LIMMUD FESTIVAL 2026 • SUNDAY 14:00 – 15:00

Marching for the Living

Reflections on the 1988 March of the Living, Soviet Refuseniks, and Restored Jewish-Austrian Community

Presented by Robin Lansman • Sponsored in 1988 by Maidenhead Synagogue

PRESENTER & LINEAGE

From 1987 Soviet Refuseniks to Poland 1988

3rd-Gen Survivor

Shaped by maternal grandparents from Vienna and Germany.

USSR Refuseniks 1987

Visited Jews trapped behind closed Soviet borders.

Poland 1988

Sponsored by Maidenhead Synagogue for the inaugural march.

PART I • APRIL 10–17, 1988 • NISSAN 5748

Key Stages of the 1988 Journey

Key Stages: Warsaw to Auschwitz-Birkenau

Arrival in Warsaw & Lublin: 42,000 pre-war Jews reduced to 30 families.

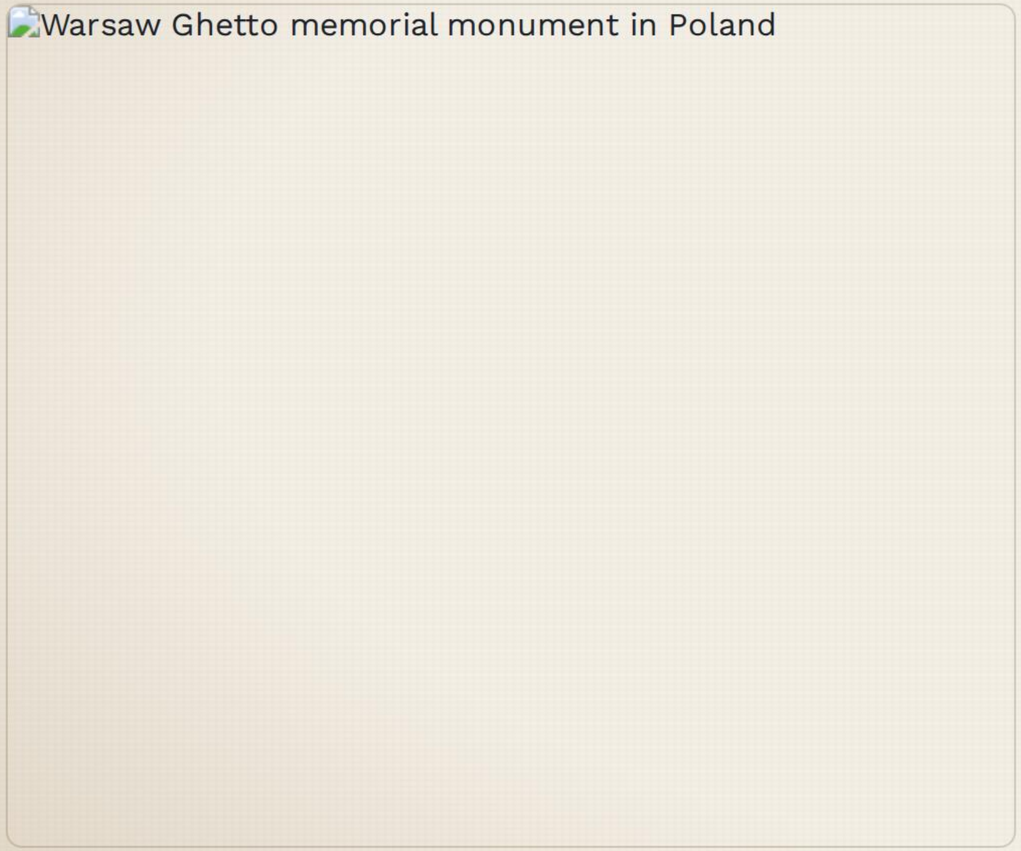
Vernichtungslager Majdanek: Preserved ovens, watchtowers, and 7 tons of ash.

Krakow & Auschwitz-Birkenau: Packed Kazimierz shuls before the snowy march.



THE 1988 ROUTE • PART II

Key Stages: Ghetto, Treblinka & Heroism



Warsaw Ghetto Memorial: 350,000 confined on 220 calories; 18 Miła Street fighters.

Treblinka Forest: 17,000 stones honoring 800,000 murdered victims.

Heroism Quiz & Lessons: Celebrating wartime courage and Jewish unity.

APRIL 12, 1988 • LUBLIN

A Vanished Center of Torah Learning

42,000 to 30 families: Pre-war community reduced below a minyan.

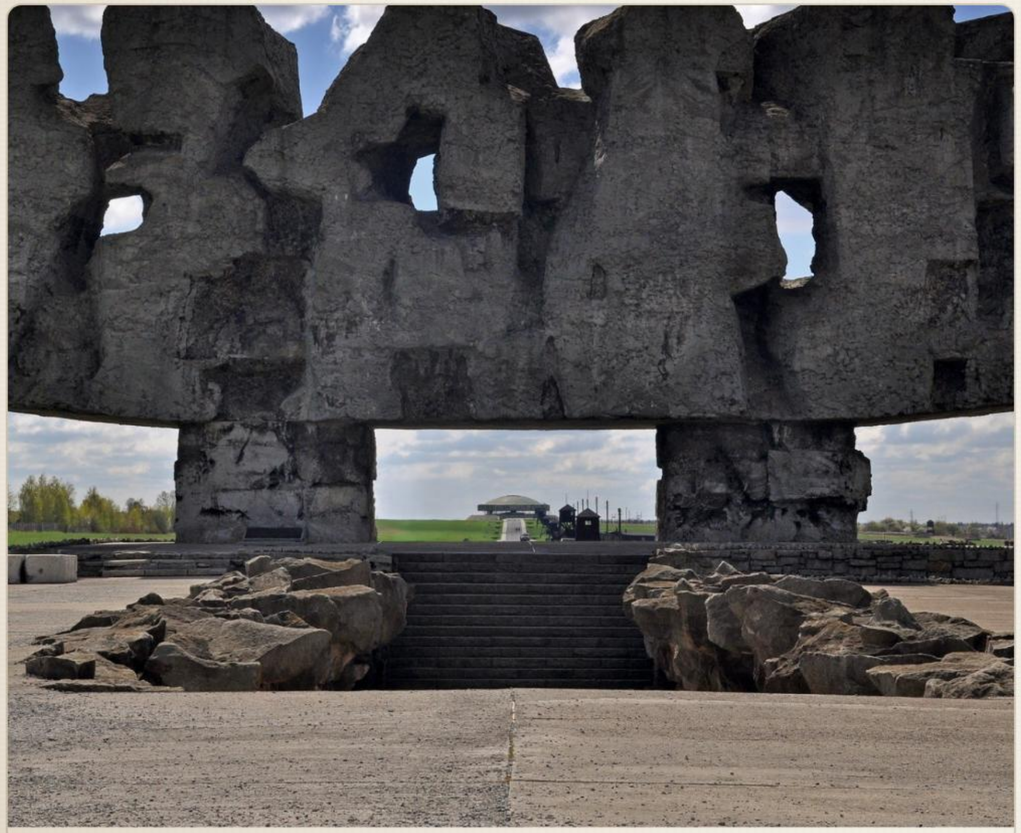
Lone caretaker: Camp survivor tending tombstones dating back to 1541.

Former Yeshiva: Medical students mocking Jewish visitors from windows.



VERNICHTUNGSLAGER MAJDANEK

Preserved Architecture & Field Notes



700-acre camp: 350,000 murdered; 18 watchtowers ironically echoing Chai.

Mausoleum dome: Covering over 7 tons of human ashes from the pyre.

Pencil note: Rose beds thriving on ash-fed soil beside the gate.

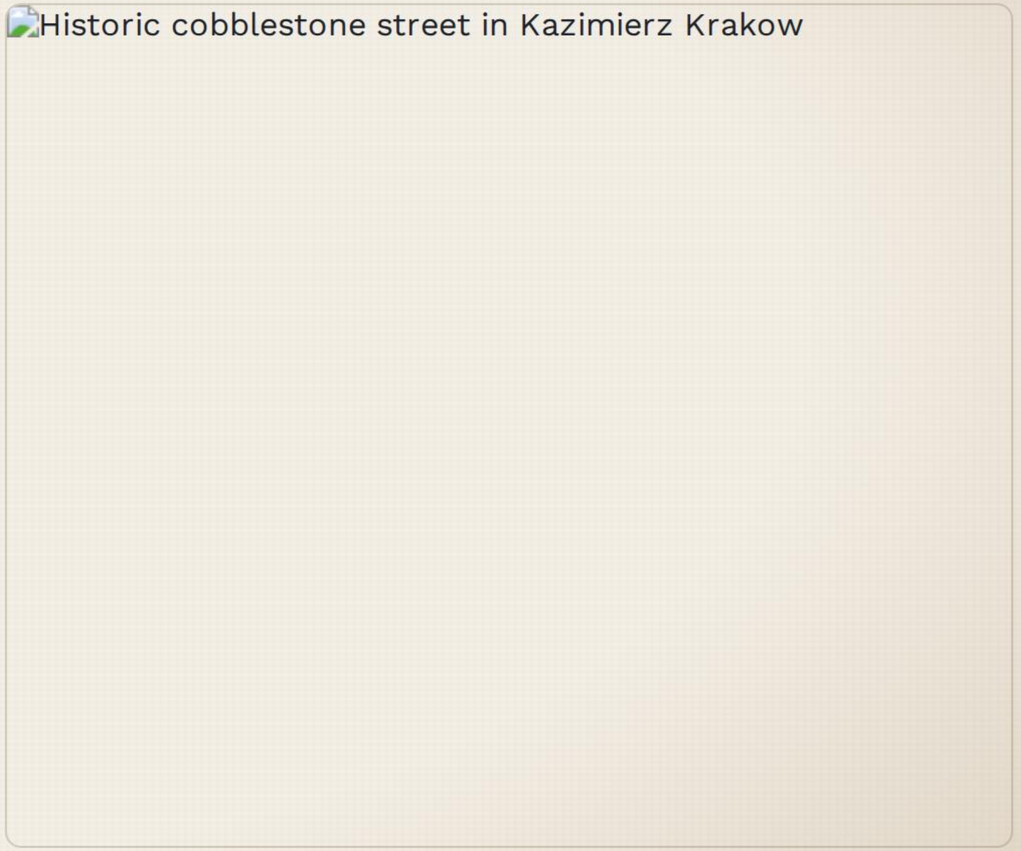
KAZIMIERZ TO OŚWIĘCIM

Packed Shuls Before the Railway Tracks

Kazimierz shuls: Restored prayer halls filled with young visitors.

Bleak transit: Seven-hour rain journey through industrial Silesia.

Parallel tracks: Active railway line beside the route into Oświęcim.

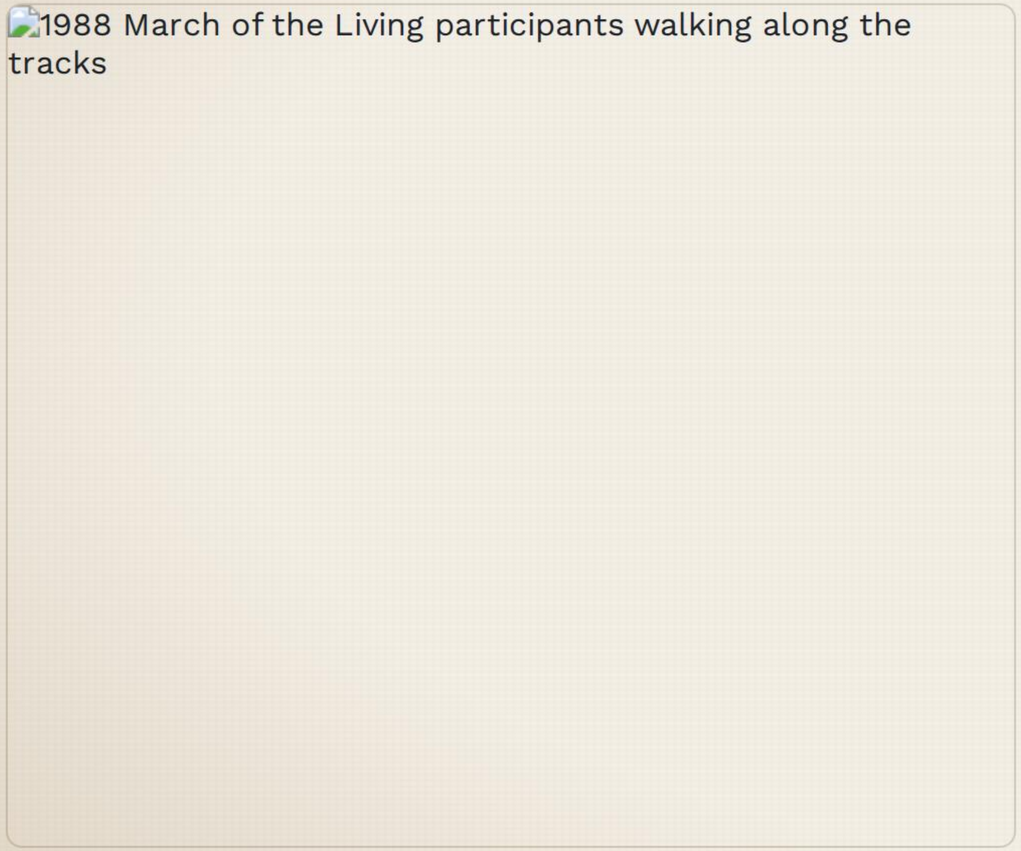


THE INAUGURAL MARCH

Three Miles Through Falling Snow

AUSCHWITZ I TO BIRKENAU

Blue Jackets & Israeli Flags in Silence


1988 March of the Living participants walking along the tracks

1,500 youth: Wearing blue Magen David coats past *Arbeit Macht Frei*.

Silent witness: Local residents watching from behind net curtains.

Hatikvah at Birkenau: Survivors weeping as anthem echoed across ruins.

AUSCHWITZ I EXHIBITIONS

Personal Relics & Cold Bureaucracy

7 tonnes of hair: Plaited braids behind glass alongside IG Farben invoices.

Suitcase M. Frank: Marked *Holland, 1915* among ceiling-high piles.

1,000 per barrack: Three-tier bunks beneath *Eine Laus – dein Tod*.



WARSAW & TREBLINKA

Stones in the Forest Where 800,000 Perished



Warsaw Ghetto: 18 Miła Street bunker and Umschlagplatz marble monument.

800,000 victims: Treblinka bulldozed and planted with pines to hide crimes.

Kaddish in silence: Weeping beside the symbolic mass grave pit.

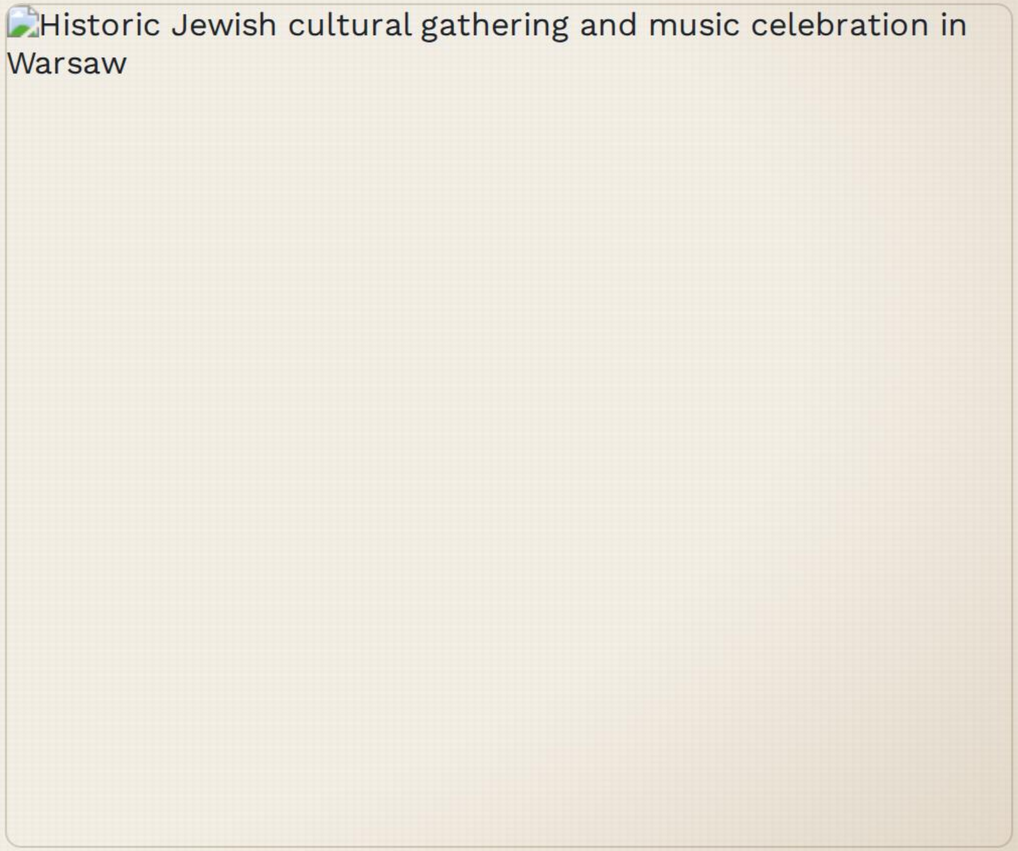
WARSAW CONVENTION CENTRE • LIVE BROADCAST

Remembering Jewish Wartime Heroism

12 global finalists: Tested live on WWII Jewish resistance and courage.

Beyond victimhood: Honoring fighters too often forgotten in history.

Dancing in Warsaw: Youth singing outside under watchful police eyes.


Historic Jewish cultural gathering and music celebration in Warsaw

1988 MEMOIR TAKEAWAYS

Lessons to Be Learnt

Modern Danger

Industrial genocide with modern technology would leave zero survivors.

Jewish Unity

Solidarity across Orthodox and Progressive communities in good times.

Am Yisrael Chai

A secure State of Israel anchors Jewish freedom and survival.

1987 USSR TO 2026

Contribution, Conditional Belonging & Security

“Jews give deeply to every society, yet vocal minorities still render belonging conditional.”

Reflection on Refuseniks & Modern Antisemitism

Trapped behind borders: 1987 Refuseniks denied exit yet excluded at home.

Rising hostility: Loud minorities testing Jewish safety across nations today.

Secure Israel: Essential anchor for Jewish dignity and everyday resilience.

RECLAIMING HERITAGE • 2026

Becoming a Jewish Austrian

Identity Reclaimed

Becoming a Jewish Austrian, not merely acquiring a passport.

Dec 10 Archive

Recording oral histories with fellow descendants of Vienna and Germany.

Restored Network

Reconnecting strangers whose families were once torn apart.

OPEN CONVERSATION

Themes for Discussion

1. Physical Witness: How does standing in Auschwitz in 1988 compare to remembrance today?

2. Reclaiming Citizenship: What does becoming a Jewish Austrian mean across generations?

3. Everyday Resilience: How do Jewish unity and a secure Israel sustain us today?

LIMMUD FESTIVAL 2026 • SUNDAY 14:00 – 15:00

Questions & Discussion

Thank you for joining this session. With enduring gratitude to Maidenhead Synagogue for sponsoring my 1988 journey to Poland.

Image Sources



https://muzeumwarszawy.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/340A2783_1600pix_%C2%A9TKaczor.jpg

Source: muzeumwarszawy.pl



https://jewish-heritage-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Mass-grave-column-Okopowa-fot.-Karol-Dzik-5.jpg

Source: jewish-heritage-europe.eu



https://miejscapolski.pl/images/miejsca/Lublin/Lublin_widok_na_Zamek.jpg

Source: miejscapolski.pl



https://api.majdanek.eu/uploads/thumbs/6932d0b9cd3ac005779212.jpg?v=1

Source: www.majdanek.eu



https://www.krakow-trip.com/images/guides/krakow-old-town-vs-kazimierz-stay.jpg

Source: www.krakow-trip.com



https://commemorativeairforce.org/uploads/content/feature_image/667/landscape_profile_Veterans_Day-2__1_.png

Source: commemorativeairforce.org

Image Sources



https://www.nationalww2museum.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/Auschwitz.jpg

Source: www.nationalww2museum.org



https://www.georgefox.edu/about/president/blog/posts/2024/poland-holocaust-trip-rockmemorial2

Source: www.georgefox.edu



https://www.yivo.org/thumb/w/400//cimages/img_2026080433026.jpg

Source: www.yivo.org