



## ***What was Oshpitzin? Workshop for students***

**Age group:** 15-19 years old

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Group size:** 15-30

**Location:** Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue and Jewish Museum in Oświęcim ([www.ajcf.org](http://www.ajcf.org))

**Objectives:**

1. Learning about the Jews in Oświęcim in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century
2. Developing empathy with Holocaust survivors from the town
3. Understanding the aftermath of the Holocaust in Oświęcim

**Educational results:**

1. Acquiring knowledge about the history of the local Jewish community
2. Developing skills of cooperation, reasoning, and asking questions
3. Promoting respect towards the victims of the Holocaust and WW2

### **Additional necessary materials:**

1. AJC EduPack no. 2 (historical photographs, available to borrow from AJC)
2. Ballpens or pencils (available to borrow from AJC)
3. Flipchart and markers (available at AJC)
4. Student worksheets (included below in this document for own printing)

### **Pre-visit teacher preparation should include:**

- knowledge of basic facts about artifacts presented in the workshop (as described further below)
- orientation in artifact location within the Jewish Museum (marked in the artifact descriptions)
- printing student worksheets (one per group) or requesting AJC for printing them prior to your arrival

### **Pre-visit student preparation should include:**

- readiness for group work

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## Step by step:

*\*Please remember to contact the Auschwitz Jewish Center prior to your arrival in order to book a date and time of your workshop to ensure availability of the venue.*

*You can do this by email [info@ajcf.pl](mailto:info@ajcf.pl) or phone +48 33 844 70 02.*

### 1. Before entering the main prayer room of the synagogue [5 mins]

a) Tell your students that they will explore the history of Jews in Oświęcim working in groups in the only surviving synagogue in the town. Ask them to form groups of four or five people\*. Make sure that groups are as diverse as possible.

*\*Forming groups may take place before the visit.*

b) Before entering the main prayer room, ask all men to cover their heads with *kippot* from the basket.

c) Inside ask each group to sit at a different table (there are six tables available).

### 2. Introduction in the synagogue [5 mins]

a) Dividing tasks within groups. Write down names of roles on the flipchart. Explain the roles and ask that each member within a group takes on a role.

- Reader: reads the material to the group
- Recorder: compiles the results of group work on the flipchart
- Reporter: reports on the results of the group work when the class meets as a whole
- Manager: keeps group 'on track' and focused
- *In a 5 person group:* Time-keeper: makes sure the group finishes the task on time

b) Explain that the purpose of the activity is for each group to analyze a historical photograph/photo of a historical object.

c) Distribute the materials from AJC EduPack among the groups (a group set comprises one laminated photo and two-page students worksheet). Ask students to follow the instructions from their worksheet and record the results of their work there. *Please note: All photographs/objects used in this workshop are described for your reference in the Teacher Sheet (pp. 4-7)*

### 3. Groupwork [15 mins]

- a) Tell students they have 15 minutes to complete the task. After that time, the reporters will be asked to present on the results. Make sure that each person is aware of the importance of their work and the quality of cooperation for the final result.
- b) While groups are working you should 'travel' between them, facilitate, and motivate students as well as provide necessary assistance.
- c) When the time is about to run out inform the students and give them a few extra minutes if necessary.

### 4. Presentation of the results [45 mins]

- a) Ask students to leave the synagogue and give them five minutes to locate their photograph/object in the exhibits of the Jewish Museum (ground floor only)
- b) When the time is up invite students to gather in the women's section of the synagogue
- c) Ask the reporter from the group working on **photograph # 1** (Jewish girls learning to plant potatoes) to:
  - point at the original photograph on the wall
  - present on the results of their work (observations & further questions )
- d) explain the real story behind the photograph based on the Teacher Sheet (pp.4-7)
  - invite further questions from other groups
- e) Follow the procedure described above for the remaining photographs/objects:
  - #2: Photograph of members of the Jewish sports club Kadima.
  - #3: A bottle from the Jacob Haberfeld factory
  - #4: Chandelier from the Great Synagogue
  - #5: Greeting card sent to Elina Shaked
  - #6: Photograph of Marta Świdorska and Olga Pressler
- f) Invite students to gather again in the New Life exhibit and explain briefly two biographies: Zygmunt Feiler (connected with photo #1), Tova Berlinski (connected with photo #2)

### 5. Sum up and self study [up to 20 mins]

In case of additional time encourage further questions and viewing the documentary in the New Life exhibit .



## **What was Oshpitzin? Teacher Sheet.**

*Below you will find descriptions of photographs/objects used during the workshops together with their location on the exhibits of the Auschwitz Jewish Center*

### **Photograph # 1: Girls learning to plant potatoes in Brzezinka**

**Location:** Gallery of photographs in the women's section of the synagogue

**Description:** Taken in 1920s/1930s this photo features a group of female members of a Zionist group planting potatoes in the village of Brzezinka.

The activity was part of a training program, which took place in special farms known as *hachshara* (Hebrew: preparation) where young Jewish pioneers were being prepared for future physical work in Palestine.

Second from left is Ester Szyndler. Her family owned a bakery next to the train station in Oświęcim.

The photograph belongs to the collection of Ida Knobler-Frydman who lived in Brzezinka no. 321, also close to the train station. Apart from the Knoblers there were many other Jewish families in that area.

Ida went to school in Brzezinka. In her class there were two other Jewish students: Tusia Silfen and Erwin Szancer.

During World War 2 the Germans razed the village to the ground and built the concentration camp KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau on its area.

### **Photograph # 2: Photograph of Jewish sports club Kadima**

**Location:** Gallery of photographs in the women's section of the synagogue

**Description:** Taken in 1930s this photograph features a group of soccer players from the Jewish Gymnastics and Sport Association Kadima in Oświęcim.

The most well-known Jewish sports club in Oświęcim was founded in 1921 on the initiative of local Zionist activists to include Dr. Maurycy Goldberg and Dr. Emil Reich.



First row second left is Zygmunt Feiler.

PLEASE NOTE : Zygmunt Feiler's contemporary photograph and personal story of survival is presented on the New Life exhibit, to be visited at the end of this workshop (see p. 7)

The official club outfit comprised white and blue t-shirts and black shorts with Star of David emblem. Next to soccer the club had sections for table tennis, gymnastics, ski, light athletics, and education.

### **Photograph # 3: Bottle from the Jacob Haberfeld Factory**

**Location:** showcase left of the entrance to the women's section of Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue.

**Description:** This is a liquor bottle from the Jacob Haberfeld Steam Factory of Vodkas in Liquors, which was located on Sobieskiego Str. (at present Dąbrowskiego Str.) close to the center of Oświęcim. It was the first factory to be established in the town in 1804 by its Jewish resident Jacob Haberfeld. The Haberfeld's liquors received numerous international awards and the factory produced also fruit juices.

The Haberfeld family was known for its involvement in the local community through membership in the town council and charity.

At the outbreak of the World War 2 the owners, Felicia and Alfons Haberfeld, were on their way back from the World Fair in New York. Their ship was diverted to Scotland and they could not return to war-stricken Poland. Their two-year-old daughter Francisca remained in Oświęcim. The Germans found her in hiding and she perished in 1942.

After the war the Haberfelds settled in the U.S. and the dilapidated factory building was finally demolished in 2003.

### **Photograph # 4: A centerpiece of chandelier from the Great Synagogue**

**Location:** glass showcase next to the window in the first exhibition room



**Description:** This is a piece of a chandelier from the Great Synagogue in Oświęcim, built in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century on the site of the first Jewish house of prayer in the town.

Jews and Christians from Oświęcim recall the celebrations of the Constitution Day (May 3) and Independence Day (November 11) held in the synagogues with Polish flags flying and prayers for Poland. The Jews in Oświęcim also decorated the interior of the Great Synagogue with Polish national symbols (see crowned eagle on the top of the chandelier)

The Great Synagogue in Oświęcim was located on Jewish Str. (today: Berka Joselewicza Str.) in the heart of town's Jewish district. The neighbourhood was filled with other synagogues and schools as well as religious, charitable and social institutions.

Two months after the invasion of Oświęcim the Germans ordered destruction of the Great Synagogue. Today an empty square and memorial plaque is what remains. The artifacts shown in the exhibition were excavated by archeologists on the site in 2004.

#### **Photograph # 5: Greeting card for Elina Shaked**

**Location:** Panel about Elina Shaked in the New Life exhibition. The exhibition is on show in the room next to reception of the Auschwitz Jewish Center.

**Description:** This greeting card was sent by Mrs. Jadwiga Marciniak, Elina's teacher of Polish in a primary school in Oświęcim in 1971, with best wishes for Elina and her parents: Salomon and Regina.

Elina's parents were among the few Holocaust survivors from the town of Oświęcim. Her future mother Regina was deported in 1941 to Sosnowiec and later to camps: Annaberg, Gross Rosen, Mauthausen and Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated.

Salomon escaped to the Soviet Union with his brother and remained in Siberia and Uzbekistan for the duration of the war. Elina's future parents returned to their hometown after the war and got married. In 1949 their daughter was born.

Elina went to school in Oświęcim until 1962 when the family left for Israel. Following her departure she kept in touch with her teacher for many years.



## Photograph # 6: Marta Świdorska and Olga Pressler

**Location:** Information panel for the documentary *Wspomnienia z Oświęcimia / Remembering Oświęcim* in the hall next to reception of the Auschwitz Jewish Center.

**Description:** This photograph was taken at the beginning of school year on September 1, 1934. Featured are Marta Świdorska and her heartfelt Jewish friend Olga Pressler. Both girls went to Stanisław Konarski High School in Oświęcim.

Most probably the photo was taken by Olga's father, Marcin Pressler, a well-known photographer in Oświęcim. The Pressler family lived in the Zasole district where their photographic workshop was located. Olga was born in Krakow as daughter of Marcin and Matylda.

In 1941 the family was deported to the Sosnowiec ghetto. From Marta's testimony we know that both girls met several times in Katowice where Olga was a forced laborer. According to Olga's brother Józef the girl was murdered at KL Auschwitz, most probably in 1943. Marta Świdorska saved the photograph with her friend.

**IMPORTANT:** Additional persons featured in the New Life exhibit and connected with this workshop  
*If time permits help your students explore two additional biographies of Jews from Oświęcim:*

### 1. Zygmunt Feiler: captain of the Jewish soccer team Kadima in Oświęcim

Zygmunt Feiler was born in 1911 in Oświęcim. Before the war Zygmunt worked as a stonemason and engraver at a stonemason's company in Oświęcim and later in Bielsko. Zygmunt's true passion, however, was soccer. He played in Oświęcim's Kadima as captain and Bielsko's ha-Koach.

During the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 Zygmunt fought in the Polish army near Lvov, and after his capture was transferred to various German labor camps in Lower Silesia. In 1945 he was liberated in Faulbrück camp and three years later he settled in Israel together with his wife, also an Oświęcim native.

### 2. Tova Berlinski: painter and prewar Zionist (connection with photograph of girls in Brzezinka)

Tova Berlinski was born in 1915 in Oświęcim as Gusta Wolf. The family moved to Sosnowiec and then Kraków, where Tova married Eliaszb Berlinski in 1938. Both were involved in the Revisionist party of the Zionist movement and they decided to leave for Palestine. Almost all of her family who stayed in Poland were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.



## What was Oshpitzin? Student worksheet

### Group task:

*You are holding a photograph/photo of an object. (1) Take a close look and try to record (2) its story and (3) your associations*

| Story of the photograph/object   | Associations with the photograph/object   |
|--|---|
| Why was it taken/made? Who did it belong to?<br>Where was it made? How did it survive? What<br>might be the real name? | What does it remind you of? In which ways is it<br>surprising or strange? Do you have a similar<br>photograph/object at home? |
|  |   |



**Having completed your work on the photograph/object story and your associations discuss the following:**

What other questions might be asked in order to learn more about the photograph/object?









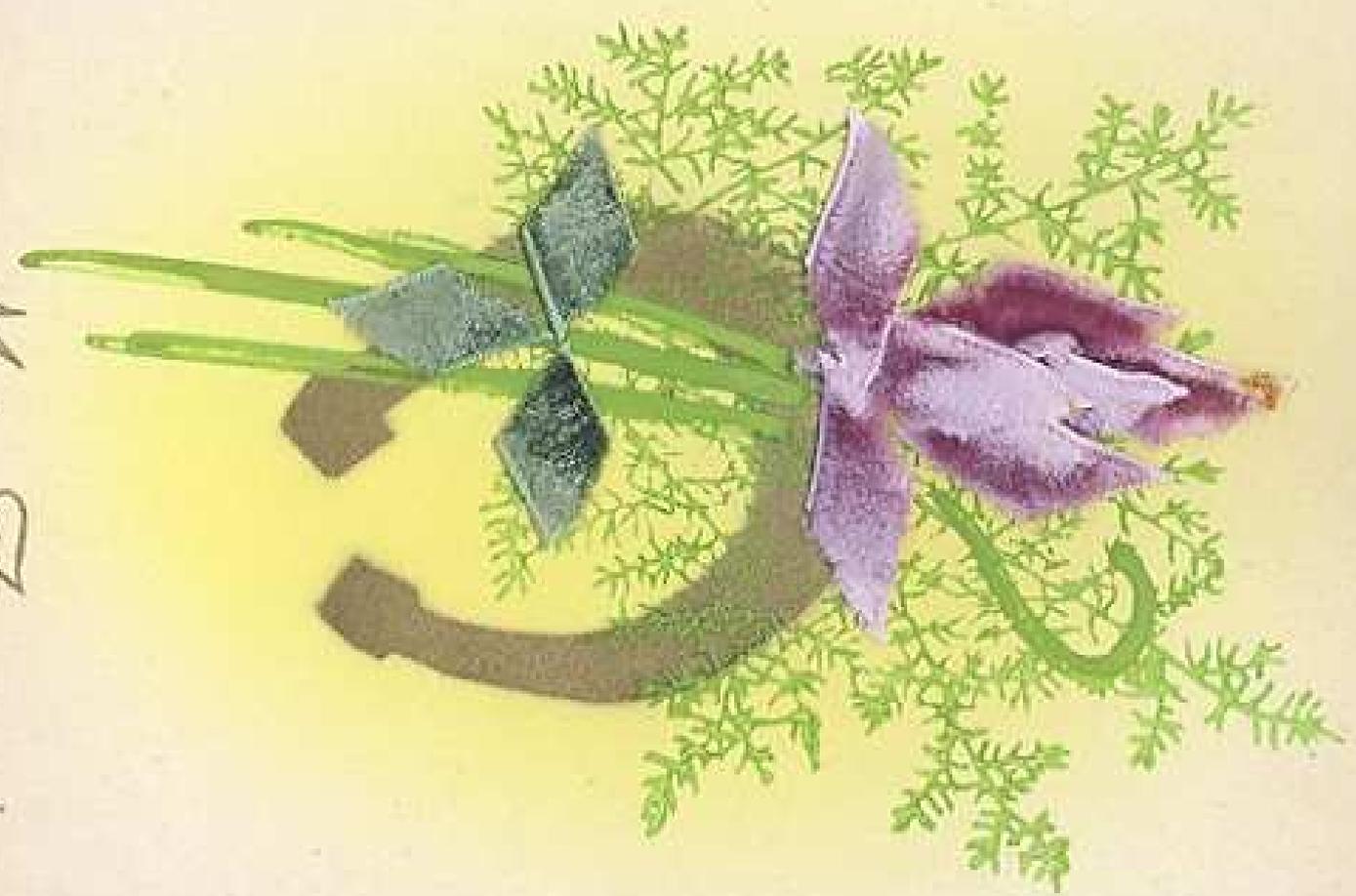
Wielki sypały  
c. 1711  
c. 1711  
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1711

Дивна, у листопаді 1971.

Кохана Зінко!

Що! Так багато споминів, а б  
набагато менше згадок! Стогоди-  
шарівська і опівки! Найкращого,  
кого мисл одура наді Школом одо-  
вом і відвіла душо помештої на  
содани ора поувлі. Її реализовані  
успішки Ізюга Шары і замислені  
ураа з середомітні поздравлення  
іа Ізюга Шароват

Р. Р. Іа Родіон Іаг у Школу А.



Масе Зюзеві

