

Pleven

Radishevsko chosse

The Pleven Jewish community consisted of 70 people when the surveyors visited. The Jewish cemetery was established at the end of the 19th century, and was still in use.

The condition of the cemetery at the time of the survey was appalling. The pre-burial house was burned down and plundered – only the foundation remained. The guard cabin was destroyed and there was no security. There was no institution caring for the cemetery, which was not marked on the local map. A path which links the residential district Druzhba with the road leading to the village Radishevo crosses the cemetery and is used as a shortcut to the center of the town. Many of the gravestones were damaged, overturned, or buried in overgrowth.

The worst threat to the Jewish cemetery was the municipality possibly appropriating half of the plot for other uses. A new plan for the division of the land, on which the present Jewish cemetery is marked, shows the area of existing burials, with the remaining part marked as a reserve area of the municipality. In practice, this gives the municipality the right to seize the land and use or sell it. Because Pleven's archives have been destroyed, there is no inventory to refer to and the exact boundaries of the cemetery are unknown. A cemetery plot with an area of 11,000 square meters is mentioned in a document dating from 1942, which contains an inventory of the Jewish property in accordance with the Law for Protection of the State. This supports the community's right to the land, but the local Jewish community hasn't been able to prove its property rights because its archives have also been lost. Sections of this part of the cemetery have already been appropriated by the municipality for a new block of flats, and also for construction of an electric power supply substation, over the protests of the Jewish organizations.

The present size of the cemetery is nine hectares and it contains about 250 gravestones. The stones are made of granite, marble and concrete and they are engraved in Bulgarian, Hebrew and Ladino. The oldest stone dates from 1890. No single gravestone has survived intact. The gravestones – made of valuable materials, such as black marble or granite – were stolen, displaced or broken into pieces. All lettering and inscriptions made of bronze were either stolen or knocked off. Some graves have been desecrated in the course of the last 15 years. Many of the inscriptions are lost forever and cannot be restored.

Chelibon Grasiani, the only Jew who participated as a volunteer in the Russo-Turkish war, is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Pleven; his photograph is exhibited in the Pleven History Museum.

Seasonal cleaning is carried out by respective offices of the Pleven municipality. The Pleven regional branch of Shalom carries out seasonal treatment with chemicals to prevent grass growth.



Pleven cemetery



Tombstone at the Plevnen cemetery



Pleven cemetery



Pleven cemetery

Plovdiv

Plovdiv is located 156 km southeast of Sofia, and is the second largest city in Bulgaria. It is an ancient town, known in antiquity as Philipopolis and Trimontsium. During archeological excavations in the vicinity of the Central Post Office, remains of a synagogue dating from the third century C.E. were discovered. The synagogue mosaic floor was removed and restored, but is not presently displayed.

Plovdiv was the largest Bulgarian city and capital of Eastern Rumelia at the time of the country's liberation from Ottoman Turkish domination. The present-day Jews of Plovdiv are mostly descendants of Jewish immigrants who entered the Ottoman Empire from Spain circa 1496. Plovdiv currently has a Jewish population of about 300 people.

Central Cemetery

73, Knyaginya Maria Louisa Blvd.

The present Jewish cemetery forms a section of the municipal cemetery. It was created no later than 1878, as is indicated by the graves of Jews who participated in the Russian army and died in the battles for the liberation of Bulgaria. The neighboring cemetery sections are for Christians and Turkish Muslims. Lack of free plots in the Christian section has put pressure on the Jewish cemetery, as Christian families sometimes demand space to bury their relatives in the Jewish section and are granted permission to do so.

The cemetery is surrounded by a stone wall to the north and a wall of concrete panels to the northwest. The wall of concrete panels and a part of the stone wall were built several years ago with funds raised in a charity campaign. The wall, more than two meters high, separates the Jewish cemetery from the Roma families who live in the park with their domestic animals. There is no wall or fence on the side of the Christian cemetery.

The present size of the cemetery is 1.47 hectares and it contains approximately 2,600 gravestones. The boundaries have shrunken slightly over the years as a result of illegal settlements of Gypsy families, the expropriation of approximately 0.5 hectares in 1938 when the architectural plan of the town was changed, and an enlargement of the overall cemetery, which reduced the size of the Jewish section by one hectare.

Between 1970 and 1990, it was thought that the Jewish and Turkish cemeteries at the Central Cemetery Park were going to be closed down due to architectural reasons, so during that period, Jews were buried in other cemeteries. Most were in a cemetery on Rogozhko Chosse Street.

Nearly all graves and gravestones in the Plovdiv Jewish cemetery are in their original locations. The Jews who died in the struggle against fascism are an exception, as their remains were moved to the Plovdiv Common Grave which was established to memorialize all of the victims of the anti-fascist struggle. About 200 gravestones have been destroyed or stolen but there have never been acts of anti-Semitic vandalism in the cemetery.

Vegetation overgrowth in the cemetery is a serious problem. Access to some graves is hindered in summer and early autumn and some graves are damaged as a result. The oldest gravestones probably date from the time of Bulgaria's liberation of 1878. They are made of granite and marble and engraved in Bulgarian and Hebrew.

The Plovdiv Jewish cemetery is owned by the Plovdiv municipality and is managed by the Funeral Activities Municipal Company. For several years, Shalom, Plovdiv, and the Funeral Activities Municipal Company have been making efforts to cope with the vegetation overgrowth problem by cutting wild trees and bushes and treating the territory of the cemetery with herbicides. Also, the local Jewish community raised money from its members and erected a high panel wall which separated the cemetery from the Roma families living nearby.

The whole cemetery park is locked at night and the watchmen of the Funeral Activities Municipal Company are in charge of the keys. Management of all cemeteries in the town is conducted by the Funeral Activities Municipal Company, located at Knyaginya Maria Louisa Blvd, Plovdiv, 73.



Plovdiv cemetery



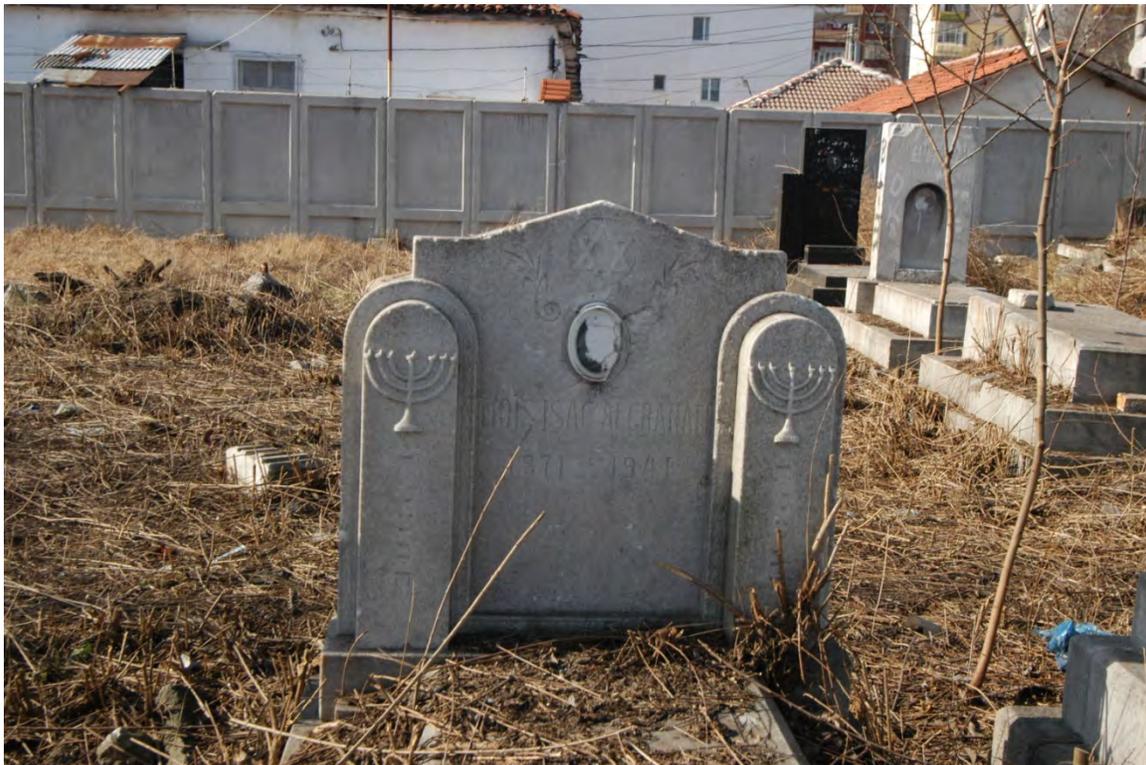
Plovdiv cemetery



Tombstone at the Plovdiv cemetery



Plovdiv cemetery



Plovdiv cemetery



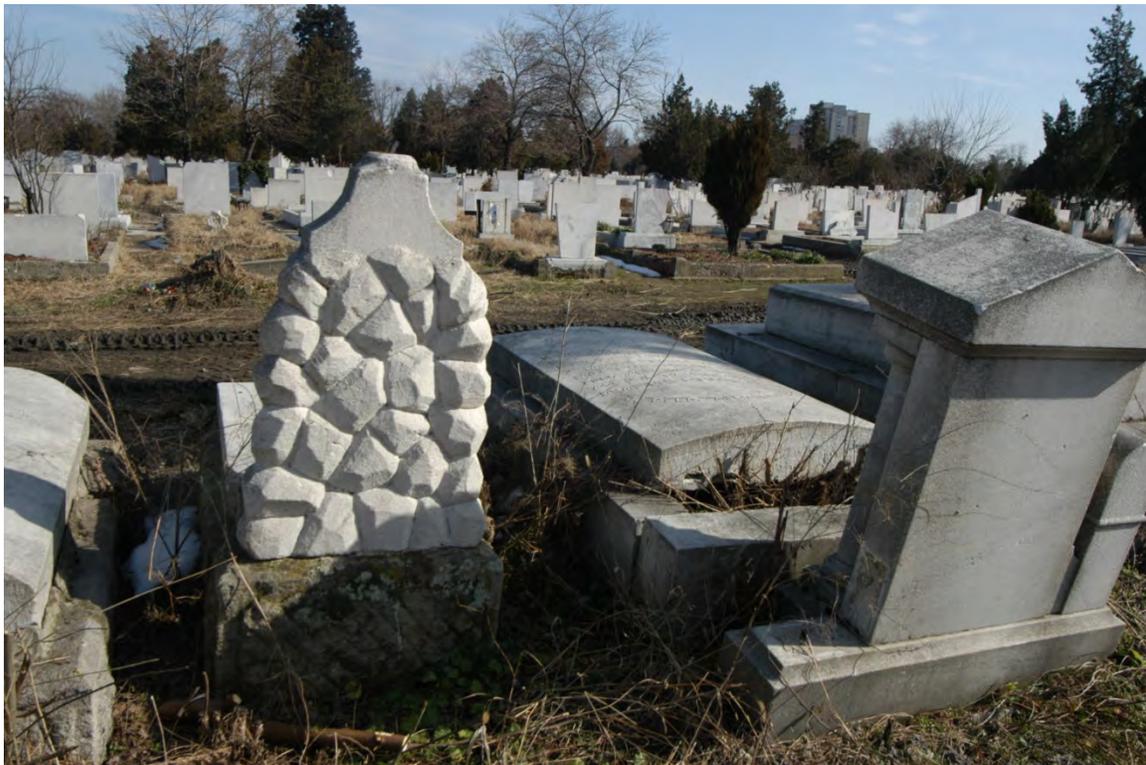
Plovdiv cemetery



Plovdiv cemetery



Plovdiv cemetery



Plovdiv cemetery

Ruse (Rousse)

Residential district Charodeika

Jews first settled in Ruse at the end of the 18th century. Ruse had a Jewish population of 150 people when the survey was conducted.

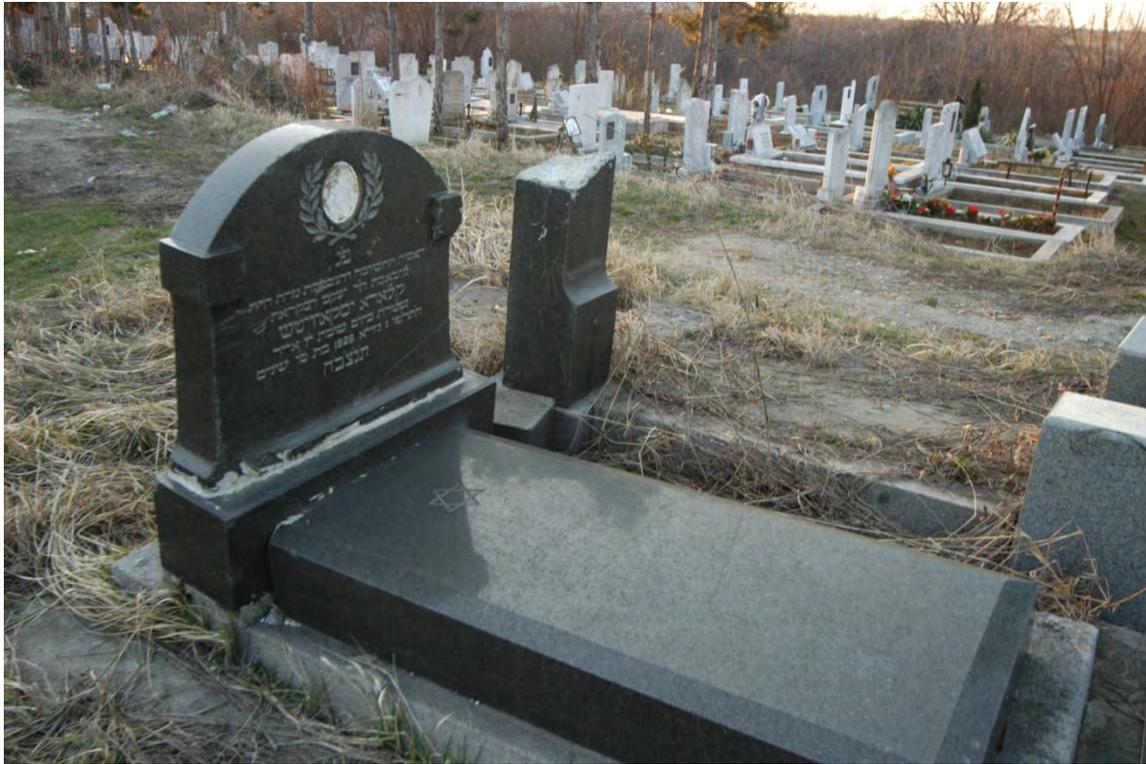
Old Jewish Cemetery

The old cemetery, which was used until 1965, is now the Park of the National Revival. The remains of some of the deceased buried there were moved to the new cemetery. There is no information available about the extent of the transfer, and whether all remains were moved.

New Cemetery

A plot in the central cemetery was allocated for a Jewish cemetery in 1965. It is not explicitly marked by a sign but its boundaries are clearly recognizable and defined. Once inside the main cemetery, a cobblestone path leads to the Jewish section. The Jewish section is 0.02 hectares in size and it contains approximately 50 graves. The gravestones are made of granite, marble and limestone and they are engraved in Bulgarian and Hebrew. The boundaries of the Jewish cemetery have shrunk over the years from surrounding housing development. The site is surrounded by a stone wall on two sides; on the other two sides it borders on the Turkish and Armenian sections. It has a front gate that does not lock.

The appearance of the cemetery is good. The Shalom organization in Ruse takes good care of the cemetery. The grass is cut several times a year and the paths between the graves are paved with concrete. In 1999, after the cemetery was vandalized, more than 20 graves had to be restored. Guards who are responsible for the security of the whole cemetery park protect the site. There continue to be burials in the cemetery.



Ruse cemetery



Ruse cemetery



Tombstone at the Ruse cemetery



Ruse cemetery



Tombstone at the Ruse cemetery



Tombstone at the Ruse cemetery

Samokov

Shipochene village, five km from Samokov

The Jewish cemetery is situated in the municipal cemetery, which is located at the crest of a hill. It contains 20 sandstone gravestones, most of which date from the 18th century. The inscribed epitaphs are in Bulgarian and Hebrew. The last known Jewish burial in the cemetery was in 1950. The site is now neglected and used as a waste dump. It is surrounded by makeshift huts occupied by Roma and is unfenced.



Tombstone at the Samkov cemetery



Samkov cemetery

Shumen (Kolarovgrad, 1950 – 1966)

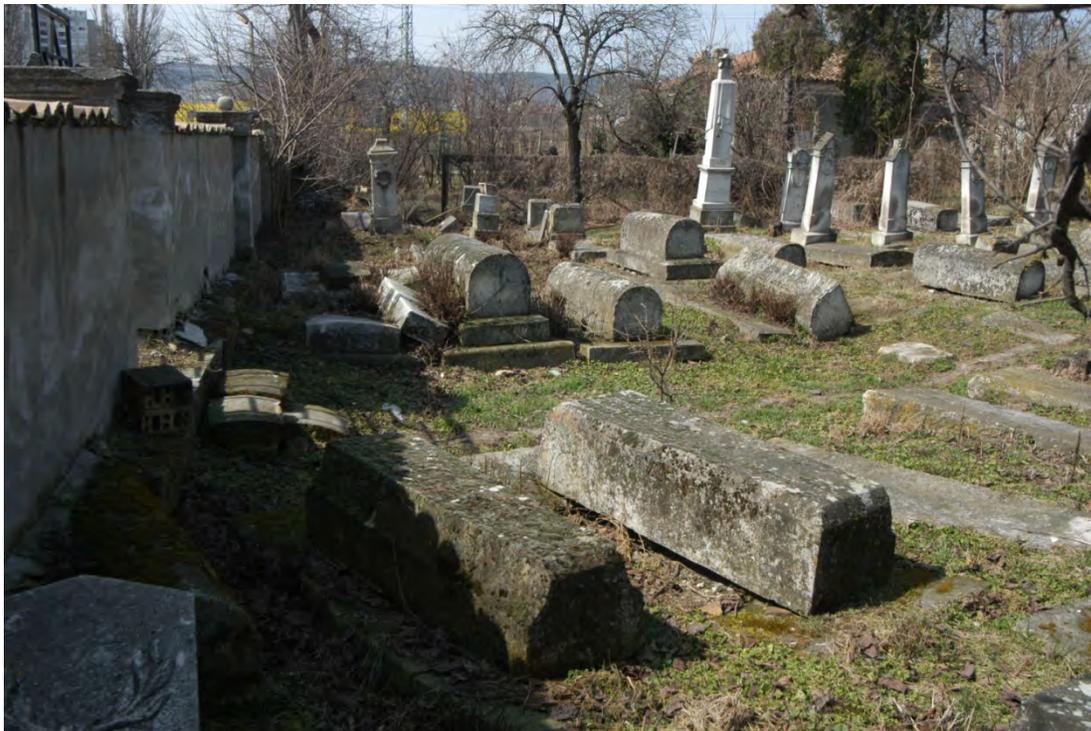
Located next to Stadium Number 17

The original cemetery in Shumen was founded at the end of the 16th century. A new cemetery was established in 1872 because of an outbreak of cholera. The last known Jewish burial at this site was in 1964.

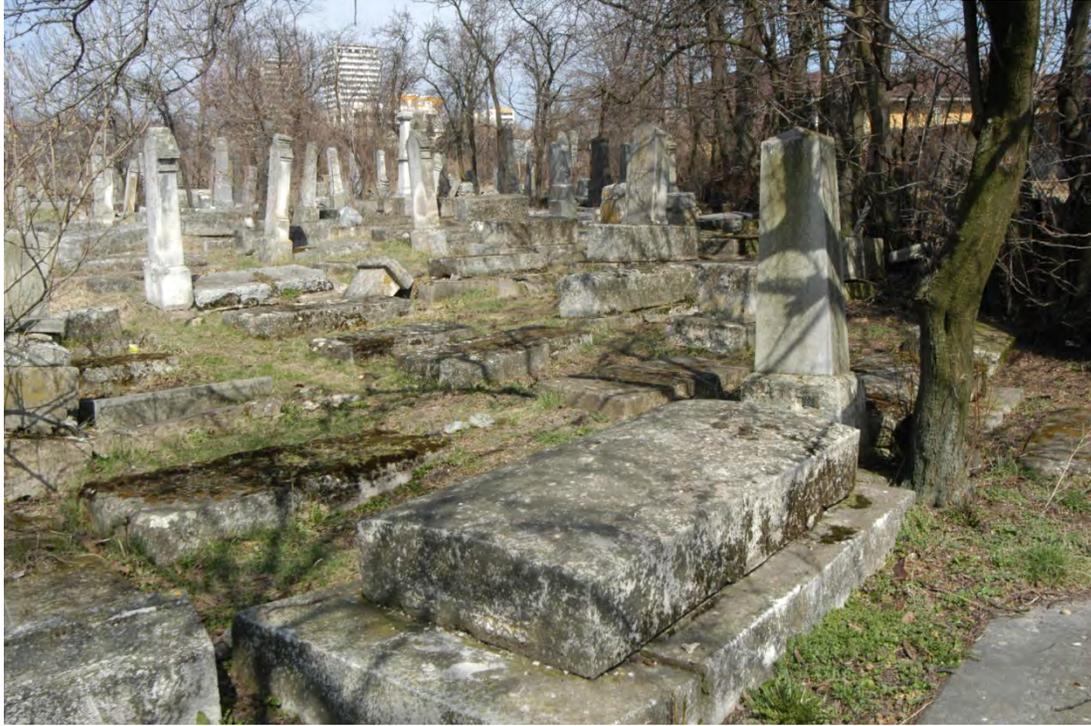
The cemetery is owned by the local Jewish community and it is marked by a Magen David (a six-pointed “Jewish” star) on the gate. Access can be obtained with permission. The site is 0.46 hectares in size and it contains about 650 headstones. These include vertical headstones in a variety of shapes, as well as horizontal slabs and the higher horizontal “breadloaf” type of gravestone that resembles a sarcophagus with a rounded top. Many of the vertical headstones are decorated with enameled portraits of the deceased and simple decorative devices – especially the Magen David. Inscriptions are in Hebrew and Bulgarian.

Only a part of the old fence with a gate that locks still survives. There are signs of commercial or industrial encroachment in places not surrounded by the fence. Though vegetation is a constant problem, the Jewish community clears the cemetery seasonally.

There is a commemorative monument to 356 individuals whose remains were moved to this site in 1935. There is also a pre-burial house at the site.



Shumen cemetery



Shumen cemetery



Tombstone at the Shumen cemetery



Shumen cemetery



Shumen cemetery

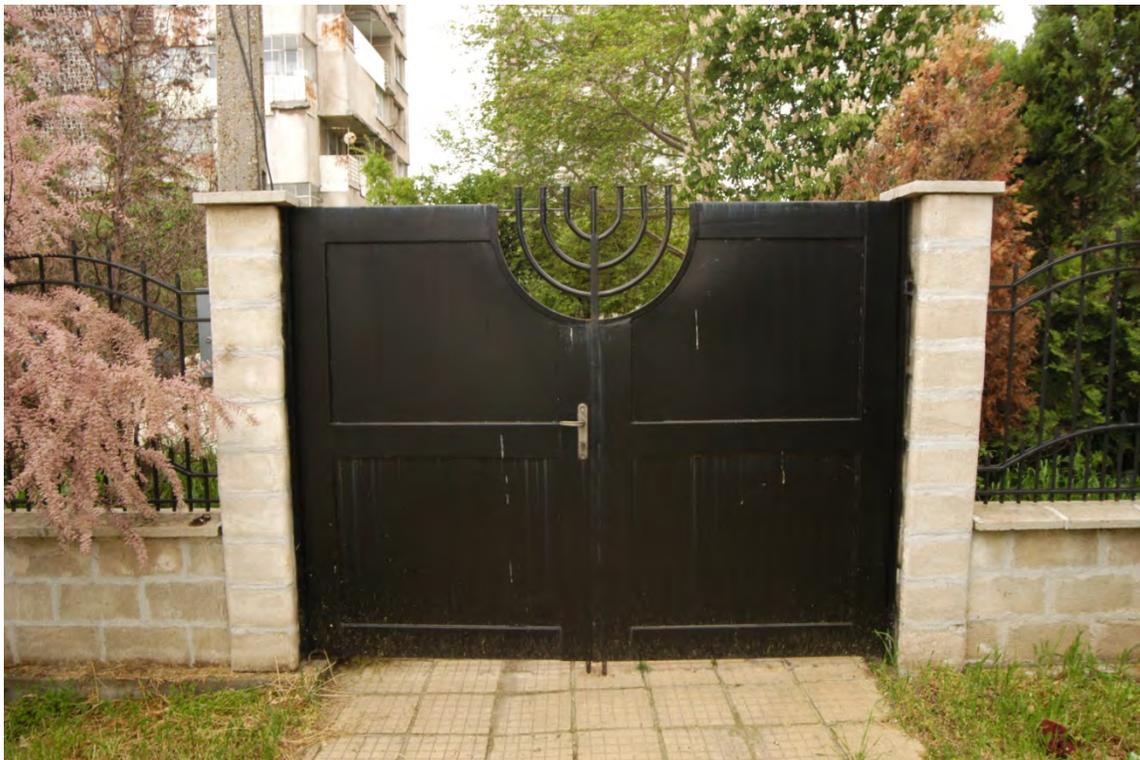
Silistra

The first Jewish community in Silistra was established in the 16th century. When the survey was conducted, the Silistra Jewish population consisted of only 14 people. The Jewish cemetery is located near the Romanian border, next to the old Christian cemetery.

An oil factory and several residential blocks now occupy the cemetery site. There is no fence or gate marking the boundaries of the 1,200 square meter site. Scores of marble and granite gravestones inscribed in Bulgarian, Hebrew, and Romanian, mostly from the 20th century, are still visible, though most of the site is obscured by thick vegetation.

Rabbi Eliezer Papo, an influential expert on Jewish law and ethics who was born in Sarajevo in 1785, was buried in the Jewish cemetery after his death in a cholera epidemic in the 1820s. His tomb is a place of pilgrimage, and a new monument, separated from the other graves by a fence, was constructed in 1998. A mikveh (ritual bath) was also recently built there for the use of pilgrims.

The site is owned by the national Jewish community.



Entrance gate to the Silistra cemetery



Grave at the Silistra cemetery



Silistra cemetery



Remains of a tombstone at the Silistra cemetery

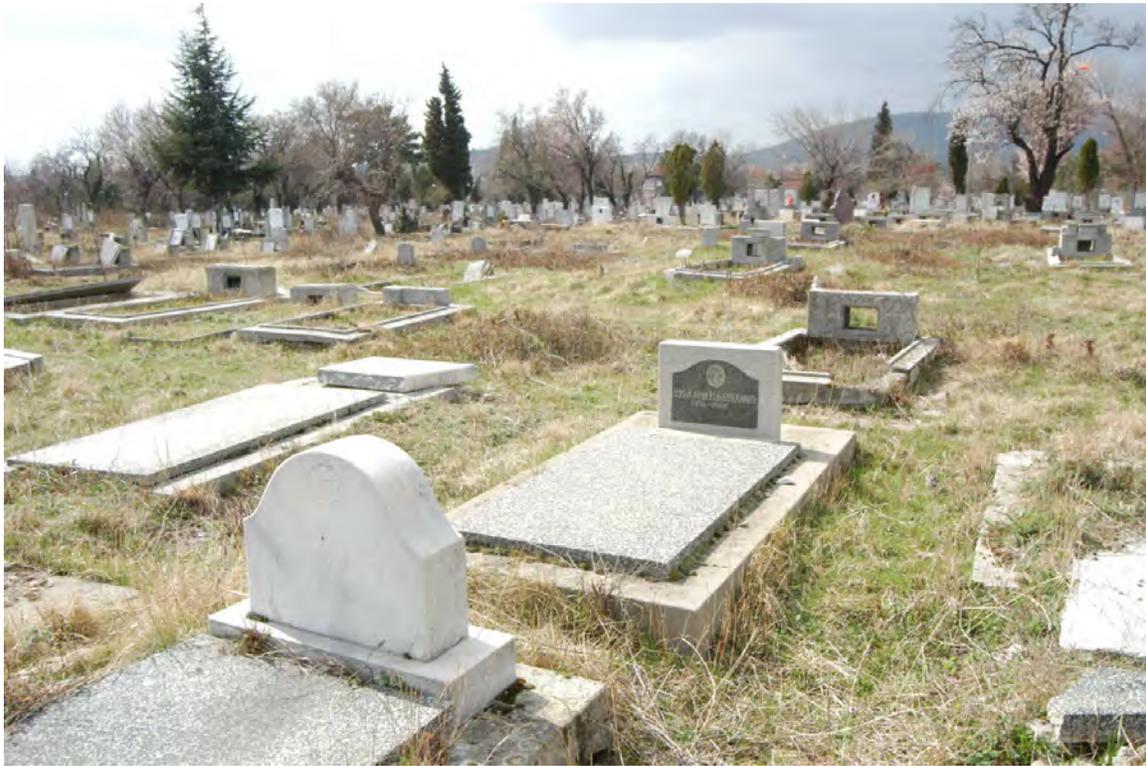


Silistra cemetery

Sliven

Sliven currently has a Jewish population of about 50 people.

Its Jewish cemetery was established around 1900 and the last known Jewish burial was in 1970. The site is part of a municipal cemetery which is surrounded by a fence with a gate that locks. The Jewish section is 0.25 hectares in size and contains only 40-50 visible gravestones, with somewhat less than a quarter of these toppled, broken or otherwise vandalized. Some were vandalized or stolen between 1980 and 1990. The marble and granite gravestones are inscribed in Bulgarian and Hebrew. Most date from the 20th century. Overgrowth is a year-round problem but the municipality occasionally has the site cleared.



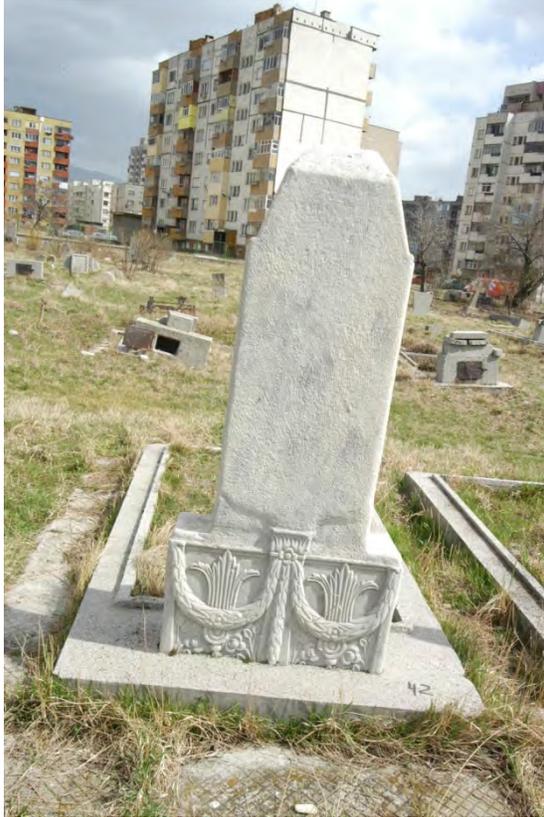
Sliven cemetery



Sliven cemetery



Sliven cemetery



Sliven cemetery

Sofia

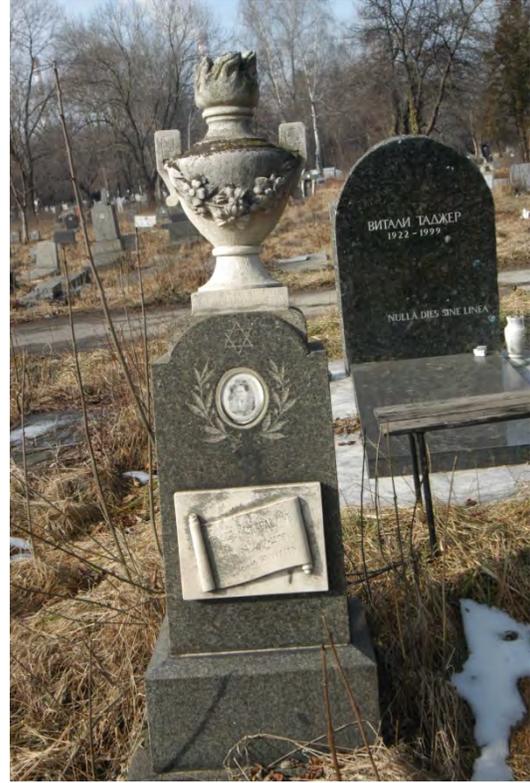
Central Sofia Cemetery 14, Zavodska Str.

Sofia is home to approximately 2,500 Jews, which is roughly half of the entire Jewish population of Bulgaria. The Jewish cemetery is a part of the Central Sofia Cemetery, which is maintained by the Municipal Cemetery Parks Company. The cemetery is 50,000 square meters in size and it contains about 7,000 gravestones, most of which are toppled or broken. The stones are made of granite, marble, and limestone, and engraved in Bulgarian, Hebrew, and Ladino. Most date from the 20th century.

The cemetery is divided into numbered groups and lots. It contains a pre-funeral hall, several ohels, a pre-burial house and a memorial grave for Jews killed by fascists during the Holocaust. The cemetery is surrounded by a stone wall with a gate that is locked at night and is also guarded around the clock. The site is maintained by the Central Israelitic Spiritual Council, but the Jewish community lacks sufficient funds to hire enough caretakers for regular maintenance of such a large site. Therefore, vegetation overgrowth and water drainage are year-round problems.



Tombstone at the Sofia cemetery



Tombstone at the Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery



Tombstone at the Sofia cemetery



Tombstone at the Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery



Tombstone at the Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery



Sofia cemetery

Varna

Varna, 1, Andrei Saharov Str.

There has been a Jewish community in Varna since the 15th century. The present Jewish population numbers about 250 people.

First Cemetery

The first Jewish cemetery in Varna was near the seacoast and functioned until 1935, when it was confiscated and made into a city garden.

So-called Old Cemetery (Municipal Cemetery)

With the closing of the first Jewish cemetery in 1935, a new Jewish burial place was opened the same year as part of the municipal cemetery, and is known today as the “Old Cemetery.” Only one gravestone, dated 1878, remains from the first cemetery. It is now kept in the municipal museum. The community erected a memorial wall in the old Cemetery engraved with the names of several hundred people who were buried in the first cemetery.

The Jewish section of the municipal Cemetery is 0.7 hectares in size and it contains 342 graves and a pre-burial house. The marble and granite gravestones, with inscriptions in Hebrew and Bulgarian, all date from the 20th century. The site is surrounded by a fence with a gate that locks.

“Shalom”—Varna (the regional branch of The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria) takes care of the cemetery. Overgrowth is a year-round problem but the site is occasionally cleared. The cemetery has never been vandalized.



Varna cemetery



Varna cemetery



Varna cemetery



Varna cemetery

Vidin

The Jewish population of Vidin is about 25 people.

The Jewish community maintains a cemetery. It was established in 1879 and the oldest known grave is from 1880. Most gravestones are from the 20th century and the last known Jewish burial was in 1976. The site is 1.85 hectares in size and it contains 1,056 headstones. The gravestones – a mix of vertical and horizontal *matzevot* – reflect the mix of Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jewish cultural traditions. The stones are granite, marble, and limestone with funerary inscriptions in Bulgarian, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Three gravestones were moved to the Christian cemetery.

The site is not protected by a fence, gate, or any other means. The cemetery was seriously vandalized for the first time in 1980, and, presumably, many times afterward. The systematic devastation of the cemetery is shocking. Gravestones have been smashed and graves excavated by scavengers looking for treasures. Overgrowth is a year-round problem and water drainage is a seasonal problem at the site.



Vidin cemetery



Vidin cemetery



Vidin cemetery

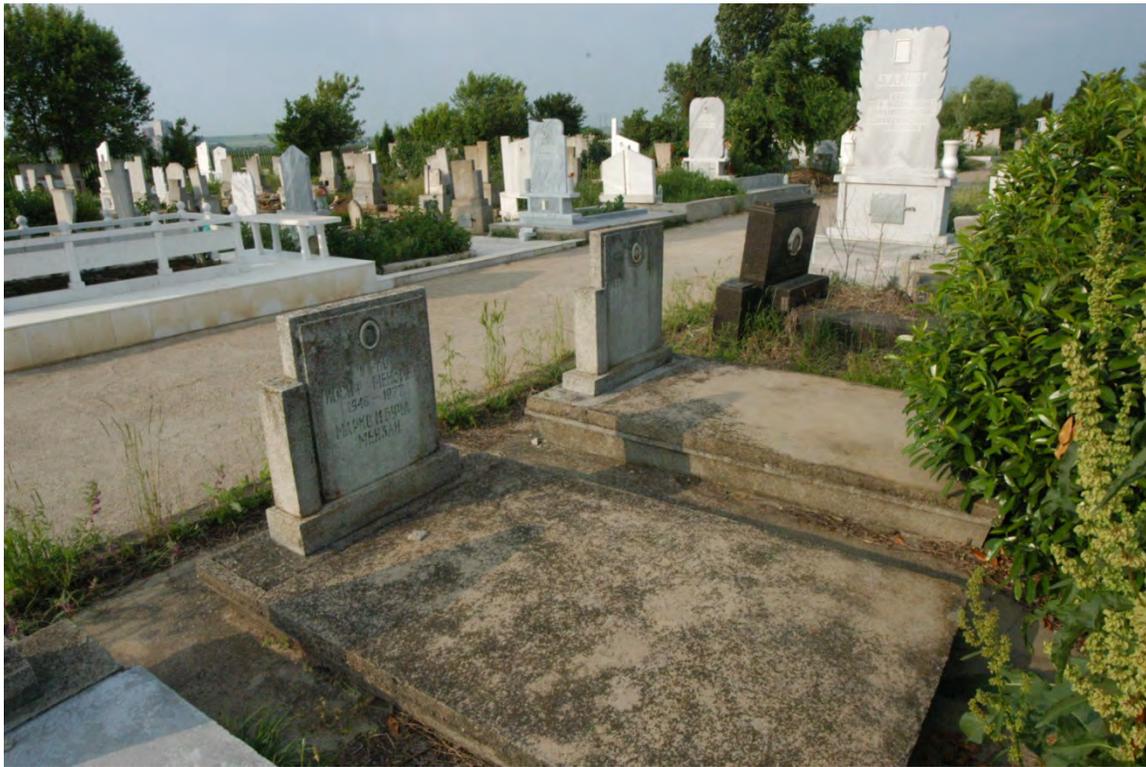


Part of a tombstone at the Vidin cemetery

Yambol (Iambol)

1 Graf ignatiev

Jews have been in Yambol since the 18th century. Today, there are approximately 70 Jews in the local community. An earlier Jewish cemetery was destroyed. The new Jewish cemetery was established in 1980 as a section of the municipal cemetery and it is still in use. The gravestones are made of granite and marble with inscriptions in Hebrew and Bulgarian. Some of gravestones have portraits on them. The new Cemetery is 0.05 hectares in size and is surrounded by a fence with a gate that locks. Vegetation overgrowth and water drainage are constant problems at the site. The Jewish community occasionally clears the vegetation.



Yambol cemetery



Tombstone at the Yambol cemetery



Yambol cemetery



Yambol cemetery

Appendix I: Agreement Between the United States and Bulgaria

AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA
AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
ON
THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION
OF CERTAIN CULTURAL PROPERTIES

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria (hereafter referred to as Parties) - -

Desirous of successful mutual cooperation in the fields of culture and cultural heritage of either state,

Convinced that such an agreement will contribute to the strengthening of numerous contacts between the two states,

Bearing in mind the respect due to fundamental human rights, and seeking to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups,

Convinced that each culture has a dignity and a value which must be respected and preserved, and that all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind,

Desiring to enhance the protection of cultural heritage and provide access to the treasures of national and world culture without discrimination,

Considering that deterioration or disappearance of items of the cultural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world,

Considering that the protection of cultural heritage can be effective only if organized both nationally and internationally among states working in close cooperation,

Considering the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and

Desirous of elaborating concrete steps in furtherance of the principles and purposes of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,

Have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

Each Party will take appropriate steps to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of all national, religious, or ethnic groups (hereafter referred to as "groups") that reside or resided in its territory, including victims of genocide during the Second World War.

The term "cultural heritage" for the purposes of this Agreement means places of worship, sites of historical significance, monuments, cemeteries, and memorials to the dead, as well as archival and other authentic and documentary materials relating thereto.

ARTICLE 2

The Parties shall cooperate in identifying lists of appropriate items falling within the scope of Article 1, particularly those which are in danger of deterioration or destruction. Either Party may publish such lists.

ARTICLE 3

Each Party will ensure that there is no discrimination, in form or in fact, against the cultural heritage of any group referred to in Article 1 or against the nationals of the other Party in the scope and application of its laws and regulations concerning:

- (a) the protection and preservation of their cultural heritage;
- (b) the right to contribute to the protection and preservation of their cultural heritage; and
- (c) public access thereto.

ARTICLE 4

In cases where the group concerned, referred to in Article 1, is unable, on its own, to ensure adequate protection and preservation of its cultural heritage, each Party shall take special steps to ensure such protection and preservation of cultural heritage within its territory and shall invite the cooperation of the other Party and its nationals where assistance is required for this purpose.

ARTICLE 5

Properties of cultural heritage, referred to in Article 4, that are of special significance shall be designated in the lists of items of cultural heritage. Such lists shall be publicly announced and communicated to competent federal, state, and local authorities.

All properties of cultural heritage so designated shall be protected, preserved, and marked in the manner stipulated by valid legal internal regulations of either Party. Public access thereto shall be ensured.

Such lists of items of cultural heritage shall be designated by the Commission referred to in Article 6 hereof. The Commission may also designate properties for inclusion in the list at any time.

ARTICLE 6

A Joint Cultural Heritage Commission is hereby established to oversee the operations of the lists referred to in Articles 2 and 5, and to perform such other functions as are delegated to it by the Parties. Each Party shall appoint not more than three members to the Commission, who may be

assisted by alternates and advisers. Decisions of the Commission shall require the assent of all members. The Parties shall cooperate in supplying the Commission with access to the items of cultural heritage and information necessary for the execution of its responsibilities.

Each Party through its representative on the Joint Cultural Heritage Commission (JCHC) referred to in the first paragraph hereof may request that special arrangements, as appropriate, be worked out under the procedures of the JCHC to protect and preserve the cultural heritage in the territory of the other Party of groups not covered under Article 1, in cases where such cultural heritage is associated with the cultural heritage abroad of citizens of the requesting Party and is in need for any reason of protection and preservation. The other Party will consider steps, within the scope of its laws and regulations, to respond to the request.

The United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad shall be the Executive Agent for implementing this Agreement on the American side. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be the Executive Agent for implementing this Agreement on the Bulgarian side. Either Party may, by diplomatic note to the other, change its Executive Agent.

ARTICLE 7

Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to relieve either Party of its obligations under the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage or any other agreement for the protection of cultural heritage.

ARTICLE 8

This Agreement shall be implemented in accordance with the laws and regulations of both countries and the availability of funds.

ARTICLE 9

Disputes concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be submitted to the Agents referred to in the third paragraph of Article 6.

ARTICLE 10

This Agreement shall enter into force upon an exchange of notes by which the Parties inform each other about the fulfillment of their respective legal requirements for entry into force. It may be amended by mutual written agreement of the Parties.

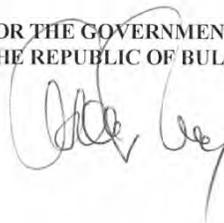
This Agreement shall remain in force until terminated by either Party giving written notice to the other Party through diplomatic channels of its intention to terminate this Agreement, which notice shall be effective six months from the date of delivery.

DONE at ...*Washington*...*D.C.*... this *5th* day of *December* 2002, in duplicate, in the English and Bulgarian languages, each text being equally authentic.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:



FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA:



Appendix II: Contacts

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