**Title:** Jewish Street in Polish Village on Shabbat, 1903

**Year (Hebrew):** 5663

**Year:** 1903

**Location**: Europe – Eastern

**Short description**

A postcard published in 1903 featuring a reproduction of a famous painting by Leopold Pilichowski of a street in a Jewish village in Poland on Shabbat.

**Detailed description**

**​**This is a postcard featuring a reproduction of a famous painting by Leopold Pilichowski of a street in a Jewish village in Poland on Shabbat. The picture shows a poor area with unpaved roads, no pavements, and crowded thatched roof houses that seem to have different kinds of makeshift additions. People dressed in Shabbat clothing are walking along the street. Many people are conversing with their neighbours and, in the bottom-right corner, two children seem to be sitting on the ground playing. The women are wearing long dresses and shawls, and the men are wearing long coats. The overall atmosphere is one of relaxation and comradery. The artist’s name and the words, “On Shabbat,” are written at the bottom of the postcard in Hebrew and French.

**Would You Like to Know More?**

**Shabbat <previous document>**

**Leopold Pilichowski –** Leopold Pilichowski (1869–1933) was a Polish Jewish painter who often used Jewish themes in his work. Pilichowski used his paintings as a form of social commentary and showed the poverty and difficulties of living in Poland at that time. He also depicted religious life by painting people studying Jewish texts and observing Shabbat and festivals. Pilichowski was an ardent Zionist and painted portraits of many of the Zionist leaders of his day such as Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, and Ahad Ha’am.

**Jewish Community of Poland –** Jews have been living in Poland for over 1000 years at the invitation of the Polish rulers who recognised the value of their particular skills. Jews fleeing persecution in other countries found relative security in Poland, and by the middle of the 1500s, eighty percent of all Jews lived there. For the next 200 years, Jews enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy in Poland and the community flourished, becoming very influential and a centre of Talmudic learning. Yeshivot were established by the prominent rabbis of the period, and mysticism and, later on, Hassidism, had a great influence on Polish Jews. Following the Polish partition of 1795, the Jews came under the rule of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Prussia, and many were subject to anti-Semitism, pogroms, and poverty. Despite this persecution, Poland remained an important centre of both Jewish religious learning and the new Jewish Haskalah (Enlightment) movement. Poland was the birthplace of many influential Jews in politics, law, science, literature, and economics. Many of the leading Zionist leaders first joined the Zionist movement in Poland. Jewish culture, including Yiddish literature and theatre, also thrived here in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The end of the nineteenth century saw the emigration of many Polish Jews to the United States and Palestine due to the repressive Czarist Russian rule. By the onset of World War II, over three million Jews were living in Poland; by the end of the war, about eighty-five percent of the community had been murdered. Poland was home to many of the most notorious ghettos, concentration camps, and extermination camps, where the Holocaust was carried out by the Nazis and their supporters. Poland also saw Jewish uprisings against the Nazi occupation, and many non-Jewish Poles endangered their lives protecting Jews. After the Holocaust, most Jewish survivors did not return to Poland but emigrated to other countries. Of those who did return to their homes, many found their property confiscated and some were even victims of pogroms. Under the post-war communist rule the small Jewish community remaining in Poland faced additional hardship. However, after the fall of the communist regime, the community underwent a Jewish cultural, social, and religious revival. Jewish community centres and synagogues were built, universities started offering courses in Jewish studies, and the POLIN Jewish museum, one of the largest in the word, was opened in 2013. Many Jews from all over the world visit Poland to learn about the history of the Polish Jewish community and about the Holocaust. According to estimates by the Joint and the Jewish Agency, there are between 25,000 and 100,000 Jews currently living in Poland, including the many Poles who have discovered Jewish roots in recent years.

**Teaching Suggestions**

**​Jewish Studies**teachers can use the postcard when discussing Shabbat and its observance.

**Jewish History** teachers can use the postcard when teaching about the Jewish community in Poland.

**Art**teachers can use the postcard to discuss Leopold Pilichowski, his artistic style, and his choice of themes.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* What is the item?
* What is your first impression when you look at the picture?
* Describe the people.  
  What are they doing?  
  What are they wearing?
* Describe the settings.
* What is the caption at the bottom of the postcard?  
  In what languages is it written?

**Reading Between the Lines**

* The drawing on the postcard is of a Jewish village in Poland on Shabbat in 1903.  
  What can you learn about life in the village from the drawing?  
  What is the mood evoked?
* What time of day do you think it is supposed to be? Why do you think so?
* What aspect of Shabbat is depicted?
* Research the history of Jews in Poland.  
  What was life like for Jews living in Polish villages at that time?
* Why do you think the artist, Leopold Pilichowski, drew this picture?  
  What do you think he wanted people to know about life in a Polish village?
* How realistic do you think this depiction is?  
  How would you do further research in order to learn more about life in Polish villages with large Jewish populations?
* Do villages like these still exist today?  
  What happened to villages like these and the people who lived in them?

**Connections**

* Is there a day that your neighbourhood looks different from the others?  
  What day is it and what is the atmoshpere?
* What is the atmosphere in your neighbourhood on Shabbat?  
  Do the streets look different on Shabbat than they do on a weekday?  
  What do you like to do on Shabbat?
* What is Jewish life in Poland like today?  
  Compare between the Jewish community in Poland then and now.
* Do you know anyone who lived in Poland before the Holocaust?  
  Are any of your family from Poland? Do you have any family customs that originated in Poland?

**Creative Ideas**

* Write a short story or journal entry to accompany the drawing.
* Search for another postcard on the National Library website that depicts a street scene or Shabbat celebration.
  + Compare the postcard with this postcard.
  + What can you learn about Jewish life from the two postcards?
  + Make a presentation comparing the two postcards.

**Target audience:** Pre-school, Primary School, Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[Time Travel Ephemera Collection](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/time_journey/Pages/default.aspx)

[Shabbat Afternoon](http://bit.ly/2t5BGlj)  
[Shabbat on the Jewish Street in Morocco, 1920](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENGSP1030&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Cmorocco%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D8)