

SYNAGOGUES

The first record of a synagogue in Boskovice dates back to 1586. It was probably situated near the site where the "**synagoga maior**", the present synagogue, was built in 1639. The decor of this synagogue dates back to the late 1600s and early 1700s. The paintings have been classified as the most coherent example of synagogue decor, spread in eastern and central Europe by Jewish artists from Poland and the Ukraine.

The older "**synagoga minor**", with a vaulted hall on the ground floor, served as a study. It was used by orthodox Jews in the 1800s, but after 1950 it was pulled down for its bad condition. In the 19th century, the period of the greatest flowering of the Jewish community, there were also houses of prayer in the school and in Löw-Beer's House.



BOSKOVICE

THE TOWN OF THE 7-TOOTH COMB



THE LIFE OF THE JEWS

The life of the Jewish community was determined by many customs based mainly on religious duties. A short walk in the Jewish Quarter gives proof of keeping those customs:

- **Mikve** – a bath which was used for ritual cleansing. It had to be done by running water. It was found in the cellars of many homes.
- **Kocher** – regulations concerning food and eating
- **Mezuzah** – a holy text on paper or parchment in a box, usually placed in the wall behind the door
- **Cheder** – elementary religious school
- **Jeshiva** – religious high school
- **Rabbi** – a representative of the Jewish community; he taught the Torah and Talmud
- **Torah** – the five books of Moses
- **Talmud** – the main part of the Jewish law and traditions
- **Menorah** – a ritual candlestick that holds 7 candles
- **Chanukah** – a ritual candlestick for 9 candles

TRAIL THROUGH THE JEWISH TOWN

Members of the "Friends of Boskovice" club prepared a trail called "Monuments of the Jewish Town in Boskovice" in 1999.

27 houses and monuments carry information plates and there are several information boards on the route.



JEWISH CEMETERY

The Jewish cemetery was founded in the 16th century. Most of the older tombstones were made of argyllite, which is why the inscriptions were not very well preserved. They have been well documented thanks to the project of Machsit ha-Shekel, carried out by the students of Gymnázium (Grammar School) in Boskovice.



JEWISH TOWN



CULTURE

The Jewish community in Boskovice was one of the largest in Moravia. It was a centre of the renowned Talmudists (Jewish scholars). The most famous of them, Samuel ha-Lévi Kolin, the author of the book *Machcit ha-Shekel*, is buried in the local cemetery. From 1858 to 1884 there was the seat of the Provincial Rabbi in the Jewish Town in Boskovice. The oldest record of the Jewish school dates back to 1591. Another important institution was the ritual bath called "mikve".

Many Jews from Boskovice became famous scientists, doctors, Talmudists or writers.:

- Abraham ben Moshe Klesterlen (Aškenazy), 16th century, the first recorded rabbi
- Samuel ha-Lévi Kolin, 1724-1806; his grave became a place of pilgrimage
- Moshe Schreiber, 1762-1839, one of the greatest Jewish scholars, known as Chatham Sofer
- Moshe ben Hirsh ha-Lévi Ungar (died 1814), Chief Rabbi
- Abraham Placzek, 1799-1884, Provincial Rabbi,
- Isidor Reich, the last rabbi in Boskovice before the occupation
- Hermann Ungar, Max Eichler, Abraham Albert Ticho and others

GHETTO

The oldest houses of the Jewish Town are in or near the streets U Vážné studny, U Koupadel and Traplova. Since 1727 the Ghetto was isolated from the Christian town by five gates and by chains. Nobody was allowed to go through the gates at night or during the Christian festivals. The isolation of the ghetto caused many tragic events: 1715-16, many of Jews died of plague, in 1696 and 1823 it was badly damaged by fires. Its appearance today is mainly due to the rebuilding in the Classicist and the Empire styles after the great fire in 1823.

In late 1800s the wealthier Jews began to move in the Christian town and the Jewish Quarter was mostly inhabited by the poor and socially inferior.

The deportation of the Jews during World War II caused further delapidation, which continued until the 1990s when many houses were rebuilt.

The Jewish Town now has 79 houses. 20 houses, the gate, the fountain and some other objects are protected by the government.



THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN BOSKOVICE

The Jews probably began to settle in Boskovice after they had been driven out of the king's towns by King Ladislav in 1454. Some Jews from Brno came to Boskovice and settled below the castle. The settlement grew bigger and bigger, as the citizens were engaged in trade and crafts; however, they were held in social contempt. They had their own magistrate, subordinate to the burgomaster of Boskovice, and their own school.

As a result of the emancipation in 1848, the Jewish community became an independent town with its own mayor, police and fire service. Of all the Jewish communities in Moravia, only those in Boskovice and Holešov had their own land registers.

The Jewish Town reached its maximum size in 1857. There were 2018 people, which was about one third of the population of Boskovice. The Jewish built factories in Boskovice and in some neighbouring villages, and thus became the founders of modern industry in the region.

The Jewish Town was re-unified with Boskovice in 1919.

The persecution of the Jews in 1939-45 became a tragical culmination of the community's existence in Boskovice. In 1942, 458 Jews were deported to Terezin and then from there to concentration camps. Only 14 of those people returned in 1945.



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