

*Where We Lived*

**44th IAJGS International Conference  
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# **Bessarabia/Moldova Jewish Cemeteries Project**

*Current Status and Future Projects*

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# Bessarabia on a map of Europe





# Bessarabia Special Interest Group (SIG) – history and projects



Bessarabia SIG explores historical region of Bessarabia and part of Moldova Republic which is on the left bank of Dniester River – Transnistria unrecognized territory.

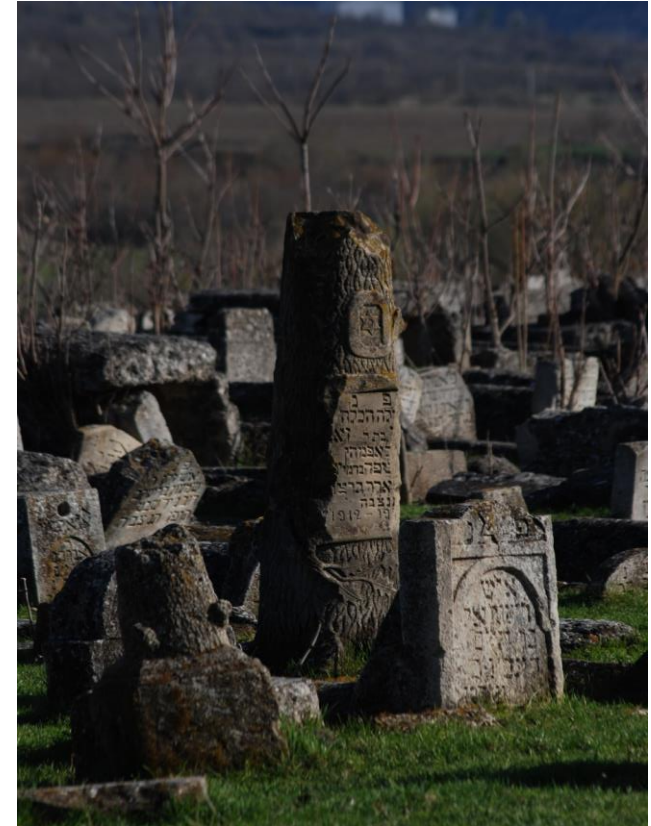
**Bessarabia** is combination of **Yellow** and **Purple**

**Republic of Moldova** is combination of **Yellow** and **Green**

**Pridnestrovie (Transnistria)** is **Green**  
**Purple** - parts of Ukraine

# Cemeteries in Bessarabia / Moldova

There are more than 86 Jewish cemeteries found in the territory of Bessarabia and Moldova, including Transnistria



Here is the inventory of all cemeteries where Jews were buried (as of June of 2024):  
<https://www.jewishgen.org/bessarabia/files/cemetery/Inventory202406-June.htm>

## Cemetery conditions

Most of the cemeteries in Bessarabia/ Moldova are in a **poor condition**. From all the 86 cemeteries there are only 2, which are in normal condition -- Bendery Jewish Cemetery and Kishinev Town cemetery “Doyna” with Jewish quarters.





Even in “normal”  
Bendery cemetery you  
can find such corners





The only remaining  
tombstone in Dumbroveny  
Jewish cemetery



Here us a corner of a  
cemetery in Brichany

# Cemetery conditions

In many of the cemeteries you find **broken or no fences**, tombstones fallen or partially in the ground. Almost all cemeteries do not have any **caretakers** and are **abandoned**.

Time and weather conditions do their job, and cemeteries are gradually being destroyed. Some are deliberately destroyed by local residents or authorities.

*See some good news on next page...*



## **ESJF – The European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative**

The ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative is a German-based non-profit established in 2015 by Rabbi Isaac Schapira with the core objective of protecting and preserving Jewish cemeteries across Europe through the accurate delineation of cemetery boundaries and the construction of walls and locking gates.

Organization already constructed walls on **17 cemeteries** in Bessarabia/Moldova and surveyed a number of other cemeteries.

Website of ESJF: <https://www.esjf-cemeteries.org/>

Sample for Valea-lui-Vlad cemetery:

<https://www.esjf-cemeteries.org/fenced/valea-lui-vlad-jewish-cemetery-2/>

## **ESJF – The European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative**

Thanks to that organization. This year we found **THREE** more cemeteries because of ESJF:

- Kremenchug, Soroki uezd, about 20 tombstones remained
- Tsybulyovka, Transnistria. It seems demolished cemetery, but there are some parts of stones on the ground
- Pirlitsa, Beltsy uezd. Demolished cemetery.



# Destroyed Jewish Cemeteries

Many cemeteries are completely destroyed!!

Here is a [list of 19 demolished cemeteries](#).

It would be great to preserve the memory of such cemeteries and put all available information to JewishGen / JOWBR. It may include names of people who were buried there and remembered by their relatives.

See sample of one of the demolished cemeteries on next page

# Destroyed Jewish Cemeteries

In June of 2024 I sent to JOWBR all about demolished **Old Jewish Cemetery in Kaushany** (shtetl in Bendery uезд).

You can find in the following report maps where cemetery was located, also 31 records from a set of Death records from 1884 from Kaushany. Cemetery was destroyed in 1920-30s.

<https://www.jewishgen.org/Bessarabia/files/cemetery/Kaushany/KaushanyOldJewishCemetery.pdf>



# Cemeteries - Museums of Jewish Heritage and Art



From Brichany Jewish cemetery

Here is a link to Brichany Jewish Cemetery report:

<https://www.jewishgen.org/Bessarabia/files/cemetery/briceni/BriceniCemetery.pdf>

You can find such reports at Bessarabia SIG RD website / Cemetery section.

The oldest grave we found so far was from the beginning of 18 century (1720s), but we may find even earlier graves. You can find cemetery reports at Bessarabia SIG website / Cemetery section with many details, photographs. Every report also includes a link to list of Unknown graves! Please look at those.

We believe that many of Jewish cemeteries should be protected by the state – the Republic of Moldova as Cultural Heritage sites.



# Difficulties working at the cemeteries

The first cemetery we started working was in the city of **Bendery**. Of the instruments at first was only a camera, but later the reality forced to carry with us a machete or ax. The shooting began in the fall of 2012 and took a huge amount of time.



Often cemeteries have to be searched for a long time, including asking the local residents. Sometimes we do not find the cemetery since it was destroyed by plowing, and the stones are dismantled for construction material, as for example, in Sarata, Odessa Oblast.





Chinisheutsi Jewish  
cemetery was discovered  
accidentally



# Clearing paths, cleaning cemetery projects

On a map of **Brichany Jewish cemetery**, a red part on the right side, a section there at first was impossible to get to the stones.

We started **clearing path project**. After the paths were cleared, another 1,500 gravestones were photographed.

Also **Lipkany Jewish cemetery** was cleared and many gravestones were photographed.

There are several other cemeteries we worked on should be cleared and all graves be photographed.



Map after first photographing at Brichany Jewish Cemetery



# Cemeteries we worked on this year

- Beltsy Jewish Cemetery – section of the cemetery was done in August 2023  
*331 records with 325 grave images*
- Klishkivtsi New Jewish Cemetery  
*261 records with 257 grave images*
- Kaushany Old Jewish Cemetery – demolished cemetery  
*31 records*
- Vertuzhany cemetery was photographed and will be indexed 2024-2025
- Oknitsa cemetery, we tried to photograph, but it appeared to be destroyed!
- Continuing work on Kishinev Jewish Cemetery (not yet upload to JOWBR)  
Sector 3 – photographed about 2,100 stones from total of 4,600  
Sector 7 – photographed about 2,000 stones from total of 3,000  
*Planning to put into JOWBR Sector 3 and 7 records/images even is photos are missing.*



# Future projects

1. Continue working on two largest cemeteries in the region:
  - Beltsy Jewish cemetery
  - Kishinev Jewish cemetery.
  
2. Photograph following cemeteries:
  - ✓ Ryshkany, Beltsy uezd, about 100
  - ✓ Kremenchug, Soroki uezd, about 20 tombstones remained
  - ✓ Tsybulyovka, Transnistria. It seems demolished cemetery, but there are some parts of stones on the ground.
  - ✓ Onitskany, Kishinev uezd. Cemetery was demolished, but there are 4 stones laid on the ground. We need to photograph them!

## Future projects

3. Try to locate following cemeteries or places where they located:
  - Bayramcha (Nikolayevka-Novorossiyskaya), Akkerman uezd, Odessa oblast
  - Slobodzeya, Transnistria
  - Lapushna (not far from Kishinev)
  - Tarakliya, Izmail uezd
  - Yaloveny, Kishinev uezd
  
4. Cemeteries that were photographed, indexed long time ago, likely only partially - we need to go back to those. These are cemeteries in Calarash, Khotin, Orgeev, Secureny, Tarutino, Yedintsy, Kiliya, Leovo, possible others. Some of these cemeteries may need a Clearing paths work, as we did in Brichany and Lipkany.

# How can you help?

There are several volunteering jobs at the cemetery projects: lead a project, manage all aspects of a project, including writing the cemetery report; translate the writings from Russian or/and from Hebrew. Also, we need your donations to make the projects happen, that includes photographing, in some projects cleaning, clearing paths, etc.

If you have information about cemeteries which are not on our inventory list, please let us know. There are some of our members who photographed all the graves from a small cemetery, and we appreciate such gifts very much.



Questions ?