



## HISTORY OF THE CITY

Łęczyca, the city on the river Bzura. The name of the town is derived from the Slavic word 'lenki' (mud, swamp). The city is located in an area of valleys, full of swamps.

Łęczyca was established in the tenth century as a Slavic fortress. The first chronicles tell about the city in the days of the Polish king Bolesław Krzywousty. In 1108, the reigning king conquered Łęczyca. The city stood at a crossroads and therefore served as a meeting place for princes and kings, as well as a place for synods of the Catholic Church (such synods took place there in the Middle Ages, around 20). At the time of the feudal disintegration, the city belonged to different princes of the dynasty of the peasants, in 1331 the city was burned by the German crusaders.

In 1655 the city conquered Sweden. In 1794 a great fire broke out which destroyed the city. From the 6th to the 8th century, until the partition of Poland, Łęczyca was a province town. The Jewish community is one of the oldest in Poland. It can be assumed that the first Jewish inhabitants came to Łęczyca in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century.

The Jewish community received the privileges in 1453 from King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk. According to the census of 1564, the Jews owned in the city 17 houses. Besides, they lived in three more Christian houses. They then paid a pound of pepper tax for each house. It is believed that the famous Magid Ephraim of Łęczyca came from the city.

In 1639 a blood libel trial took place here. The Jews Meir and Eliezer were accused of killing a child for ritual purposes. The two Jews perished on *Kiddush HaShem*.

In the church of Łęczyca there is still to this day a coffin with the bones of the child and a picture on which is depicted the scene of bloodshed of a child by the Jews. The clerics staged this process in order to obtain a relic for their new church (it was built in 1632).

In 1656 a massacre of Jews took place in the city. King Jan Kazimierz captured the city from the Brandenburg troops, and after the storm, the Polish troops destroyed virtually the entire Jewish community. The Jewish sources mention about 3000 fallen. The Jewish children were abducted. He then burned 600 Torah scrolls.

After the Swedish wars in the first half of the eighteenth century, the Jews settled in Łęczyca *en masse*. In 1724 the Jews were given a privilege to trade and occupy themselves with liquor and production of beverages, as well as renting inns and bars. In 1728, they received permission to build the synagogue. All handicrafts were then in Jewish hands. According to the 1765 census, the Jewish community numbered 1,067 people. The Jewish community of Łęczyca was made up of the congregations of Stryków (625 people), Brzeziny (243 people), Sobota (114), Parzęczew (267 people) – and a couple of smaller Jewish communities.

In 1789, the Jews owned 47 houses in Łęczyca.

(Sent by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw)