

מדינת ישראל
משרד החינוך התרבות והספורט
מינהל חינוך התיישבותי, פנימייתי ועליית הנוער
הפיקוח על החינוך הדתי

January, 2009

To the Friends of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage,

As a teacher and leader of student groups to Poland for many years, I wish to describe briefly the contribution of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage to the success of our trips.

Our school is composed of children of the religious kibbutzim of the Bet Shean Valley in northern Israel. The founders of these kibbutzim were born in the cities and villages of Poland, and so it was only natural that when their grandchildren visit the country of their birth, we attempt to plan the itinerary to include the very towns where their grandparents grew up. Each student was required to interview a grandparent or other relative, and prepare a family history of their experiences during the holocaust. At a certain point, the students felt that in addition to their personal stories, they should somehow commemorate the memory of the Jewish communities which perished in Poland. Thus, for the last five years, the Foundation has been helping us restore, to some small degree, the Jewish cemeteries of a few of the towns to which our students felt a personal tie.

The first of these towns was Zambrov, the home-town of the grandfather of one of our students. The Jewish cemetery had lain untouched for decades, but thanks to the work of the Foundation, the municipal

Authorities of Zambrov provided heavy equipment and tools to help us clear the undergrowth and reveal the gravestones which had been hidden so long under the weeds. The mayor of the town welcomed us and gave our student a gift for her grandfather.

After another visit to Zambrov, which was covered by the local Polish newspaper, we visited the town of Knyszyn, where a Polish family had hidden the grandfather of another one of our students. With the help of the Foundation, we established contact with the son of the Polish benefactor, and he was ultimately recognized as a "Righteous Gentile" by Yad Vashem. At Knyszyn, the Foundation arranged for students of the local high school to join us in restoring part of the Jewish cemetery and translating the inscriptions on some of the gravestones. I'm sure both groups of students benefited from learning about the richness of Jewish life in Poland before the holocaust.

In Przemyzyl, the Foundation once again secured the cooperation of the local high school, and together the two groups of students joined in studying the Jewish past of the town by touring the Jewish cemetery together.

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Last summer, we visited the town of Narol accompanied by the grandmother of one of our students. She was born in Narol, and fled to Russia when the Nazis invaded Poland. We discovered that all traces of the Jewish past of the town had been erased. Michael Traisin of the US arranged for a decorative sign to be made by a local craftsman, and Monika and Marcin of the Foundation, coordinated it's erection with the mayor of the town. Today, anyone passing on the road can find the old Jewish cemetery of Narol.

The invaluable work of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage of Poland has added another dimension to trips of Israeli youth to Poland. I know from non-Jewish friends that its work is equally important to Polish youth seeking to learn about Poland's rich Jewish past.

Sincerely,
Nili BenAri
Israel