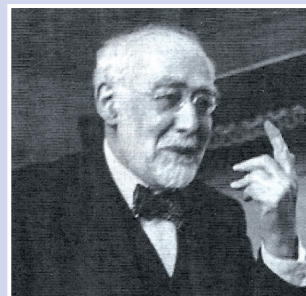


LEO BAECK

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF LEO BAECK Time of sightseeing: approx. 2 hours

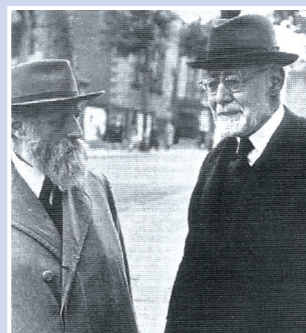
- 1 JEWISH COMMON SCHOOL** /22 Krasieńskiego str./ - established in 1840, functioned until the end of 1921; later protestant school; after the war special school, currently private school. The building was erected at the end of the 19th century.
- 2 EDUCATION HOUSE (BET HA-MIDRASZ)** /4 Średnia str./ - Talmud school, is the oldest building in the Jewish district apart from the synagogue; it was erected in the middle of the 18th century; it became a residential building during the period between WWI and WWII.
- 3 MATZO BAKERY** /2 Łazienka str./ - erected in the middle of the 19th century. The remaining structures of Marcus and Isidor Heppner. Matzo from this bakery was exported to the foreign markets, i.e. to Berlin.
- 4 SACHS FOUNDATION** /5 Narutowicza str./ - established around 1870 with the idea of creating a Talmud school, where the youth prepared for their future Rabbi studies. The foundation operated until 1939 as a Talmud school, a dormitory and a charity.
- 5 FORMER SYNAGOGUE** /31 Narutowicza str./ - situated at the central point of the Jewish district. Considered to be the largest and probably the largest synagogue in the Wielkopolskie province. It was erected in the 18th century and rebuilt in 1905 during the Vienna Secession according to a design of architects from Wrocław, Richard and Paul Ehrlich. The synagogue was facilitated by the Jewish commune until 1939. After the war it functioned as the local bath house. Currently it is the Art Gallery of the District Museum in Leszno. A permanent exposition entitled "Jewish people in Leszno" was set in one of the rooms.
- 6 RITUAL ABBATOIR** /47 Narutowicza str./ - located in the yard of the building. This is a neo-Gothic structure from approximately the middle of the 19th century situate on the premises of the purchaser and owner of artificial wine factory, Rudolph Moll.
- 7 FORMER MID-SCHOOL OF COMENIUS** /5 Kościuszki Sq./ - the school building was erected in 1882 for the Royal-Prussian Middle School which was transferred here from the Sułkowskis palace. Leo Baeck was amongst the students. The school was named after Comenius in 1898 during the 300th anniversary of J.A. Komeński's birthday. In the building of the former mid-school there is a Teacher's College of Foreign Languages established in 1990 as well as the 3rd secondary school of general education.
- 8 LEO BAECK'S HOME** /34 Chrobrego str./ - a 19th century tenement house where the most famous Jew in Leszno, Leo Baeck was born. He was one of the most eminent Jewish philosophers of the 20th century.
- 9 FORMER JEWISH CEMETERY** /14 Jana Pawła II Ave./ - established in 1626, used by the Jewish commune until 1939. Completely demolished by the Germans during World War II. The graves were used as debris for building roads. Only a small fragment of the former grave-digging area and two buildings remain: the house of the grave-digger and the funeral home (from 1907 designed by the Wrocław architects, Richard and Paul Ehrlich. The latter was used as a galvanizing house. Currently the building houses a branch of the Local Public Library.



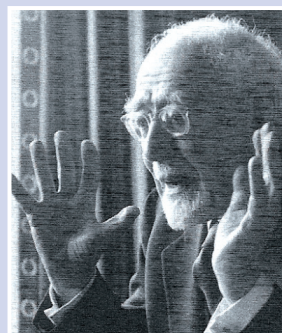
Leo Baeck



Rabbi dr Samuel and Eva née Placzek Baeck (parents of Leo), 1905



Leo Baeck and Martin Buber (London 1947)



Leo Baeck (London 1951)

LEO BAECK was a man ahead of his epoch. This was emphasized by him being the rabbi and a scholar who supported the idea of dialogue and tolerance towards other religions and ways of thinking. Already in the 50s of the previous century he called for a religious dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims. He stated that only by getting to know the other religions one can understand a person and cooperate with them based on respecting the differences.

Perhaps the multi-religion traditions of Leszno, a city famous for being tolerant, led Leo Baeck to create his view on the world.

Materials come from the collection of the District Museum in Leszno.

Texts: M. Maćkowiak



LEO BAECK
1873-1956

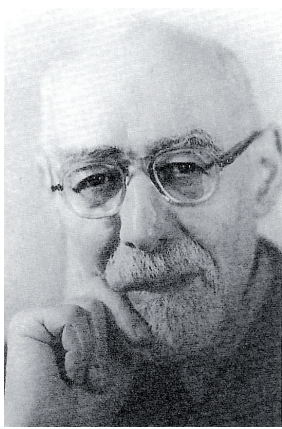


Informacja Turystyczna (Tourist Information Centre)
64-100 Leszno, ul. Słowiańska 24
tel. +48 65 529 81 91, tel./fax +48 65 529 81 92
e-mail: infotur@leszno.pl

www.leszno.pl

LEO BAECK

BIOGRAPHY



Leo Baeck – widely known and acknowledged rabbi and philosopher, representative of Progressive Judaism, born on May 23 1873 in Leszno, died on November 2 1956 in London.

His father, Samuel Baeck (1834–1912), doctor of philosophy and writer, a man who was widely educated had the position of Head Rabbi in Leszno. He was buried in the local cemetery. Leo Baeck visited his father's grave each year until the final time in 1938. Leo, as the only one out of the five brothers followed in his father's footsteps. The oldest brother became a tradesman while the other three brothers chose medical studies. Leo also had six sisters; three of them were married to rabbis. Baeck lived in Leszno until his matriculation exams in 1891 at the J.A. Komeński middle school. He then studied at the Jewish Theological Seminar in Wrocław and philosophy at the University of Wrocław and at the University of Berlin where he received a Ph. D. in philosophy in 1895.

In Opole, in 1897 he became a Rabbi. He married Natalie Hamburger in 1898 and in 1900 she gave birth to their only child, a daughter named Ruth.

In 1905 Leo published his most famous piece, "The Significance of Judaism" which was the answer to the book entitled "The Significance of Christianity" published in 1900 by Adolf Harnack, a Lutheran clergyman. Two years later, when his career was moving forward rapidly, he was invited to become a rabbi in Düsseldorf, and after the subsequent five years there, he moved to Berlin in 1912 to become the rabbi of a Jewish commune with a population of 150,000 people. As an associate professor and lecturer of a university for rabbis, he was invited to numerous lectures including Christian schools.

Before his ordination, he published a number of articles where he described his attitude towards education and liberalism. He was a follower of such reforms as: introducing instrumental music into synagogues, mixed choir and local language (German) apart from Hebrew. Some of these changes were introduced earlier by his father (who until the end remained conservative), i.e. in 1905 he opened the Leszno synagogue after it was rebuilt. He equipped the synagogue with large pipe organs. Leo was also a follower of equal rights of women in synagogues. While assisting Regina Jonas in becoming a rabbi, he committed a breach of the religious limits set many centuries earlier.

During World War I he served as a military chaplain and he returned to Berlin after the war, where he was selected as the Head of the Rabbi Association in Germany in 1922. After Hitler took over the reigns, Leo Baeck led the institution representing German Jews. He rejected a few proposals of emigrating so that he could help others: he took the effort to negotiate the terms of receiving funds for the suffering people. In 1943 he was sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp where only due to a clerical error he avoided death.

In June of 1945 Leo Baeck went to London, to his daughter and took on British citizenship. Soon after he took the position of President of World Union for Progressive Judaism.

He traveled a lot to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem where he lectured at universities. He was distinguished with the doctor honoris causa title multiple times.

On October 29, 1956 he finished the second volume of his piece entitled "Those People of Israel". He died suddenly 3 days after at 83. Many institutes, e.g. in Jerusalem, London, New York were named after Leo Baeck.



Leo Baeck with wife, Natalie on a walk (1930)

