

LEARNING ABOUT THE GRAVESTONES FROM LUBACZOW

A BEGINNER'S TUTORIAL

INTRODUCTION

Before you start reading this, I want to recommend the following book by Monika Krajewska "A Tribe of Stones - Jewish Cemeteries in Poland" published by Polish Scientific Publishers in Warsaw in 1993.

The following text will try to be a practical help for "reading" Jewish gravestones in Lubaczow, Poland. This is based on those gravestones in Lubaczow Howard Bodenstein photographed for us, and that you can see in our Photo Gallery.

You must be able to read the Hebrew alphabet, as all the texts are in Hebrew. But knowing Hebrew is not the whole answer. Abbreviations, titles, unusual words, close spacing of the words, erosion and use of the Hebrew calendar make this a little more complicated than expected.

I have, first and foremost for my own use, tried to collect the relevant information. One day I hope to go to Lubaczow and see for myself all the Jewish gravestones there. It is estimated that there are close to thousand stones in this specific cemetery, and that two third of them are still legible.

On the other hand, I figure that others may have similar problems when visiting their shtetalach and their cemeteries in Galicia, and may find this information useful.

I feel that I myself am the Beginner in this Beginner's Tutorial, so please help me correct, improve and add any relevant information.

**With this I want to thank all of those who have shown interest in this project and who have helped me in different ways. In particular I want to thank
Howard Bodenstein, USA
Greg Bauman, Lubaczow, Poland,
Israel Pickholz, Israel
and Tova Jaffa, USA**

**Eva Floersheim,
Shadmot Dvorah, Israel
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THE STONE

THE SHAPE OF THE STONE

So far, I have divided the gravestones according to these basic shapes:

1. The rectangular

F.ex. Grave 003



2. The rectangular with curved top to different degrees

F.ex. Grave 011 , Grave 004



3. The rectangular with a triangular top

F.ex Grave 031 (to the right), Grave 010 (to the left)



4. Others

F.ex. Grave 026 (to the left)

THE MATERIAL OF THE STONE

At this point I know absolutely nothing about this subject.

TWO SMALL LETTERS IN HEBREW

The letters PEY NON or PEY TET are found on most Jewish gravestones all over the world. Even those countries where the texts were written in Latin letters, one will usually find that these two letters are the only Hebrew letters on the gravestone. In Lubaczow where all the texts are written in Hebrew, these two letters appear in the upper halfcircle, usually under the date and year.

Here is buried	פה טמון/טמונה	פט
Here is buried	פה נטמן/נטמנה (או) פה נקבר/נקברה	פנ

DECORATIONS

Nearly every stone has some kind of decoration. Personally I find these decorations very beautiful and fascinating.

KOHEN or LEVI?

Two decorations help us to identify the deceased as Kohen or Levi:

A. Two hands raised in a blessing (Kohen)

As part of the synagogue service, descendants of the Kohanim will raise their hands to bless the assembly.

This is called the in Hebrew BIRKAT HAKOHANIM (the Blessing of the Kohanim).

The fact that a person is a KOHEN will also appear just after the name as in “Aharon HaKohen”.

HAKOHEN; The Kohanite	הכהן
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Some Kohen gravestones were photographed, but it is impossible to read the names.

B. The basin and the pitcher. (Levites)

One of the duties of the Levites is to wash the hands of the Cohen, so the basin and the pitcher became symbols for Levites. Our Floersheim family is a LEVI family, so I have seen different versions of this symbol on family graves in Germany.

The fact that a person is a Levite, is also written just after the father’s name as in “Jehuda Leibish son of the late Chaim (Shmuel?) Halevi”.

HALEVI; the Levite	הלוי
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The following Levites can be found on the photographed gravestones:

The two sons of Jehuda Halevi

Jehuda Leibish son of the late Chaim (Shmuel?) Halevi

A Levite who died on the 3rd of Ayar 5660 (1st or 2nd May 1900)

CUT TREE

If somebody died young (definition of young?), a cut tree seems to have been a common symbol.

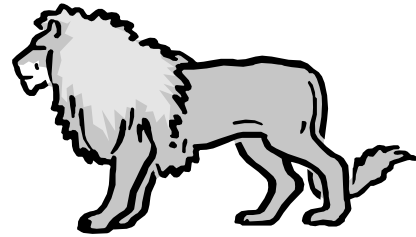
See graves 005, 010, 012(to the right), 014, 015, 027.

OPEN BOOKCASE

Try to imagine the religious books that were in such a real life bookcase.
The person must have been a man of (religious) learning.

LION

In “Tribes of Stones”, Monika Krajewska explains that the lion is the most frequently used symbol on Jewish gravestones in Poland. The lion was the symbol for the tribe of Jehuda and as this tribe is identified with the Jewish people, the lion seems to have become a general symbol for Jews.
See grave 031 (to the right), 019, 016 (three graves), 013, 007, 006.



CROWN OF THE TORAH

On one of the graves it says the Crown of the Torah.
The Crown of the Torah should point to a man of great religious learning and status.



“GRAPHIC” DECORATIONS

F.ex. Grave 020

BIRDS

From this limited number of graves, the birds appear only on women's graves. Could this be a pattern?



CANDLESTICKS AND CANDELABRAS

The candlesticks and candelabras come in different shapes and with different number of candles.
This also seems to be a symbol for women’s graves, probably because it is the woman who lights the shabat candles.



THE HEBREW CALENDAR

The dates of death are all given according to the Hebrew calendar.
On these stones the date is usually written in a half circle at the top of the gravestone.

THE HEBREW MONTHS

Tishrei	תשרי
Heshwan	חשון
Kislev	כסלו
Tewet	טבת
Shewat	שבט
Adar	אדר
Second Adar	אדר שני
Nissan	ניסן
Ayar	אייר
Siwan	סיון
Tamuz	תמוז
Av = Menachem Av	אב = מנחם אב
Elul	אלול

THE DATES

The dates are given in Hebrew letters used as numbers.

1	א
2	ב
3	ג
4	ד
5	ה
6	ו
7	ז
8	ח
9	ט
10	י
11	יא

12	יב
13	יג
14	יד
15	טו
16	טז
17	יז
18	יח
19	יט
20	כ
21	כא
22	כב

23	כג
24	כד
25	כה
26	כו
27	כז
28	כח
29	כט
30	ל

THE YEARS

The Hebrew calendar again uses the Hebrew letters for indicating the year according to the Hebrew calendar. Many years ago while visiting old family graves in Germany, I remember trying to “reconstruct” which year those Hebrew letters indicated.

No more!

There are special books giving the Hebrew calendar in comparison with the general calendar, month by month. I received one as a present. It is called AD MEAH VAESRIM (“Till 120”) published by the Reuven Mass Publishing House in Jerusalem, covering the years 1900 – 2019. A friend says he will give me a bigger version, going further back. If you cannot find “Till 120” or a similar book, I hope my list for the years 1840 – 1943, will be helpful.

At the end of the Hebrew year you will find the three Hebrew letters LAMED – PEY – KOF (leprat katan) meaning that it is a shortened version of the year and one should add 5000 years to get the “real” year. In the column to the right I have written the “real” year according to the Hebrew calendar.

Autumn 1839 - Autumn 1840	תר	5600
Autumn 1840 - Autumn 1841	תרא	5601
Autumn 1841 - Autumn 1842	תרב	5602
Autumn 1842 - Autumn 1843	תרג	5603
Autumn 1843 - Autumn 1844	תרד	5604
Autumn 1844 - Autumn 1845	תרה	5605
Autumn 1845 - Autumn 1846	תרו	5606
Autumn 1846 - Autumn 1847	תרז	5607
Autumn 1847 - Autumn 1848	תרח	5608
Autumn 1848 - Autumn 1849	תרט	5609
Autumn 1849 - Autumn 1850	תרי	5610
Autumn 1850 - Autumn 1851	תריא	5611
Autumn 1851 - Autumn 1852	תריב	5612
Autumn 1852 - Autumn 1853	תריג	5613
Autumn 1853 - Autumn 1854	תריד	5614
Autumn 1854 - Autumn 1855	תרטו	5615
Autumn 1855 - Autumn 1856	תרטז	5616
Autumn 1856 - Autumn 1857	תריז	5617
Autumn 1857 - Autumn 1858	תריח	5618
Autumn 1858 - Autumn 1859	תריט	5619
Autumn 1859 - Autumn 1860	תרכ	5620

Autumn 1860 - Autumn 1861	תרכא	5621
Autumn 1861 - Autumn 1862	תרכב	5622
Autumn 1862 - Autumn 1863	תרכג	5623
Autumn 1863 - Autumn 1864	תרכד	5624
Autumn 1864 - Autumn 1865	תרכה	5625
Autumn 1865 - Autumn 1866	תרכו	5626
Autumn 1866 - Autumn 1867	תרכז	5627
Autumn 1867 - Autumn 1868	תרכח	5628
Autumn 1868 - Autumn 1869	תרכט	5629
Autumn 1869 - Autumn 1870	תרל	5630
Autumn 1870 - Autumn 1871	תרלא	5631
Autumn 1871 - Autumn 1872	תרלב	5632
Autumn 1872 - Autumn 1873	תרלג	5633
Autumn 1873 - Autumn 1874	תרלד	5634
Autumn 1874 - Autumn 1875	תרלה	5635
Autumn 1875 - Autumn 1876	תרלו	5636
Autumn 1876 - Autumn 1877	תרלז	5637
Autumn 1877 - Autumn 1878	תרלח	5638
Autumn 1878 - Autumn 1879	תרלט	5639
Autumn 1879 - Autumn 1880	תרמ	5640
Autumn 1880 - Autumn 1881	תרמא	5641
Autumn 1881 - Autumn 1882	תרמב	5642
Autumn 1882 - Autumn 1883	תרמג	5643
Autumn 1883 - Autumn 1884	תרמד	5644
Autumn 1884 - Autumn 1885	תרמה	5645
Autumn 1885 - Autumn 1886	תרמו	5646
Autumn 1886 - Autumn 1887	תרמז	5647
Autumn 1887 - Autumn 1888	תרמח	5648
Autumn 1888 - Autumn 1889	תרמט	5649
Autumn 1889 - Autumn 1890	תרנ	5650
Autumn 1890 - Autumn 1891	תרנא	5651
Autumn 1891 - Autumn 1892	תרנב	5652
Autumn 1892 - Autumn 1893	תרנג	5653
Autumn 1893 - Autumn 1894	תרנד	5654

Autumn 1894 - Autumn 1895	תרנה	5655
Autumn 1895 - Autumn 1896	תרנו	5656
Autumn 1896 - Autumn 1897	תרנז	5657
Autumn 1897 - Autumn 1898	תרנח	5658
Autumn 1898 - Autumn 1899	תרנט	5659
Autumn 1899 - Autumn 1900	תרס	5660
Autumn 1900 - Autumn 1901	תרסא	5661
Autumn 1901 - Autumn 1902	תרסב	5662
Autumn 1902 - Autumn 1903	תרסג	5663
Autumn 1903 - Autumn 1904	תרסד	5664
Autumn 1904 - Autumn 1905	תרסה	5665
Autumn 1905 - Autumn 1906	תרסו	5666
Autumn 1906 - Autumn 1907	תרסז	5667
Autumn 1907 - Autumn 1908	תרסח	5668
Autumn 1908 - Autumn 1909	תרסט	5669
Autumn 1909 - Autumn 1910	תרע	5670
Autumn 1910 - Autumn 1911	תרעא	5671
Autumn 1911 - Autumn 1912	תרעב	5672
Autumn 1912 - Autumn 1913	תרעג	5673
Autumn 1913 - Autumn 1914	תרעד	5674
Autumn 1914 - Autumn 1915	תרעה	5675
Autumn 1915 - Autumn 1916	תרעו	5676
Autumn 1916 - Autumn 1917	תרעז	5677
Autumn 1917 - Autumn 1918	תרעח	5678
Autumn 1918 - Autumn 1919	תרעט	5679
Autumn 1919 - Autumn 1920	תרפ	5680
Autumn 1920 - Autumn 1921	תרפא	5681
Autumn 1921 - Autumn 1922	תרפב	5682
Autumn 1922 - Autumn 1923	תרפג	5683
Autumn 1923 - Autumn 1924	תרפד	5684
Autumn 1924 - Autumn 1925	תרפה	5685
Autumn 1925 - Autumn 1926	תרפו	5686
Autumn 1926 - Autumn 1927	תרפז	5687
Autumn 1927 - Autumn 1928	תרפח	5688

Autumn 1928 - Autumn 1929	תרפ"ט	5689
Autumn 1929 - Autumn 1930	תרצ	5690
Autumn 1930 - Autumn 1931	תרצ"א	5691
Autumn 1931 - Autumn 1932	תרצ"ב	5692
Autumn 1932 - Autumn 1933	תרצ"ג	5693
Autumn 1933 - Autumn 1934	תרצ"ד	5694
Autumn 1934 - Autumn 1935	תרצ"ה	5695
Autumn 1935 - Autumn 1936	תרצ"ו	5696
Autumn 1936 - Autumn 1937	תרצ"ז	5697
Autumn 1937 - Autumn 1938	תרצ"ח	5698
Autumn 1938 - Autumn 1939	תרצ"ט	5699
Autumn 1939 - Autumn 1940	תש	5700
Autumn 1940 - Autumn 1941	תש"א	5701
Autumn 1941 - Autumn 1942	תש"ב	5702
Autumn 1942 - Autumn 1943	תש"ג	5703

THE DATE ACCORDING TO THE HEBREW CALENDAR

“ And it was evening and it was morning the first day”.

If you are used to count the date from midnight to midnight, here is the other way, according to the Hebrew calendar.

When a gravestone says that a person died on 25th Menachem Av 5676, this can mean that she died in the evening of July 5th 1915, after sundown and after the three stars can be seen, or on July 6th till sundown.

THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

The stones are all written in Hebrew.

The language is a little old fashioned, and I would like to keep some of the flavor of this in my translation. Please help me!

TITLES

Here is a list of the titles appearing before the first name of the deceased.

These abbreviations can be interpreted in different ways. I bought a book called ROSHEY TEVOTH (Abbreviations) by Shmuel Ashkenazi and Dov Yarden to get some help. Sometimes there are several possible solutions.

Just take the letter RESH in some of these abbreviations – does it imply Reb as in Mr., or is it really a rabbi?

Reb (more like Mr.)	רב	ר
Honorary title for a great Torah scholar	הרבני	הרבני
the rabbi	הרב	הרב
my/ our teacher, Rabbi	מורי רבי (או) מורנו רבנו	מר
our teacher the rabbi, Rabbi	מורינו הרב רבי	מהרר
1)Teacher is probably used in the context of a melamed, a teacher of Jewish religious learning	מורה	מורה
2) Could it also be an abbreviation for "Our teacher and our rabbi, Rabbi"?	מורינו ורבינו רב	מורה
1) our teacher and our rabbi, Rabbi	מורינו ורבינו רב	מוה
2) our teacher the rabbi, Rabbi	מורינו הרב	מוה
1) the great learned man	החכם הגדול	הה
2) the great rabbi	הרב הגדול	הה
our teacher the rabbi, Rabbi	מורינו הרב רבי	מהרר
the Mishna preaching rabbi, Rabbi (better translation?)	הרב מגיד משנה הרב	הממה
the hassid, a follower of the Hassidic movement founded by Baal Shem Tov	החסיד	החסיד
1) In modern Hebrew a BACHUR is a young man	הבחור	הבחור
2) I was once told that in older times a BACHUR was an unmarried man who was at least 18 years old. Today we would probably say "bachelor".	הבחור	הבחור
Mrs.	מרת	מרת

ADJECTIVES FOR DESCRIBING THE DECEASED WOMAN

modest	צנועה
honest, innocent	תמה
clean	ברה
pure	זכה
honest	ישרה
decent	כשרה
a woman of valor	אשת חיל

Israel Pickholz contacted a friend who is a professional translator. He explained that “Tamma uvara” is an expression meaning Torah.

ADJECTIVES FOR DESCRIBING THE DECEASED MAN

pure	זך
honest	ישר
honest, innocent	תם
nice, pleasant	נחמד
important	חשוב
tender (in years)	רך
prominent	מופלג
excellent	מופלא
very pleasant	מאד נעים

AGE

tender in years (female)	רכה בשנים
tender in years - 26 years old (female)	רכה בשניםבת שישה ועשרים שנים
young in days (female)	צעירה בימים
tender in years	רך בשנים
a young man/lad tender in years	עלם רך בשנים
a man tender in years	איש רך בשנים
did not reach the supreme in years	לא הגיע עליון בשנים
a man young in days	איש צעיר לימים

a young soul in days	נפש צעיר לימים
Did not reach (many) years	עוד לא הגיע בשנים
unmarried young man	הבחור
passed away in the prime of his days	חיים שבק לו בדמי ימים
in the prime of his days	בדמי ימיו
his days were finished in his best years	כלו ימיו במבחר שנים
old woman	אשה זקנה
a very old man/ a great scholar	איש ישיש
full / satiated of days	שבע ימים
full / satiated of days ... a very old man / a great scholar	שבע ימים ישיש
a man (who was) a very old man / great scholar (who was) old and full / satiated of days	איש ישיש זקן ושבע ימים

THE FATHER HAD PASSED AWAY EARLIER

In these texts every little piece of information may be important. F.ex., you should study the letters coming just after the father's name. They may tell you if the father at the time of death of his son or his daughter, had already passed away.

of blessed memory	זכרונו/זכרונה לברכה	זל
A zaddik of blessed memory	זכרון הצדיקה/ לברכה	זצל
the late	המנוח	המנוח

THE END

At the end of each gravestone you will find the Hebrew letters

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. or תנצבה

These are the first letters in each of the five Hebrew words
TEHIEH NAFSHO/NAFSHA ZRURAH BEZROR HACHAIM
 ("May his/her soul be bound in the bond of Life") *

These five Hebrew words sum up my own personal interpretation and my main hope: May those who lived many years ago, be remembered by us who live now.

***This sentence is sometimes translated as “ May his/her soul be kept among the immortal souls”.**

**Eva Floersheim
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Feb 28th 2000**