

**A Narrow Bridge: Jewish life in Poland
Then & Now
24 June – 6 July 2015 (13 days)**

You are invited to join a study trip to Poland, formerly the home of the largest Jewish community in the world. Join us as we embark on an in-depth study tour of this once vibrant Jewish society that flourished in Poland for almost one thousand years.

We will look at the culture of the shtetl (a small Jewish town) and Hassidic spirituality. We will also study Jewish reactions to the Enlightenment, Socialism and the arrival of Zionism. We will not ignore the traumatic events of two world wars and will devote a considerable portion of our time to discussing the “Final Solution”. In particular, we will use Christopher Browning’s important book, *Ordinary Men*, to follow the footsteps of Reserve Police Battalion 101. Browning’s work will help us understand why and how so many “ordinary” Germans became willing accomplices in a genocide which murdered 90% of Poland’s 3 million Jews. On our bus journeys we will discuss and watch DVDs about the occult roots of Nazism and other topics.

Our studies of Jewish history will be done within the context of wider Polish history. Where appropriate, such as in Warsaw and Bialystock, we will discuss the existence of Hebrew Christian communities that existed before the war and examine the contours of modern Jewish Messianism from Shabbtai Zvi to Theodor Herzl, and from the Holocaust to the State of Israel. Finally, we will look at Jewish life today when visiting active synagogues and community centers. If conditions permit - we will spend a day cleaning a neglected Jewish cemetery in the town of Miedzyrzec in eastern Poland.

Our tour will take us through a wide swath of eastern and southern Poland, from Warsaw to Bialystok and from Lublin in the east to Cracow in the South. We will visit medieval cities, castles and churches to better understand the general historical context of the Polish Jewish experience. In the process we will learn about the precarious Polish geo-political position in Europe, the role of the Catholic Church and its changing relationship with the Jewish people.

This is a study tour, although there will be time set aside for reflection, discussion and worship. If you are interested in learning more about the Jewish people through looking at the history of one of the most important Jewish spiritual and cultural centres, you should considering joining us for twelve fascinating days in Poland.

Promotion points: why should people from Hong Kong come to Poland - - and this tour in particular:

1. Anyone interested in the Bible and God's people Israel will find this experience in Poland to be of greatly illuminating.
2. Our trip to Poland tells the second half of the story of the people of Israel. What happens to Israel once it leaves its land? For hundreds of years Poland was the center of Jewish life and today modern Judaism and the State of Israel have been strongly shaped by the Jewish stay in Poland.
3. Any that care about the future of the Jewish people and their current well being should visit Poland with us. Not

only will it help explain recent history but it will help us to somewhat better understand God's ways with his people – including the church.

4. This study tour will help us to be better informed in our prayer life, our stand against anti-Semitism and our witness as Christians.

5. Just a few of the themes that we will examine:

- The place of tradition - avoiding assimilation into the surrounding culture
- What do we learn from people who saved Jewish life – can such values or approaches be taught today?
- How to stop a genocide before it gets started
- Jewish mysticism, beneficial or gnostic? What is Gnosticism?
- The role of the covenants and God's presence in history
- The glories and pitfalls of spiritual revival – the Hassidim as an example
- The culture of Bible study in Eastern European Jewry and what we can learn from this
- The structure of the Jewish community – its values and changing role over the centuries
- The connection between anti-Christian paganism and the rise of Nazism.
- Role of memory and forgiveness after the Holocaust
- What is anti-Semitism and why it won't go away
- How anti-Semitism harms the Christian community

6. This focus on Jewish spirituality and the history of Jewish life (including the Holocaust) is combined like in no other tour.

7. We not only visit today's active Jewish communities, but we hope to make a small contribution by spending a day cleaning a desolate Jewish cemetery.

8. Finally, Poland is beautiful country with interesting old cities, wonderful music, and delicious food. In comparison to other European countries it is relatively cheap.

Price: (rate 1 euro = HK\$9.6628 as at 15 Dec 2014. **rate is for reference only)

15 pax :1460 euro (HK\$14,105) ; 21 pax: 1330 euro (HK\$12,847)

26 pax: 1260 euro (HK\$12,170) If required for a single room, additional 350 euro (HK\$3,380)

Prices do not include: flights to and from Poland, visas to Poland, insurance, tips to guide (Polish) and driver, train from Cracow to Warsaw, transfer to and from the airport to hotel unless the group is 15 or more, lunches.

Price includes half board, double occupancy in three/four star hotels, entrance fees, Polish guide and transportation.

Group air ticket: Aeroflot Russian Airlines, HK\$7,450 Include Airport Tax.

Tour Leader David Pileggi of CMJ, Israel. Co-host by HaDavar Yeshiva and CMJ, Hong Kong.

HaDavar Yeshiva (For the Nations)

Website: new.hadavar.org.hk Tel: 6208 2693

Email: enquiry@hadavar.info

Address : Room B, 5/F, Wing Kwai Factory
Building, 2-8 Wang Wo Tsai Street, Tsuen Wan, NT

CMJ, Hong Kong

Website: www.cmj-hk.org Tel : 5407 7774

Email : enquiry@cmj-hk.info

Address : Room B, 5/F, Wing Kwai Factory
Building, 2-8 Wang Wo Tsai Street, Tsuen Wan, NT

Our Itinerary

Day 1 Wednesday June 24: Arrival

SU 213 Hong Kong - Moscow 1100/1610 ; SU 2002 Moscow - Warsaw 1750/1850

Afternoon introductory presentation: Poland and its Jews. Introductions followed by night walk. Overnight at Novotel Warsaw.

Day 2 Thursday June 25: Warsaw

Our study begins by spending the day in Warsaw. We will discover something about Jewish life before the war by visiting the only functioning synagogue in Warsaw and the Jewish cemetery. We will also stop at the new museum of Jewish life. In the afternoon we turn our attention to the tragic events that took place during WWII while visiting various sites in the Jewish ghetto. We will also find out what happened to Warsaw's small Hebrew Christian community during the years of the Nazi occupation. Overnight in Warsaw.

Day 3 Friday June 26: Bialystock

We travel today to Bialystock. We will read the stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer as we pass by his home town of Radzimir. We continue heading east to the beautiful town of Tykocin, "the pearl of the Baroque". We visit the best-preserved Baroque synagogue of the period and take a peek at what is left of the town's Jewish cemetery. If time permits we will compare the architecture of the synagogue to a Baroque church in the area. At Treblinka we will explore the mechanics of mass murder. At Bialystock we will recount the history of the Jewish community here and visit the site of the Great Synagogue, the largest wooden synagogue in Eastern Europe where the Nazis burnt 3,000 Jews alive in 1941. Overnight in Bialystock.

Day 4 Saturday June 27: Ordinary Men

This morning we will start with a tour of Jewish Bialystock (once known as Polish Jerusalem) which will take about two hours. We will then proceed South towards Lublin. On the way we recount some of the activities of Police Battalion 101 (a group of middle aged German policemen who played a key role in the mass murder of the Jewish population of eastern Poland). As time permits we will briefly see Lukow and the Parczew Forest, all places where Battalion 101 operated. In Miedzyce, a town that was once 80% Jewish we will recount the life and death of the Jewish community there. If time permits we will visit the town's neglected Jewish cemetery. It was there that many sick Jews were murdered by the Nazis as the rest of the Jewish community was sent to death camps. Overnight in the Miedzyce area.

Day 5 Sunday June 28: Miedzyrzec

We work most of the day in the cemetery. Late afternoon departure to Lublin. On the way to our hotel we stop at the hometown of Mendel Morgenstern (Kotzker Rebbe). Overnight in Lublin.

Day 6 Monday June 29: Lublin

We will first discover something of the strategic importance that Lublin has played throughout history while admiring its walls, castles and churches. In the late morning we turn our attention to the significant Jewish presence that made the city one of the most important Jewish centers in all of Eastern Europe. We will stop at the Jewish cemetery to see the grave of Rabbi Yitzhak Yaacov, the famed "seer of Lublin," and visit the synagogue and former yeshiva,

one of the most famous in the Jewish world. At the end of the day we will make a brief stop at the Majdanek labor camp. Overnight in Lublin.

Day 7 Tuesday June 30: Sobibor

We leave Lublin and travel north east to Wlodawa where we will view its beautiful synagogue and recount the Jewish history of the town. At Sobibor death camp (one of five in Poland) we will focus on the role of Franz Strangl, a practicing Christian and seemingly ethical man who became slowly compromised as a Nazi bureaucrat who oversaw the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews. In the city of Chelm we will discuss the rich folklore associated with the town and recall the tragic Chmielnicki massacres of 1648 to 1669 and the literary contribution of Y. L. Peretz. Overnight in Zamosc.

Day 8 Wednesday July 1 Zamosc:

First thing we will visit the old city of Zamosc, a stunning example of a sixteenth century Renaissance town. It has retained its original layout and fortifications and a large number of buildings that combine Italian and central European architectural traditions. At nearby Jozefow we discuss how Police Battalion 101 was initiated into the "Final Solution". On the way to Cracow we will visit the world famous salt mines at Wieliczka. Overnight in Cracow.

Day 9 Thursday July 2: Cracow

We will spend most of the day walking through the Jewish Quarter of Cracow visiting the Old Synagogue, the cemetery and the Jewish Museum of Galicia. In the afternoon we will visit the Schindler factory, and other sites associated with Oscar Schindler's wartime activities in Cracow -such as the Plazow labor camp and the Jewish ghetto. We will take time to fully discuss Schindler and some of the moral ambiguities of his character. In the afternoon we will have a guided tour of Market Square area and visit the Church of St. Mary. Overnight in Cracow.

Day10 Friday July 3: Auschwitz I, II &III

We spend our day in the Auschwitz area. We will have a guided tour of the concentration camp and the Birkenau death complex three kilometers away. We also will visit the site where the Buna labor camp stood, one of many around the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex. Here both Eli Wiesel and Victor Frankl were slave laborers for German chemical firms. Dinner at Jewish Restaurant. Overnight in Cracow.

Day 11 Saturday July 4: Renewal

Free time in Cracow for sightseeing or shopping in the Jewish Quarter. Travel to Lodz with a stop at Zdunska Wola on the way to meet Kamilla Klauzinska, a Polish woman who is recovering the Jewish history for the benefit of the Jewish survivors and a younger generation of Poles. Overnight in Lodz.

Day 12: Sunday, July 5:

Morning stop at Lodz Musuem to learn about Jan Karski, the Polish underground leader who went to London and Washington during the War. After a brief stop in the former Lodz ghetto we will travel on to Warsaw and arrive aroundnoon.

Departure :SU2001 Warsaw - Moscow 1240/1540 ; SU212 Moscow – Hong Kong 1915/#0945 (July 6)

Day 13: Monday, July 6:

Arrive Hong Kong SU212 Moscow – Hong Kong 1915/#0945 (July 6)