

HISTORY

The Jewish cemetery on Zelena street was established by the decision of the municipality in the year 1866. The original plot of land, allocated by the municipality for the cemetery, was significantly smaller than what the Jewish community thought was necessary and the Jewish community collected funds to buy more land to expand the cemetery to its current size. Even and that time, The Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery differs from many other Eastern European Jewish cemeteries in that it was planned, with a clear designation of sectors, alleys and walkways.

Currently the size of the cemetery is about 14.2 hectares and consists of 137 rectangles, which together form one continuous closed complex. About 50 000 Chernivtsi citizens are interred in the cemetery, among them; the first Jewish mayor of the city, **Eduard Reiss**, Yiddish poet and author **Eliezer Steinbarg**, chief Rabbis of the community, deputy of Austrian parliament and Landtag of Bukovina, the prominent public activist and leader of the Jewish community **Benno Straucher**, the head of the Chernivtsi chamber of lawyers and renown politician **Max Fokschaner**; as well as philanthropists **Anna** and **Markus Kislinger**; politician and deputy of Austrian parliament **David Tittinger**, honorary citizen of Chernivtsi **Markus Kampelmacher**, politicians and public activists **Josef Steiner** and **Saul Leib Steinmetz**, physicians **Dr Siegmund Neuberger**, **Dr. Josef Ohrenstein**, as well as many other people, who made significant contributions to the political, economic, cultural and public life of Chernivtsi.

The cemetery has four mass graves:

1. Jewish soldiers of Austrian army from World War I (1914-1918),
2. Muslim soldiers in the service of Austrian army, who died during World War I (1914-1918),
3. Romanian citizens, killed in 1941,
4. Around 900 Jewish civilians, who were victims of Holocaust in 1941.

Since 1995, by the decision of the Chernivtsi city council, the cemetery is part of the historical-cultural preserve "Cemeteries at Zelena Street". At present, the Jewish cemetery of Chernivtsi is one of the biggest preserved old Jewish cemeteries in Central and Eastern Europe. It is also a monument, and reminder of, the formerly large Jewish community of the city and its role in the politics, economy and culture of the city.

THE SYMBOLS

ON JEWISH GRAVESTONES

GRAPEVINE – the symbol of 'people of Israel' as a 'vineyard of Good', of both family and an individual. It symbolizes family and ethical life.

ROSE (or different kind of flower) – it can be found on the graves of women; a broken flower is a sign of premature dead.

THE TREE OF LIFE – it symbolizes all metaphors concerning future life in heaven, it is also a symbol of 'people of Israel' as well as an individual Jew. The tree of life is also a symbol of the Torah. Since the XIX century this symbol aquired a new meaning - a tree with broken branches or cut down symbolizes evanescence and death.

DEER – it symbolizes the road to God; it also represents the names: "Tzvi" and "Hersh", – which are the Hebrew and Yiddish words for deer and "Naftali", which is a Hebrew name and also the name of one of the twelve tribes, who's symbol was a deer.

LION – it can be found mostly on the gravestones of men; it is a sign of the Jehuda tribe and symbolizes 'people of Israel' as well as an individual leader. On the gravestones, lions are represented by standing on the back paw and carrying a crown or in the company of other animals (eg. deer or lamb). It associates the deceased person with respect and authority. Lions carrying the crown are the guards of Torah and the rules of Judaism. They are also associated with names: Arje in Hebrew and Leib in Yiddish.

SNAKE – it symbolizes the power of evil and death; in assimilated communities this symbol was derived from the non-Jewish surrounding and associated with immortality.

CANDLES, CANDLE HOLDER – it can be found mostly on the gravestones of women, in the shape of single, double, or five branched candle stick. They symbolize a woman's piety and long life. When they are broken they are a sign of premature death. In some cases the candles are represented with hands above them – then it symbolizes the blessing of light, with which women start the Shabbat dinner. Candles can rarely be

found on the gravestones of men – in that case it symbolizes a wise and religious man who studies holy texts.

BOOKS – on the gravestones there can be a single book or books standing in a row. They are mostly on the gravestones of men whose responsibility is to study the Torah. On the gravestones of women there can be a single book which is a popular prayer-book and represents he piety.

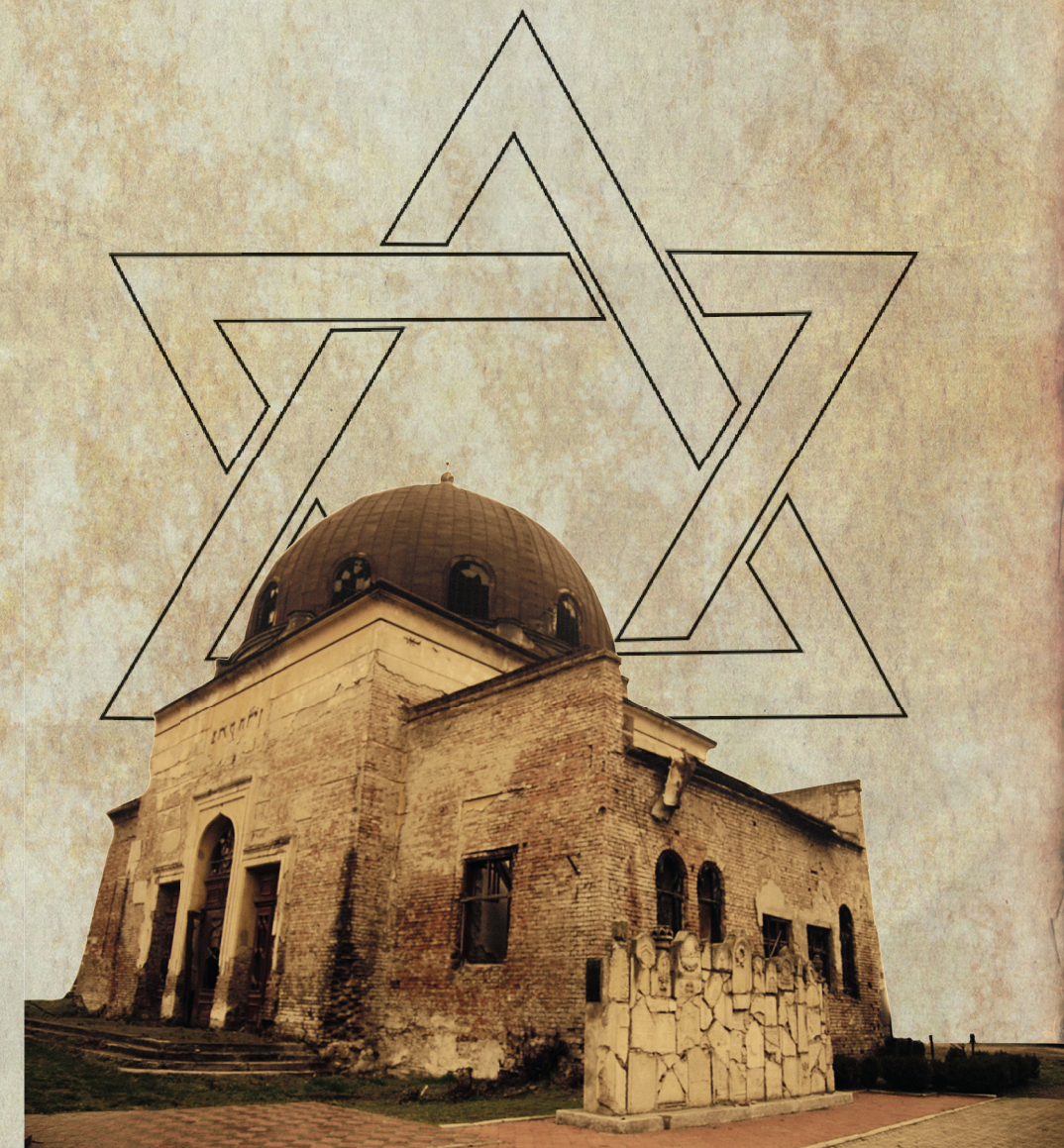
CROWN – mostly it symbolizes the Torah, then the good name of the deceased person. On the gravestones of "Kohanim" (male members of the priestly families, descendants of Aaron the brother of Moses), the crown is a symbol of the priesthood. On the gravestones of women it indicates that the woman brought honor to her husband and her whole family.

BASIN, JUG – shown separately or next to each other, or a hand holding a jug; indicates that the deceased person was Levite (he who belonged to the tribe of Levi), his responsibilities included the ritual washing of the Kohen's hands before his blessing during service at the synagogue.

BLESSING HANDS – in characteristic gesture; abutted thumbs and forefingers and two last fingers of each hand spread away from the other fingers; they symbolize a priest - Kohen (male descendants of Aaron). This specific sign made by the hands of the Kohen during the ritual blessing, became an emblem of the Kohanim.

THE STAR OF DAVID – it is an emblem shaped as a six-pointed star, built by two equilateral triangles placed on each other, forming a structure of six equilateral triangles attached to the side of hexagram. The Hexagram is one of the ancient symbols of mankind. As a Jewish symbol it is known from the 14th century, and it has been largely used on tombstones as a symbol of being Jewish, since the 19th century.

JEWISH CEMETERY OF CHERNIVTSI



CHERNIVTSI 2012



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The Soviet period in the history of Chernivtsi started in the summer of 1944 and continued till the end of 90. The tombstones from this period are evidence of the changing background of the Jewish citizens of the city. Most of the old Jewish population which survived WW2 emigrated in 1945 and 1946 and was replaced by Jewish people from various parts of the Soviet Union. Tombstones from this period are similar in style to those, which can be found in the Christian cemetery. The only difference being that the Star of David is often used as a decorative element. Other traditional decorative elements are almost never used. The tombstones are mostly made of artificial stone (eg. cement) and the photograph of the deceased is very often placed on the tombstone. This is a clear indication of the degree of assimilation of the Jewish community, because by Judaic law, having an image of the deceased on the tombstone is clearly prohibited. Occasionally, artificial flowers can be found on these graves. This is another proof of the assimilation of the Jewish community, since this custom is more typical to Christians. It is also an obvious sign that the deceased person still has relatives in the city. On some tombstones from all periods, there may be found small stones. On graves from all periods, it is common to find small stones. These were placed there by relatives and friends of the deceased. Placing small stones on the graves of relatives is an old Jewish custom and indicates that the grave was visited by relatives.



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Romanian citizens,
killed in 1941



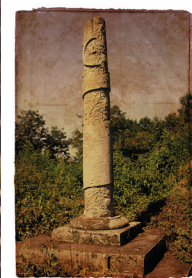
Jewish soldiers
of Austrian army
from World War I
(1914-1918)

1



Muslim soldiers
in the service
of Austrian army,
who died
during World War I
(1914-1918)

2



4

Around 900
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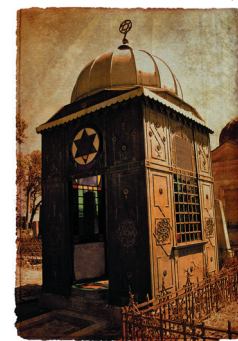
ROMANIA PART



Many tombstones in the cemetery are from this period, when the city was part of the Kingdom of Romania (1918-1940). They are mostly of simple and massive form, with only few decorative elements. They show the change in local stone-cutting customs. Starting at the beginning of the 20th century, workshops specializing in the mass production of tombstones, became common in the Bukovina region, but individual stonemasons still produced tombstones to order and carved their names on them. The names of stone masons which are found on many tombstones are: L. Kukurudza, Moskaliuk brothers, K. Kundl, Bernard Reder and others. Bernard Reder later left Czernowitz and became a very famous sculptor.

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN PART

Tombstones dating from the Austro-Hungarian period (1775-1918), often indicate the wealth and importance of some members of the Jewish community when many of them were among the wealthiest citizens of the city and formed its economic, political and cultural elite. These wealthier members of the Jewish community were mostly assimilated and believers in Reform Judaism. Thus their tombstones are of different form from the traditional ones. In most cases they consist of small architectural forms, meant to be seen from all sides, even though the inscription still generally remains on the side facing east. The inscriptions are generally in German and Hebrew, but Russian and even Polish can be found among them. The variety of languages is proof of the assimilation of this community and shows the multinational character of the city during that period. The inscriptions contain the name, dates of birth and death and sometimes the profession or position of the deceased. Occasionally they include a poem. The decorations on the tombstones, are in the form of vases, urns, columns, motifs borrowed from ancient traditions (eg. bayberries), flower ornaments and representations of animals. The Star of David is a popular decorative element. The tombstones are often surrounded by a low iron fence. There are many family graves, some of them in the form of mausoleums. Most noticeable among them is the unique grave of the mayor of Czernowitz, Eduard Reiss (1850-1907). This mausoleum is made of metal into which are set various kinds of stones; marble, granite and gabbro were used in its creation.



THE OLDEST PART OF THE CEMETERY



Most tombstones in the cemetery are in the shape of vertically standing large stones, called Stele. This is typical of Jewish tombstones in Central and Eastern Europe and has remained characteristic for the graves of most religious and traditional Jews. Inscriptions and decorations are mostly on the side of the stone which faces east. Decorations are often in the form of symbolic representations, which give information about the deceased. The oldest stones are in folkloric style untouched by European styles as Classicism and Historism. Tombstones of this type are usually all of the same size and are made of Sandstone. In the Jewish cemetery of Chernivtsi, in addition to the stele, the grave itself is usually covered by a horizontal stone.

THE MORTUARY HALL



The Mortuary hall - Beit Tahara (house of purification) at the entrance to the cemetery, was erected in 1905 according to the design of the architect Finkel and financed by the Jewish community. The names of the sponsors are still visible on the wall of one of the rooms in the ceremonial hall. Their graves are close to the building. The mortuary hall consisted of 4 rooms: a ceremonial hall, mortuary, ritual shop and office. An inscription "Tzedek ha-din", which means: The Justice of the court, is visible above the main entrance to the building. It is the name of a prayer before a funeral and indicates man's subordination to the will of Good. A monument created of pieces of tombstones is located next to the mortuary hall. This was erected in 2001 by the cemetery administrator Y. Prystupenko.