

Brody

Ukr. Броди, Yid. ברוד

*A town that brings together wisdom and wealth,
the Torah and understanding, trade and faith.*

Nachman Krochmal

Near the border ¶ Brody is found in the borderland of Galicia and Volhynia, where the frontier between Austria-Hungary and Russia ran in the 19th century. This borderland location was an asset to the town and promoted its development. ¶ The first mention of Brody is dated to 1084. In 1441, Władysław III of Varna, King of Poland, gave the nobleman Sienieński the castle in Olesko together with the surrounding area as a reward for his services in defence of Ruthenian territories. Brody became part of Sienieński's estate. In 1580, his descendants sold their estate to Stanisław Żółkiewski, and this marked the beginning of the town's rapid socio-economic development. On August 22, 1584, Brody was granted Magdeburg rights and royal privileges. Thanks to this, every Tuesday and Friday the town enjoyed the market days. In addition, three annual fairs were established. In 1629, the town passed into the ownership of Hetman Koniecpolski, who invited to Brody various artisans, including Jewish, Armenian, Greek, Turkish, and Flemish weavers in order to stimulate the economy. These newcomers developed the production of

oriental-style carpets and tents, which was the staple of the local economy until the late 18th century. ¶ In 1630, the construction of a large fortress began. The work supervised and guided by the Venetian architect Andrea dell'Acqua and French engineer Guillaume le Vesseur de Beauplan took five years. During the outbreak of the mid-17th-century Cossack Revolution, Brody was totally burnt down. The fortress, however, survived thanks to its powerful fortifications and its location in a marshy area. Aleksander Koniecpolski transferred the town to King John III Sobieski, and Sobieski, in turn, transferred it to his son James, who sold Brody to the Potocki family in 1704. ¶ In 1772, the town found itself under Austrian rule and became a border town: first, at the border with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and after 1795, at the border with the Russian Empire. In the second half of the 19th century, the Rzeszów–Lviv–Brody railway line was built making Brody into an important international trade and migration centre. Emperor Joseph II of Austria granted it the title of a “free town” which enjoyed all sorts of duty-free privileges.



Market square in Brody, 1912, collection of the National Library, Poland (www.polona.pl)

The Jews of Brody ¶ The first Jews settled in Brody in the 16th century, when Hetman Koniecpolski owned the town. By 1648, around 400 Jewish families lived here. In 1664, the local sub-*kahal* split from the *kahal* of Lwów (Lviv), secured its independence, and from that time, Brody Jewish leadership played a significant role in the Council of Four Lands. In 1696, the Jewish quarter burnt down but was quickly rebuilt. In 1699, the owner of the town, Jakub Ludwik Sobieski (son of King John III Sobieski) allowed Jews to settle in all quarters of the town and to work in all crafts as well as in trade, despite the presence of the Christian guilds active in the same trade. ¶ Early in the 18th century, Brody was pillaged by the Russian army, and a great fire destroyed the central part of the town in 1749. Brody was soon rebuilt, however, thanks to the support of the Jewish international merchants who brought merchandise from Paris, Leipzig, and Neustadt. When the Armenians, who also had been active in trade, left the town after the fire, the Jews remained without their long-lasting

competitors and Brody became one of the main Jewish centres in Galicia.

Synagogues ¶ The wooden synagogue known from the 16th century burnt down in a fire in the first half of the 18th century, and in 1742, because of the frequent fires, the Jewish community decided to build a formidable stone synagogue. Under the pressure of the bishop of Lutsk, local authorities refused to grant permission for its construction. They also demanded a payment of 350 zlotys a year for the maintenance of every Jewish student of the Lutsk yeshiva (Talmudic academy). Therefore, the construction of what would become the Great Synagogue did not start until the *kahal* agreed to pay this fee, which was attested to by an inscription on the eastern attic of the building. ¶ One of the largest synagogues in Galicia, the fortress-like building was designed according to Renaissance-style square-plan blueprint. Its main prayer room was adjoined on the southern, northern, and western sides by lower annexes used as women's sections. ¶ In May 1859,

A



A Synagogue in Brody, 1930s, collection of Beit Hatfutsot, The Museum of the Jewish People, Photo Archive, Tel Aviv, legacy of Joseph Parvari

B Interior of the synagogue in Brody, a general view in the direction of aron kodesh. Photo by Szymon Zajczyk, collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN)



the synagogue burnt down in a fire that destroyed most of the town. Renovation was carried out at the beginning of the 20th century. ¶ The synagogue suffered severe damage during World War II – the northern and southern annexes were completely destroyed. In the mid-1960s, the building was renovated and its interior was adapted to serve as a warehouse. Yet the roof was constantly leaking, and the building soon ceased to be used and quickly fell into ruin. In the summer of 1988, a massive collapse of the western wall and annexe occurred, and in February 2006, the western part of the vaults collapsed. At present, the

condition of the synagogue is disastrous.

¶ The 10 Honcharska Street building stands on the site where there used to be a so-called Little Synagogue. After a great fire at the beginning of the 19th century, this synagogue was restored (circa 1804) and thus earned the name of the “New” synagogue. It was pulled down after World War II. ¶ According to a register of synagogues in the Zolochiv district made in 1826, there were six other synagogues in Brody, two of them wooden. ¶ In 1756, in the wake of the Frankist pseudo-messianic schism against the traditional Judaism and Jewish communities, local Jewish authorities condemned the leaders of the schism at the Brody synagogue in Brody. Likewise, in 1772, the *kahal* elders condemned the rising Hasidim, a movement of religious enthusiasm, whose representatives were put under the ban of excommunication. Despite this, Hasidim remained in the town, gained respect of the communal members for their piety and spiritual drive, and Brody eventually became an important Hasidic centre at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. ¶ In the 18th century, Brody became one of the key Jewish centres of the studies of Kabbalah and Judaic mysticism due to the functioning of the “Broder *kloyz*.” This was an elitist study and prayer house maintained by the family of Rabbi Jacob Babad. The pietists who studied here practiced various pietistic and ascetic rituals flowed by the study of classical esoteric texts such as the Zohar (The Book of Splendor). Initially they opposed new-style Hasidim, who rejected ascetic regulations and preached the divine service through corporeality, but later some of them became adherents of this new



movement. It suffices to mention that the founder of the movement Israel ben Eliezer (who revealed himself in 1740 as the Baal Shem Tov, or the Besht) married the daughter of the Brody merchant and pietist Moshe Kutover who was also the sister of a prominent Brody kabbalist Gershon Kutover. Before World War I, the local Hasidim followed the rites and regulations of the Hasidic dynasty of

Belz, whose founder Shalom Rokeach was born in Brody in 1781. ¶ For some 50 years, Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1785–1869) served as the head of the rabbinic court of Brody and was also known as the Maggid of Brody. Rabbi Kluger was an arduous opponent of the Haskalah movement of Jewish Enlightenment and educational reform. He died in Brody and was buried there.

[A] Ruins of the synagogue in Brody, 2017. Photo by Christian Herrmann, www.vanishedworld.blog

[B] A part of the original decoration of the frieze in the Great Synagogue, 2013. Photo by Wioletta Wejman, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

Shlomo Kluger (1785–1869) was a noted rabbi, Talmudist, preacher, commentator, and teacher, one of the most distinguished Torah scholars in 19th-century East Europe. A person of distinguished pedigree, he was born into a rabbinic family in the town of Komarów, in the Lublin Province, then part of the Russian Empire. From his early years, he exhibited extraordinary talents; he wrote his first commentary on the Torah at the age of six. He studied in Zamość under the guidance of the illustrious preacher and commentator Yaakov Kranz, known as the Maggid of Dubno. In 1809, he took the position of the town rabbi in Kulików (now Kulikiv); in 1817, he became the rabbi of Józefów (Lublin Province); and in 1820, he assumed the position of the Brody town rabbi. In 1845, he was offered the position of the Berezhany rabbi. Despite the pleas of the local community, he accepted the offer. Soon after his arrival in, however, he fell ill with typhus, and doctors did not give any chance of recovery. He promised to return to Brody if he did recover. He kept his promise and returned to Brody, where there was already a different rabbi. Kluger continued to live in Brody until his death nearly a quarter of a century later. ¶ Shlomo Kluger occupied a special place in the rabbinic literature of East Europe and Russia of the first half of the 19th century. An eminent Talmudic authority and moralist, he became one of the most respected rabbis in the Russian Empire. Both Hasidim and their opponents Misnagdim valued his opinion on legal and moral matters.



Students of the Jewish gymnasium (secondary school) in Brody, 24 July 1921, collection of Beit Hatfutsot, The Museum of the Jewish People, Photo Archive, Tel Aviv, legacy of Joseph Parvari

Towards the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century, the Jews of Brody, who maintained close commercial relations with the Germanic market towns, promoted the spread of Enlightenment (Haskalah) in Galicia and then to the nearby territories of the Russian Empire. Because adherents of the Haskalah were often associated with German culture, Brody was considered to be the most Germanised town in Galicia. ¶ With the support of Herz Homberg, a leading Haskalah scholar in Galicia, the local Jewish authorities endorsed the establishment of a modern Jewish secondary school (*Hauptschule*), two elementary schools (*Grundschule*), and a school for girls. All these institutions, however, were closed in 1806 by the suspicious Austrian government. Still, in 1815, the *kahal* opened a three-year modernized school. The headmaster of that school was not a Jew, and the teaching of religion was replaced with the teaching of ethics according to Homberg's moral and religious storybook for children, entitled *Bnei Zion* (Heb.: Sons of Zion). The school had many opponents among traditional Jews, who opened a *yeshivah* and invited the noted Talmudist Grisha Heller to

come and teach there. However, Heller soon had to leave Brody because he was accused of teaching "forbidden books" – this is how the local Jews called the Haskalah publications. The institute was soon closed as well. In 1851, the maintenance of the reopened "real school" (*Realschule*) was taken over by the state and transformed into a state secondary school. Initially there were no classes on Saturdays, yet 3.5-hour Saturday classes were introduced later. In 1847, a Jewish school for adults was opened, headed for many years by the noted educator Leopold Herzel. In 1907–1908, he also taught religion at the state secondary school. At that time, the secondary school enlisted 688 students, including 273 Jewish children. ¶ In the 19th century, Jews made up 88 percent of the town population. Brody became the biggest county town in Europe with a high percentage of Jewish residents. In the first half of the 19th century, Brody was regarded as the second most important city of Galicia after Lviv (then Lemberg), often referred to as "the Jerusalem of Austria-Hungary" or the "mainland Trieste." In the second half of the 19th century, due to its unique position as the major cross-border railway station, the town became the largest trade centre in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The importance of Brody as a trade centre began to decrease after 1879, when it lost the status of a duty-free trade town. Its location right at the border remained important, though.

The singers of Brody ¶ The "singers of Brody" (Yid.: *broder-zinger*) was an expression used in the mid-1850s to refer to itinerant troupes of folk singers,

performing at inns and taverns, initially in Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia and later elsewhere in East Europe. The first of such groups was organised by D.B. Margulies of Pidkamin near Brody, and another one, equally well known, was organized by B.Z. Ehrenkranz of Zbarazh, a noted poet and bard who began his singing career by writing songs. With time, these singers founded the Jewish-German Theatre of Art and Singing, appointing Chaim Bendl as its manager. They performed in Lviv, at the popular Bombach's inn. They sang folk and Hasidic songs, danced, staged Yiddish one-act plays, whose authors preferred to remain anonymous (though some plays are attributed to Israel Grodner). Many new songs were written by Alik Tsunajer, others by Velvl Zbarazher (pen-name of Ehrenkranz) and by the famous Ukrainian Yiddish theatre director Avrum Goldfaden, often regarded as the father of the Yiddish theatre. Leading actors included Khune Sztrudler and Jona Rejzman. These performances were exceptionally popular among the



Jews. In 1866–1868, the Brody singers performed in Warsaw, in the summer theatre on Nalewki Street. Artists from Vienna and Zhytomyr were guest stars in the plays. These were the first Jewish secular theatrical performances, apart from the occasionally staged Purimspiels – Purim plays, performed on the February/March religious holiday built around the events of the Book of Esther, in which the singing actors were also engaged. ¶ Based on: www.jhi.pl/psj/brodzcy_spiewacy

Złota Street in the former Jewish quarter in Brody, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

Brody was the birthplace of the famous Austrian writer and journalist **Joseph Roth** (1894–1939). He finished high school in Brody at the age of 19 and moved to Lviv (Lemberg), where he studied philosophy at the University of Lviv. He soon found himself in the epicentre of the Polish-Ukrainian rivalry. As neither Polish nor Ukrainian nationalism attracted him, and he remained unimpressed by the Zionist movement, he decided to integrate the imperial Austrian culture and write in German. After a year of studies, Roth transferred to the University of Vienna. Jewish themes are present, to a greater or lesser degree in most of his works, among which *The Radetzky March* is by far the most popular novel which portrays representatives of various ethnic minorities in their relation to the Dual Austro-Hungarian Empire and its symbols at the time of the collapse of the empire. The famous short novel *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Ger.: *The Wandering Jews*) is a kind of elegy for the "Ostjude," East European Jews who found themselves caught in between the fighting powers during World War I. One of Roth's best works, *Job*, contains a description of a shtetl in Soviet Ukraine, which the writer visited as

Mourners and professional weepers (klogerins) at the Jewish cemetery in Brody, 1920–1930, collection of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research



The Spring of Nations ¶ In 1848, the series of revolutions and political upheavals known as the “Spring of Nations” began. These events ushered in a new era of the European nationalism and nationalist revivals across the continent and triggered new courses of action for the Jewish community. Jews were gradually recognized as an ethnic and national (not only religious) minority and granted political rights on a par with other minorities in the Habsburg empire – but not in the Russian Empire. ¶ In the second half of the 19th century, two politically-oriented newspapers were published in Brody: *Hekhalutz*

a correspondent for a German newspaper in the early 1920s. The novel has been adapted for the screen. Marlene Dietrich, who knew Roth personally, regarded him as her favourite writer and *Job* as her favourite book.

(Heb.: Pioneer), issued between 1852 and 1889 in Hebrew and edited by Joshua Heschel Schorr, and *Ivri Anokhi* (Heb.: I am a Hebrew), a weekly issued from 1865 until 1890 by Baruch and Jacob Weber. Both newspapers adapted Hebrew for modern journalism and promoted secular study of Hebrew among east European Jews. ¶ After Galicia gained autonomy in 1867, economic life in Brody began to decline due to the weakening of trade relations with other trade centers of the Empire and new railway routes that deflected trade from Brody. Local Jewish secular intelligentsia and economic elite tried to defend Austrian centralism, and their position led to economic isolation and weakened Brody’s position in the region. ¶ Various Jewish religious associations functioned in Brody such as Burial Society, the Society for providing Passover matzo to the poor, and the Society of helping the needy with the clothes.

Nathan Michael Gelber (1891–1966) was a Jewish historian, social activist, and researcher of Galician Jews. He graduated from the high school in Brody and continued his studies at the Universities of Berlin and Vienna. During World War I, he served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. At the beginning of 1919, he was one of the advisers of the Jewish National Council of Galicia in Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine), the organ of Jewish national autonomy under the West Ukrainian People’s Republic. In 1933, Gelber moved from Vienna to Palestine. A Zionist activist, Gelber authored the following works: *Die Juden und der polnische Aufstand 1863* (Ger.: Jews and the 1863 Polish Uprising), *A History of the Jews of Stanisławów, Brody 1584–1943*, *Geschichte des Zionismus in*

Galizien 1875–1918 (Ger.: *A History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia*), a collection of articles devoted to the history of the Jewish community of Lviv, historical articles in various encyclopedias and co-authored publications devoted to the history of Jews in Galician towns – Stryi, Busk, Ternopil, Zovkva and others.

Dov Sadan (1902, Brody – 1989, Afula, Israel) – an Israeli academic and politician, ethnographer, and literary scholar. In 1952–1970, he was head of the Department of Yiddish Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1965–1968, he was a member of the Knesset. Sadan was awarded the Israel Prize in Jewish Studies for 1968.

After World War I, Brody became a part of Poland (1919), and in the interwar period, it was a county town in the Tarnopol Palatinate.

World War II and the Holocaust

¶ In 1939, Brody had a population of 6,000, of whom more than 3,000 were Jews. In September 1939, after the partition of Poland between the Nazi Germany and the USSR, the town became part of the USSR. In July 1941, the German occupation began, and on 12 July 1941, the Nazis and their Ukrainian collaborators in Brody shot 250 Jews. In the middle of July, the occupation authorities established a *Judenrat*. The Germans set up a ghetto in the autumn of 1941, encompassing Browarna and Słomiana Streets. The inmates included 12,000 Jews from Brody and the nearby villages of Sokolivka, Lopatin, and Olesko. ¶ The first transport operation took place on September 19, 1942. According to different sources, between 2,000 and 4,500 people were brought to the market place,



Jewish cemetery in Brody, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

from which they were forcibly transported to the Bełżec death camp. During that operation, many people, who knew about the Bełżec camp, took their own lives. Many Jews were murdered in their own homes or in the streets. The second transport operation was carried out on November 2, 1942, when a group of 2,500–3,000 Jews, including members of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police, were transported to Bełżec. ¶ From December 1, 1942, the ghetto was enclosed with barbed wire. In two streets, there still lived 4,000 Jews from Brody and 3,000 Jews from the nearby towns and villages. The local residents were strictly prohibited from maintaining any contacts with the Jews in the ghetto. The daily ration of bread was 80 g. A typhus epidemic soon broke out; and in winter 1942/1943, hunger and disease took lives of about 1,500 people. ¶ A resistance group led by Samuel Weiler was formed at the beginning of 1943, but attempts to organise an uprising in the ghetto failed. ¶ The operation aimed at the final



liquidation of the ghetto began on May 21, 1943. It was then that the members of the underground resistance opened fire on the camp guards. In response, the guards started shelling the entire ghetto. Many Jews were burnt alive, others were shot in the street or in the forest near the town. In the ensuing chaos, some Jews managed to escape; they joined the group of Jewish partisans led by Weiler and survived the war. During the liquidation of the ghetto, the remaining 3,000 Jews were transported to the Sobibór extermination camp. Of the entire population of 10,000 Jews in Brody, only 88 people survived the Holocaust.

The cemetery ¶ The new Jewish cemetery in Brody is the largest Jewish cemetery in Galicia, and despite damage caused to it it is one of the best-preserved Jewish cemeteries in present-day Ukraine. About 5,500 tombstones have survived there, many of them elaborately carved. The oldest one is that of Judah, son of Meir (d. 1833). Just behind

the fence, in the western part of the cemetery, there is the mass grave of about 6,000 people shot here during the Holocaust. ¶ As an economic and trade center, Brody suffered severely during both world wars. The Roman Catholic church was shut down for 50 years, and the faithful attended services in the parishes of Zolochiv and Kremenets. Two Baroque-style Orthodox churches have survived near the town walls. What remains of the once famous synagogue is a massive ruin. Before the outbreak of World War II, there were 86 Jewish houses of worship in the town, of which the only surviving ones are the partly destroyed Great Synagogue and the former 19th-century synagogue building at 9 Shchurata St. The latter lost all distinguishing features when it was converted into a shop in the summer of 2006. A recent project attempts to identify historic houses, buildings, and other sites in the town, providing detailed information via QR codes (more: www.brodyhistory.org.ua).



Worth
seeing

Jewish cemetery (19th c.), Chuprynki St.
 🏛️ **Former synagogue** (18th c.), Goncharska St.
 🏛️ **Castle ruins** (17th c.), with the Potocki Palace (18th c.), Zamkova St.
 🏛️ **Fortified Orthodox Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God** (1600), 12 Ivana Franka St. 🏛️ **Holy Trinity Orthodox Church** (1726), 23 Velyki Filvarky St. 🏛️ **Orthodox Church of St. George** (16th–17th c.), Yuriyivska St. 🏛️ **Catholic church** (1596), 9 W. Stusa St. 🏛️ **Chamber of Industry and Commerce** (19th c.), 8 Kot-siubynskoho St. 🏛️ **The building of the former Imperial-Royal County Elder** (18th c.), the seat of the Brody Museum

of History and Ethnography, 5 Maidan Svobody, tel. +380326642113. 🏛️ **“Zastavki” forest wilderness**, the site of an old Ruthenian town mentioned in a chronicle.

Olesko (28 km): the ruins of a synagogue (18th c.); a castle (16th c.), currently a museum; Holy Trinity Church (1545). 🏛️ **Berestechko** (35 km): a former synagogue (18th c.); the stone post on Prince Aleksander Proński’s grave site (16th c.); Holy Trinity Church (17th c.); the Museum of the Battle of Berestechko (1651).

Surrounding
area