

## **DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

The aim of the project *The Jewish Family in Warsaw in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century in Light of Wills* is to research the types and significance of family bonds in Jewish families in Warsaw in the first half of the nineteenth century to establish which type of dependence was dominant: familial, neighborly, communal, or intercultural. Social and economic bonds within Jewish families are a subject that is mostly overlooked in the existing literature. This is not because the subject is a marginal one, but rather because of a lack of Jewish memoirs from the Congress Kingdom and because of the many methodological difficulties involved in such research. The project will first of all establish what kind of bonds were dominant in the Jewish families of Warsaw during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is particularly important to reconstruct the dynamics of families that were not wealthy – these are not researched due to the absence of sources other than wills. In addition, the project will answer other questions such as: how were closer and more distant relatives treated? How often did they receive legacies and what did they receive? What was the attitude to converts, with conversion becoming increasingly common at the time? Were converts completely excluded from the Jewish community through family ostracism, or was this not the rule? Who received inheritance more often according to wills? What role did women and men play in bequest plans? Did the content of one's last will and the instructions contained in it depend on which branch of Judaism the testator belonged to?

Research hitherto conducted on the Jewish community has relied chiefly on state administrative records and Jewish community records. Scholars have shown little interest in consulting notarial records which are a demanding source. Achieving my project goal depends first and foremost on analyzing testaments preserved in the archival notarial records for Warsaw. I will examine whether the religious precepts preached by rabbis and tsaddikim were reflected in the lives of members of the Warsaw Jewish community and to what degree. Bequeathing one's estate shall be treated as material evidence of the existence of certain family bonds or as an expression of feelings. I will answer each of my research questions based on documents I have already found in the Warsaw notarial records. These include first and foremost Jewish wills as my main source. I shall conduct further research and obtain different types of sources at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York and the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem. Library and digital collections research will allow me to gather the necessary subject-related literature. During my planned research stays abroad I will consult my material with distinguished Jewish Studies scholars. My analysis will also include sources such as property lists, marriage settlements, press publications, memoirs, documents from the Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (e.g., records of the Warsaw Jewish community), and Jewish vital records from Warsaw kept at the State Archive in Warsaw.

During the project I will examine selected wills (from the Warsaw notarial collection) which will be discussed in detail in my doctoral dissertation. Moreover, I will compile a list of sources selected from the notarial records collection, listing detailed bibliographic data so that other scholars can access this hard-to-find material.

Within a broader context, the project findings will contribute to the dissemination of information contained in notarial records which are a demanding source and insufficiently explored by scholars. They will convince other researchers to use this source. The project will enrich our knowledge of Poland's diverse culture, especially its Jewish component. It will also yield stereotype-free knowledge about the Jewish family. Over the course of the project I will present my findings internationally, which will consolidate the contribution of Polish scholars to world science. There is no doubt that notarial records yield information about the internal problems of the Jewish family which are hard to research in any other way.