile factory, while Mum finished ladies’ coats at home and cared for little Celina.

They saved every penny, moving house six times in their first year.

In 1955 Dad bought a knitting machine and began producing scarves and ties in a small rented room in Brunswick Street.

The business slowly expanded into Emporium Knitwear in Collingwood.



The Eridan

Mum also began taking the children of their immigrant workers on outings – a play, a movie, an art show – knowing they had few opportunities like these. There’s a photo of her standing happily with three of the workers’ children outside the National Gallery of Victoria.

The business grew steadily until they sold it in 1985. They were always grateful for the opportunities Australia gave them.

Mum had one lasting regret — missing out on an education. Her schooling ended in Year 9 when the war began. Finally, thirty years later, in the 1970s, she returned to study at Melbourne University.

She began by studying Early Christian manuscripts, driven by a need to understand the roots of antisemitism. Later she studied in the Islamic Studies department, and in her late eighties completed her final subject, ‘Women and Islam’.

I remember her small study overflowing with library books, with notes pinned across the walls and



Mum writing her essays, notes pinned on the curtains

curtains. We still have her long essays with her lecturer’s comments, bound together in thick manilla folders.

By then Dad was becoming frail and needed more of her care.

Recently I contacted her former lecturer. Even after fifteen years, he was eager to visit Mum and pay his respects.

During the visit he shared a memory: Years earlier, after a lecture on God and religion, ‘Maria’, as he knew her, handed him a small scrap of paper.

On it she had written: “Where was God at Auschwitz?”

I was moved, that after all those years, he still treasures that note.

After Dad died, Mum — then 93 — moved into my home and lived with us for five wonderful years. She was surrounded by love, and everyone in the household cared for her like a Queen.

In 2022, she moved into aged care after repeated falls and a broken hip. Each time we thought it might be the end, she surprised us again with her resilience and strength.

Mum passed away peacefully on Wednesday 20/5/26, marking the end of an era.

As someone recently wrote: “The world loses yet another witness to the horrors of Auschwitz at a time when Jew-hatred is spreading again.”

A decade or two ago, this hall would have been filled with Mum and Dad’s friends— those remarkable survivors who crossed oceans and rebuilt their lives from nothing.



Dr Kamal, Mum's lecturer in Islamic studies came to visit after not seeing each other for over fifteen years



Me and Mum, 2025

Today only a few remain. One of them, Inka Weinstein, is with us today. She travelled to Australia with Mum and Dad on *The Eridan* in 1949.

The others look down on us.

In recent years, we have seen hatred return in ways that would have felt painfully familiar to Mum.

I often wonder how she would have responded to today's dark times—to October 7th and the ongoing war, to the silence of friends, the distorted media, and the rise of antisemitism, or antizionism even here, in the Australia she once loved so much.

I can imagine her raising her fist, in true Marysia style and declaring: *Bugger the haters. We will fight.*

Chazak v'ematz — be strong and of good courage.

And she would have meant it with every cell of her body.

She had always been a tireless fighter for Israel and the Jews.

We honour Mum by carrying her memory forward — by telling these stories, by standing up against hatred, and by living with the same love, courage and curiosity she showed every day of her life.

Mum leaves behind a beautiful family: her daughters Celina and me, Graham and Ronny; her grandchildren – Justine, Anton and Emma, Yaakov, Sunny and Amir, Yasmin and Liad, and Gil and Jimena. and her great-grandchildren – Sabe, Sienna, Mia, Evie, Ben, Eitan, Alma and Yonatan.

She survived the worst of humanity and spent the rest of her life showing us the best of it.

With so much love, we farewell our darling Marysia — our beloved mum, nana and friend.

May her memory be a blessing.

Bless you Mum.

May you finally Rest in Peace.



The family, 2015

Lenbachhaus 1948: Exhibition of Jewish Artists



Opening of the *Exhibition of Jewish Artists*,
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1948.

The "Exhibition of Jewish Artists" (German: *Ausstellung Jüdischer Künstler*) in November 1948 at Munich's Lenbachhaus Municipal Gallery was a landmark post-war showcase. It featured works by one female and four male Holocaust survivors who were part of the Sh'erit ha-Pletah (the surviving remnant of European Jewry) seeking to reclaim their voices.

As early as January 1947, the artist and UNRRA university professor Maximilian Feuerring organised an exhibition featuring 336 works by 71 DP artists, including 35 of his own. The artists represented were from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Yugoslavia, and Ukraine, all registered as displaced persons in the US zone. They were listed in the exhibition program according to their origin; there was no separate "Jewish" category.

The idea for an exhibition of Jewish displaced persons (DP) artists arose in October 1947. Feuerring was a member of the Writers' Union of Liberated

Jews, which, in addition to writers and journalists, also included a few visual artists. In October 1947, the group decided to organise its own exhibition. An "artists' council" was formed and entrusted with the organisation.

The exhibition was highly symbolic. Held just a few months after the declaration of Israeli independence, it took place at the Lenbachhaus, a municipal gallery that had banned Jewish art during the 1930s and showcased the aesthetics favoured by the Nazi regime.

The 1948 exhibit featured five artists who documented their experiences as prisoners of war, within concentration camps, and in displaced persons (DP) camps:

Maximilian Feuerring, Ewa Brzezińska, Chaskel Szyllis, Pinkus Szwarc and Leon Kraicer.

Maximilian Feuerring (1896–1985) was a highly respected European painter and art educator. Born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Lwow, Poland, Feuerring studied art in Berlin, Florence, Rome, Paris, and Warsaw. He tragically lost 52 members of his family, including his wife and parents, in the Holocaust.



Maximilian Feuerring

After the war, he was appointed a professor at the UNRRA University in Munich and organised exhibitions for displaced artists featuring 336 works by 71 DP artists, including 35 of his own.

He taught in Munich before migrating to Sydney, Australia, in 1950, at the age of 54.

Once in Australia, he became an influential figure in the local art scene, twice representing the country at the São Paulo Biennial. He worked as an artist, stage designer, and art critic. Today, his works are preserved in collections like the Art Gallery of NSW and are regularly traded on the auction market.

Polish Poesy Books: Form, Voice and Meaning



With **Marta Kubiszyn**, Associate Professor, Department of Jewish Culture and History, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin and **Janine Holc**, Professor and Chair of Political Science, Loyola University, Baltimore.
Moderated by **Rita Nash**

Those who joined this fascinating webinar on 14 July 2026 were introduced to a compelling literary form that is little known to both historians and general readers.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, poesy books (also known as friendship or autograph albums) were especially popular among girls and young women, including secular Jews. Relatives, friends and classmates were invited to contribute personal messages, poems, and quotations from eminent writers. During the partitions of Poland, these albums became a means of preserving Polish national identity and honouring the Polish language.

The albums were passed from one person to another and were so treasured by their owners that when Jewish girls and women were forced into ghettos, labour camps, and concentration camps, they took their albums with them, often at great personal risk. They offered comfort and connectedness with family and friends left behind. Above all, they offered an emotional refuge from the brutal realities surrounding them.

Janine Holc and Marta Kubiszyn explored the history of these albums and explained why they were so deeply valued by their owners. We were shown some remarkable examples which were made from whatever materials could be found in the camps. One exquisite example was made of felt and decorated with beads and buttons joined in an oval with embroidered stitches. In the middle of the oval is the name Dwosia, the diminutive of Dworja. The album was made by Dwosia's aunt whose dedication on the first page referred to hope for the future. Seeing the different styles of albums and their handwritten entries gave

participants a vivid sense of why these objects were so treasured.

Marta spoke about the hapticity of these albums. Their physical presence represent far more than diaries or collections of letters. Their tactile qualities such as the texture of the covers, the weight of the paper, signs of wear, and even their scent, convey layers of meaning and information. Food stains, tear marks, and the smudging caused by fingers repeatedly turning to favourite pages all tell stories of love, loss, and remembrance. These multiple layers of meaning have led Marta and Janine to argue that such albums, especially those created or kept in ghettos, labour camps, and concentration camps should be recognised as Holocaust artefacts in their own right, rather than just for their contents.

The webinar focused on an album kept by Helena Tabąńska between 1905 and 1906. Covered in rich red velvet and decorated with an embossed gold leaf motif, this beautiful volume was compiled during Helena's final years at high school in Warsaw. On the flyleaf is an inscription in Russian, believed to have been written by her husband, Abram, who died of typhus in the Warsaw Ghetto. The corner of this page is noticeably worn and grubby, suggesting that it was touched countless times - perhaps by both Helena and her daughter Krysia as they remembered their husband and father.

The album is filled with entries written in exquisite copperplate script, expressing affection for Helena and asking to be remembered. Most of the contributions are poems by the leading Polish writers of the nineteenth century, verses that were often committed to memory by their readers. Now 120 years old, Helena's album still speaks as eloquently as the words themselves.

Helena was deported to Treblinka and her older daughter Irena and grandson Włoduś were sent to Majdanek. However, her younger daughter Krysia, who survived in hiding, preserved the album throughout the war despite constantly moving to avoid capture. In 1948 she brought it with her to Australia, where she cherished it until she died in 2008. Krysia's step-granddaughter, Yvonne Haber, donated the album to the Sydney Jewish Museum, ensuring that this extraordinary object and the memories it carries will be preserved for future generations.

The album was the only memento of Krysia's beloved mother Helena.

Warsaw Ghetto Museum



The Warsaw Ghetto Museum under construction

The Warsaw Ghetto Museum is a historical museum in Warsaw currently under construction.

The target seat of the museum is the historic complex of the former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital at Śliska 51 St./Sienna 60 St.

The mission of the institution is to disseminate knowledge about the everyday life, survival strategies, fight and extermination of Polish Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and other ghettos on territory of the occupied Poland.

The museum's team is working on the creation of a permanent exhibition in the revitalised building of the former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital, collecting archives, artefacts and testimonies of memory and drawing on the achievements, experience and resources of Polish and foreign institutions that deal with the topic of the ghetto.[4]

The statutory tasks of the museum include: activities for the protection and care of the cultural heritage of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, conducting

cultural, scientific, educational and popularisation activities related to the history of the Warsaw Ghetto and other ghettos built on the occupied Polish territories, initiating and supporting social initiatives and non-governmental organisations that contribute to the protection and commemoration of the history of the Warsaw Ghetto.



Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital c.1900

The building situated between 51 Śliska Street and 60 Sienna Street was constructed between 1876 and 1878 and was subsequently known as the Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital. The hospital was established through monetary endowments of two affluent Warsaw families. It was Majer Bersohn (178–1873) who initiated the idea of establishing a hospital. His sons, Mathias (1824–1908) and Jan (1829–1913) Bersohn, together with son-in-law Salomon Bauman (d. 1876) and daughter Paulina Bauman, provided additional funding. Attendees of the hospital opening ceremony included the President of Warsaw, General Lieutenant Sokrat Starynkiewicz.

Initially, the hospital had a 20-bed capacity, which increased to 43 beds by 1915. It should be noted that the hospital treated children free of charge. The main building was designed by Artur Goebel and subsequently underwent extensive expansion in the years 1924–1930, according to the design of Henryk Stifelman. Funded by the Dawidsohn family, a new Ophthalmology Clinic (standing to this day) was added to the main hospital building in 1900, the first director being Noe Dawidsohn.

Many eminent doctors worked in the hospital over the years, undoubtedly the most famous of them was Henryk Goldszmidt ("Janusz Korczak"), employed in the years 1905–1912. The post of the hospital's chief physician was held respectively by:

Ludwik Chwat (1878–1881), Szymon Portner (1881–1910), Adolf Poznański (1911–1923), and finally Anna Braude-Hellerowa (1930–1942).

Between 1878 and 1915, the hospital treated a total of over 20,000 patients, one-third of that number being Christian children. In 1923, as the fortunes of the Bersohn family declined and the Municipality of Warsaw withdrew its subsidy, a decision to close the hospital was taken. Through the efforts of Dr Anna Braude-Hellerowa and with the assistance from the Warsaw Jewish Community and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the institution was refurbished and expanded, reopening in 1930. Dr Braude-Hellerowa became its executive director while Henryk Kroszczor was appointed its administrative director remaining in those capacities until 1942. By 1930, the hospital had 150 beds rising to nearly 250 by the outbreak of the war. In the 1930s, the facility was considered one of the most modern children's hospitals in Poland.

The Warsaw Ghetto Museum is implementing a project entitled 'The renovation and extension of the historical buildings of the former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital at 60 Sienna Street/51 Śliska Street in Warsaw, with their adaptation for exhibition and educational purposes, and the implementation of the Media Library – part of the permanent exhibition of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum'.

Author's Talk. Waverley Library, Sydney



On the 20 August 2026 author Freda Widawski in conversation with Michaela Kalowski about *Mina & Jacob: Holocaust Survivors of Nine Camps*. Co-written with her sister Adele Abraham, the memoir tells the remarkable story of their parents' survival through nine concentration camps, their post-war life in Poland, and their journey to Australia.

(l-r) Author Freda Widawski, Michaela Kalowski (interviewer), Dr Marjorie O'Neill (member for Coogee), Dr Keri Spooner (Deputy Mayor Waverley Council), Piotr Rakowski (Polish Consul General)

Antisemitism on the Rise Again

Many people think antisemitism is a problem of the past. This however is far from reality.

A major global survey found that 46% of adults worldwide hold significant antisemitic attitudes — more than double the level measured a decade ago. That represents roughly 2.2 billion people.

The most recognised reasons are:

1. Conspiracy Theories: The "Puppet Master" Myth: Falsely accusing Jews of secretly controlling global financial systems, media networks, and governments.
2. Geopolitical Spillover and "New Antisemitism" Conflation of Jewish Identity with Israeli Policy: Holding Jewish individuals worldwide collectively responsible for the actions and military policies of the State of Israel.

Anti-Zionism Intersecting with Bigotry: Crossing the line from legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy into antisemitism by denying Israel's right to exist.

The "Zionist" Code Word: Utilising the term "Zionist" as a socially acceptable proxy or euphemism to target and harass Jewish people.

Far-Right Nationalism: White supremacist and neo-Nazi ideologies that view Jews as unassimilable race bent on undermining the white population.

Far-Left Anti-Colonial Narratives: Framing Jews exclusively as symbols of hyper-capitalism, white privilege, or colonial oppression

Anonymity and Echo Chambers: Creating digital spaces where hate speech, memes, and disinformation can be normalised without immediate social or legal accountability.

History teaches a painful lesson:

Hatred rarely stays limited to one group.

When societies normalise collective blame, conspiracy theories and identity-based hostility, everyone eventually becomes less free.

You can criticise governments.

You can criticise policies.

You can criticise wars.

But judging people because they are Jewish is prejudice — no matter which political side it comes from.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) documented 1,654 anti-Jewish incidents across Australia between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025. This followed a record peak of 2,062 incidents recorded nationwide during the preceding twelve-month period, representing an unprecedented surge following the October 7, 2023 onset of the Israel-Hamas war.

Breakdown of Recent Data:

Total 2024–2025: 1,654 recorded incidents (excluding online abuse).

Total 2023–2024: 2,062 recorded incidents.

Pre-2023: Roughly 342 incidents annually.

Meaning that totals in these years are at nearly five times historical levels.

Geographic Distribution (2025 Data):

Victoria: 738 incidents (highest state total)

New South Wales: 662 incidents

Western Australia and Queensland: Accounted for the remaining structured community reports.

Nature of the Incidents:

Verbal abuse: 621 cases

Posters and stickers: 379 cases

Graffiti: 359 cases

Direct messages/threats: 238 cases

Vandalism and property damage: 33 cases (including 18 major arson/structural attacks)

Physical assaults: 24 cases

Undocumented discrimination in the workplace and institutions.

The Polish Catholic who became the world's leading expert on Hasidim



Marcin Wodziński is a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Wrocław, where he heads the Taube Department of Jewish studies. His research is centred on the 19th century social history of Jews in Silesia and Eastern Europe (chiefly the areas that had historically comprised Poland), and particularly on Haskalah and the Hasidic movement within Judaism.

He has employed both qualitative as well as geospatial and quantitative methods in his study of Hasidism playing a pioneering role in the understanding of geographic factors in its development in former Poland and Eastern Europe. This approach features notably in his *Historical Atlas of Hasidism*, complemented by his other closely interrelated books on the movement's history in the context of wider socio-historical processes in the region.

His interest in digital methods in humanities resulted also in his contributions to several projects, among others to the Yerusha project, where Wodziński was responsible for the Polish section, and to several ongoing projects focused on the collection, analysis and publication of data along with tools for digital historical analysis, in cooperation with several universities in Israel (Bar Ilan, Haifa University, Open University of Israel) and Toronto University.

He was the editor-in-chief of the biannual of the Polish Association of Jewish Studies, *Studia Judaica* in the

years 2009–2018 and, since 2021, he has served as the editor-in-chief of the *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, published by the European Association for Jewish Studies.

Wodziński worked as a historical consultant at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland in the years 2000–2014, for two of which he was the museum's senior historian (2010–2012). He was the head of the team responsible for the 19th century section of the permanent exhibition. Since then, he has been a member of the museum's Historical Committee.

He is a member of the Academia Europaea and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Depictions of Hasidic Jews in art

Depictions of Hasidic Jews in art span from 19th-century romanticised European realism to modernist abstraction and contemporary pop culture. Artists often use the distinct visual markers of Hasidim—such as black hats, long coats, beards, and side locks—to explore themes of spiritual ecstasy and community.

Ecstatic joy and dance (Simcha): features Hasidim dancing wildly at weddings, Simcha Torah and gatherings. These pieces use swirling brushstrokes and dynamic movement to symbolise a mystical connection to God.

The nostalgic shtetl: Early-to-mid-20th-century artists infused their dreamlike canvases with floating Hasidic figures, fiddlers, and rabbis, preserving the memory of Eastern European Jewish village life.

Mysticism and inner life: Portraiture often focuses on the deep, contemplative, or weathered faces of elders and rebbes.

Contemporary pop Art and subversion: Modern observant and secular artists blend traditional subjects with bright colour palettes, translating spiritual concepts into modern aesthetics.



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