

REVIEW

Eckard Reiß, Magdalena Abraham-Diefenbach, *Makom tov – der gute Ort. Jüdischer Friedhof Frankfurt (Oder) / Słubice – dobre miejsce. Cmentarz żydowski Frankfurt nad Odrą / Słubice*, Vergangenheits Verlag, Berlin 2012, pp. 243.

This beautifully presented book on the Jewish cemetery in Frankfurt (Oder) / Słubice documents Jewish heritage in this fairs and university city. It also reminds us of the important role played by Jews there.¹ The book is a very good example of efforts to commemorate the cultural heritage of Jews in eastern Brandenburg, which employs a broader perspective in portraying the history of the region. This history is marked by the mutual coexistence of Jews and Christians from the Middle Ages to modern times. This was brought to an end by the Holocaust. Unfortunately, after World War II the remnants of the Jewish material culture continued to be destroyed, including synagogues and cemeteries. This book is positive evidence of the fact that the time has come to work together in preserving this heritage and in examining it in academic terms. This is a challenge facing both Poles and Germans.

The book consists of five parts. The first describes the history of the cemetery. The second contains epigraphical documentation. The third explains “why cemeteries are important for Jewish tradition.” The fourth describes Jewish traces in the Lubuskie region. In it, the author discusses issues including how German cemeteries, including the Jewish one, were treated after World War II. The fifth part is a chronology of the history of Jews in Frankfurt (Oder).

Eckard Reiß’s history of the cemetery deserves high praise. It was prepared on the basis of detailed research in archives and libraries in Germany, Israel and the Netherlands. The author has grouped information into several sub-periods: from the cemetery’s foundation to 1866; from 1866 to the outbreak of World War II; the war years; the post-war period until 1975, when the largest destruction of the cemetery took place; and from that year until the present day. One important bibliographical addition is Ephraim Moses Pinner’s book published anonymously in 1861, in which eight inscriptions from the Frankfurt cemetery could be found.² These were the inscriptions of: the Frankfurt Rabbi Aron, son of Icchak (died 1721), Jechiel Michael, son of Mordechai (died 1740), Abraham Horowitz (died 1744), Naftaly Kind (died 1750), Sacharia Mendl of Podhajce (died 1791), Józef, son of Meir (died 1792), Pinchas, son of Jisachar of Prague (died 1800) and Jehuda Leib Marguliot (died 1811). The material assembled by Pinner could be very valuable in checking and complementing the inventory materials.

¹ I had the opportunity to “encounter” this heritage in person. In 2010 the Department of Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University received a collection of Hebrew books as a gift, of which three were printed in Frankfurt (Oder): two volumes of the Talmud – the Tracts *Nida* (1799) and *Nazir* (1773) – as well as one of the volumes of the *Zohar* (1816).

² M. Pinner: מצבות קברות הרבנים ואנשי השם. *Grabschriften der berühmtesten Männer und Rabbiner in Europa und im heiligen Lande, nebst Catalog von 389 hebr. Drucken und Handschriften*, Berlin 1861, pp. 198–200.

The most interesting part for epigraphers is of course the documentation of the cemetery. In this, Eckhard Reiß presents 66 entire gravestones or collated extracts from extracts. These are both preserved stones and archive photographs. The documentation of gravestones is complemented by excerpts from the Hebrew cemetery register encompassing the years 1677–1866. These provide a valuable addition to the information contained in the inscriptions. Each gravestone is shown in a (very good-quality) photograph. The text of the inscriptions is translated into German and Polish, which is supplemented by comments and information from the cemetery register (also in German and Polish). It is a pity that the size of the letters makes the original extracts hard to read. German-language gravestones are translated into Polish. Unfortunately, there is no copy of the Hebrew inscription, and in spite of their good quality the photographs are no substitute.

The documentation is in my opinion in most cases correct. The best studies are of the most difficult and extended inscriptions of rabbis: Jehuda Leib Marguliot and Josef ben Meir, as well as the scholar Sacharia Mendel of Podhajce. In the latter case, the identification of the deceased's ancestors is very well prepared. In this case too, though, some comments are needed. מגיד משרים (מגיד משרים) – Iz 45, 11 – refers to a synagogue preacher, i.e. someone on duty. On the old and new gravestone the place is recorded as מפאדייטין (מפאדייטין), i.e. there is no He. The text in the register does not show (it is too small to be certain) how the name is written. The translation of the text of the inscription shows the titles of the works of the three first people, There is no bibliographical description, however.

Below, I would like to present a few remarks on the remaining inscriptions:

(p. 164, Me'ir)

1. פ"נ
2. האי"ש ה"ה האלוף
3. התורני כ"ה מאיר בן

1. Buried here
2. Husband. This is a dignitary (not in translation)
3. Torah scholar, esteemed Mr Meir, son.

The translation is lacking the part visible in the photograph in the Hebrew text.

(p. 162, Meir Bart Präger)

1. פ"ט
2. הילד
3. מאיר ב"ר ט'
4. פרעגער

1. Buried here,
2. child,
3. Meir, son of Mr T.(owia) – [Tobiah].
4. Präger.

The Hebrew text has been interpreted incorrectly. The name Towia is in the register. The translation Bart is therefore incorrect. Excerpts from the cemetery register are shown several times, but not used for interpreting the text.

(p. 100, Löb)

5. (...) איצר ז"ל (...)

[...] Icik, of blessed memory!

His father was Icik, not Aszer. Icik also appears in the cemetery register.

(p. 92, Chogla Katz, Taube Segal)

Right page:

1. (פ"ט)
2. ה(...)
3. ב"ר (...)
4. אשת (...)
5. (אבר)הם בן (...)
6. (שמעל)קה סג"ל (...)
7. שהיתה (...)
8. (ביום) ו' ב' דר"ח (...)
9. (אדר ב') תקל"ב לפ"ק
10. (תג)קב"ה

1. (Buried here)
2. [...]
3. [...] daughter of Mr
4. [...] wife
5. [...] Awra(ham's), son
6. [...] (Szmel)ke Segal.
7. [...] Who was
8. [...] on Friday, 2nd day of new moon
9. (adar II) 532 according to the small calendar.
10. (May her soul) be bound up in the bond of eternal life!

Levite origin (Segal) is attributed a male name (in this case the name of the husband's father) and not Rywce. This suggestion of an addition is not a chance one, as this name quite often appeared in the Horowitz Segal family.

Left page:

I do not understand the reasons for attributing origin (Kaz) to the woman in the heading, who did not inherit this origin. In the inscription it is by the name of her father. In verse 5 a shortened version is used (above the letter Resh is an abbreviation symbol) – נפטר'י. The date of death also requires a comment. In the text it is:

נפטר'י ש"ק ד"ד שבט
תקכ"ט

Died on the holy Sabbath 24 Shevat
529.

It is therefore certainly not 6 Shevat, as the author indicates. However, in the year 529 the Sabbath did not fall on 24 Shevat. There is a mistake on the gravestone, then. The fact that it is the twenty-somethingth of Shevat is shown by the registry entry, where the Qoph in the date (i.e. 20) is very much visible despite the miniature script. It is worse

with the second letter of the date. Or perhaps it is simply כ"ח (20th of the month), in which case the text should look thus:

נפטר' ש"ק ד' רשבט

Died on the holy Sabbath on 20 Shevat
529 (28.1.1769)

(p. 118, Israel, son of Bendit)

In verse 3 it should be:

בענדעט מ(ג)קר נפטר

Bendit mnaker. Died

The concept of “mnaker” means shochet, i.e. it refers to a ritual slaughterer and not a mason. This concept also appears in the cemetery register.

(p. 120, Chaje, daughter of Tewel Ries)

In verse 4 is:

ביום א' ונקברת ביום ב' ר"ח
אב תקס"ד לפ"ק

The 1st day and was buried on the 2nd of the new moon
aw 564 according to the small calendar.

In the inscription day 1 is not Sunday, but the first day of the holiday (Rosh Chodesh), i.e. as it is recorded in the register. The woman died on 9 July 1804, which fell on a Monday.

I find the reading of the inscription incomprehensible (p. 138) in the context of the record from the cemetery register. I also believe that it is possible to make out the date. I suggest:

נפטרת ש"ק ר"ח (ש)בט
ונקברת ב' שבט
שנת (תקצ"ה לפ"ק

Died on the holy Sabbath, on Rosh Chodesh of Shevat
And buried 2 Shevat
(59)5 according to the small calendar.

The date is special because two holidays take place at the same time. We can see that the hundreds in the date comprise two letters (probably Tav and Qoph). Visible is a final letter He (5). Assuming that we have 500 and 5, only one date will be able to be completed in accordance with this record: 595, i.e. date of death 31.1.1835.

(p. 166. Bunem)

The identification of the gravestone of Bunem is inaccurate. Bunem is the name of the father or husband. The date of death on this gravestone can also be added to:

נפטרת ביום (ג') א' ניסן
ונקברת ביום ה' ג' ניסן
שנת תקצ"א לפ"ק

Died the 3rd day (Tuesday) of 1 Nisan
and was buried the 5th day (Thursday) 3 Nisan
of the year 591 according to the small calendar (d. 1.3.1831).

A separate commentary is required for the translations of the inscriptions from grave-stones depicted in archive photographs. The texts preserved on them are indeed barely legible, but can be analysed in more detail. For example, I suggest interpreting the end of the inscription on the gravestone of Czarna (p. 198) as follows:

בת הר"ר יעקב ז"ל מקו צילץ אשת
הר"ר מרדכי ב' מה"ו מנח' מן נפטרת
ביו' ד' ב' תמוז תע"ב לפ"ק תנצב"ה

Daughter of Mr and Master Jakow, of blessed memory! From the commune of Zülz. Wife of Mr and Master Mordechaj, the son of our teacher, Mr and our Master Menachem Man. Died the 4th day (Wednesday) 2 Tammuz 472 according to the small calendar. May her soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life!
(d. 25.6.1712).

The comments and supplementations presented here do not take away from the book's value. I am aware that in some cases suggestions for interpreting the text require comparison with the records in the cemetery register and seeing the stones themselves (which I was unable to do). The fact that the Institute of Applied History, Society and Science in Dialogue of the European University Viadrina took on the scientific initiative of describing the Jewish heritage in these lands is a reason for pleasure. It is also important to note that the epigraphical study of Jewish cemeteries in Poland has been developing only recently, and to date has largely concerned Silesia and Lesser Poland. This work, edited by Eckard Reiß and Magdalena Abraham-Diefenbach, is the first such extensive and valuable publication concerning the Polish-German borderland.

The book *Makom tov – der gute Ort. Jüdischer Friedhof Frankfurt (Oder) / Stubice – dobre miejsce. Cmentarz żydowski Frankfurt nad Odrą / Stubice* is a significant and important comment on the universality of European history. Its integral part is the history and culture of Jews. The documentation of the common heritage on the Polish-German borderland belongs both to Poles and to Germans.

Leszek Hońdo